



TOPICAL  
DIALOGUES

# TOPICAL DIALOGUES

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## ONE TOPIC - TWO ARTICLES

This is the first part of the series of paired analytical articles prepared by Armenian and Azerbaijani authors. The materials were prepared within the framework of the “Public Dialogues for Communication between Armenian and Azerbaijani Specialists” project, implemented by the “Region” Research Center.

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# TOPIC - THE DISCOURSE OF PEACE AND WAR IN ARMENIAN AND AZERBAIJANI SOCIETIES - 2018

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See the comments of the authors on the other article here -  
<http://www.publicdialogues.info/node/800>

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**SYUZANNA BARSEGHYAN**

*The Armenian Institute of International and  
Security Affairs*

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## NEITHER WAR NOR PEACE: THE SOFT POWER OF DISCOURSE

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<http://www.publicdialogues.info/en/node/799>

**“Humans never engage in war without the mediating force of discourse”<sup>1</sup>**

**Adam Hodges**

The discourses of peace and war are relevant for the Armenian society, which has lived for more than two decades in the conditions of "neither war, nor peace". Due to the unsettled Karabakh conflict, Armenia's relations with the neighboring countries and the regional realities, the discourse of war is perceived to be very "natural" for the public, and the discourse of peace is becoming increasingly "abstract."

Discourses of peace and war have a significant impact on realpolitik, and on the decision-making process. On political and public platforms, in the media and social networks, the

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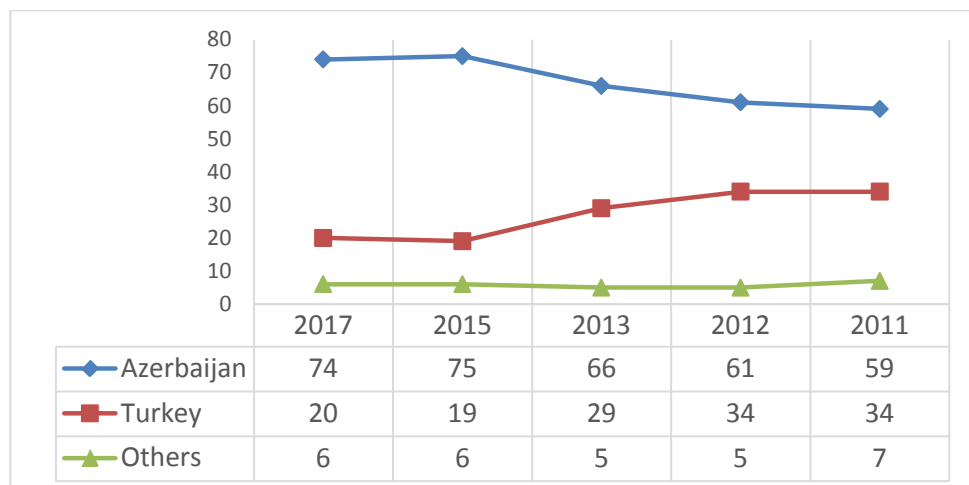
<sup>1</sup> Discourses of War and Peace, Adam Hodges (ed.), Reviewed by Vesa Koskela, Sociolinguistic Studies, Vol. 9.4, 2015, p. 519.

essence of this discourse shapes the notions of peace and war, defines the objectives of national security and the corresponding behavioral patterns for its provision. As Adam Hodges mentions, war is not wired into human brains, but rather exists as a culturally contingent phenomenon, expressed in language as well as action.<sup>2</sup>

### Hostile Environment

The correlation of peace and war discourses, conditioned by the peace-loving or bellicose nature of verbal activity on public platforms (mainly in political rhetoric and in the media space) forms public perceptions of security in which the definition of a "friend vs. an enemy" occupies a special place. According to public opinion polls, the overwhelming majority of the Armenian public have a hostile perception of the neighbors, in the person of Azerbaijan and Turkey (see Diagram 1). However, even though the other two neighbors – Georgia and Iran – are not considered enemies, only a small part of the respondents recognizes them as friends.

**Diagram 1. The enemies of Armenia, according to public opinion,%<sup>3</sup>**



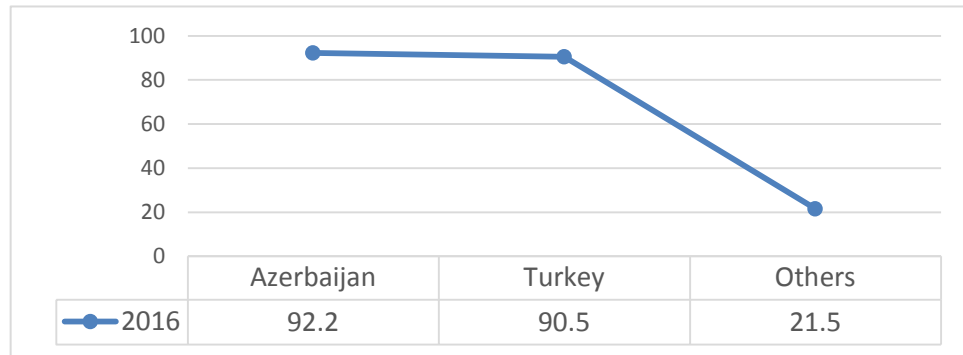
Moreover, the data show that over the past 7 years there has been a dynamic growth in the perception of Azerbaijan as an enemy.

It is noteworthy that there is a more acute perception of the hostile neighborhood in Artsakh, and there is practically no difference in the perception of Azerbaijan and Turkey (see Diagram 2).

<sup>2</sup> See also there.

<sup>3</sup> Caucasus Barometer, Public Perceptions on Political, Social, and Economic Issues in the South Caucasus Countries, Yerevan, 2017 ([http://www.crrc.am/hosting/file/\\_static\\_content/barometer/2017/CB2017\\_ENG\\_presentation\\_final\\_.pdf](http://www.crrc.am/hosting/file/_static_content/barometer/2017/CB2017_ENG_presentation_final_.pdf)).

**Diagram 2. The enemies of NKR, according to public opinion (multiple answer,%)<sup>4</sup>**



The discourse of war is rarely associated with Turkey, regardless of the unfriendly relations, the closed border, and historical intransigence.

The attitude towards Russia is not unambiguous. In the public consciousness, Russia has retained the image of the only friend for a long time already. On the one hand, in the public consciousness there is the image of Russia as the guarantor of Armenia's security and the main actor in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict; on the other hand, Russia is a security threat for Armenia and Artsakh, because it sells offensive weapons to Azerbaijan.

Such a hostile, unfriendly environment provokes an acute perception of security in the Armenian society, which, in turn, contributes to the development of the discourse of war, the militarization of the society and the legitimization of war in general.

And in this generally hostile environment, the discourse of war is mainly focused on the Karabakh conflict.

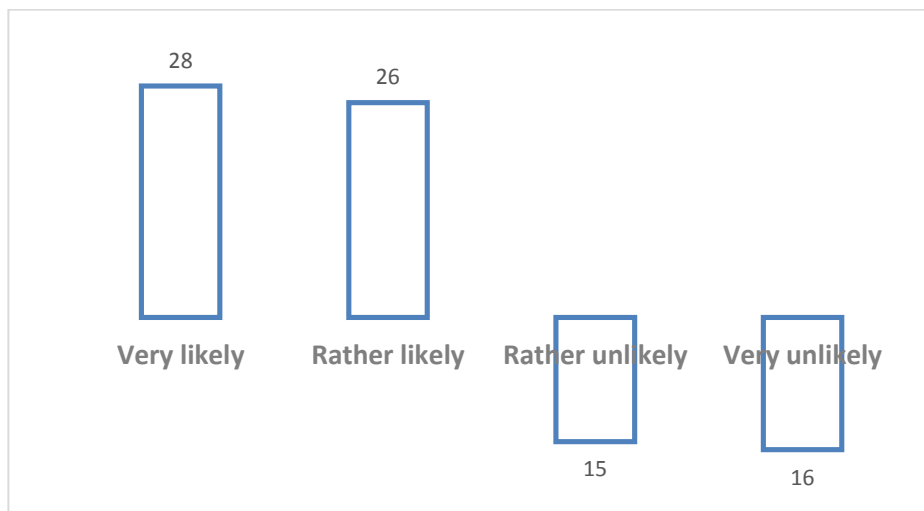
### ***The Karabakh Conflict is a Key Factor in the Discourses of War and Peace***

According to public opinion, the socio-economic problems that are a priority for the population are followed by the significant issues of unresolved conflict and the lack of peace (10-11% of respondents).<sup>5</sup> However, the peaceful settlement of the conflict is not very realistic in the foreseeable future (see Diagram 3). 15% of the respondents even find it difficult to make any predictions regarding this matter.

<sup>4</sup>Opinion Polls in Nagorno-Karabakh: Comparative Results from 2015 and 2016, IPSC – Institute for Political and Sociological Consulting, Armenia, 2016 ([http://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Comparative-opinion-polls\\_2015-2016\\_17.11.2016\\_Website\\_Eng-2.pdf](http://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Comparative-opinion-polls_2015-2016_17.11.2016_Website_Eng-2.pdf)).

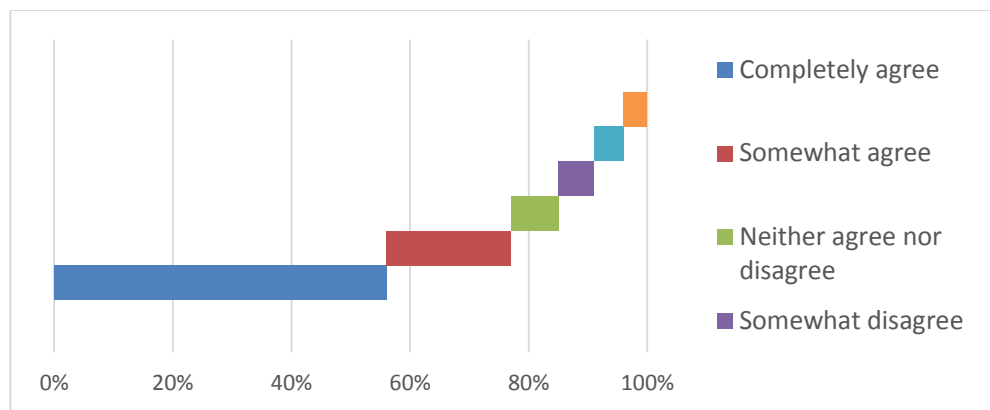
<sup>5</sup> Caucasus Barometer, Public Perceptions on Political, Social, and Economic Issues in the South Caucasus Countries, Yerevan, 2017 ([http://www.crrc.am/hosting/file/\\_static\\_content/barometer/2017/CB2017\\_ENG\\_presentation\\_final\\_.pdf](http://www.crrc.am/hosting/file/_static_content/barometer/2017/CB2017_ENG_presentation_final_.pdf)).

**Diagram 3. How likely is it to find a solution by peaceful negotiation in the next five years? (%), 2013<sup>6</sup>**



A public opinion after the April war in 2016 showed that, despite the threat of war, the majority of the Armenian population sees the resolution of the Karabakh conflict only through negotiations (see Diagram 4).

**Diagram 4. “April war showed that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be resolved through negotiations and not through force”: Public opinion, 2017<sup>7</sup>**



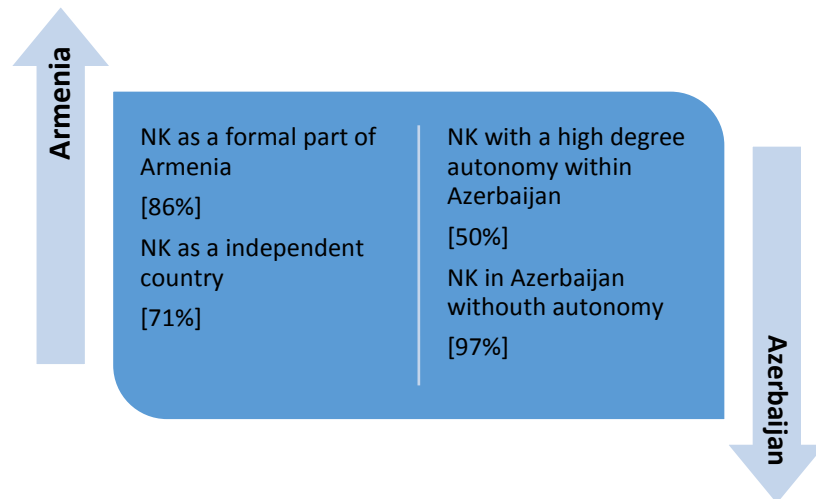
In fact, in the same way the Armenian society reaffirms its approach to a peaceful settlement. However, existing polar approaches render the prospect of the latter as unrealistic (see Figure 1).

<sup>6</sup> Caucasus Barometer, Public Perceptions on Political, Social, and Economic Issues in the South Caucasus Countries, Yerevan, 2013 ([http://www.crc.am/hosting/file/\\_static\\_content/barometer/2013/CB2013\\_public%20presentation\\_English.pdf](http://www.crc.am/hosting/file/_static_content/barometer/2013/CB2013_public%20presentation_English.pdf))

<sup>7</sup> Caucasus Barometer, Public Perceptions on Political, Social, and Economic Issues in the South Caucasus Countries, Yerevan, 2017 ([http://www.crc.am/hosting/file/\\_static\\_content/barometer/2017/CB2017\\_ENG\\_presentation\\_final\\_.pdf](http://www.crc.am/hosting/file/_static_content/barometer/2017/CB2017_ENG_presentation_final_.pdf)).



**Figure 1. Approaches to the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, 2013<sup>8</sup>**



The societies of the two countries are in solidarity in their attitude to only one option they both consider unacceptable (88-90%): it is about the status of NKR as a special administrative region governed jointly by Azerbaijan and Armenia.

According to the surveys of 2015 and 2016<sup>9</sup>, the population of Artsakh, in its turn, sees two main options in determining the status of Nagorno-Karabakh: 1) being independent and 2) becoming part of Armenia. It should be noted that the four-day April war of 2016 made significant amendments to the perceptions of the Artsakh people, regarding the status of the NKR and the settlement of the conflict. The perceptions of the population of Artsakh regarding the above-mentioned status cover the 7 regions (Aghdam, Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Qubadli, Kalbajar, Lachin, and Zangilan), and they are seen as part of the NKR or RA.

From among the options for the conflict resolution, the maintenance of the status quo with the presence of the Armenian army(35%) and the recognition of NKR's independence by Armenia (preserving territories and peace) (33%) are considered a priority by the population of Karabakh, and only 1/10 of the respondents see military actions as a solution. At the same time they believe that if the regional and global powers impose handover of territories to Azerbaijan, they should resist with weapons (81%).

Thus, the Karabakh conflict is the main impetus for the discourses of war and peace in Armenia and Artsakh. The domination of the discourse of war over that of peace is a consequence of polar approaches, held by the conflicting parties who find it difficult to find mutually beneficial solutions. There are apprehensions that if the Armenian side is ready for a peaceful settlement, the opposing party may take a different position. Such a situation engenders rivalry, in which only one side can be the winner, therefore, in the media and on

<sup>8</sup>Caucasus Barometer, Public Perceptions on Political, Social, and Economic Issues in the South Caucasus Countries, Yerevan, 2013

([http://www.crrc.am/hosting/file/\\_static\\_content/barometer/2013/CB2013\\_public%20presentation\\_English.pdf](http://www.crrc.am/hosting/file/_static_content/barometer/2013/CB2013_public%20presentation_English.pdf))

<sup>9</sup>Opinion Polls in Nagorno-Karabakh: Comparative Results from 2015 and 2016, IPSC – Institute for Political and Sociological Consulting, Armenia, 2016 ([http://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Comparative-opinion-polls\\_2015-2016\\_17.11.2016\\_Website\\_Eng-2.pdf](http://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Comparative-opinion-polls_2015-2016_17.11.2016_Website_Eng-2.pdf)).

public platforms, the discourse of war becomes dominant. On the one hand, it contributes to the escalation of the war, on the other hand, it presents itself as the language of peace: the development of the country's military potential and the suppression of enemy's attempts of armed aggression are represented by actions, aimed at establishing peace.

### ***The Main Power of Discourse***

Unlike the practices of war and peace, the communicative and verbal nature of the discourses of war and peace makes it possible to deconstruct the accepted and war legitimizing discourse by changing language and narratives. However, the factors influencing these discourses and the stakeholders thereof are very diverse, namely the authorities and persons responsible for politics, the public of Armenia and Artsakh, the Armenian diaspora, the media, the opposing party of the conflict, the international community, intermediary organizations, and so on. Consequently, the entities stimulating these discourses are able to affirm the superiority of one of these discourses. In addition, the diversity of stakeholders contributes to the emergence of differences between social and political discourses, between reality and perception.

The authorities/politically responsible forces, the political parties and the civil society, think tanks and experts are particularly influential among the Armenian actors promoting a discourse. After the ceasefire was established, these forces circulated various, often mutually exclusive approaches to resolving the conflict.

It can be noted that balanced and conservative approaches by politically responsible forces that the main political forces lie in the center of discussions, which come to rather present different negotiating formats, options for the solution, some compromises as well as uncompromising issues (often at the official level they avoid public talks about concession agreements). Whereas there are two radical approaches on the periphery. On the one hand, it is the so-called nationalist approach which considers the issue in the wider context of the Armenian Question (restoration of historical justice and the return of Armenian lands), within the framework of which it is unacceptable to talk about concessions and which presupposes forceful methods of solution. On the other hand, there is little unambiguous readiness to concede a very small number of civil society representatives in the name of peace.

It is difficult to judge in which direction the new authorities of Armenia will lead this discussion. So far, the new government and the new president have declared their readiness for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, underlined the pernicious consequences of the war for both countries and the region as a whole, and spoke of the intention to get NKR back to the negotiating table.

### ***Manipulations with the War Discourse***

Manipulations with the issue of security is another force stimulating the discourse of war, based on the special sensitivity of the society to this topic. Using the military position and

the high degree of interest of the society in defense matters, the authorities apply patriotic propaganda to weaken the public demand for democratic processes, in many cases contrasting security with democratic and civil values. Noting the preservation of security as the most important task, the authorities give it an unquestionably important status, narrowing, at the same time, the perception of the concept per se. The opposition of security interests and the fundamental principles of democracy in public perception is strengthened in political discourse against the backdrop of domestic political processes. Thus, the Karabakh conflict and the issue of war and peace have always been important topics in the political discourse. The stereotypes circulating in these discussions worked in favor of the war discourse. Conversely, the preponderance of the war discourse has promoted some undeniable approaches:

- In the conditions of a conflict, we cannot observe democracy: the war discourse and authoritarian rule are necessary to mobilize the society (authoritarian approaches are seen as a guarantee of strength and security).
- The existing social and economic difficulties should be treated with condescension, in view of the constant military threat and defense costs that are a priority for the country.
- The resolution of the Karabakh conflict in favor of Armenians is directly connected with concrete persons in power (those who are the most informed, are from Artsakh by origin and who have taken part in the war).
- Post-election rallies and actions against falsified elections work in favor of hostile neighbors and instigate border clashes.
- The official negotiating party does not speak of concessions, in order to avoid public mistrust.
- Peace discourse is perceived solely as a willingness to compromise.

However, the discourse of war and peace, as well as the perception of security, acquired new meaning after the April war in 2016 and the April Revolution in 2018.

### ***Two Decisive Events: War and Revolution***

After the war in 2016 and the revolution in 2018 stereotypes and taboos formed over the years break down in the context of domestic political changes in Armenia.

After the April war, a clear emphasis was laid on the discourses of war and peace, a new wave of discussions about the settlement of the conflict arose, there were changes in public opinion and in the perception of Russia as the only ally.

The discourse of war, in its turn, contributes to the legitimization of war and the militarization of the society. As L. Baghdasaryan notes, after the April war in 2016, the "right to war"

ceased to be exclusively the monopoly of the Azerbaijani discourse.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the objective causes of the war, the authorities themselves contributed to militarization, implementing various programs and using the opportunities of the media. The concept of "Nation-Army" can be an example of the above-mentioned, through which an attempt was made to focus the attention of the population on the objectives of defense and the army and to create a program of "military-patriotic education of students" as well. As the results of media discourse analyses on the Nation-Army program show, communication between the army and the nation is strengthened in the context of strengthening security.<sup>11</sup> Many experts qualified this concept as a program for the militarization of society and linked it with the authorization of power, however the concept of "Nation-Army" and a number of programs prepared under this concept are not implemented after the Velvet Revolution of 2018.

Although the issues of security issue and the mobilization of the society for defense purposes presented themselves more acutely after the April war in 2016, the problems identified during the war, corruption disclosures, the practices of private contributions within the framework of the "Nation-Army" concept questioned the perception of the army as an unconditionally trusted and mature institution, as well as the priority of ensuring security and defense over socio-economic difficulties and concessions in democratic processes.

Perhaps this had an impact on the mass revolutionary engagement two years later, i.e. in 2018. This time the long-circulated myth that due to their historical memory, conservatism and wisdom the people of Armenia will not go for domestic political perturbations, realizing the threats emanating from the enemy environment and war, did not work. Although throughout the civil disobedience actions and rallies a thesis and information were being voiced and disseminated about the Azerbaijani armed forces accumulating and clustering at the border and the threat of hostilities, they not only failed to suppress the protesters, but were met with counterarguments, that such civic participation and the reign of the spirit and strength of the people, on the contrary, could contribute to defense. The anti-corruption actions of the new government of Armenia, the undertaken steps towards democratization and legitimacy of the government in practice have shown positive results.

Thus, the revolution, by virtue of internal political processes, has transformed the myth of the manipulation with war and security. The legitimacy of power and the pursuit of democratic values can become a new negotiating and security resource for Armenia.

### ***Information Space and the Language of Discourse***

However, in addition to the domestic Armenian discourse, the Azerbaijani one is also very important, because the asymmetry of these discourses, in its turn, contributes to the

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<sup>10</sup> Багдасарян Л. Метаморфозы дискурса мира и войны на армянских и азербайджанских публичных площадках после апреля 2016 г., Исследовательский центр "Регион", 2017 (<http://hetq.am/rus/news/75606/metamorfoziy-diskursa-mira-i-voyniy-na-armyanskikh-i-azerbaiydzhanskikh-publichnykh-ploshchadkakh-posle-aprelya-2016-g.html>).

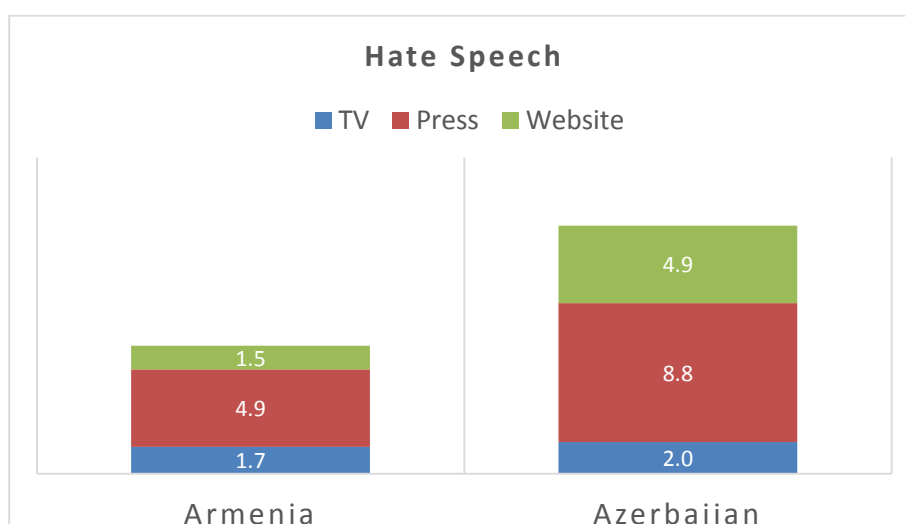
<sup>11</sup> "Armenian Media Discourse on the Nation-Army Concept – 2017", Region Research Center, Yerevan, 2017 (<http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1542>)

development of the discourse of war. Military rhetoric and propaganda, distortion of facts and information affect not only the internal audience, but also generate rivalry and an information war .

In Armenian and Azerbaijani societies, the asymmetry of the discourses of war and peace is expressed in political rhetoric, in the media, social networks, educational programs (in the textbooks of history and other subjects, "patriotic" upbringing, and so on.)<sup>12</sup>, arts and other fields.

The role of the media is especially important in the formation of these discourses, since they are the main source of information not only for the domestic audience, but also for the audience of the opposite side. Given that in the media the discourse of war is usually expressed, first of all, by the language of hostility, this indicator can stand out as an important marker. The mass media of Armenia and Azerbaijan (2014) identify the asymmetry of hate speech: according to their results, the language of hostility is particularly pronounced in the Azerbaijani Media (see Chart 5).

**Chart 5. Hate speech in the mass media of Armenia and Azerbaijan (the ratio of materials with the elements of "hate speech" to the total number of materials studied in this type of media,%)<sup>13</sup>**



In order to ensure the emotional involvement of people in the conflict, the parties are divided into "good" and "bad", a struggle is constructed between "truth" and "lies". In this discourse of war the conflict seems insoluble, the parties state the heroic deeds of their people and the atrocities of the opposite party, humanize their political and military leaders, soldiers, victims, civilians, thus completely dehumanizing the images of the opposing side.

<sup>12</sup> The war discourse is extremely aggressive in the educational programmes in Azerbaijan. Textbooks and other educational materials can be found in the following website: <http://azerichild.info/books-education-azerbaijan-hatred-from-childhood.html>.

<sup>13</sup> "Язык вражды" в средствах массовой информации Южного Кавказа (На основе мониторинга СМИ Азербайджана, Армении и Грузии), Ереванский пресс-клуб, 2014 ([http://ypc.am/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Hate\\_Speech\\_October\\_2014\\_rus.pdf](http://ypc.am/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Hate_Speech_October_2014_rus.pdf)).

According to the study on the Azerbaijani and Armenian media (2008-2013)<sup>14</sup>, the clichés spread by the enemy in the context of the settlement of the Karabakh conflict are mirror-opposites in most respects. For example, the media of both countries use certain clichés against each other: the aggressor, occupation, the Armenian/Azerbaijani propaganda, atrocity, barbarism, terrorism, militant politics, changed toponyms, and so on. They also use clichés of the opposite meaning (for example, liberated/occupied territories), expressions and words in quotation marks ("the NKR", "the Armenian Genocide", and so on) and used by only one party (Artsakh, Armenian/Karabakh separatists). The stereotype of the uncompromising stand is also circulating in the media, as a matter of fact, due to the reluctance of the enemy to make concessions. However, the option of resolving the conflict through military operations is found exclusively in the Azerbaijani media. In the Armenian media, most often it is stated that Armenia is a supporter of peaceful resolution, whereas Azerbaijan supports a military solution to the conflict.

Given the different degrees of their freedom, the media in both countries (of course, in different ratios) do not ultimately provide the audience with reliable information about each other.<sup>15</sup> This information gap, to some extent, is supplemented by social networks, which present themselves as communication tools, on the one hand, and as information warfare tools, on the other. Social networks provide an opportunity to promote peace discourse which is impossible without the understanding of the histories of the conflicting parties, without taking into account the views of the participants and respect for the victims, without distinguishing political and military leaders from the ordinary people. In fact, social networks are not yet widely used in the peace discourse of the two peoples and are rather and mostly used as an instrument of information warfare.

Thus, the perceptions of peace and war are not generally based on real facts and truthful information. Media technologies shape these perceptions, disseminate and reproduce discourses of war and peace. The latter actually act as important tools of soft power.

At present, the discourse of war is undoubtedly dominant and, in principle, the societies of the opposing countries are not ready for peace, despite declared statements<sup>16</sup>.

Peace discourse, following irrefutable standards of truth, is capable of discovering the contradictions and deconstructing the polarity of war discourse. It is called upon to rethink myths and identify common values, indicate the cost of victory, determining the harm to culture, economy, social relations, etc., and to examine the possibilities for conflict transformation and the possibilities for reconciliation and peacemaking.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Глоссарий языка вражды в СМИ Азербайджана и Армении, Баку-Ереван, 2008-2013 ([http://ypc.am/upload/GLOSSARY\\_rus.pdf](http://ypc.am/upload/GLOSSARY_rus.pdf))

<sup>15</sup> According to the Freedom House Report on the Freedom of Speech in 2017, Armenia occupies the 137<sup>th</sup> position, and Azerbaijan comes the 190<sup>th</sup> among the countries with the lowest rating in the world..

<sup>16</sup> According to our observations, the war discourse in Azerbaijan is of a more extreme and complex character.

<sup>17</sup> Kempf W. Deescalation-oriented conflict coverage? The Northern Ireland and Israeli-Palestinian peace processes in the German press, IAMCR Scientific Conference at Leipzig (Germany), 1999 (<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.871.4250&rep=rep1&type=pdf>).



**ADIL AKHUNDOV**

*Institute for Peace and Democracy*

## **THE DISCOURSE OF PEACE AND WAR IN AZERBAIJANI AND ARMENIAN SOCIETIES**

<http://www.publicdialogues.info/en/node/796>

Since May 1994, Azerbaijan and Armenia have been living in a state of "neither peace, nor war". This condition could not but affect the mood in the societies.

### ***From "the war to a victorious end" to "we have lost the battle, but not the war"***

In the period of active confrontation (including the use of military force) from 1988 to 1994, the society preferred the slogan of "a war to its victorious end". Although even back then there were people and groups in both republics that came up with peaceful initiatives, they were hardly heard and were accused of betraying national interests. Interestingly, in this period even the leadership of the two republics came forward with peaceful initiatives (for example, the leadership of Armenia in 1992 or that of Azerbaijan in 1993). However, the ceasefire agreements concluded in those years were violated very quickly, and the fighting resumed.

Undoubtedly, in addition to the military and political aspects of the resumption of hostilities, the mood of societies awaiting an early victory pressurized the leaderships of the countries. Only in May 1994, when both armies were weakened and practically could not move forward, it was possible to conclude a more or less real agreement on a cease-fire (it must be admitted that this agreement is conditional in nature, since all these years it has been repeatedly violated), which was convenient to both parties at the time.

Over the past 24 years, the attitude of the societies to peace and war have somewhat changed, diverging from each other. Armenia that had taken control of Nagorno-Karabakh



and had created a "buffer zone" around it with the 7 occupied territories, considered itself the winner and was ready to negotiate a peace treaty. I think that at that time the Armenian society cherished a prevalent opinion that Armenia should dictate the terms for peace to Azerbaijan as the winner. In Azerbaijan, on the contrary, they did not want to admit their defeat, which led to the growth of revanchist sentiments. Very often the slogan "we have lost the battle, but not the war" was used. Accordingly, the Azerbaijani society, tired of the war, was also ready for peace talks, but on equal terms, or after a short victorious campaign.

The slogan "war to a victorious end" ceased to be a topic of discussion in both societies and was used only by small nationalist groups.

### ***Peace Discourse in the Shadow of War Discourse***

It should be noted that for 30 years of conflict no real pacifist movement has ever emerged in either society as a force that can influence both societal sentiments and the political leadership. Various NGOs tried to carry out peace-making projects, people's diplomacy, joint seminars and conferences, youth camps, and so on, but this was often met with fierce resistance from the authorities, the information shared with the public was either scarce or distorted. Therefore, in the author's opinion, these attempts have not developed into the emergence of a real peace-making force that would promote peace discourse.

The authorities gave more support to the discourse of war in the society which gave certain dividends in both domestic and foreign policies. Inside the republics, they tried to consolidate the society *vis-à-vis* the image of the enemy and in the outside world an impression was created about:

- a) the impossibility of making compromises,
- b) one's indispensability: "we cannot make compromises, because the entire society wants war, and only we can guarantee a truce".

Despite the paradox of the situation of "neither peace nor war", the societies ceaselessly maintain discussions and debates about the Karabakh settlement. It should be noted that such discussions are held at the international, regional and national levels.

The author of the article had chances to take part in various suchlike discussions. I constantly had the feeling that every speaker, regardless of who he represented, was under the influence of the so-called "internal censor", that is, the person voiced what the audience wanted to hear, or started from how his speech would be evaluated subsequently by the society.

Discussions on the Karabakh settlement most often boil down to a repetition of different variations of the thesis voiced by the Azerbaijani President that we support the peaceful resolution of the Karabakh issue, but if necessary, the Azerbaijani army will liberate the occupied lands by force. The more or less real, "furious" discussions on the Karabakh settlement are carried out by small marginalized groups of "pacifists" and nationalists. And



such discussions are organized extremely rarely and are held in small rooms. Their results are not covered in the media and become known only to a very limited audience.

In my opinion, another topic of interest in the discussions on the Karabakh settlement in both societies (as a rule, their opposition and democratic parts) is the issue of the relations between the democratic reforms in the two countries and the resolution of the Karabakh issue. This discussion is based on the thesis that only authoritarian regimes do not want and cannot make real compromises, but in a democratic society, under a democratically elected government that is based on the will of the people, real changes in the negotiation process are possible. Naturally, the authorities accepted this thesis with hostility. Pro-revolutionary deputies began to accuse those who promoted this idea of betraying national interests. The counterargument presented itself by the fact that the bloodiest battles were fought under democratically elected presidents, and a ceasefire was maintained under the so-called authoritarian authorities.

In the author's opinion, this thesis has a right to exist, but it has some flaws. In both societies, democratic movements are rather weak and are more of a national-democratic nature, which allows the authorities to manipulate the sentiments in the society.

At the same time, it should be noted that practically all the discussions in Azerbaijan deal with only the first part of the Karabakh settlement, that is, the liberation of the occupied territories, whereas the society has a lot of questions about what will happen afterwards.

In my opinion, it is necessary to conduct discussions in the societies about:

- the fate of the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh and its integration in the Azerbaijani society (and, in general, are both societies ready for such an integration?);
- the future of the internally displaced persons (Azerbaijani refugees from Karabakh) and their willingness to return to their homeland in the absence of any infrastructure and jobs;
- the benefits of establishing joint regional security;
- the future of the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations (in the political, economic, diplomatic, transport, cultural, tourism and other realms).

And if at first glance the topics of such discussions looks ridiculous, the answers to many of the above-mentioned questions would demonstrate to the other side the extent to which the society ready or not ready to accept the idea of peaceful coexistence... the latter looks more realistic today.

### ***Who Is Interested in Whom?***

Today, unfortunately, it should be noted that societies are not ready for a discussion about peaceful coexistence and, accordingly, are not in a position to demand the same from the authorities. First of all, this is due to incorrect information about each other, or rather, misinformation. The level of conflicting societies' interest in information about each other is

extremely high. Societies are very interested in receiving any information about the other party and are ready to absorb it, like a sponge. Unfortunately, this level of interest has become a tool for manipulations. In my opinion, it was the media that began to play a destructive role in informing the societies. Televisions, newspapers and online publications are searching for negative information about Azerbaijanis and Armenians around the world and are pouring it onto the heads of their fellow citizens. In sports, the result is not important, it is important that "our" athlete is at least a step higher than "theirs". The same thing happens with criminal information (although the criminal world has long been international), culture, history, social processes, urban planning, and so on. A special place is occupied by information from the front line where young children are dying, but in one case these are heroes and may their memory live forever, and in the other case – it served them right. At the same time, we should realize that the media alone cannot be blamed for this.

Journalists are also members of our societies and meet our needs. Any attempt to give relatively objective information immediately encounters rejection and accusation of betrayal of national interests. This process has been going on for many decades, which has led to a certain selection of people engaged in activities to inform the societies. There is a so-called "natural selection". At least, the "internal censor" begins to work, as I have already described above. In my opinion, it is necessary to undertake a deep socio-psychological restructuring of the society and its needs. It is necessary to abolish the notion of "the image of the enemy", but this requires at least a social mandate granted by the society itself, and in the ideal scenario it takes the political will of the authorities. Unfortunately, I do not know how to achieve this, what mechanisms and tools to use. Probably, it is necessary to study and implement the coexistence practices of Armenian and Azerbaijani societies outside their historical homelands. After all, outside their countries, they contact, cooperate, work together, cut corners, often make friends, sometimes even fall in love and create families, which, in its turn, is very painfully and negatively perceived in the homelands.

The fact that with the development of communication technologies such contacts are becoming more and more gives some hope. The young generation that gives preference to virtual communication (regardless of all its negative impact on communicative functions in real life) uses social networks to communicate quite widely. Already today social networks play a huge role in shaping the worldview of the societies, and they will play an even larger role in the future.

In the West, they seriously consider and even investigate the impact of social networks on such important political processes as the presidential elections in the United States, Brexit and the unsuccessful separation of Catalonia. If this influence has been used in such well-structured societies, the extent to which it can be a positively effective or destructive tool in shaping the discourse of peace and war in such small societies as ours becomes obvious. Today the main processes in social networks are still spontaneous, but we cannot rule out that a process that is being managed has already started. In my opinion, among positive examples it is possible to cite the recent events in Armenia, which can be called a "Facebook-based revolution". And although these events are not directly related to the discourse of peace and war, but sooner or later political changes in Armenia will lead to

changes in the discourse in both societies. Time will tell who will use the influence of the social networks to shape the public outlook of societies. One thing is clear that the political elites and active representatives of the societies should not leave these processes without attention and should try to influence them.