

CENTER OF ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
BEYNÖLXALQ MÖNASİBƏTLƏRİN TƏHLİLİ MƏRKƏZİ

# BULLETIN

HIGHLIGHT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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## **I. Zangazur corridor will strengthen regional cooperation and reconnect the Turkic world**

On March 31, an informal Summit of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council) was held in a video conference format. Referring to a transport corridor that will pass through Zangazur and link mainland Azerbaijan to its Nakhchivan exclave and further to Turkey, President Ilham Aliyev underscored the importance of this corridor in reconnecting the once separated Turkic world. The opening of the corridor is part of the peace deal signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia with Moscow's mediation on 10 November 2020 that ended the 44-day Karabakh war. "The war is over, and the conflict belongs to history. New opportunities have emerged. I think the most critical opportunity among these is transportation. We are already working very hard on the Zangazur corridor. At the Summit in Nakhchivan, I said that the decision to separate Zangazur from Azerbaijan and annex it to Armenia led to a geographical divide of the Turkic world. If we look at the map, it looks as if a dagger was stuck in our body and the Turkic world was separated. Zangazur, the land of ancient Azerbaijan, will now play the role of uniting the Turkic world because the transportation, communication and infrastructure projects across Zangazur will unite the entire Turkic world and create additional opportunities for other countries, including Armenia, President Ilham Aliyev [noted](#).

The establishment of the Zangazur corridor is one the most important elements of the signed documents between Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia and it serves the interests of all regional countries, including

Armenia. Azerbaijan is fully committed to the creation of this corridor and restoration of transport links as it considers cooperation to be the main tool for creating sustainable peace in the region. The creation of the Zangazur corridor will add a new artery to the transportation network of Eurasia and positively affect the economic and trade relations between the regional countries. Using this corridor Turkey will get a direct land road to Azerbaijan, boosting bilateral economic and tourism relations between the two countries. On the other hand, the Zangazur corridor will also serve as a gateway to Central Asia for Turkey, enabling it to strengthen its economic relations with the Turkic World. Turkey is also working on a new project to connect Nakhchivan to Turkey through the Kars-Nakhchivan railway. In the next stage, the linkage of this railway to the Zangazur Corridor will give another impetus to the bilateral trade relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey. For Russia, this corridor could become the main route for the transportation of goods to the South Caucasus and surrounding countries. Russian trains could reach the Zangazur corridor through the territory of Azerbaijan and then be directed to Armenia, Turkey, Iran and Southern Asian countries. Along with positively affecting the trade relations with Turkey, this corridor will also provide an alternative route for Russia to reach the markets of the Middle East through the territory of Turkey. Besides, this corridor has special importance for Russia in terms of getting a direct land route to Armenia, one of its main allies in the region. The Zangazur corridor and unblocking of all economic communications will also increase the attractiveness of the region for foreign investors. Despite the implementation of

several important energy and transport projects in the South Caucasus for many years, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict has negatively affected the business environment and left Armenia isolated from the regional projects. Now, as the conflict ended, regional countries have the opportunity for the full use of the economic potential of the region, to attract additional investments to different project implementations, which was not possible due to the conflict.

Armenia also recognizes the benefits of cooperation within regional transportation and other communication projects. Through this corridor, Armenia will have a railway link with its ally Russia and with neighboring Iran. At the same time, this route will connect Azerbaijan to Turkey and Central Asia to Europe. On 15 February, President Ilham Aliyev inaugurated the construction of the 100-km Horadiz-Aghbend railway that would go along the Azerbaijani-Iranian border up to the Armenian border and would be part of the rail link connecting mainland Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan via the Zangazur corridor through Armenia. On March 30, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan chaired a meeting of the Security Council that discussed the unblocking of regional transport communications. Opening the meeting, Pashinyan said that Armenia should be able to assess new opportunities in terms of eliminating its regional transport blockade and be ready for cooperation. "The blockade has alienated the Republic of Armenia from the region to some extent. For example, we have only one land route [via Georgia] with our strategic partner [Russia], which is seasonal; it largely depends on the weather conditions, which in turn brings many challenges, including in terms of

security. In this new situation, we must be able to assess the opportunities that exist in terms of lifting the blockade of Armenia" adding that "we must be able to make decisions that will ensure the long-term sustainable development of the Republic of Armenia, and in a sense, the long-term sustainable development of the region is also within our area of responsibility". In this context, the January 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the deputy prime ministers of Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia in Moscow is a positive signal towards this goal. It became the first trilateral meeting to discuss future peace in the region. The sides agreed to establish expert subgroups to deal with the provision of transport, including security, border, customs, sanitary, veterinary, and other types of control relating to rail, road, and combined transport.

At the same time, despite these positive dynamics, there are still significant challenges and obstacles in implementing all clauses of the November 10<sup>th</sup> agreement. As Orkhan Baghirov, a leading advisor at the Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center), [has put it](#), "Armenia could benefit from the mentioned advantages of the Zangazur corridor only if it chooses to prefer regional cooperation over the aggressive policy against its neighbors that it has been implementing for almost three decades". If Armenia wants to end its economic isolation and get economic development opportunities, the only way forward is to join regional cooperation. Otherwise, the same economic situation accompanied by high unemployment, emigration and poverty will remain in Armenia, eliminating its long-term economic development perspectives.

Unfortunately, there are worrying signs

showing that peace is still not something Armenia strives for in relations with Azerbaijan. While Azerbaijan handed over of 1400 bodies of Armenian servicemen, Armenia in exchange returned only around 100 bodies of Azerbaijani servicemen. While Azerbaijan released Maral Najaryan – a Lebanese citizen, who entered Azerbaijani territory illegally and subsequently detained in Karabakh – facilitated humanitarian aid to the Armenian community of Karabakh, permitted Armenians to visit the Khudavang Monastery in Kalbajar, and allowed the transportation of Russian natural gas to Armenia via Azerbaijan, Armenia has tried to smuggle Armenian troops to Karabakh via the Lachin corridor and refused to provide maps of minefields. The landmine legacy is a significant challenge in the post-conflict period. The Karabakh region has one of the largest mine contamination problems in the post-Soviet space, and it is very difficult to remove all landmines without maps of the minefields. The Armenian refusal to provide maps of the minefields to Azerbaijan could derail any peace efforts and integration processes.

## **II. Armenia refuses to hand over landmine maps to Azerbaijan**

Armenia is still refusing to provide Azerbaijan with maps on the location of mines set up during its three-decades-long occupation of Karabakh. As a result, Azerbaijani civilians and troops continue to be killed and injured by those explosives. Around 20 Azerbaijani citizens, including civilians, have been killed and more than 70 people have been wounded by mine explosions scattered throughout the territories Armenia occupied since the end

of the war. The liberated territories of Karabakh are among the most mined territories in the world. In his speech during the informal Summit of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic Council on March 31, President Ilham Aliyev [noted](#) that “everything in the liberated lands has been destroyed... Armenians have ravaged our cities, annihilated our historical sites, plowed the cemeteries, knocked down gravestones, and wrecked more than 60 mosques and kept cows and pigs in semi-demolished ones... After the war, many Azerbaijani civilians and servicemen were killed and wounded by landmines. Armenia has not yet presented the maps of minefields to us. That is another war crime. Therefore, demining will take more time. Without completing this work, of course, we will not be able to return our IDPs and refugees to those lands”.

The liberated territories have been considerably mined, especially civilian infrastructure, water canals, crossroads, cemeteries, riverbanks, rural and urban paths. According to Azerbaijan Mine Action Agency (ANAMA), “sometimes more than 10 mines per square meter are found in the mined areas”. Demining and the clearance of the liberated territories of unexploded ordnance and other explosive objects is one of the most pressing issues after the war. “In one of the latest mine explosions that occurred on March 16 in Aghdam region, six civilians suffered, two of them killed,” the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov said at a joint news conference with his Slovak counterpart Ivan Korcok in Baku on March 17, defining this as “the continuation of Armenia’s aggression against Azerbaijan” and calling upon the international community to

pressure Armenia to share the minefield maps. The international humanitarian law is clear about the prohibition of the indiscriminate use of landmines. The fact that Armenia is unwilling to share with Azerbaijan its mine-laying records and maps in order for them to be used to guide demining operations in the liberated territories is a clear war crime that Yerevan continues to commit without any repercussions. Moreover, Yerevan's refusal to abide by the international law and cooperate on this sensitive matter despite ever increasing number of the victims rightfully enrages the Azerbaijani side, further straining the regional situation and hindering the emergence of a co-operative environment between the two countries.

The demining of the entire liberated lands could take more than twenty years and is further complicated by the mountainous nature of Karabakh. Dr Vasif Huseynov, a senior advisor at the Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center), [has noted](#) that the international support that Baku has received helps to accelerate the process but does not solve the issue in the needed timeframe, adding that Yerevan has no sensible alternative but to cooperate in the demining of Karabakh since every mine that kills civilians is also a blow to the peace process. At the same time, as Shahmar Hajiyev, a leading advisor in the Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center) [pointed out](#), a total mine clearance of the liberated lands is critical for sustainable development and the region's revival. It is this process that will affect the settlement of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the region's economic integration process the most. Therefore, Baku is cooperating with the UN

and other international organizations to accelerate demining process. The UN has provided \$2 million to support the emergency humanitarian response in conflict-affected areas of Azerbaijan. With an additional \$1 million from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Crisis Response and the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund, UNDP will provide support to ANAMA to train, equip, and deploy emergency response teams to clear mines and unexploded bombs that pose risks to local communities living in conflict-affected zones.

There is a good foundation to launch a new chapter in relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Economic integration initiatives and unlocking of all transport links as laid out in the November peace agreement could be a powerful tool for achieving sustainable peace and stability in the region. Armenia's refusal to give access to landmine maps is currently one of the biggest obstacles towards regional peace and prosperity. In this context, Armenia providing records showing where landmines have been planted could give an additional boost to the reconciliation process, ease tensions and encourage peaceful coexistence while also addressing humanitarian concerns in the region.

### **III. Azerbaijan Warns Against Armenian provocations that might undermine the peace process**

On March 14, President Ilham Aliyev received the delegation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), led by this year's OSCE chairperson-in-office, Swedish Foreign Minister Ann

Linde. During their meeting, President Ilham Aliyev reiterated his positive assessment of the post-war situation in relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan stating, “We think [the] four months [that] passed after [the second Karabakh] war already demonstrate the will of both sides to turn the page [of enmity] and to concentrate on the future”. Moreover, President Ilham Aliyev also reaffirmed his support for the launch of transportation and communication channels between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as agreed in the November ceasefire statement, adding that this can serve as a “starting point” for opening a new chapter in relations between the two sides, finally “leaving the conflict to history”. On the issue of POWs, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jeyhun Bayramov stated during his meeting with the OSCE Chair-in-Office, Ann Linde that Azerbaijan has already returned all POWs and exchanged bodies, and that those captured in the liberated Azerbaijani territories after the November 10 declaration was signed do not count as POWs, but are terrorists.

Despite the optimistic tone, President Ilham Aliyev and other senior officials continue to repeatedly raise concerns about the threats to the precarious balance established by trilateral accord and to subsequent peace process. One of the elements of the statement that was meant to serve the peace and reconciliation process was concerning the provision of stable communication between the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and Armenia via the so-called “Lachin Corridor” of which security is provided by the Russian peacekeepers. This corridor was supposed to be used for entirely non-military purposes in line with another clause of the trilateral document that committed Armenia to withdraw its

armed forces from the territories of Azerbaijan. According to the document, concurrently with the deployment of Russia’s peacekeeping contingent, Armenian troops were required to withdraw from the region. What happens weeks after the signing of this document and establishment of ceasefire is extremely alarming and undermines all the regional and international initiatives for peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. There are reports from multiple sources about Armenia’s attempts to deploy its armed personnel to the Karabakh region, internationally recognized part of Azerbaijan, through the “Lachin Corridor” in total disregard to both the trilateral statement and international law. This was the concern raised by Jeyhun Bayramov, Azerbaijan’s Foreign Minister, in his letter addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations dated March 1, 2021. “According to the credible information available to the Azerbaijani side, which is also validated by the reports of independent mass media sources, members of armed forces of Armenia, wearing civilian dress, are transferred to the territory of Azerbaijan through the “Lachin Corridor” in civilian trucks, including disguised among the construction cargo, in an attempt to escape the control procedures of the Russian peacekeeping contingent”, Minister of Foreign Affairs Bayramov noted.

The deployment of Armenian armed forces to the Azerbaijani territories is also confirmed by the fact that the parents and relatives of Armenian soldiers who reject the transfer to the territories of another state have publicly come together protesting this illegal practice of the Armenian government. “Armenian servicemen and their relatives have voiced serious allegations of human

rights abuses, in particular torture and inhumane treatment, against the personnel deployed into territories of Azerbaijan”, stated in the Minister of Foreign Affairs Bayramov’s letter to the UN Secretary-General.

The sabotage operations and provocations by the Armenian armed forces are alarming repercussions that would spiral out of control if not properly countered. “It should be recalled that it was the transfer of Armenian conscripts into the territory of Azerbaijan in late November last year that eventually led to serious military tension. Thus, the sabotage group of 62 Armenian servicemen committed a series of attacks on the Azerbaijani military and civilians, causing casualties and injuries, before being detained as a result of an anti-terror operation”, the letter informed the Secretary General in his letter that was circulated as General Assembly of the United Nations (UN GA) and United Nations Security Council (UN SC) document.

The deployment of Armenian armed personnel to the territories of Azerbaijan is a move that drastically challenges the precarious balance established by the trilateral statement and serves as a call for future armed confrontations. This threat is reinforced by the internal domestic quarrels within the Armenian government and the army’s attempts to topple the incumbent government. As Dr Farid Shafiyev, Chairman of the Center for Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center), [pointed out](#), “so far, the modern political discourse in Armenian society and the diaspora has not changed. The nationalist dream of revenge and messages about the “status” of Karabakh, which entail the continuation of the conflict, still prevail in the political discourse”. The

recurring radicalistic and revanchist slogans in Armenian society stating that “Armenia should always be ready for war” has been in line with other provocative behavior from the Armenian side lately: using the Lachin Corridor for military purposes after the November 10 agreement, transferring armed militias into the liberated Azerbaijani territories to carry out acts of sabotage, later demanding the release of those terrorists as prisoner of war (POW), refusal to give Azerbaijan the map of the mined areas in the liberated territories, sending out mixed signals about Armenia’s intent to fulfill the November 10 declaration. Such actions create a sense of insecurity around the already tenuous prospects of peace in the region. These threats and challenges to the post-war peace process are also exacerbated by the Armenian side’s refusal to characterize the Karabakh conflict as “resolved”. The domestic political instability in Armenia and the pressure posed by more hardline political and military forces to the government of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan further strain tensions between Yerevan and Baku, necessitating vigilance and intervention on the part of the international community against destructive trends in the region. As Dr. Esmira Jafarova, a Board Member of the Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center), [pointed out](#), “there were no winners from the thirty-year-long occupation of Azerbaijani territories; however, everyone in the South Caucasus region suffered the dire consequences of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict”. As the last three decades tragically demonstrated, the only way to achieve enduring peace is for all sides of the conflict to accept new security architecture based on the principle of territorial integrity and

mutual respect for international borders— on the basis of which, minority rights can then be developed. There is no alternative to peace in the South Caucasus, and this is why *Pax Caucasia* is the only way forward.

#### **IV. Azerbaijan embraces smart tech solutions to revive liberated Karabakh**

Azerbaijan is planning to adopt innovative approaches with technology, policy, and management to achieve more sustainable growth and development in the liberated territories after the Second Karabakh War. The main goal is to utilize technology integration and smart solutions as the conduit for rebuilding the region. The government also sees smart development as an opportunity to use technology as a boost and catalyst for economic growth in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan plans to use the technology-based approach for the urban planning in Karabakh. The cities and villages in the liberated territories will be re-established based on the “smart city” and “smart village” concepts. “Smart city” solutions will create effective municipality-to-resident interaction, high quality of government services and citizen welfare. The first smart village will be built in the Aghali village of the Zangilan region. It is planned to build 200 houses in the village and the energy supply of the village will be provided by only alternative energy sources. One of the main goals of Azerbaijan in the restoration process is to provide energy security to the liberated territories and create a “Green Energy Zone”. Thus, priority will be given to the use of renewable energy sources. It is estimated that liberated territories have more than 4,000 Mw of solar

and up to 500 Mw of wind energy potential. The process of establishing a green energy zone has already started and the Energy Ministry of Azerbaijan had meetings with international financial institutions. At the meetings, the organization of renewable energy auctions and the possibility of attracting private investments were discussed. Along with discussions of green energy projects, other energy projects have already started. Currently, two power lines are being laid to Shusha. The “Azerishiq in Karabakh” project is being implemented to provide electricity to government buildings. Works are also underway for the restoration of hydroelectric power plants (HPP) that were destroyed by the Armenian occupants. The 8-megawatt Gulabird HPP in Lachin region has already been put into operation. Restoration and reconstruction of two hydroelectric power plants in Sugovushan, Khudaferin and Qiz Qalasi HPPs in Jabrayil and Shukurbayli HPP in Fuzuli are also underway.

The three-decade-long occupation have resulted in massive destruction in Karabakh. Armenia has almost completely destroyed the existing infrastructure in the occupied territories, razing most of the cities and villages to the ground. Agdam faced the most extreme destruction and was dubbed the “Hiroshima of the Caucasus.” According to the UN estimates, the total economic damage of the occupation was around \$53.5 billion. According to the Military Prosecutor’s Office of Azerbaijan, if all the material and environmental destruction is taken into account, the total damage that Azerbaijan is faced with is about \$819 billion. With the end of the occupation, Azerbaijan now aims to fully revive the liberated territories. Despite the fact that the scale of

the devastation makes the economic recovery process complex and time-consuming, Azerbaijan wants to transform the liberated territories into areas of high-tech development. Thus, immediately after the war, the plan for socio-economic development of the liberated territories was prepared and the reconstruction process has started. For the efficient organization of the recovery process “Coordination Headquarters” and 17 working groups on different areas were established. Initially, \$2.2 billion is planned to be allocated in the 2021 budget for the restoration process. These funds will be used for the formation of infrastructure and ensuring the availability of utilities. At the next stage, priority will be given to private and foreign investments. The first steps taken in the restoration process were the construction of roads and highways. The first transport project, which was launched during the war was the reconstruction of roads connecting Tartar city with Sugovushan and Talish villages in the North-East direction of Karabakh. The total length of highways is 28.5 km and the first stage of reconstruction of these highways has already been completed. At the next stage, it is also planned to restore the roads from Naftalan City to the Talysh village with a length of 22 km. The other important transport project is the Ahmadbeyli-Fuzuli-Shusha highway, which is 101.5 km in length and reduces the distance from the capital Baku to Shusha to about 363 km. Initially, \$29.4 million were allocated for the construction and these highways are expected to be completed by late 2021 or 2022. The final part of this road which connects Fuzuli and Shusha has a symbolic meaning for Azerbaijan as the road passes from the territory that was used by the

Azerbaijani soldiers to liberate Shusha city, the cultural center of Azerbaijan. Therefore, President Ilham Aliyev named it “The Road to Victory.” Along with the Ahmadbeyli-Fuzuli-Shusha highway in the southern part of Karabakh, Azerbaijan plans to construct the Horadiz-Zangilan-Qubadli-Lachin road. It is also planned to connect Horadiz with Fuzuli and Shusha by railway. Currently, this project is in its planning stage and the construction of this railway is expected to start in 2021. Other railway projects include the Barda-Aghdam railroad which is part of the Yevlakh-Khankendi railway (104 km). The construction of a 45-kilometer section from Barda to Agdam has already started and initially, \$2.94 million has been allocated. The Horadiz-Agband railway will also be restored. This road is one of the main components of the Zangazur corridor. In the northern part of Karabakh, Azerbaijan works on the Toganalı-Kalbazar highway project. With an approximate length of 190 km, this highway will get through the Murovdag mountain range and will be extended to the Istisu resort area. At some points, the altitude of the highway will reach 3500 meters. Therefore, it is planned to build several tunnels with a total length of 10-12 km in order to avoid possible transportation difficulties in the winter. This highway will be also extended to the Lachin district. All the mentioned transport projects will create the necessary infrastructure to reach Kalbajar and Lachin regions both from northern and southern directions.

Along with highways and railways, the Azerbaijani government also plans to build three airports in the liberated territories. The first airport project is the Fuzuli International Airport, the foundation of which was laid on January 14. The runway of

the airport is 2,800 meters long and it is going to be commissioned this year. The new airport will facilitate the travel of foreign visitors and tourists to the liberated territories, especially to Shusha. Fuzuli-Shusha highway will be connected to the Fuzuli airport, which will make it easier for foreign visitors to travel to Shusha. It is also planned to build other airports in Lachin and Zangilan districts.

Establishing a green energy zone and smart villages will create substantial opportunities for sustainable economic growth. Reconstruction of transport networks and establishment of airports in the liberated territories will boost trade relations and will create a favorable environment for the full usage of tourism opportunities. As a result, Azerbaijan will be able to use lost opportunities and resources and bring the share of liberated territories in the economy to pre-occupation levels. Economic development in turn will contribute to the maintenance of sustainable peace and open prospects for future reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

#### **V. Azerbaijan pushes forward with coronavirus vaccination drive despite the COVAX letdown**

Azerbaijan has criticized the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX) for not providing the country with Covid-19 vaccines. Azerbaijan was one of the first 50 countries to join the WHO-led COVAX platform aimed at ensuring the fair and equitable distribution of Covid-19 vaccines to every country. However, recently Azerbaijan was informed by the COVAX platform that in the near future they will not be able to provide Azerbaijan with vaccines.

“The promise to provide Azerbaijan with the appropriate vaccine within the framework of the COVAX initiative has not been fulfilled to date,” spokesperson for the State Agency for Compulsory Medical Insurance of Azerbaijan said in March. It was expected that Azerbaijan would get two million doses of a Covid-19 vaccine as part of the COVAX campaign, but was later revealed that Azerbaijan was not included in the list of 18 countries that would be provided with Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines by COVAX. Such an attitude towards Azerbaijan is not only wrong, but also run counter to COVAX’s objectives.

Despite the apparent failure of the COVAX platform at this stage, Azerbaijan is swiftly moving forward with its vaccination campaign. As of March 29, 536871 people, or 5 percent of the country’s population, have already been vaccinated. Azerbaijan purchased 4 million doses of the Chinese CoronaVAC vaccine for its vaccination rollout. Two million people is expected to be vaccinated with CoronaVac. Moreover, Azerbaijan will get 432000 doses of AstraZeneca and 300000 doses of Sputnik V vaccines as well.

President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly underscored the significance of the joint fight of the countries of the world against the coronavirus pandemic and close cooperation in this area. Ever since its early days, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a true test of multilateralism, exposing the cracks and weaknesses within the international system. Throughout its development, certain aspects of the pandemic have been politicized, with some countries putting their nationalistic agendas above the collective health of the international community. Among the

unfortunate tendencies ignited by the pandemic, the most recent and the most pressing one today is what has been referred to as “vaccine nationalism”. Global vaccine distribution has been neither fair nor equal, with even developed countries quarrelling amongst themselves about the distribution of vaccines. In February, President Ilham Aliyev pointed out the unjust and unequal access to vaccines. While developed countries account for 14 percent of the world's population, they have booked 53 percent of the world's supply of vaccines, President Aliyev said, adding that more than 95 percent of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines have been ordered by rich countries. “But what should the citizens of poor countries do? Get sick? When they get sick, they are more likely to die because the health care system in such countries is by far worse than that of developed countries. Therefore, we must talk about these issues and not hush them up,” President Ilham Aliyev said.

From a moral point of view, vaccine nationalism is not only causing the pandemic to last, but it also has the potential of leading to preventable deaths of the most vulnerable populations in developing countries. Vaccinating those at low risks in countries without or before vaccinating those at high risk is inevitably causing preventable deaths. As the incumbent chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the largest international organization after the United Nations, Azerbaijan holds not just a moral but an official responsibility to advocate for equal vaccine distribution. Azerbaijan has provided humanitarian assistance to more than 30 countries in the fight against COVID-19 and donated \$10 million to the World Health Organization. Since the beginning of

the pandemic, Azerbaijan has decided to take a NAM-wise coordinated approach towards this crisis and has chosen a multilateralist approach with initiatives like the online Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) called “United Against COVID-19” held under Azerbaijani chairmanship in May 2020. Delivering a statement on behalf of 120 Member States of the NAM at a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in Response to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic in December of 2020, President Ilham Aliyev stated that “NAM stresses the importance of affordable, unhindered and equitable access by all countries to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment, which should constitute an integral part of a coordinated and effective global response to COVID-19”. On March 23, 2021, within the framework of the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council, on the initiative of Azerbaijan as the chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, a resolution was adopted entitled “Ensuring equal, affordable, timely and universal access to vaccines against COVID-19”. The resolution calls on UN Member States and other relevant bodies (international organizations, private sector representatives, civil society members, etc.) to take appropriate measures to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are distributed fairly among all states. The resolution, which expresses support for international initiatives created to support equitable distribution of vaccines, including the COVAX initiative, calls on all states to remove unnecessary barriers on the export of vaccines to other countries.

Referring to the row between the European Union and the United Kingdom about vaccine distribution during an interview to

national television, President Aliyev stated “If developed countries can’t share these vaccines fairly and make mutual accusations, then what should other countries do? Who will help poor countries, those living in developing countries? Doesn’t anyone think about that? I have not heard such calls from the leaders of developed countries so far.”

To quote World Health Organization (WHO) director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, “Vaccine equity is not just the right thing to do, it’s also the smart thing to do”. A study commissioned by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Research Foundation discovered that vaccine nationalism could cause the global economy up to US\$ 9.2 trillion, with half of that amount falling on advanced economies. According to the study, states are economically better off if they invest in the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT Accelerator), a “groundbreaking global collaboration to accelerate development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines”. Investing US\$27.2 billion in the ACT Accelerator (the currently existing funding gap of the collaboration) is expected to return 166 times the investment. The study also demonstrated that those economies with high degrees of international exposure will suffer the most. Therefore, it is the advanced economies with international linkages that have much to lose; global vaccine distribution will advantage them.

At the same time, the longer the virus cannot be suppressed, the higher are the chances of it mutating, as already witnessed with the UK, South African and Brazilian variants of the virus, which also makes it possible for the variants to evade the vaccines. With claims that mass COVID-19 immunization in poor

countries will be achieved only by 2024, new variants are bound to emerge, threatening the progress towards stabilization. Unless international collaboration is strengthened in the vaccination program, the virus will continue to circulate, mutate, cause more preventable deaths and reduce global economic output. Considering this, it is less costly to join the initiative of fair vaccine distribution and follow the motto of “No one is safe, until everyone is”. Sticking to vaccine nationalism and rejecting a globalized approach to this global problem will make it much longer for the world to get back to what used to be normal. Vaccine equity is not only a question of morality but one of ensuring the fastest road to recovery.

#### **VI. Participation of foreign fighters in Armenian military offensives during the Second Karabakh War**

The involvement of military personnel in the fighting on the side of Armenia during the Second Karabakh War went beyond Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia itself. There is [ample evidence](#) that foreign fighters (citizens of France, Russia, and Georgia) as well as mercenaries were deployed by the Armenian side. Azerbaijan has launched criminal cases against mercenaries and members of PKK-PYD-YPG terrorist organizations, as well as foreign fighters such as two Lebanese citizens of Armenian origin, Khagop Terziyan and Khagop Khzhiryan. Armenian diaspora organizations played a critical role in the Second Karabakh War, contributing manpower and financing to Armenian army. Armenian organizations all over the world circulated ads for the recruitment of military

forces, and one such organization named VoMA (short for Armenian “Ողջ Մնալ ու Արվեստ” – “the art of staying alive”), operating in Yerevan, launched accelerated military training courses with the aim of establishing a mountain rifle battalion under the command of the Ministry of Defense of Armenia. As foreign combatants recruited for the purpose of “undermining the territorial integrity of a State” fall under the definition of “mercenaries”, deployment of these fighter is considered a violation by the Armenian side of the international laws of war under the Article 47 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Articles 1 and 5 of the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries of 1989. According to several media agencies, an indeterminate number of French citizens joined the military operations against Azerbaijan, among them a French Armenian by the name of Artur Oganisyan, who, in his interview to Russian outlet “Новая газета” mentioned that he and his two brothers arrived in Armenia, received automatic assault rifles without providing any identification or requiring any permissions, and were swiftly added to the army. Such cases were also highlighted by the “France24” news agency, which published video materials validating the stories of a number of volunteers heading to Armenia to join military action, among them a veteran referred to as “Vardan” and a 28-year-old French citizen Sipan Muradyan. Information on Marc de Cacqueray-Valmenier, French citizen participating in military training by the Armenian military forces was disseminated by “Libération” news agency. A photograph published on social media by Marc de Cacqueray-

Valmenier, a notorious neo-Nazi and the leader of the far-right group Zouaves Paris (ZVP), verified his presence in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

The Armenian diaspora organizations widely disseminated the calls to join military operations among their members. Among those who joined the military trainings were citizens of Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, France, Greece, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine and the U.S. For instance, despite the fact that the Article 208(2) of the Criminal Code of Russian Federation prohibits the participation of its citizens in an armed force that is not ordained by a federal law, and states that such actions may carry up to five years in prison, the head of the “Armenian Union of Russia” (“Союз армян России”) Ara Abramyan on 28th of September 2020 announced that 20 thousand Russian Armenians were eager to fight for the Armenian separatist regime in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. As a result, on September 29<sup>th</sup>, members of Armenian diaspora in Russia, including a few representatives of the ARF Dashnaksutyun party, traveled from Sochi to Yerevan with the aim of joining military operations as volunteers. Similar cases took place in several European states: according to the “Sputnik Hellas” news agency, at least 30-35 Greek Armenians, as well as 10-15 ethnic Greeks departed for Armenia to join the military actions against Turkish armed forces. A similar case was covered by the Spanish “El Confidencial” news agency. Additionally, an information leak revealed that members of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) from Syria and Iraq, as well as 1,500 Kurdish mercenaries joined the

Armenian military.

## **VII. The outcome of the Second Karabakh War for Armenia**

In March, the Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center) [published](#) a comprehensive report detailing military and economic consequences of the recent war for Armenia. According to the report, the Second Karabakh War had massive military, demographic and economic fallout for Armenia that will take decades to recover from. The biggest impact of the latest war on Armenia, where the population is decreasing every year, will surely be demographic. A country with a population of just 2.9 million and a fertility rate of 1.7 is a disappearing country. Along with the low fertility and migration, the decades-long war with Azerbaijan is the critical element here that also has serious implications for demographics. Against the background of the lost war in Karabakh, the economic downturn and political chaos in Armenia have intensified the question of mass emigration. Although the birth rate in Armenia in 2020 increased by 0.9 percent compared with 2019, during the same period, the death rate in the country recorded an increase of 35 percent, despite the fact that not all those killed during the Karabakh War are included in these statistics. In other words, the natural population growth was 1077 people. Now, it is expected that, following the war, the number of Armenians leaving the country will increase as soon as global borders reopen.

The financial cost of the war to Armenia is almost equal to Armenia's total military expenditure for the last ten years. It will take

many years for Armenia to rebuild its army. Because of the war, Armenia also lost access to the natural resources situated in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and exploited by Armenia for about thirty years. Those resources played an important role in the provision of food and energy security in Armenia. Now, Armenia has to increase its imports of energy and food products in order to substitute lost resources from the previously occupied territories. Moreover, the war also significantly affected the fiscal sector of Armenia and deepened its financial crisis. During the war, Armenia had to make changes to its budget because of the increasing military and social costs. Increased budget expenditures, in turn, necessitated the attraction of foreign finance, which created additional financial security problems for Armenia. As a result of budget changes in 2020, budget income decreased about \$590 million (17.5 percent) and the budget deficit increased by about three times. The high level of the budget deficit, in turn, created substantial financial security problems for Armenia. In order to serve the high budget deficit and solve its financial problems, Armenia had to incur foreign debt. Despite the fact that the rising level of public debt is one of the main economic problems in Armenia, it did not have any other choice than attracting financial resources from other countries or institutions. Doing so resulted in the continuation of an increasing level of public debt in Armenia. According to official data from the Armenian government, in 2020, the total public debt of Armenia increased by about \$1.37 billion (18.5 percent), amounting to \$8.74 billion at the end of the year. High public debt, in turn, worsened the economic situation in Armenia, threatening

the financial security of the country. As a result, the Debt-to-GDP ratio of Armenia has reached a dangerous level and is expected to increase in the coming years. After the second amendment to the state budget, the Armenian government predicted that Debt-to-GDP ratio would reach nearly 67 percent, passing the 60 percent threshold. However, as the recorded decline of GDP was greater than the predictions of the government, by the end of the year the Debt-to-GDP ratio of Armenia had reached 69 percent. Owing to existing economic problems, it is expected that this ratio will reach even higher levels in 2021 and subsequent years. Because of these financial problems, Armenia cannot achieve the approved state budget projections for 2021. Thus, government members are actively discussing decreasing budget expenditures in public institutions and in the military sector.

Along with the fiscal sector, economic problems have also put pressure on the national currency of Armenia. As the negative economic effects of the war began to be felt after the end of the war, the depreciation of the dram accelerated, and this has pushed the Armenian government to use its currency reserves to stabilize the dram. From November 13, 2020 to March 15, 2021, the dram fell by about 6.3 percent. More broadly, from the beginning of the war up to March 2021, the dram depreciated by about 8.6 percent. As pandemic-related restrictions are still effective in Armenia and other countries, this moderates the outflow of foreign currency from the country. This, in turn, prevents the rapid depreciation of the currency. Therefore, the dram is expected to continue to fall even in the post-pandemic period. In order to maintain the stability of the currency, the Armenian government has

to use its limited foreign exchange reserves, which also creates financial problems for the country.

Armenia's defeat in the war resulted in its army suffering the loss of most of its military equipment and combat capabilities. In the war, the Armenian army lost military hardware and equipment costing hundreds of millions of dollars. It is estimated that the value of Armenian military equipment destroyed or taken as trophies by the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan during the war is about \$3.8 billion. In the last 10 years, the annual military expenditure of Armenia approximately doubled, from \$357 million to \$716 million. Despite the fact that the annual level of military expenditure of Armenia cannot be considered high compared with countries that spend a considerable amount of money on militarization, for a small country such as Armenia with limited economic resources, this is a huge financial expense. In the past decade, the share of the military expenditure of Armenia in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was about 4 percent and reached almost 5 percent in 2019. That figure is even greater than those of countries such as the U.S.A. (3.4 percent) and Russia (3.9 percent) that dedicate substantial financial resources to militarization. The total military expenditure of Armenia in the most recent ten years was \$4.9 billion. Thus, the value of military equipment lost by Armenia in the Second Karabakh War constitutes more than 77 percent of the total military spend in the past ten years. If the other losses of Armenia are also taken into account, such as military personnel (officially about 4000) and war-related economic damage, we see that in the Second Karabakh War Armenia was deprived

of the greater part of its military capabilities that had been accumulated over a period of ten years. Therefore, given its existing economic and financial problems, Armenia will need several decades to recover its military potential.

Taking into account all of its economic and financial problems, the Armenian government plans to cut military expenditure, as envisaged in the 2021 state budget. Meetings among government members and the defense ministry were held for planning military cuts. Despite the fact that there are disagreements in the Ministry of Defense over decreasing the military budget, the Armenian government does not have any other choice. Utilization of a substantial part of its limited financial resources for military purposes would leave other economic problems unresolved. This, in turn, could further increase the already growing social tensions because of the war. Considering the impossibility of restoring the army in a short time, the Armenian government is currently focusing more on the economic and social problems.

Armenia is faced with economic damage not only because of its military losses, but also because of the loss of various natural resources in the territories that were under its occupation for about 30 years. During the occupation, Armenia exploited all energy, mineral, and agricultural resources in the occupied territories. These resources played an important role in the energy, food, and financial security of Armenia. Now, as Azerbaijan has liberated its territories, Armenia is deprived of those resources, which creates additional economic problems for Armenia. To replace the lost resources, Armenia needs to import them from other countries, which will increase the financial

burden on the country.

In the last ten years, the average annual amount of the money spent for military purposes in Armenia was about \$490 million. With spending at this average value, to recover the \$3.8 billion in damage that Armenia experienced in the war will need at least eight years. However, Armenia cannot mobilize all of its financial resources for the recovery of its military capabilities. Because of the pandemic and the war, Armenia is faced with serious economic and social problems. In order to solve these problems and head off rising social discontent in the country, the Armenian government also needs to allocate financial resources for economic development. Thus, with the existence of economic and financial problems, Armenia will need many years to rebuild its army.

The liberation of the occupied territories by Azerbaijan has created problems for the energy security of Armenia. As those territories have huge water resources, many hydroelectric power stations were built there during the period of occupation. The electricity produced in those stations met the energy demands of the Armenians living in the occupied territories and surplus electricity was exported to Armenia in both spring and summer. In recent years, electricity imported from the occupied territories made up about 7 percent of the electricity supply in Armenia. However, as a result of the war, 30 hydroelectric power stations out of the 36 that existed in the occupied territories came under the control of Azerbaijan. This led to the loss of 60 percent of the electricity production capacity for Armenians in the previously occupied territories. In 2020, Armenia planned to import about 330 million kWh of

electricity from the occupied territories. However, owing to the war, only a fraction of the planned volume was delivered and this created an electricity shortage in Armenia. It is also worth mentioning that Armenia now not only has to import electricity from abroad, but also should export electricity to support the Armenian population left in the previously occupied territories.

Because of the war, Armenia also lost the large agricultural lands of Azerbaijan that it exploited over the last thirty years and which played a crucial role in the provision of food security. As a result of the war, Azerbaijan has liberated more than 90000 hectares of arable land used for grain production. This means that Armenia has lost about 90 percent of arable land in the previously occupied territories. Those territories were producing 150000 tons of various grain crops annually, of which 100000 tons were exported to Armenia. As the total demand for grain products in Armenia is about 450000 tons, the grain products imported

from the occupied territories provided about 20–25 percent of the country's total demand. Therefore, the Second Karabakh War has noticeably affected the agriculture sector and food security of Armenia. As with the energy sector, because of the lost agricultural resources, Armenia must substantially increase grain imports in order to meet the needs of its population.

All the economic damage and financial problems that Armenia is facing indicate that, for the restoration of the army and establishment of a sustainable economy, Armenia needs many years and a huge amount of financial resources. In the current situation, the only way for Armenia to achieve economic development and restoration is to abandon its aggressive policy against its neighbors and join regional initiatives. By supporting regional cooperation, Armenia could get support from its neighbors and become part of regional projects.