

# The Conflict of Nagorno Karabakh: A Leverage of Power or a Defined Problem Requiring A Solution?



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Presidential elections are approaching both in Armenia and Azerbaijan. While referring to 2008, politicians never tire to add the attribute “election year”. It is a fact that the outcomes of these elections will define future developments in all of the spheres of social life. Conflict is perhaps the only one where the final destination, i.e. the final regulation of the conflict, is such a vital necessity that it seems that regardless of the election results, the resolution of the conflict should still remain the crucial milestone of the vision of any newly elected authority. Is it really so?

## The conflict caught up in the whirlpool of state, political and public relations

Nagorno Karabakh conflict can be viewed within three dimensions:

1. State
2. Political
3. Public relations

While regarding the conflict on the state level, one should try to answer one basic question: does this conflict and potential solutions derive from the goal of preserving the power, or from the national interests? It is already more, than ten years that the conflicting states make efforts, whether genuine, or formal, to build democracy. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan still lack an institute and culture of power shift. In both countries the authorities’ instinct of self-reproduction has been much stronger, than the commitment to democratic ideology, which can be considered a characteristic of the national interest at least in Armenia. What will the year 2008 have to say?

On the political level the Nagorno Karabakh conflict still remains a subject of manipulation. In the conflicting countries political platforms and ideologies are directly constructed on predictions regarding possible reactions of the constituencies to the conflict and its possible solutions, and when the majority of these constituencies still suffer from the wounds of the war, forecasting is not a difficult task...

While describing the public relations, one can name every single event which brings Armenians and Azerbaijanis together, since their number is very few. These relations are usually restricted to conferences and meetings held in a third country, where, as a rule, everybody knows everybody else. The frequency of personal interactions gradually silences out the existence of acute problems, whereas we all know they do not vanish. Therefore, while keeping to the usual formats, it has already become an urgency to initiate new ones. The conflict has sharp teeth and securing quantitative and qualitative diversity of contacts between the conflicting parties, it will perhaps become possible to contribute to the development of mutual understanding between the sides.

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## **The answer to be found in the follow-up questions**

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Is it possible for the political will and political ambitions to co-exist? Is it possible to repudiate the image of an enemy? Even if the answer is “yes”, it is not enough, since the positive answer implies failures, defeats, very small victories and perseverance – a consistent and committed effort. Is it possible to leap without learning to creep first?

The quest for the answers to the questions above will lead to the final answer to the question whether the newly elected governments of the two countries will be ready to withstand the temptation of manipulation. If no, the current trends do not promise anything optimistic...



*The paper is elaborated based on the opinions passed by the participants of the discussion “Armenia – Azerbaijan Relations: the Factor of the Pre-elections Year”, which took place on October 12, 2007. The roundtable discussion was attended by independent analysts, government officials, and representatives of the international organizations.*

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