

A glimpse at different aspects of Azeri-Armenian conflicts

Is New War Looming in South Caucasus?



By Zhanna Vardanyan
Int'l affairs expert

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

Azerbaijan has been actively engaged in a propaganda campaign for several weeks, attempting to portray Armenia as preparing for an attack. Typically, in such situations, Baku lays the groundwork for a potential military attack. Furthermore, there is evidence of reservist mobilization in Azerbaijan, and social media is flooded with videos depicting the movements of Azerbaijani armed forces. We discussed the potential Azerbaijani attack on Armenia with two individuals: Tigran Abrahamyan, a military expert and an opposition member of the RA National Assembly, and Armen Petrosyan, an expert specializing in regional affairs.

Tigran Abrahamyan highlights that Baku's information campaign can be interpreted in two ways: as a method of pressuring Armenia to secure concessions or as a precursor to war. "The situation is such that there are factors working in favor of initiating a war, so to speak, and there are factors favoring the avoidance of a war. During this period, it is challenging to unequivocally determine whether we are on the brink of war or if Azerbaijan is attempting to exert influence over Armenia to secure desired concessions by demonstrating its military strength"-says Abrahamyan. He states that currently, it is difficult to ascertain whether a war is imminent or if this is a form of blackmail, a threat, or a looming specter over Armenia. "This uncertainty arises from our past experiences in similar situations, where we encountered diverse circumstances under similar indicators. State institutions, which possess more comprehensive access to information, may have a clear-

er perspective. However, what is observable in the political and informational spheres, as well as on the front lines, still fails to provide a definitive answer regarding the likelihood of war"-adds Abrahamyan. Turning to the question of the potential direction of Azerbaijan's attack, Abrahamyan states that in both scenarios, there are factors that could lead analysts to believe that the conflict might escalate either in Armenia or Artsakh. "For instance, in the case of Armenia, negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan appear to have reached an impasse. In such situations, when diplomatic negotiations stall, the likelihood of military action tends to increase. Regarding Artsakh, it's worth noting the presidential elections that took place on September 9. Azerbaijan has issued stern warnings in recent days in response to these elections and has previously advocated for the dissolution of the government system in Artsakh,"-highlights Abrahamyan.



Tigran Abrahamyan
Military expert

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He believes that these two examples illustrate that the threat could manifest in either direction. "It remains challenging to predict Azerbaijan's current intentions definitively. Nevertheless, it is evident from the public statements of Azerbaijani leadership that they do not rule out the use of force as a means of resolving these issues", states the member of the RA Parliament. The opposition MP firmly believes that to navigate the challenging regional situation, there must be a change of leadership in Armenia. According to Armen Petrosyan Azerbaijan's policy serves as a textbook example of military diplomacy. It employs both the overt threat and potential use of force simultaneously to extract maximum unilateral concessions from its adversaries. "This means that Azerbaijan is actively working to advance its own agenda in relation to Armenia and Artsakh by heightening the likelihood of a new war and establishing the essential political and informational groundwork for such an eventuality. Furthermore, even in times of diplomacy and negotiations, Azerbaijan retains the option of implementing its plans through military

means",- says Petrosyan. He highlights that the possibility of a big war persists, but this potential war is consistently delayed due to ongoing backstage diplomacy operating in parallel. "Various mediators are actively engaged in presenting the Armenian side with a revised plan for implementing Azerbaijan's new demands. Simultaneously, these mediators are employing their limited resources to exert influence on Azerbaijan, with the aim of preventing a new war from erupting. This is the reason why we have seen diplomacy yielding limited results so far, as Azerbaijan continues its extensive campaign of leveraging the threat of force, yet a parallel war has not materialized, but which can break out at any moment"-states Petrosyan. He mentions that Azerbaijan is actively laying the groundwork for potential actions in both Armenia and Artsakh's directions. "In the event of a new war, it's crucial to recognize that the situation extends beyond Armenia and Artsakh alone. Notably, there is a Russian peacekeeping presence in Artsakh, and the potential for a new military operation



An ethnic Armenian soldier looks through binoculars as he stands at fighting positions near the village of Taghavard in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, January 11, 2021. Picture taken January 11, 2021.
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