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Published in:
 Security and Human Rights

DOI:
[10.1163/18750230-02701009](https://doi.org/10.1163/18750230-02701009)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
 Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
 2016

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
 Bayramov, A. (2016). Silencing the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and Challenges of the Four-Day War. *Security and Human Rights*, 27(1-2), 116-127. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18750230-02701009>

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Silencing the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and Challenges of the Four-Day War

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Abstract

The Four-Day War of 2016 once again exposed the danger that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict poses in the Caucasus. However, despite its military scale and human losses, Russia has raised only general statements from other co-chairs of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) Minsk Group, from the United States and France, and from other international actors such as the United Nations Security Council. In an attempt to stimulate debate about this lack of engagement, this paper claims that the external actors involved aim to cast silence over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict beyond the region. While this approach may serve to remove the political impact of the conflict from the international arena, it unwittingly also enhances the aggressiveness of both Armenia and Azerbaijan in the regional arena. The main aim of this paper is, then, to explain why the conflict is being silenced, how this is made possible and what the regional effects of this approach are. By drawing on the Four-Day War of 2016, the paper intends to show how the recent violence has challenged the silencing of external actors.

Keywords

Nagorno Karabakh – Four-Day War – silencing – international actors

Introduction

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which has continued almost 30 years now, is one of the most complicated and longest-running disputes in the post-Soviet territories. The feud involves an array of political,

economic, legal, social and historical factors. In May of 1994, the inter-state conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia was ended by the Bishkek Protocol, which was signed by both countries under the supervision of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group: the Russian Federation, France and the United States. Although military confrontation ceased thereafter, a withdrawal of troops and deployment of peacekeepers never took place, and there was no return of refugees. Thus, peace between the countries has not yet been achieved. Instead, since the signing of the Bishkek-Protocol, the hostility between the two countries has risen significantly, and both countries have increased their military expenditures year on year.¹ In light of this, both countries have tested their militaries from time to time, with strong clashes in 2008 and 2014. The most severe confrontation of all occurred over April 2–5 of 2016, a clash that is also called the Four-Day War. After the fighting ended, both sides published differing and contradictory accounts about its human costs. Meanwhile, some scholars and non-governmental media organizations have argued that the war took the lives of approximately 200 people.²

However, despite the scale and cost of the fighting, the Four-Day War raised only general comments from the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk group (with the exception of Russia), the U.S. and France, and from other international actors such as the United Nations Security Council and the European Union.³ Following the Four-Day War, experts once again emphasized the danger the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict poses in the Caucasus—mainly in research papers, books and blog posts.⁴ One of the explanations most commonly offered for this sudden outbreak of violence concerns the lack of international engagement with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Nevertheless, despite diverse and well-structured explanations, little research has focused on the reasons behind this neglect by the global powers.

In an attempt to stimulate debate about this issue, this paper claims that the external actors involved aim to cast silence over the Nagorno-Karabakh

1 Azernews, “Azerbaijan Ups Military Budget amid Armenian Provocations”, 2015, Retrieved 20 March 2017, <http://www.azernews.az/nation/74010.html>

Armenia, “In 2017, Armenia’s Military Budget Will Increase by 1.7 Billion Drams (about \$ 3.5 million)”, Retrieved 20 March 2017, <http://armediam.am/eng/news/39928/armenia-to-increase-its-military-budget-in-2017.html>.

2 T. de Waal, “The Threat of a Karabakh Conflict in 2017”, Carnegie Europe, 2017, Retrieved 10 March 2017, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/67774>.

3 Given that international newspapers and experts call this war the Four-Day War, I have chosen to use the same terminology in this paper.

4 For more information, see Shriyev (2016, 2017); de Waal (2016, 2017); Cornell (2017); and Broer (2016).

conflict beyond the region. While this approach may serve to remove the political impact of the conflict in the international arena, it unwittingly also enhances the aggressiveness of both Armenia and Azerbaijan in the regional arena. The main aim of this paper is, then, to explain why the conflict is being silenced, how this is possible and what the regional effects of this approach are. By studying the Four-Day War of 2016, the paper intends to determine how the recent violence has challenged the silence of external actors. To this end, I first discuss the main reasons for this severe confrontation and then analyse how and why the silencing of Nagorno-Karabakh is made possible. Challenges to the silencing are discussed and the main findings of the paper are presented in the conclusion.

1 Four-Day War of 2016

In the early hours of 2 April, 2016, following the return of the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents from the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, intense clashes between the Azerbaijani and Armenian armies commenced along the north and south lines of contact. Although Azerbaijani forces initially captured several strategic posts around the villages of Seysulan and Talish (north) and the Lele Tepe heights (south), Azerbaijan was eventually able to hold only the latter post. The heavy clashes continued until 5 April, 2016, when the ceasefire was restored under Russian mediation. The Four-Day War was not the first and almost certainly will not be last such clash in the region. Prior to April of 2016, two serious skirmishes that injured dozens of servicemen occurred in March of 2008 and August of 2014. When compared to previous clashes, the Four-Day War illustrates that the scale of violence has increased gradually on each occasion. Thomas de Waal has gone as far as to argue that “Armenia and Azerbaijan are two or three steps away from a Bosnia-style conflict that could be deleterious for the wider region. Further escalation could destabilize the whole Caucasus region and its energy projects”.⁵

Immediately after the war, the first question to be asked is why this outbreak of violence happened in the first place. It is hard to answer this question because of the many explanations on offer. According to Armenian experts, the situation was escalated by Azerbaijan, as it represented a message to both Armenia and the West that Baku can also use military power to resolve

5 T. de Waal, “Why We Need to Contain the Caucasus Crisis”, 2016, Retrieved 10 March 2017, <http://www.politico.eu/article/why-we-need-to-contain-the-caucasus-crisis-armenia-azerbaijan-conflict-karabakh/>.

problems.⁶ In addition, Mikayel Zolyan argues that Baku intended to distract domestic society from internal socio-economic problems via this escalation and mini-victory. According to Azerbaijani experts, meanwhile, it is irrelevant who initiated the escalation. However, it is likely that, due to military and political changes, Azerbaijan's military offensive had long been planned.⁷ Zaur Shriyev argues that Azerbaijan's military offensive was a response to changes in Armenia's defence strategy, which was moving from a position of "static defence" to one of "deterrence". In practice, this new strategy could lead to significant civilian and military casualties on the Azerbaijani side because of Armenia's military advantage along the lines of contact.⁸ Shriyev contends that, from a political perspective, the linkage between domestic socio-economic factors and escalation would make sense if the violence had happened in January of 2016, because local tensions caused by socio-economic crises were high in December of 2015. In this regard, the Azerbaijani authorities' aim was to gain leverage at the negotiating table. In the meantime, Baku has illustrated that a military solution is also possible in case of diplomatic stalemate.

Despite some overlapping arguments, foreign experts have proposed a host of different reasons for the April 2016 violence. De Waal, for example, proposes two main scenarios: first, it might have been an accidental breach of the cease-fire that escalated the situation, before the intervention of both sides. Second, Azerbaijan intended to change the contexts of the peace negotiations in its favour by launching a small military operation,⁹ evidently because the military balance was tipped more in favour of Azerbaijan in April. Like Shriyev, Svante Cornell claims that military changes on the part of both Azerbaijan and Armenia are among the main reasons for the conflict.¹⁰ In addition to these internal changes, Cornell argues that Russian influence is apparent due to the timing of the escalation, as Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan had just returned home from the Nuclear Security Summit in

6 M. Zolyan, "Understanding the Four-Day War", in *Regional Studies Center*, 2016, no. 10, pp. 1–4.

7 Z. Shriyev, "The Four-Day War: Changing Paradigms in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict", in *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 2017, no. 4, pp. 53–64.

8 Z. Shriyev, *The Four-Day War*, 2017, p. 58.

9 T. de Waal, "Nagorno-Karabakh's Cocktail of Conflict Explodes Again", Carnegie Europe, 2016, Retrieved 10 March 2017, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2016/04/03/nagorno-karabakh-s-cocktail-of-conflict-explodes-again-pub-63220>.

10 S. E. Cornell, "Reversing Escalation: the Local and International Politics of the Conflict", in S. E. Cornell (eds.), *the International Politics of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict*, Palgrave, Washington, 2017, pp. 195–203.

the United States.¹¹ According to Cornell, this event offered an opportunity to improve the bilateral ties between Baku and Washington, which threatened Moscow's decade-long effort to bring Baku into the Russian orbit. However, despite their otherwise differing arguments, both Azerbaijani and Armenian experts reject the idea that direct influence by external actors, such as Russia and Turkey, played a role. In the same vein, de Waal argues that, while Russia has an interest in preserving its strong presence in the region, it cannot afford to risk a new full-scale war breaking out there.

The second question to be asked concerns the outcome of this war. Both sides announced a ceasefire on 5 April, 2016.¹² To ratify this, the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents met in Vienna in May of 2016 in a meeting that was led by then U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, and the current Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov.¹³ The overall results can be divided into external and internal ones. Internally, the Four-Day War ultimately provided Azerbaijan with minimal gains: i.e., some strategic positions towards the north (Lele Tepe). Meanwhile, it also increased the popularity of the government and particularly of the ministry of defence. The success of the Four-Day War also provided a psychological boost to the Azerbaijani army by showing that it is capable of re-taking its lands. In Armenia, meanwhile, the declaration of a ceasefire was followed by public demonstrations against Russian arms sales to Azerbaijan, and three high-ranking Armenian army officials were fired in April of 2016.¹⁴

Externally speaking, Azerbaijan's expectation was that the Four-Day War would revitalize the Minsk Group and increase international engagement with the long-standing conflict, thereby providing Azerbaijan with greater leverage at the negotiating table.¹⁵ However, countries other than Russia—Germany, the United States and France, for example—restricted their responses to vaguely worded statements. In June of 2016, a joint meeting was held in Saint Petersburg between the presidents of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia. It has been claimed that, during this meeting, Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed that Armenia should return two territories and that Azerbaijan should

11 S. E. Cornell, *Reversing Escalation*, pp. 198.

12 *Aljazeera*, "Armenia and Azerbaijan Call Nagorno-Karabakh Ceasefire", Retrieved 18 March 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/crunch-talks-vienna-nagorny-karabakh-fighting-160405081141941.html>.

13 *Radio Free Europe*, "Armenia, Azerbaijan Presidents Meet in Vienna over Nagorno-Karabakh", 2016, Retrieved 12 March 2017.

14 *The Armenian Weekly*, "Hundreds in Yerevan Protest Russian Arms Sales to Azerbaijan", Retrieved 18 March 2017, <http://armenianweekly.com/2016/04/14/anti-russian-protest-yerevan/>.

15 Please see: Z. Shriyev (2017); L. Broer (2016); and T. de Waal (2016).

re-establish transit and economic routs to Armenia in exchange.¹⁶ However, this meeting was overshadowed by the “Sasna Tsrer” revolt in Armenia of July, 2016. One of the objectives of the revolt was to prevent the handing over of territories to Azerbaijan, which shows that the maximalist solution still dominates in Armenian public opinion.¹⁷ Negotiations have remained in a deadlock since then.

Overall, this illustrates that the Four Day War brought some internal benefits but little in the way of external gains. Following the war, one of the most common arguments within existing scholarship has been that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict needs systematic international help to re-activate diplomatic negotiations between the two countries and to thereby prevent further violent clashes in the region. It appears that international actors minimize the attention paid to this long-standing conflict. As things stand, international concern is not strong enough despite all the escalation. In light of this lack of concern, the following section discusses the mechanisms by which the conflict is being silenced.

2 Silencing the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Silence is a complex term, one that is defined and implemented differently by different scholars at different times.¹⁸ Although this paper uses some of the existing definitions to make necessary clarifications, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the conceptual framework of *silence*. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, defines *silence* as “a situation in which somebody refuses to talk about something or to answer question”.¹⁹ According to Sophia Dingli, silence in its strict definition, is the complete absence of voice or sound and a state in which one abstains entirely from speech.²⁰ She argues that the silent issues in global politics are not physically voiceless; rather, they are politically silenced by external actors. In other words, silence implies that the voice of particular states (e.g., Azerbaijan and Armenia) has been eliminated by external

16 Z. Shriyev, *The Four-Day War*, 2017.

17 Public Seminar, “The Armenian Violence Question”, Retrieved 15 March 2017, <http://www.publicseminar.org/2016/12/the-armenian-violence-question/#.WMoKvIXyu7o>.

18 For detailed information, see Dingli (2015); Bhambra and Shilliam (2009); Parpat, (2010); Gendron (2011); Guillaume, (2013); and Ferguson, (2003).

19 *Oxford Dictionary*, Definition of *Silence*, 2017, Retrieved 10 March 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/silence>.

20 S. Dingli, “We Need to Talk about Silence: Re-examining Silence in International Relations Theory”, in *European Journal of International Relations*, 2015, no. 4, pp. 721–742.

actors from the global political process or from discourse.²¹ However, Dingili argues that this does not mean that these problems are forgotten, as silencing is an implicit recognition that certain issues exist. Thus, the exclusion of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from international political discourse does not mean that the conflict has been forgotten. It might instead merely have been politically silenced. But what is the ultimate purpose behind such silencing?

There are several possible purposes to silencing. For example, according to Glenn, silence can be a strategic choice or an enforced position that can determine the “rhetorical success” of someone who remains silent, because success is dependent on the “rhetorical situation”.²² Ferguson argues that “issues that cannot be adequately addressed should not be addressed at all; they are outside the realm of the proper and therefore rightfully languish”.²³ In other words, silencing can be seen as the failure of the West and Russia to respond to a request by Azerbaijan and Armenia. The sociolinguist Wardhaugh, meanwhile, says that silence can be used in response to questions that are difficult to answer.²⁴ In such a situation, silence ultimately facilitates avoidance. An example of such silencing can be found in the four UN Resolutions (822, 853, 874 and 884), that were adopted during 1992 and 1993 to confirm the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and that demanded the immediate withdrawal of occupying forces from the territory of Azerbaijan.²⁵ Despite these resolutions and the calls of Azerbaijan, however, western countries and Russia have preferred to remain silent.

After studying more than 500 negotiations across a representative sample of 27 international organizations and regimes, Panke finds that some states speak up very often (e.g., the U.S., Japan, China, France, Mexico and Switzerland) while others are mostly silent in international negotiations (e.g., Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde).²⁶ There are states that voice their positions only occasionally due to their size, power, and international orientation. Panke concludes that, although speaking up in the international arena is a way for states to highlight their national interests and issues, not all

21 S. Dingili, 2015.

22 C. Glenn, *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004, pp. 54–60.

23 K. Ferguson, “Silence: A Politics”, in *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2003, no. 2, pp. 49–65.

24 R. Wardhaugh, *How Conversation Works*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985.

25 United Nations, *86th Plenary Meeting*, New York, 2008, Retrieved 12 March 2017, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2008/ga10693.doc.htm>.

26 D. Panke, “Speech Is Silver, Silence Is Golden? Examining State Activity in International Negotiations”, in *the Review of International Organizations*, 2017, no. 12, pp. 121–146.

states are equally vocal in the international arena.²⁷ All in all, silence can play a wide variety of roles in international politics: it can be destructive, defensive, evocative or facilitate avoidance.

2.1 *When/How/Why Nagorno-Karabakh*

The silencing of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be divided into two epochs: The first dates from the 1920s up until 1988 under the Soviet Union. The taboos of the first silence were broken by the 1992–1994 inter-state conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The second period starts in 1994 with the Bishkek Protocol and runs to the present day. To address both periods is beyond the scope of this paper: The focus here is only on the second conflict. Since the formation of the OSCE Minsk Group in 1992, both the West and Russia have turned a blind eye and taken a minimalist approach to conflict resolution in Nagorno-Karabakh.²⁸ Except for initiating a few peace proposals, the three mediators and co-chairs of the group—France, Russia and the United States—have not moved beyond “shuttle diplomacy”. Since the late 1990s, meanwhile, international attention given to the conflict has decreased gradually.

Given the responses of both Armenian and Azerbaijani domestic societies to the Four-Day War, it can be argued that one of the main reasons for the silencing is that peace is hard to sell in both countries. Instead of preparing their populations for compromise, both Azerbaijan and Armenia have in fact enhanced feelings of nationalism, aspirations to total victory and maximalist approaches since 1994. Thus, any potential compromise may give the impression of betrayal or loss. An important example of this is the response to the Four-Day War. In Armenia, by the evening of 3 April, thousands of volunteers—including some veterans of the 1990s war who are now in their fifties—had been transported to the line of contact by leading Armenian veteran associations such as Yerkrapah.²⁹ To encourage veteran participation, the Armenian diaspora promised financial support to their families. Later, Armenia experienced one of its largest unrests in the “Sasna Tsrer” hostage crisis, in which a radical armed group composed of veterans of the original conflict seized a police station in Yerevan. One of the objectives of this group was to protest against the possibility of territorial concessions to Azerbaijan. This hostage

²⁷ D. Panke, 2017.

²⁸ The Minsk Group, the activities of which have become known as the Minsk Process, spearheads the OSCE's efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

²⁹ *News itv*, “Seyran Ohanyan Receives April War Volunteers”, Retrieved 12 March 2017, <http://news.itv.am/en/2016/08/10/Seyran-Ohanyan-receives-April-war-volunteers/36086>.

crisis was supported by public demonstrations.³⁰ These events illustrated that the Armenian public is not ready for concession to Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, the Four-Day War led to strong patriotic support and thousands were reported to have volunteered to fight. To show moral and material support and solidarity, spontaneous demonstrations took place across the country, in Ganja and Baku and some smaller towns on 5 and 6 of April. The ceasefire of 5 April led to disappointment among those expecting the liberation of the territories.³¹ This illustrates that patriotism continues to dominate both sides of the divide.

It can be argued that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict does not affect the multi-million dollar investments and aid programmes that the United States, Russia and the EU have with Armenia and Azerbaijan. For example, one of the largest investments is in the southern gas corridor (SGC), which is expected to cost approximately U.S. \$45 billion. In this regard, both the West and Russia are aware that any full-scale escalation in the region will destroy energy pipelines, which are the main source of export-related income for Azerbaijan. This threatening of the construction of billion-dollar pipeline projects (the SGC) and the active involvement of international companies and financial institutions only increases the negative costs of war. Azerbaijan itself knows that full-scale war would halt its energy pipelines and the inflow of international investment. As one Western diplomat in Baku said of the Azerbaijani leadership: "They are oil guys, they are cautious, they do not need a war".³² As such, there is no sense of urgency surrounding increasingly external attention on the historical dispute. The existing status quo satisfies the external actors both in the West and Russia. Thus, continuing peripheral negotiations, even if destined ultimately to be fruitless, appear to be enough to prevent the onset of full-blown violence.

Considering recent global developments like the conflicts in Syria, Crimea and eastern Ukraine, the upcoming presidential elections and the risk of rising populism in Europe, one may argue that the agendas of the external actors are currently pre-occupied with other issues that overshadow the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The three co-chair countries have their own priorities: France is busy with upcoming presidential elections; Russia is working to protect its interests in Syria and Crimea; the new U.S. administration prefers to follow an isolationist foreign policy (e.g., by constructing a wall along the Mexican

30 G. Novikova, "Armenia: Some Features of Internal (In)Stability", in *Caucasus Survey*, 2017, pp. 1–19.

31 *The Guardian*, "Azerbaijan-Armenia Conflict: Patriotism Prevails on Both Sides", 2016, Retrieved 12 March 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/07/azerbaijan-armenia-nagorno-karabakh-patriotism-prevails-on-both-sides>.

32 T. de Waal, *The Caucasus*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010, p. 181.

border) than to involve itself in South Caucasus. Thus, these countries prefer to preserve the current status quo. However, the main danger is that this silence can inflame the conflict: Armenia and Azerbaijan are not blind, and one of them may use these circumstances to gain more leverage.

Finally, regarding the reactions of the external actors to the Four-Day War, it can be argued that it is difficult for both the West and Russia to respond in any other way given the available alternatives to the silence. One option might be to enhance diplomatic negotiations and put pressure on Armenia to implement the four aforementioned UN resolutions. However, Andrzej Kasprzyk, the personal representative for the OSCE Chairman-In-Office for Nagorno-Karabakh, has argued that “enforcing a solution would both be extremely costly and risky for the international community”.³³ For example, the hostage crisis and demonstrations in 2016 illustrate that the idea of territorial concession to Azerbaijan can lead to open internal conflict in Armenia. This situation has also been used by the Armenian government to show both the West and Russia that any external pressure for a solution would alter the nature of the stand-off and likely make the current situation even more volatile and explosive. In light of this likelihood, both Western countries and Russia prefer to stay silent. To satisfy the political voice of Azerbaijan, these actors state merely that they respect and recognize its territorial integrity. However, this situation satisfies only Yerevan: besides keeping Nagorno-Karabakh under its control, Armenia has also used the conflict as a foreign-policy tool by which to attract international economic and political assistance.³⁴ Therefore, despite the regional actors’ own wishes, the current stalemate seems to suit the external actors well enough, as two decades of history have demonstrated that the status quo is indeed mostly viable.

2.2 *Effects of Silencing*

The effects of this silencing can be divided into two types: regional and international. From a regional perspective, both sides have steadily increased their military budgets since the signing of the Bishkek Protocol. The scale of violence has increased proportionally: from skirmishes to active conflict, which causes more human losses. Consequently, this active violence will most likely continue and even gradually increase so as long as the external actors continue

33 N. Caspers, “Moving Beyond Deadlock in the Peace Talks”, in S. E. Cornell (eds.), *The International Politics of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict*, Palgrave, Washington, 2017, pp. 173–195.

34 S. Minasyan, “The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in the Context of South Caucasus Regional Security Issues: An Armenian Perspective”, in *Nationalities Papers*, 2017, no. 45, pp. 131–139.

to maintain silence. The disruption of the first epoch of silence, initially established under the Soviet Union, illustrates that it is not the ideal solution and cannot continue forever. The Four-Day War demonstrates that both sides have obtained new types of advanced military technology that would lead to more human casualties in case of full-scale war. Considering this potential, one may argue that silence unwittingly enhances the aggressiveness of both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

From an international perspective, the prolonged silence of the West may damage the effectiveness and credibility of external actors. For example, Azerbaijani officials have repeatedly expressed their concerns about the West's double standards over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.³⁵ On the one hand, the West has shown a strong reaction to Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty by imposing sanctions. On the other hand, the West and its allies have demonstrated only modest concern for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, thereby undermining the credibility of the West.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that, through their limited involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the external actors concerned have sought to deliberately silence the historical dispute beyond the region. Several conclusions can be reached about this approach. First, it is a strategic decision, as issues that cannot be adequately addressed should seemingly not be dealt with at all. Second, silence can be perceived as the failure of both the West and Russia to produce a response to a question that is difficult to answer: What is the alternative to silence? One lesson learned from international relations is that a dispute that cannot be solved should not be pressed. Third, significant international financial investments in the two countries create the false impression that, due to the high negative costs of war, neither Azerbaijan nor Armenia will dare to start a full-scale war in the future.

Addressing recent violence in the region, specifically the Four-Day War, which was intended to challenge the silence of external actors and to increase the attention they give to the long-standing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, this paper demonstrates that the international outcome was ultimately little more than a few abstract statements. From a regional perspective, however, the Four-Day War illustrates that the scale of violence between the two parties

35 Trend, "Azerbaijan against West's Double Standards on Karabakh Conflict—Top Official", 2016, Retrieved 12 March 2017, <http://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/karabakh/2363446.html>.

has increased significantly over time. Thus, while silence has succeeded in postponing a full-blown conflict for more than twenty years, it has also served to enhance the aggressiveness and belligerence of both sides. This approach should not be allowed to create the misleading impression that the conflict is resolved. In this regard, similar clashes will probably continue between Azerbaijan and Armenia until external actors disrupt the taboo of silence.