



**SECOND INTERVIEW OF PETER TASE FOR FUAD HUSEINZADEH,
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- The recent meeting held in Paris between the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and France, according to some French diplomats was a “very positive atmosphere”, after President Aliyev’s trip to France, can we hope that Europeans may contribute more in the peace process between Baku and Yerevan than the United States and the Russian Federation?

On October 27, 2014, President Ilham Aliyev met in Paris with his counterpart, the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan, together with the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in Paris. Later was held a bilateral meeting between the two heads of state, followed by another meeting with the leaders of OSCE Minsk Group and subsequently the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and France attended the third session of this important Summit, followed by an official dinner. Unfortunately we did not see a tangible result from these talks.

It is clear that the three heads of state had somewhat fruitful meetings in the French Capital at a time when the geostrategic role of the United States in the Caucasus region is substantially diminishing, towards resolving the long lasting conflict of Nagorno Karabakh (NK) even though James Warlick, a US co-chair of the OSCE Minsk group had participated in these talks. During the past 22 years, the OSCE Minsk group has not brought any sustainable solution to the NK conflict, it has

proved to be obsolete, in this context the European Union must reinvigorate the negotiations' platform and set feasible goals and objectives in a five year time frame so that by 2019 the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan is accomplished and the Province of Nagorno Karabakh is internationally recognized within the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The territorial demands of Armenia are against international laws and violate four resolutions approved by the United Nations Security Council in 1993. If we were to follow the logic of Yerevan, then we would not have the Republic of India as it stands today, but instead we would have over seventy independent countries if we were to divide the current Indian Territory according to its large number of ethnic groups that speak their own languages. In the same vein, even though France and Russia are leading the negotiation process, the United States must take a leadership role in solving this decades' long conflict of Nagorno Karabakh and strengthen its bilateral ties with Baku. It is unfortunate that US Secretary of State John Kerry has not yet fulfilled his promised official visit to Azerbaijan. Such a visit was announced in March 19, 2014, by his Ambassador in Baku and it still has not taken place. Additionally the Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel has not undertaken an official visit to Azerbaijan even though the Minister of Defense of Azerbaijan Safar Abiyev had paid an official visit in the Pentagon in August 5, 2013. If we consider the United States to be one of the superpowers in the Eurasian geopolitical landscape, Washington must be more engaged and truly defend the interests of its allies in the Caucasus region and contribute towards strengthening democratic institutions not with words but with real actions. The fact of this matter is that the United States does not have a better strategic ally than Azerbaijan throughout the whole Caucasus region and Central Asia.

- There are rumors that Armenians are ready to withdraw from seven occupied regions of Azerbaijan around Nagorno Karabakh itself to receive economic dividends that they would benefit from an economic cooperation with Azerbaijan. Do you believe that this a logical scenario that could take place in the current geopolitical environment in the region?

There are over 17 million people living in the South Caucasus, which is indeed a small but diverse region, geographically spread into three nations: Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. It contains one of the highest concentrations of refugees and

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) per capita in the World. Almost 1.5 million people have suffered a displacement by armed conflicts over the last 20 years in Azerbaijan alone. Unlike any other country in Eurasia, the government of Azerbaijan has been very successful towards accommodating those families that still suffer from being internally displaced.

I am skeptical that these initiatives taken by the Armenian communities in Azerbaijan are really taking place. Armenia conducts a regular propaganda warfare to divert the attention from the provocations of its Armed Forces in the border with Azerbaijan and most importantly it has taken a unilateral decision to isolate the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan from the mainland of Azerbaijan. Today everyone who wants to travel by road and air from Nakhchivan to Baku, has to cross the border to Iran in order to reach the eastern territories of Azerbaijan. This is politically unacceptable and does not contribute towards a regional economic integration and preservation of peace and stability between Yerevan and Baku. Additionally, Armenia must make a public apology for all the massacres and atrocities committed by its armed forces against the people of Azerbaijan for more than two decades; withdraw its armed forces and refrain from its annexation aspirations of Nagorno Karabakh and embrace peace and stability in the region. It is highly hypocritical and it does not help regional stability if you have the Foreign Minister of the *artificial* Nagorno-Karabakh Republic Karen Mirzoyan deliver a lecture on October 30, 2014, at the Carleton University of Ottawa, focused on the regional security in the South Caucasus, and in the same day, Armenian Armed Forces violated the ceasefire 17 times in the villages of Sarijali, Shuraabad in Aghdam region, and in the village of Kuropatkino region of Khojavend and in the village of Horadiz, Fuzuli region and in the hills of Khojavend and Fuzuli regions.

The international community must be aware of these atrocities, border clashes and constant provocations by Armenian soldiers. The Caucasus region must not be a victim of these unnecessary provocations, and Armenia is certainly pouring gasoline into fire at a faster pace than the region can afford. I must reiterate that since the beginning of the war in 1988, 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory has been occupied by Armenian armed forces, including Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding regions. A fragile ceasefire has been implemented in 1994 however Yerevan continues to refuse the implementation of the four resolutions by the U.N.

Security Council and undertake a pullout from Azerbaijan's territories. Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan must lower his sword and become a true XXI century visionary leader, just like Heydar Aliyev, the founding father of modern Azerbaijan, was for his country, and not simply sit on the negotiation table (with his regional counterparts) at the same time when his armed forces undertake another deadly attack against Azerbaijani border patrols. The same principal applies to Minister Mirzoyan: the latter talked about security in the Caucasus and at the same time he became part of the problem by advocating the establishment of unlawful enclaves and constant ethnic cleansing in the Azerbaijani soil. Who would want to listen to his hypocritical presentation?

Another unacceptable act was the recent visit of Mayor Marlene Mourier from the French town of Bourg-les-Valence, to Azerbaijan's occupied territories; her actions are illegal and an act of provocation. The signing of a twinning agreement with Mayor Artsvik Sargsyan, on October 8th, in the occupied town of Shusha is a violation of international law and goes against the recent Summit in Paris. It is unfortunate that we continue to have public figures in Western Europe who decide to openly violate International laws and treaties and not acknowledge crimes against humanity.

- How would you describe the role of United States in the Caucasus Region peace process, considering that Washington is very distant from this area?

The United States has been reluctant to take a leadership role in solving the Nagorno Karabakh (NK) conflict. The negotiation process by the OSCE Minsk Group has not been successful towards seeking a negotiated outcome that is sustainable politically and guarantees peace in the region. The current status quo is very unpleasant and Armenia and Azerbaijan must agree to make concessions that would bring a start to the negotiation process. Now is the time for the United States to take a leadership role and make tangible suggestions – US state department officials must conduct extensive visits in the region - that bring an internationally acceptable solution to this conflict. Washington must call upon the international community to send a monitoring team in the border areas in order to observe first-hand the violations committed by Armenian forces in the so-called frozen conflict. Armenia must allow the participation of the so-called government

authorities of NK to participate in the negotiation table. At the same time Armenian propaganda machine does not help when biased information is constantly published and as a result foreign audiences are not well informed. Provocative actions do not end here: on October 30th, Armenian authorities inaugurated a Kindergarten center in the occupied region of Zangilan, to celebrate the anniversary of Armenian invasion. This is another offensive action and is counterproductive to the recent Summit in Paris. Armenians never lived on the territory of Zangilan which was occupied by Armenian armed forces on October 29, 1993; these events confirm the annexation policies of occupied territories by Armenia, while violating the Geneva Convention and International Laws.

- We all know about reach and powerful Armenian lobby in the US. What should be done to make Azerbaijani voice louder?

The government of Azerbaijan has been implementing a proactive strategy towards letting the world know the truth about the massive atrocities and current disinformation conducted by the Armenian State Media and national newspapers. I am confident that such dynamic measures taken by government authorities of Azerbaijan who lead the strategic communication policies will very soon have its positive results and hopefully the US policy makers will realize that America's staunchest ally in the region is Azerbaijan. In respect to the current influences of the Armenian lobby in Washington D.C. we must acknowledge that there are major diaspora organizations that are more powerful than Armenians in the United States. Washington must not rely on the information provided by an infinite number of lobbying groups on K Street, it has the tools and resources to assert the situation on the ground and take decisions that are appropriate to US national interests, its Foreign Policy and guarantee the territorial integrity of its most trusted allies such as Azerbaijan.

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