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Land for Peace: A Comparative Analysis of the Cases of Israel and Nagorno-Karabakh

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Of the many aspects of the complex Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the core issues of self-determination and territorial integrity have presented a challenging clash or even contradiction of key principles of international law. Within the framework of diplomacy and mediation, there is also a related issue of the need for concession and compromise, largely defined by the surrender of Armenian-held, or “occupied,” territories of Azerbaijan proper beyond the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh, in exchange for the self-determination of Karabakh through a referendum on final status.

While this issue of “land for peace” continues to be a highly charged and daunting aspect of the Karabakh peace process, there are interesting and pertinent lessons learned from other cases of the concept of “land for peace,” namely in the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, or more precisely, regarding the issue of Palestinian statehood in exchange for peace with Israel. Therefore, this analysis seeks to present specific lessons learned from the Israeli case and to demonstrate the comparative relevance to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Introduction and Origins

The concept of “Land for Peace” is derived from the UN Security Council Resolution 242 that provides a legal interpretation of conflict resolution which holds that the giving up or concession of land or territory is an essential element of a negotiated resolution to many conflicts.

In the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the resolution confirms that the principle is based on the implementation and application of two approaches which include the withdrawal of Israeli forces, thereby giving up land, and the termination of all belligerency. The implications behind these principles are that giving up land will bring about or guarantee peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors, that the root cause of the conflict is the territorial dispute, that the only obstacle to peace is Israeli occupation, and that the Arab states are willing to recognize Israel as a State if certain conditions are met.

The first part of the charter: “1. Affirms that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles: (i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict; (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.”

The Jewish State vs. the Arab-Israeli Conflict

In November 1947, the UN General Assembly voted to end -as of May 15, 1948- the British mandate over Palestine, established after World War I, and

decided to partition the territory into a Jewish state and an Arab state.¹

The Zionist leadership at the time agreed to the partition plan, with hesitations, but the Arab leadership, both within Palestine and in the neighboring states, rejected it completely. Fighting broke out between the two groups, and grew into a full-fledged war the following day. When the British forces withdrew, the Jewish leadership in Palestine declared the independent state of Israel, and armies from the neighboring Arab states engaged in the conflict.

An armistice agreement was signed in July 1949 and the armistice lines became the official borders of the State of Israel. They included larger portions of Palestine than the UN partition plan had originally apportioned for the Jewish state. The West Bank, which was later annexed by Jordan, and the Gaza Strip, which came under Egypt's control, were the only two portions of mandatory Palestine which remained under Arab control. The Palestinians considered the establishment of a Jewish state in any part of Palestine illegitimate, and they developed a political goal in which the elimination of the State of Israel and the establishment of an Arab state in the entire area of mandatory Palestine would be their primary focus.²

Egypt

Israel's peace treaty with Egypt in 1979 was based on the Land for Peace concept. Israel withdrew forces from the Sinai territory it acquired against its war with Egypt in exchange for a peace treaty with Egypt, the first Arab country to officially recognize Israel. Egypt aided Palestinian militants, called Fedayeen, in their attacks against Israeli civilians starting in 1954, including the Yehud attack, Ma'ale Akrabim massacre, Beit Oved attack, Shafir shooting attack, 1956 Eilat bus ambush, Ein Ofarim killings, and the Negev Desert Road ambush. The Lavon Affair, a failed Israeli covert operation which aimed to stage an attack against civilians in Egypt, resulted in a deeper mistrust of Jews in Egypt.

Because Egyptian Jews had been recruited in the attack, Egypt retaliated on its Jewish community by actively sponsoring, training, and arming Palestinians from Gaza as Fedayeen units in order to stage attacks and raids in Israel. From 1955 to 1967,

after a series of violent attacks from the Fedayeen at the Gaza Strip and the accumulation of Egyptian troops in the Sinai Peninsula, Israel launched a strike and several operations against Egypt which turned into the Six-Day War. As a result of the war, Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria.

Egypt attempted to recapture its territory by launching the War of Attrition from 1967-1970 which, despite high civilian casualty rates, failed to accomplish its mission. In October 1973, Egypt and Syria simultaneously launched operations in order to recapture the Sinai and Golan Heights, respectively. Known as the Yom Kippur war, Egyptian engineering forces built bridges to cross the Suez Canal stormed Israel's defensive line.

In the beginning stages of the war, Egypt maintained control of the Canal's East Bank, but in the latter stages Israel crossed the Southern section and cut off the Egyptian Third Army, thereby occupying the western section of the bank. A mutually-agreed upon ceasefire followed the end of the war.

Israel withdrew from the Canal and Egypt again permitted Israel entry of ships through the Suez Canal as part of the Sinai Disengagement Agreements. In 1979, Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty in which Israel agreed to withdraw its forces completely from the Sinai, including dismantling all settlements, in exchange for Egypt's official recognition of the State of Israel. Israel's final withdrawal of its forces occurred in 1982.

The Aftermath: Egypt's Gain and Israel's Losses

The Camp David Process, which brought about the signing of the peace treaty and diplomatic relations between Egypt and Israel, benefited Egypt greatly in that it was able to reclaim the Sinai Peninsula from Israel as well to garner military support and funds from the United States without jeopardizing its position in the Arab world. The treaty provided Egypt with \$2 million dollars in economic and military assistance, which made Egypt the second largest beneficiary of US aid. By signing the treaty and regaining the Sinai, it acquired vast oil reserves, military bases, and a geographically better military position in relation to Israel.³

¹ Kelman, Herbert C. "The Israeli Palestinian Peace Process and Its Vicissitudes," *American Psychologist* (2007): May-June 2007.

² Ibid.

³ Weingarten, Joel. "The Illusion of Land for Peace," Center for the National Interest, Summer 1989. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24027196>>

The treaty had three requirements: 1) that neither country's citizens would be physically harmed by the other country's citizens, 2) promotion of normalization of trade in tourism between the two countries, and 3) Refrainment from hostile propaganda from either side directed at the other (Article 3, Clause 5).

Egypt has hardly acted in the spirit of the treaty. Since the signing of the treaty, Egypt's government-controlled press has not refrained from publishing antagonistic propaganda against Israel. On June 8, 1987, *El-Abram*, Egypt's leading government-owned newspaper, published that Israel was liable for hoof and mouth disease in Egypt in 1983, and claimed that Israel was launching 'biological warfare' campaign against Egypt. They asserted that all imports from Israel should be halted, as a result. In December 1988, *El-Akbbbar*, another Egyptian government-owned newspaper, claimed that Israel was the most likely perpetrator of the terrorist bombing of an airplane in Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed over 259 passengers.⁴

Western Intelligence traced the attack and confirmed that Libyan/Syrian backed terrorists had been responsible. In addition, Egyptian newspaper cartoons repeatedly depicted caricatures of Jews equating Judaism with Nazism. The normalization of trade and tourism has not flourished either. Egypt placed a nearly complete embargo against trade with Israel. Egypt-Israeli tourism consists of Israelis spending their leisure dollars in Cairo whereas Egyptian citizens are discouraged to travel to Israel.

Egypt was responsible for the harm of Israeli citizens countless times to its aiding of the PLO by providing its terrorists a 'safe haven' in Cairo and allowing them to engage in cross-border terrorism against Israeli citizens. Since 1987, there were six attempts of infiltration by Palestinian terrorists into Israel via Egyptian territory.

In an incident that occurred in March 1988, three Israeli civilian bus passengers were killed. In December 1988, four Palestinians terrorists infiltrated the Southern Negev region of Israel. In March 1989, it was found that terrorists who launched a cross-border attack against Israel had been trained at Canada Camp in Rafa, Egypt.

Furthermore, Egypt has been involved in the assassination of Israeli citizens. In June 1984, Israeli Diplomat Zvi Kedat was shot by Egyptian terrorists. In September 1985, an Egyptian soldier killed seven

Israeli tourists on east Sinai Beach of Ras Burka. In August 1986, Israeli Diplomat Albert Atrachki was assassinated by Egyptian terrorists. In March 1986, an Israeli hostess and three other Israeli citizens were shot dead at the Cairo International Trade Fair by Egyptian terrorists. In addition to the assassinations, Egypt has built up its military along the Israeli border, which is in clear violation of the Camp David troop level agreements, mostly due to American military aid.

Israel did not gain much from the Camp David accords in terms of achieving peace, or otherwise. Its geopolitical position was weakened when it exchanged the Sinai, which would have served strategic and economic importance for Israel, for a mere promise of peace. By showing willingness to give up land instead of engaging in direct negotiations that do not involve relinquishing territory, it has created the impression and indirectly communicated to its Arab adversaries that future negotiations will be similar in nature. Israel gave up valuable land in hopes that peace would be achieved, and because it failed, future negotiations might not be successful because Palestine, knowing what Israel has been capable of in the past, may falsely promise and demand that on no other condition will it achieve peace unless Israel gives up land. This action endangers Israeli security and helps Hamas, and other hostile regimes, achieve their goal of eliminating the Jewish State.

Despite withdrawing from Sinai territory and signing the peace treaty with Egypt at the Camp David accords, Israel has not been better off in terms of peace or diplomatic relations. Egypt has not changed its hostile intentions towards Israel. If it had, it would have closed the terrorist bases in its territory and withdrew Sinai border troops long ago.

The fact that economic relations, trade, tourism, and cultural exchanges are not normalized shows that Egypt retains the same belligerent attitude towards Israel under the facade of peace. The Egyptian example of the "land for peace" concept is one scenario which demonstrates that forfeiting land is not necessarily a prerequisite for peace.

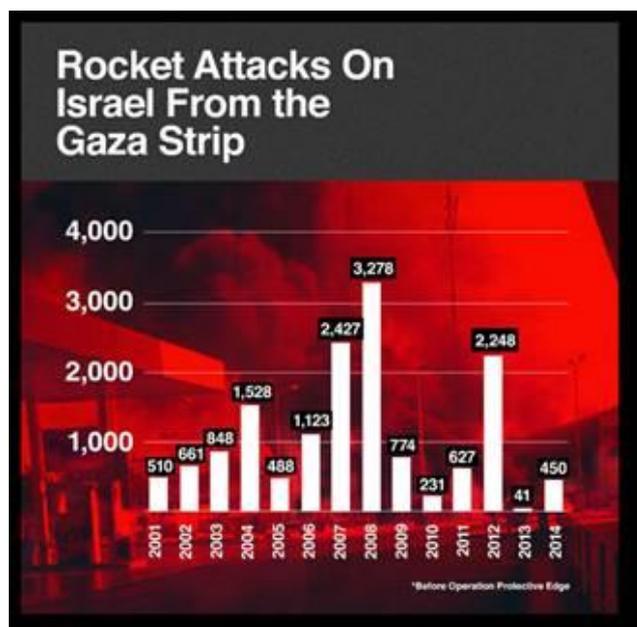
The Gaza Experiment

The Gaza Experiment is another counter-example to the 'Land for Peace' idea; unilateral withdrawal of Israeli presence in Gaza did not bring about tranquility but instead set the stage for Hamas terror attacks against Israel.

⁴ Ibid.

Known as the “Gaza Expulsion,” the Israeli disengagement from Gaza refers to the withdrawal of the Israeli army from Gaza and dismantling of all Israeli settlements in the Strip in 2005. Over 9,000 Jewish residents from Gaza’s 21 settlements and four northern West Bank Settlements were evicted and relocated under PM Ariel Sharon’s proposal in an effort to lessen the tensions, achieve a peace deal, and dissuade the Arab world from its goal of eliminating the Jewish state.

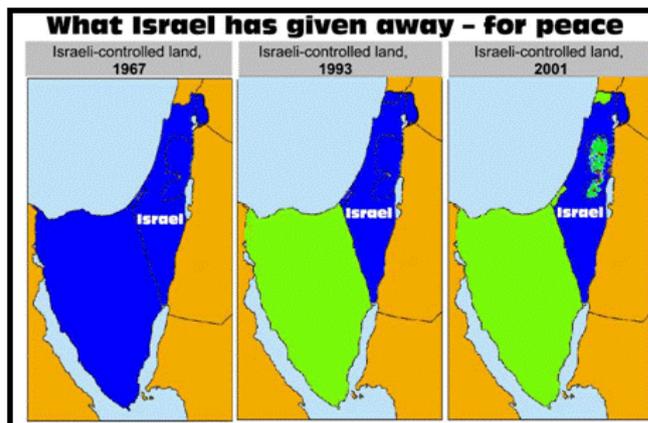
The pullout was viewed as a disaster; instead of peace, Israel has not only seen thousands of rocket attacks since 2005, but has seen the rise of Hamas’ takeover of the Gaza Strip, a “steep rise in weapons smuggling, the strengthening of terrorism, and the ensuing cycle of escalation,” according to Shmuel Even, a senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, who notes that “it appears that most of the security events in the south over the past decade were the result of the disengagement.”



Israel has seen over 11,000 rockets since the pullout and about five million Israelis live within reach of those missiles. In 2007, Hamas won the Palestinian legislative election against the armed wing of the rival Fatah party and took full control of Gaza.⁵ Since the disengagement, the conflict has only intensified. Israel has been met with continuous rocket fire and is nowhere near reaching a peace deal with the Palestinians.

⁵ Baker, Luke. “Shadow of Israel’s Pullout from Gaza Hangs Heavy 10 Years on,” *Politics Special Reports*. Reuters, 10 August 2015.

Instead of unilateral withdrawal, negotiating with a Palestinian peace partner, such as Mahmoud Abbas, would have been preferable in order to reach a territorial compromise. By refusing to negotiate and effectively coordinate to reach a stable agreement, Israel undermined Abbas’ authority and paved the way for a Hamas coup to take over Gaza, to gain popularity and power, and to severely jeopardize the opportunity of a future peace deal.



Israel cannot afford to repeat the same scenario in the West Bank which is home to over 400,000 Jewish settlers, fifty times more than those withdrawn from Gaza, who live among 2.3 million Palestinians.

The international community as well as the UN General Assembly has asserted that peace would be possible if Israel returns to its pre-1967 borders, within the Green Line, in order to mark the territory for a future Palestinian state. Israel’s territorial concessions have not yielded peaceful results; instead it has led to what critics of the pullout had predicted all along, that Hamas would use Gaza as a base from which to attack Israel.

Those in opposition to the Gaza pullout stated that it would serve as a security threat to Israel especially if Israel was not allowed to monitor the Gaza-Israeli and Gaza-Egypt border to and halt the delivery of arms, missiles, and other items that Hamas could use to attack Israel’s civilian population.

Ayoob Kara, a Druze Arab Knesset member of Ariel Sharon’s Likud Party, had warned in 2005 that, “The withdrawal is going to be terrible for Israeli security. Hamas is going to become dominant as soon as Israel leaves Gaza, and they will use the land to stage more attacks against Israel.”

As a vocal opponent to the Gaza disengagement plan, Kara stated that giving away the land for free without negotiations, would reaffirm to the Palestinian population that Israel's retreat was the result of Palestinian terrorism and would validate the idea that an armed struggle in the future would also lead to Israeli giveaway of more land. " Hamas is already telling their supporters that Israel leaving Gaza is because of their terrorism, so they are thinking terrorism works," said Kara. As if to echo Kara's words, a confidential Hamas memo written by Dr. Mahmoud al-Zahar, Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, stated the terror group views Sharon's unilateral withdrawal as a capitulation to terror and is planning to continue its "armed struggle" against the Jewish state until "all territories" are in Palestinian hands.⁶

"The withdrawal, if it is implemented, is an important achievement by the Palestinian people, its intifada and armed struggle, its determination and great sacrifice, and confirms the willingness, correctness and usefulness of employing an armed struggle and its ability to attain political objectives," writes al-Zohar. "We will emphasize our people's right to resist the occupation [outside the Gaza Strip] so long as the occupation of the land and the aggression continue, with the understanding that withdrawal from Gaza is not the end of the story and occupation is still present in the rest of the lands and that not all rights and holy sites have been returned yet," the memo stated.⁷

Aftermath and Consequences of Disengagement

The "Land for Peace" exchange had one negative consequence that Israel had unforeseen. Increasing attacks via the building of tunnel systems under the barrier between Israel and Gaza followed the disengagement. The first incident of attacks, of which there would be more to come, occurred on June 25, 2006, when Palestinian terrorists infiltrated into Israel via an 800 meter tunnel dug over a period of months. They killed two Israeli soldiers and attacked another one.⁸

The attack marked the first ground assault by Palestinian militants since the Gaza pullout, and the first abduction of an Israeli soldier since 1994. Since the pullout, Israel has seen a new form of terrorism through underground tunnels, a tactic that Hamas

uses frequently as a passageway to infiltrate into Israel to carry out attacks, provide security and mobility to militants, as well as to deliver weapons and arms.⁹

Since Hamas' takeover of Gaza Israel has had to deal with Palestinian tunnel warfare, a system which Palestinians began using since the mid-1990s to smuggle goods, but saw accelerated use for warfare in 2001 and in 2005. Referred to as the 'terror tunnels' by Israel, the underground network is a new unprecedented challenge, perhaps a detrimental consequence Israel did not expect when it hoped to exchange land for peace. Hamas uses the sophisticated network of military tunnels to hide its arsenal of weapons underground, facilitate communication, conceal militants, and make its discovery from Israel difficult.¹⁰ It is unique in that the drilling is done with a mechanical device, to avoid noise detection.

The strategy poses a new challenge to IDF forces and Israeli intelligence due to its elusive nature, and because it is not easily detected, it makes cross-border invasion into Israel territory more accessible for Hamas. A document distributed to Palestinian military groups stated, "The tunnel tactic is dangerous because it doesn't use traditional conditions and procedures for confrontation. [The tactic is] to surprise the enemy and strike it a deadly blow that doesn't allow a chance for survival or escape or allow him a chance to confront and defend itself. [The tactic] relies on the calm work of digging an underground tunnel by simple means and equipment and working without making noise, according to pre-prepared geographic coordinates, and without appearing on the ground's surface."¹¹

The underground war serves as one of Israel's main challenges and is one of the direct ways in which Hamas will confront Israel.

Hamas has attributed its success to the advanced tunnel system.¹² Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh announced in a rally in 2014 that, "the tunnels we are inaugurating today are the new Hamas strategy in the war against Israel—the strategy of the

⁶ Klein, Aaron. "Gaza Withdrawal Victory for Terrorism," WND Jerusalem Bureau, 13 April 2005.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Vitka, William. "Palestinian Militants Attack Border," CBS News, 25 June 2006

⁹ Eldar, Shlomi. "Gaza Tunnels Take IDF by Surprise," *Al-Monitor*, 20 July 2014.

¹⁰ Michaels, Jim. "Extent of Tunnels under Gaza Takes Israel by Surprise," *USA Today*, 31 July 2014.

¹¹ Amer, Adnan Abu. "Tunnel May Signal Shift In Hamas-Israel Conflict," *Al-Monitor*, 17 November 2013

¹² Watkins, Nicole J. and James, Alena M. "Digging Into Israel: The Sophisticated Tunneling Network of Hamas," *Journal of Strategic Security* 9, no. 1 (2016): 84-103

tunnels. From belowground and aboveground, you, the occupiers, will be dismissed,” meaning that the attacks would not only come by air but also from the ground by using the tunnels as a way to increase operational capabilities. Using engineering aid provided by North Korea and Iran, Hamas’ network of subterranean tunnels has a level of sophistication to ensure its success and a level of security that has posed challenges for the IDF and Israeli intelligence.

In 2014, Israel launched its Operation Protective Edge which was aimed at destroying the tunnel systems, a direct consequence of Israel’s disengagement in 2005. Given that Hamas resumed its tunnel building after the operation was over indicates that the group receives significant financial assistance and resources that enable its success and sustenance from Israeli attacks. The total cost of excavating tunnels costs anywhere from \$60,000 to \$200,000 in its initial stage, and up to \$1 million including maintenance.¹³ Tunnel diggers are compensated and given a salary as well. It’s no hidden fact that international aid to Palestine intended for humanitarian assistance is diverted for this purpose.

The Land for Peace concept is counterproductive in that it strengthens the opposition instead of working towards peaceful progress; Hamas takeover and Israeli Tunnel warfare shifted the balance of power into the hands of Hamas by giving (arming them with the tools they needed) and a safe (unmonitored) space in which to plan attacks from. Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas’ prime minister in a speech stressed the importance of how the attack tunnels are changing the power dynamic with Israel in conjunction with the military build-up.

According to the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, an Israeli security think tank, tunnel warfare “provided armies facing a technologically superior adversary with an effective means for countering its air superiority.”¹⁴ The tunnels have given Hamas a security advantage a life-line to Egypt, who replenishes their arms supply and uses the pathway to smuggle ammunition and missiles to Hamas.

In the aftermath of Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza strip, from 2005 until the present, Hamas has enjoyed the success of coming to power, constructing and maintaining an effective tunnel

network system, while Israeli citizens in towns near the Gaza Strip have suffered from the psychological trauma of war.

Whether or not the number of casualties is an indicative factor in assessing the aftermath, it is undisputedly clear that the power dynamic has changed and Hamas certainly considers it a success that it was able to inflict political, psychological, and physical damage upon Israel.

Why Land for Peace Doesn’t Work

Hamas has explicitly stated that it does not want peace with Israel; rather, its objective is to conquer Israel “from the river to the sea” in order to achieve Palestinian sovereignty. Giving away land and making territorial negotiations without the recognition of Israel’s legitimacy and acknowledgment of Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state, is a recipe for disaster because it empowers the opposition and reinforces terroristic behavior. It is a temporary condition until the opposition is strong enough to take the remaining territories it desires.

The Palestinians don’t want peace; they want land. Israel is reaping its own destruction because the peace process has to be a two-way street. Israel’s land giveaways have only been met with an increase in terrorism. At the end of the day, Israel cannot demand its land back because it is dissatisfied with the peace it received in exchange. It is an unbalanced agreement when something as temporary as a peace treaty is exchanged with something permanent like land.

Land Doesn’t Buy Peace

Land for peace is based on the false premise that if Israel gives land, the Arabs will give peace, but both Egypt and Gaza have not honored the bargain. Israeli land giveaways are permanent, whereas Arab commitments to peace can be revoked at any time. In his visit to Cairo with his Muslim Brotherhood counterpart, Mohammad Badie, Hamas’ leader Haniyeh said, “The Islamic resistance movement of Hamas by definition is a jihadist movement by the Muslim Brotherhood, Palestinian on the surface, Islamic at its core, and its goal is liberation.”¹⁵

It is clear that their intentions have not been to achieve peace with Israel, but rather to weaken the Jewish state. In order for peace to be achieved, it has

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Halevy, Jonathan D. “Hamas’s Attack Tunnels: Analysis and Initial Implications,” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 22 July 2014.

¹⁵ Glick, Caroline B. “Column One: The Land-for-peace Hoax,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 6 January 2012.

to be the goal for both parties. Israel has demonstrated its desire to achieve peace by giving up territory, but neither Egypt nor Gaza have reciprocated. Instead of rewarding Israel for giving up territory, the Palestinians transformed Gaza into a launching pad from which to attack Israel.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh proclaimed, “We say today explicitly so it cannot be explained otherwise, that the armed resistance and the armed struggle are the path and the strategic choice for liberating the Palestinian land, from the [Mediterranean] sea to the [Jordan] river, and for the expulsion of the invaders and usurpers [Israel]... We won’t relinquish one inch of the land of Palestine.”¹⁶

Gaza has not honored Israel’s concessions, yet the Palestinians are not demanded to give the territory back to Israel because “peace” is not their goal. On the contrary, only Israel has had to pay the price in its willingness for peace.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Risks: If Armenia gives Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan, it might lead to Georgia asking for Lori and other countries taking other parts of Armenia. The occupied territories serve as a buffer zone between Azerbaijan and Armenia and Azeri control of these territories is a security threat and will make Nagorno-Karabakh vulnerable to Azeri aggression. Azerbaijan has historically been hostile to Armenia and Azerbaijan has historically been the aggressor in its conflicts with Armenia over the occupied territories.

While Karabakh is comprised of an ethnically Armenian population and contains a historical Armenian presence, the occupied territories were once inhabited by an Azeri majority which did not include Armenians, hence why Azerbaijan desires to attain it. However, the occupied territories are under Armenian military rule and serve as “bargaining chips” in negotiations with Azerbaijan, not to mention a security buffer against Azeri aggression against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Similarly, the West Bank is in Israeli hands and is comprised of two regions: Judea and Samaria. Israel lays claim to Judea on the basis that it is a historically Jewish land and was inhabited by Jews for 3000 years and must not be given away as Palestinian land.

Just as Israel maintains that its occupation over Samaria as a buffer zone is necessary, regardless of its Arab majority, so Armenia argues that occupied Armenian territory is critical for security purposes as a buffer zone.

Like the Armenian occupied territories, the West Bank was acquired by Israel due to war. Israel’s presence in the West Bank is the result of its successful defense in the Arab-initiated 1967 Six-Day War and subsequent 1973 Yom Kippur War. The territory’s final status, per U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 (1968) and 338 (1973), is to be determined in negotiations with Israel, which Palestinian leaders have refused to conduct in good faith or rejected outright. The difference, however, is that while Palestinians reside in the West Bank, neither Armenians or Azerbaijanis live in the Armenian occupied territories.

Azeri Aggression: After the four-day war in April 2016, Azerbaijan has abused the ceasefire numerous times. Azerbaijan is not interested in the status quo and achieving peace with Armenia until it gains territory in the occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turkey’s interest in the Karabakh conflict: If Turkey loses its support and alliance with Azerbaijan, it will lose access and benefits of the Azeri Gas and Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and TANAP Pipelines. It will also lose the race in the Caucasus against Russia. Therefore, Turkey demands Armenia to end its occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Because of the Karabakh war in the 1990s, both Azerbaijan and Turkey closed their borders to Armenia. Each pipeline and transport that occurs between these countries must occur through Georgia, which becomes expensive.¹⁷ Normalizing relations with Armenia will be economically beneficial for both Turkey and Azerbaijan because it will reduce the cost of projects.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Thomas de Waal: *Black Garden. Armenia and Azerbaijan Through War and Peace*. New York University Press. 2013.

Conclusion

Due to Azerbaijan's behavior and maximalist policy towards Armenia, a giveaway of the occupied territories, comprised of seven districts, to Azerbaijan will prove detrimental to the peace process and will put Armenia at a geographical disadvantage. The April war demonstrated an increasing pattern of Azeri aggression, and a giveaway of any of the occupied territories is likely to whet the Azeri appetite for more.

The land giveaway will be a permanent one for Armenia, with no way to keep Azerbaijan accountable if it chooses not to honor the agreement. If the entire portion of the occupied territories ended up in Azeri hands, Nagorno-Karabakh will be land-locked by Azerbaijan with no land-link to Armenia. This will result in Nagorno-Karabakh becoming militarily vulnerable and poses a security risk for both Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia who do not stand a good chance of defending themselves against an attack from Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan does not have a history of offering peace agreements to Armenia, but even if it had, a land giveaway is not the right means by which to achieve it. A country which has displayed aggression as its main form of contact with Armenia is not likely to keep its end of a peace agreement, which it views as a means to an end and not the end goal in and of itself. Azerbaijan has strong weapons and arms that give it an advantage militarily, while Armenia's possession of Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied territories gives it a geographical advantage.

Therefore, it is in Armenia's best interest to not use the territories as bargaining chips but rather to strengthen its economy, fortify its defense system in preparation for future clashes with Azerbaijan, and to wait until it acquires international military backing and support base (from countries other than Russia) before offering parts of the territories as concessions.

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