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## The position of the European Union in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

*The article is devoted to the study of the EU position in the settlement of regional conflicts in the South Caucasus, including the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in a generalized form. The article provides a brief overview of the accepted documents and proposals of the EU on this issue. The possibilities and tools of the EU in conflict resolution and crisis situations, the interests and tasks of the Union's foreign policy in this field are being studied.*

**Key words:** Conflict resolution, Nagorno-Karabakh problem, EU, mediation, European Security Strategy.

*Стаття присвячується вивченню позиції ЄС у врегулюванні регіональних конфліктів на Південному Кавказі, зокрема врегулюванні Нагірно-Карабаського конфлікту в узагальненому вигляді. У статті представлена коротка інформація про документи й пропозиції ЄС із цієї проблеми. Вивчається можливість і інструменти ЄС у врегулюванні конфліктів і кризових ситу-*

*ацій, інтереси й завдання зовнішньої політики ЄС у цій галузі.*

**Ключові слова:** урегулювання конфліктів, вирішення Нагірно-Карабаської проблеми, ЄС, посередництво, Стратегія європейської безпеки.

*Статья посвящается изучению позиции ЕС в урегулировании региональных конфликтов на Южном Кавказе, в том числе в урегулировании нагорно-карабахского конфликта в обобщенном виде. В статье представлена краткая информация о принятых документах и предложениях ЕС по этой проблеме. Изучаются возможности и инструменты ЕС в урегулировании конфликтов и кризисных ситуаций, интересы и задачи внешней политики ЕС в этой области.*

**Ключевые слова:** урегулирование конфликтов, решение Нагорно-Карабахской проблемы, ЕС, посредничество, Стратегия европейской безопасности.

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The “frozen” regional conflicts are considered one of the biggest threats to stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic security area. The resolution of the conflicts is one of the EU's priorities for cooperation with partner countries. The EU is considered to be a significant political, economic, military force in the Euro-Atlantic security area and has some experience in resolving regional conflicts (in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Congo) and in some cases, engaged in mediation activities.

For instance, the EU acted as an international mediator between Russia and Georgia in the war of August 2008 and is currently continuing the Geneva process. At the same time, the Union has been actively involved in the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict form at “5 + 2” [1].

The EU cooperates with such organizations as the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe and NATO in ensuring international security. The “Berlin +” agreement with NATO is the basis for the partnership of both organizations in the resolution of the crisis. The European Union is also able to carry out simultaneously several operations with the largest defense budget and is capable of assisting the UN in elimination the threats and dangers to international peace [1]. From this point of view, special attention should be paid to the study of the European Union's capabilities and policies in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The EU has issued a statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict still on April 7, 1993, expressing concern over military operations in the Kelbajar and Fizuli districts. In the same year, the EU, which issued two more statements in September-November,

demanding to fulfill the UN resolutions. However, these statements did not name the aggressor. Despite the fact that relations with Azerbaijan, generally the South Caucasus, were laid after the cold war at either level, the main line and strategy of the EU policy on these countries began to be determined from the beginning of 2000. One of the main reasons for this was the expansion of the EU towards the East and, eventually, the emergence of new neighborly relations. On February 29, 2000, the “fact-finding mission” of the European Parliament came to Baku to prepare a report on the South Caucasus [2, 1 March 2000].

In April of the same year, the basis of inter-parliamentary cooperation was laid in Brussels and the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict became the subject of these meetings [3, 2 May 2000]. On 7 July 2003, the EU appointed the Special Representative for the South Caucasus [4]. The EU delegation, headed by Margaret Boniver, during the visit to Azerbaijan on July 8, expressed its intention to expand not only political but also economic cooperation with the South Caucasus countries. In this regard, the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts through the territorial integrity of each country and the implementation of democratic reforms was considered as the main criterion [3, 9 July 2003].

On December 12, 2003, the introduced a European Security Strategy – A Secure Europe in a Better World. The document highlighted the need for co-operative action against existing threats and challenges in modern international conditions [1]. The Strategy, which assesses regional conflicts as a major threat to contemporary global and regional security, says that the creation of new separator barriers to EU

enlargement is incompatible with Europe's interests at all. The aim of the EU is to disseminate economic and political cooperation in eastern neighborhoods and at the same time deal with existing political problems in these countries. The EU should now show more serious and active interest in the South Caucasus region, which will soon turn its borders [1].

During the entire period of its cooperation with Azerbaijan, the EU made very few proposals for regulation. In March 2004, the EU proposed to liberate the occupied five regions in exchange for the opening of Azerbaijan's communication lines to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by peaceful means. Though the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh welcomed this proposal, the position of the Armenian side was non-constructive [3, 20 March 2004].

The question of what the EU can do to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has in its turn influenced the preparation of the Action Plan with the EU in the European Neighborhood Policy. In April 2005, when the EU Special Envoy in Azerbaijan, met with MPs was find out that the failure of the EU's position on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict delayed the adoption of the Action Plan [3, 9 April 2005].

The report on the application of the European Security Strategy in December 2008 noted that the settlement of the conflicts in the South Caucasus within the Eastern Partnership could play an important role in the development of cooperation. Here it was shown that it was necessary to take permanent measures to settle the conflicts [5]. The report titled as "Ensuring Security in a Changing World" highlighted the importance of involving all regional actors to restore peace to a long-term settlement.

The sovereign governments were recommended to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions and to assume responsibility for the protection of the population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It was again proposed to follow the basic principles of the UN Charter, as well as the principles and commitments of the OSCE, as an important precondition for the conflicting countries.

The report said: "We must firmly believe that respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states is not the subject of discussion. In any country, is not admissible the solution of territorial issues by intimidation or use of military force" [5].

Investigation of the EU policy in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict shows that the Union treats the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with the same prism as the conflicts in the South Caucasus, without taking into account its roots and causes. The EU is not interested in the historical reasons of the conflict and suggests its solution by explaining it from the position of the West. Although each of these conflicts has its own peculiarities, each one requires a special approach.

Secondly, the EU considers that the possibilities and ways for conflict resolution should mainly be sought by the conflicting parties themselves. Speaking at a discussions on the prospects of cooperation between Azerbaijan and the European Union in the Strategic research center under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in February 2010, Ambassador Roland Kobia, Head of the EU Representation to Azerbaijan, touched the processes and conflicts in the region and said that the best resolution of any conflict is to be ready to sit behind the negotiating table with their competitors. In this regard, the EU believes that the Eastern Partnership program, along with economic benefits, will also help Azerbaijan to start a dialogue with its neighbors, which is an important aspect of the resolution of any conflict [6]. The EU believes that the more democratic the partner countries are, it will increase the stability and ensure security. From this point of view, democratic reforms and building a democratic society are considered one of the main conditions for the settlement of conflicts. To this end, the EU implements a civil society program of the European Partnership (EPNK), which is a financial instrument created under the Stability Instrument. This program seeks to support the peacemaking efforts on the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh by providing dialogue among civil society, media and politicians [7].

The EU supports the territorial integrity in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the right of peoples to self-determination. Until now, Armenia has not been shown as an aggressor state in any of the Union's statement on the conflict. The so-called "government representatives" of the separatist Karabakh regime have repeatedly visited European capitals and have taken part in these or other meetings. Representations of the so-called republic operate in such countries as Germany and France, and according to the Armenian sources, although the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic is not recognized de jure, by the assistance and support of the Armenian Diasporas in these countries has long been a de facto part of the international community and business [8].

All this once again shows that the EU does not have a definite and clear position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and seriously affects the future of the Union's relations with Azerbaijan.

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