

The Voice of the People: Addressing the Needs of Conflict-Affected Societies in Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Efforts

Scoping study by Peace Dialogue NGO



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Abbreviations

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative/Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation
CR	Conciliation Resources
CSDP	European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
EUMA	EU Mission Armenia
FSS	Federal Security Service
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
U.S.	United States

Executive Summary

In the complex geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus, the prolonged conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region has been marked by significant turmoil and human cost. This study, spearheaded by Peace Dialogue NGO through the support of the European Union, represents a pivotal step towards understanding the multifaceted impact of this conflict on the Armenian society, excluding those displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh.

The methodological approach of this study is based on Johan Galtung's Typology of Basic Human Needs and the "Position/Interests/Needs" (PIN) theoretical framework. It included 330 structured interviews conducted throughout Armenia. This methodology allowed for a thorough examination of societal needs and concerns in four key areas: Security, Welfare, Freedom, and Identity. The data and insights collected were then meticulously analyzed using the 'Inclus' digital tool, an innovative platform created by previous associates of the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI). This tool was instrumental in providing a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

Key findings from the study revealed a predominant concern for security threats, especially physical safety and economic stability. Welfare issues, including education and financial well-being, were also prominent. Additionally, the study underscored significant concerns related to freedom and identity, with a particular emphasis on democratic values and cultural preservation.

The implications of these findings for drafting an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty are substantial. The study advocates for a comprehensive treaty that addresses these four core areas. It suggests practical measures such as establishing a permanent ceasefire, creating demilitarized zones, fostering cross-border economic initiatives, and ensuring access to essential services. Furthermore, the study recommends pragmatic steps designed to preserve freedom of expression, maintain civil liberties, and protect cultural diversity and heritage.

In its conclusion, the study outlines recommendations that emphasize the need for a treaty that is not only politically sound but also resonates with the people's needs. These include establishing a joint peacekeeping commission, investing in border security, implementing conflict-sensitive economic programs, and fostering cultural exchange and preservation. The study underscores the importance of integrating local voices into the peace process and highlights the need for flexible diplomacy, international mediation, and domestic initiatives focused on education and infrastructure development.

Overall, this study represents a modest contribution to the peacebuilding efforts in the region, offering a nuanced understanding of the societal impact of the conflict. The research illustrates the risks of an overly narrow and top-down 'normalization' process that fails to address the popular concerns identified here and points to problems with the sustainability of a 'thin' peace treaty and process that neglects these issues. It underscores the danger of reverting to violence due to a flawed, overly simplistic peace agreement. This concern is particularly relevant given the current trajectory of the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations and is exemplified by the shortcomings of the November 10, 2020, Ceasefire Statement. The study advocates for a comprehensive peace strategy that goes beyond merely obtaining signatures on a treaty. It emphasizes the need for a well-thought-out socio-political framework that not only sustains an agreement but also fosters its growth, ensuring its effectiveness and durability in the long term.

Introduction: Background and Context

The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Complex Tapestry of Armenian-Azerbaijani Relations

Nagorno-Karabakh, a region in the South Caucasus, has been the epicenter of a prolonged conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This dispute, rooted in historical and cultural complexities, predates the Soviet Union's dissolution, with tensions brewing for decades. The First Karabakh War (1988-1994), triggered by the Soviet collapse, intensified these ethnic and territorial disputes. A significant escalation occurred in 1992-94 when Armenian forces seized control of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjoining Azerbaijani territories. The war resulted in around 30,000 deaths and displaced over a million people, including Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, and Armenians from Azerbaijan.

The Second Karabakh War and Its Aftermath

In 2020, the Second Karabakh War, also widely known as the 44-Day War, marked a pivotal chapter in this enduring conflict. Azerbaijan's strategic military campaign, employing advanced warfare technologies, significantly altered the control dynamics over the disputed area. The war resulted in over 6,500 casualties, underscoring the conflict's severity. A landmark moment in the conflict's history was the signing of a trilateral ceasefire agreement on November 10, 2020, mediated by Russian President Vladimir Putin. This agreement, titled 'On a ceasefire in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone and the cessation of all hostilities,' enabled Russia to deploy 1,960 peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor, a vital link to Armenia. This deployment thereby reinforced Russia's influential role in the conflict's resolution process.

Escalations and Humanitarian Crisis

A significant escalation occurred on September 13th 2022, when Azerbaijan launched a large-scale assault on Armenian territoriesⁱ, targeting up to 23 locations in the southern provinces of Syunik, Gegharkunik, and Vayots Dzor. This offensive damaged military and civilian areas in cities like Goris and Kapan, as well as villages such as Sotk, Artanish, Jermuk, and Kut. These hostilities, the most severe since 2020ⁱⁱ, ceased temporarily on September 14th following a ceasefire. However, the peace was fragile, and further clashes were reported by month's end.

In December 2022, the conflict took another turn when Azerbaijani civiliansⁱⁱⁱ, claiming to be environmental activists, set up blockades along the Lachin corridor. This action significantly exacerbated the humanitarian situation, restricting vital access for people and goods. The crisis deepened in April 2023 with a full blockade of the Nagorno-Karabakh, when Azerbaijan established a checkpoint along this key route. The blockade led to international concern. In September 2023, a new phase began when Azerbaijan commenced "anti-terrorist activities" in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, citing the objective to restore constitutional order and alleging the presence of Armenian military forces. This move triggered a massive exodus of ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. Over 100,000 residents fled to Armenia, unwilling to live under Azerbaijani control, as reported by departing authorities in Stepanakert. Consequently, the Nagorno-Karabakh breakaway government announced the dissolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

Adding complexity to the already tense situation, Azerbaijani authorities reportedly detained three former presidents of Nagorno-Karabakh and the speaker of its local legislature. These detentions, along with the ongoing imprisonment of individuals from the 44-Day War and subsequent conflicts, have continued to strain relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The persistent detentions underscore the intricate nature of the conflict

and the enduring challenges in achieving a resolution to this prolonged dispute between the two nations.

Changing Dynamics and Shifting Alliances

Since 2020, Armenia has notably shifted its foreign policy, increasingly aligning with Western alliances. This strategic move away from its traditional reliance on Russia has been influenced by both global and regional events, notably Russia's engagement in Ukraine and ongoing tensions in the Middle East. Armenia has been actively seeking partnerships with countries outside the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to modernize its weaponry and enhance its security framework. This shift includes efforts to procure defense equipment from nations like India and France and engage in security collaborations with Greece and Cyprus. Additionally, countries such as the Netherlands, Italy, and Sweden have expressed interest in defense cooperation with Armenia. In a bid to expand its international support network, Armenia is negotiating with the European Union to receive assistance through the European Peace Facility. Concurrently, discussions with the United States are underway, focusing on evaluating the security environment, advancing defense reforms, and strengthening defense cooperation. Similar dialogues are also progressing with France, underscoring Armenia's commitment to diversifying its security alliances and capabilities.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan is making efforts to have balanced relations with Moscow. Although Azerbaijan has announced that Russian deployment in Karabakh is allowed only until 2025, following the expected departure of Armenians from the area, there is no apparent rush to expedite the withdrawal of Russian forces. Presently, both Russia and Azerbaijan are pressing Armenia to provide a corridor from the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan to the main country, to be controlled by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSS).

A significant indicator of Armenia's evolving security priorities is the deployment of the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy's (CSDP) civilian mission (EUMA) in the region. This mission conducts daily patrols along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, marking a new level of international involvement and support. In 2023, the mission increased the number of its deployed personnel. Both Russia and Azerbaijan have expressed displeasure with the EUMA deployment in Armenia. However, Azerbaijan received a similar proposal from the EU to deploy the mission on its side, especially as the mission's longer-term goal is to foster confidence-building between the conflict-divided populations of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Stalled Peace Negotiations

The Nagorno-Karabakh peace negotiations, historically overseen by the OSCE Minsk Group, have encountered notable challenges, particularly during the 44-Day War. The group faced difficulties in effectively preventing the conflict from escalating. In this complex scenario, Russia has played a significant role, often diverging from the Minsk Group's approach. Consequently, two main paths for negotiation have emerged: one led by Russia and the other facilitated by the European Union (EU), with support from the U.S. It is crucial to recognize that the functionality of the Minsk Group was halted following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, leading to a more fragmented mediation landscape. Recent progress in the talks has been limited, particularly in the wake of Azerbaijan's military advancements. This pivotal change necessitated a reevaluation of traditional mediation mechanisms and approaches in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, further complicating the quest for a sustainable peace agreement.

Bringing Armenia and Azerbaijan to the negotiating table has been challenging. Armenia seems to prefer mediation from Western countries, while Azerbaijan is more inclined

towards working with regional powers like Russia and Turkey. A key meeting planned for October 2023 between Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was cancelled because President Aliyev had issues with France's role and Turkey's exclusion from the talks. Despite this, Prime Minister Pashinyan met with European leaders, leading to a joint statement that emphasized the need for normalized relations and a commitment to non-violence.

In an encouraging development in December 2023, Armenia and Azerbaijan issued a joint statement independently, a first in this peace process without any external mediator's involvement. In the statement, they expressed a belief that there was a unique opportunity to achieve lasting peace in the region. Both parties also agreed to work towards normalizing relations and reaching a peace treaty, respecting each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They announced a prisoner exchange, trading 32 detained Armenian soldiers for 2 Azerbaijani soldiers, which was quickly implemented. This move was welcomed by the EU and the U.S., who have long encouraged a peace treaty to address unresolved issues, including border demarcation.

However, as 2023 ended, official negotiations under the EU, US, or Russia-led tracks had yet to restart. This highlights the ongoing complexity of the situation and the continued efforts needed to resolve the long-standing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Contested Scope of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Negotiations

Securing a long-term peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan is complex, largely due to their differing interpretations of the conflict's subject, nature and progression. Baku insists that the Karabakh conflict has ended and calls for resolving any residual issues through negotiations. In contrast, Yerevan is concerned about possible new escalations from Azerbaijan, especially regarding the creation of a land corridor to Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan exclave.

In Armenia, there is strong societal pressure on the government to emphasize the rights of Karabakh Armenians as critical for long-term regional peace. Additionally, Armenian society expects the government to set preconditions for peace negotiations, such as the return of all prisoners and the withdrawal of Azerbaijani troops from Armenian territories. Official Yerevan maintains that any peace agreement should include a concrete mechanism for border delimitation, suggesting the use of late Soviet-era military maps, reportedly supported by the European Union. However, this proposal is not accepted by Baku. Hikmet Hajiyev, the senior foreign policy advisor to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, has expressed that Azerbaijan prefers to address border delimitation issues separately from the peace treaty discussions. This stance represents a significant point of contention in the negotiations, highlighting the deep-rooted differences between the priorities and stands of two countries.

These divergent views and societal expectations contribute considerable uncertainty to both the substance and effectiveness of a potential peace agreement. Concerns persist about how the agreement would impact the lives of people in the conflict zone and whether it would adequately meet their diverse needs and rights.

A Complex and Fluid Landscape

In this context, addressing the concerns of conflict-affected populations becomes critically urgent. This situation emphasizes the need for a comprehensive peace deal that effectively addresses key issues such as security, identity, welfare, and freedom, all of which are vital for sustained stability and prosperity in the region. The significant, yet often underreported, civilian casualties and injuries further complicate the situation. Every conflict episode inflicts severe losses on civilian lives, resulting in long-lasting



psychological trauma and widespread societal grief. The conflict has also been characterized by numerous human rights violations, including reports of atrocities, the use of banned munitions in civilian areas, and mistreatment of prisoners of war. These violations exacerbate existing tensions and pose significant obstacles to the reconciliation process.

Furthermore, the conflict has led to considerable economic hardship for civilians, resulting in damage to critical infrastructure. This destruction limits access to essential services, disrupts education, and undermines the economic stability of the region. The psychological impact on civilians, especially children who have lived through the conflict, is profound, leading to extensive trauma and mental health issues. Addressing these humanitarian issues is imperative not only for the immediate welfare of those affected but also for the long-term prospects of peace and stability in the region.

Decades of peacemaking experience have shown that lasting peace agreements must address these fundamental issues. Statistics indicate a worrying pattern of peace processes lapsing back into violence due to superficial agreements. This risk and policy challenge is at the heart of this research: the danger of reverting to conflict because of inadequate peace agreements. The ceasefire agreement of November 10, 2020, exemplifies the shortcomings of incomplete peace agreements that neglect to address the deeper societal wounds and grievances.

Objectives of the Study

With support from the EU, Peace Dialogue NGO, in partnership with Azerbaijani partners, has carried out a comprehensive, needs-based scoping study. Titled 'The Voice of the People: Addressing the Needs of Conflict-Affected Societies in Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Efforts,' this study focuses on identifying the fundamental needs of various groups impacted by the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. It goes beyond surface-level observations to deeply explore the underlying needs and fears that shape societal viewpoints, aiming to outline key action plans for addressing these needs.

The study focuses on identifying the specific threats that shape people's perspectives on dignified peace and formulating customized recommendations for addressing these concerns. Recognizing that a potential treaty may not address every aspect uncovered, Peace Dialogue is committed to promoting a human-centered, needs-based approach in the pursuit of a durable political solution to the intricate conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

This report specifically presents the findings from the standardized interviews carried out in Armenia. It does not include the perspectives of those displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, as these interviews coincided with the significant events of September 2023 in Nagorno-Karabakh, which were marked by mass displacement of its inhabitants. Reports on the focus group discussions held in Armenia are scheduled for publication later in 2024. In addition, a separate report detailing the study conducted in Azerbaijan is in preparation and is set to be released in due course.

The project's fruition is notably attributed to the active support of the London-based Conciliation Resources (CR) and the Helsinki-based Crisis Management Initiative (CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation). The latter have been instrumental in assisting Peace Dialogue with the analysis of the collected data.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This scoping study's methodology was designed with precision to gain a multifaceted understanding of respondents' basic needs in relation to their views on a sustained and dignified peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The study includes 330 interviews, conducted by 10 trained interviewers across ten regions of Armenia and the capital, Yerevan.

Sampling Methodology

This study was methodically designed to explore the distinct needs of populations in various geographical and demographic settings, particularly focusing on:

- The distinct needs of residents in border regions adjacent to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, compared to those in areas further from the border.
- The unique requirements of individuals in rural settlements versus urban environments.
- A comparative analysis of needs in rural areas along the border and those in urban settlements near the border.

The purpose of targeting these specific categories was to gain insights into how proximity to conflict zones and different living environments affect the needs and viewpoints of the populations involved. Additionally, the study aimed to capture a diverse range of needs across various demographic groups, including differences in gender, occupation, and age.

In terms of methodology, the study utilized snowball sampling, a non-probability approach suitable for the study's unique focus and resource limits. This method involves initial participants recruiting others from their networks, creating a chain of referrals. While effective for reaching specific groups, this technique may not capture a fully diverse range of perspectives, as it builds a sample based on existing networks. Thus, while insightful, the findings should be extrapolated with caution, as they may not be entirely representative of the broader population.

Data Collection Techniques

Interviews, lasting 30-40 minutes, were conducted using a standardized questionnaire comprising 21 questions. The rationale for this structured approach is detailed in the theoretical framework section below.

Analysis Method

Data was analyzed using 'Inclus^{iv}' a tool developed from complex peace mediation processes by Nobel Peace Prize laureate President Martti Ahtisaari's Crisis Management Initiative's (CMI) former employees. This tool is designed to identify and analyze shared interests, threats, and uncertainties to aid progress in the peace process.

Theoretical Framework

Needs-Based Approach: The study adopted Johan Galtung's Typology of Basic Human Needs^v, categorizing needs into *Security*, *Welfare*, *Freedom*, and *Identity*. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of societal expectations and inherent contradictions in

conflict resolution processes, emphasizing the need to align resolution strategies with the underlying conflict sources. Identifying these needs was crucial for making practical, multi-layered recommendations for addressing them.

Identification of Populations' Needs and Fears (PIN Framework): The PIN^{vi} (Positions/Interests/Needs) framework was another fundamental theoretical principle of this study, helping to understand the underlying dynamics of the conflict by examining the perspectives of involved parties. Basic needs form the foundation for societal interests, which in turn influence individual positions. By employing this approach, the study aimed to delve into the underlying emotions, motivations, and needs shaping these positions, thus, in the longer term, aiming at facilitating effective communication and dialogue between conflicting parties. The PIN framework also helped identify common ground and potential areas of compromise, shifting the focus from entrenched positions to shared interests and underlying needs.

The Human Security Concept: This concept formed the third theoretical pillar, identifying fundamental needs within The Human Security Concept: As the third theoretical pillar, the Human Security Concept was integral to identifying fundamental needs within conflict-affected societies. These needs were categorized and subdivided according to the Human Security Concept, providing a deeper understanding of the specific needs that shape participants' positions. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 0-10 the impact of 21 pre-identified threats, categorized into four major groups – threats to security, welfare, freedom, and identity.

Limitations of the Study

- The study is not fully representative, reflecting the views of only those interviewed.
- Subjective perceptions may have influenced respondents' understanding of key terms like security, human rights, democracy, or identity.
- The interviews were conducted during the critical events of September 2023 in Nagorno-Karabakh, marked by a mass displacement of its inhabitants. This backdrop notably influenced the responses from the Armenian participants, who often expressed concerns more reflective of the collective needs of the displaced people from Nagorno-Karabakh. This response pattern highlighted a deep sense of empathy and identification among the Armenian respondents with those forced to leave their homeland in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Through abovementioned methodology, the study offers vital insights into the complex dynamics of peace and conflict, considering the perspectives of a diverse group of individuals in the region.



Threats to Peace: Perceptions and Ratings

The Scoping Study Demography

The study encompassed 330 interviews conducted across all regions of Armenia and capital Yerevan. Specifically, it involved 25 interviews in border-adjacent rural areas, 21 in border-adjacent urban settlements, 69 in non-border rural areas, and 215 in non-border urban areas. The gender distribution of respondents included 111 males and 219 females. In terms of occupational representation, 51 respondents were from state institutions, 55 from local governments, 64 worked in the private or public sector, 52 were unemployed, 50 were students, 53 were retirees, and 5 fell into other categories. The study was inclusive of all age groups, with 86 respondents aged between 18-30 years, 111 aged 30-45 years, 75 aged 45-60 years, and 58 aged over 60 years.

Fig.1. Interview Distribution by Location

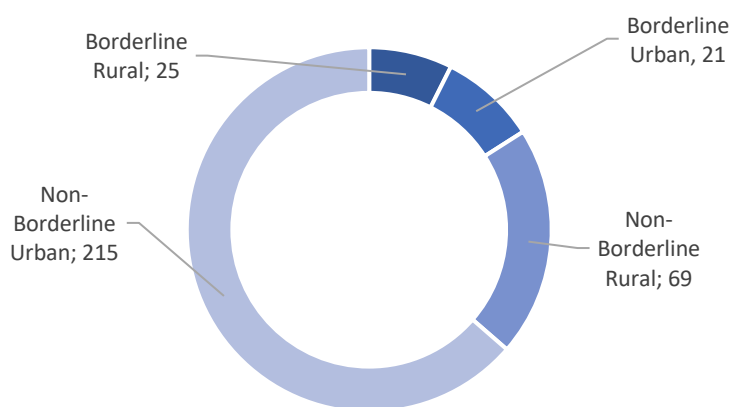


Fig.2. Gender Distribution

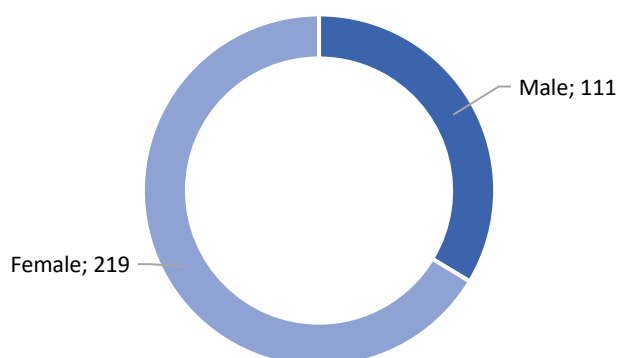


Fig.3. Sector Distribution

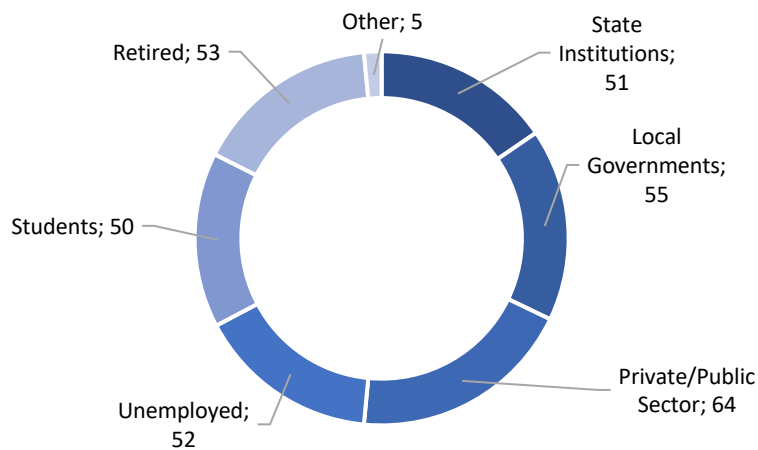
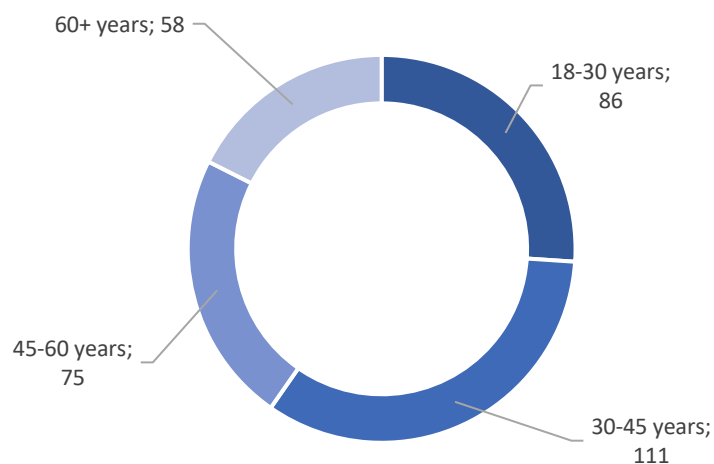


Fig.4. Age Group Distribution



Respondents were requested to evaluate, on a scale from 0 to 10, the impact of various threats on the development of a long-term and dignified peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In this scale, a rating of 1 indicates that the threat is not important at all, whereas a rating of 10 denotes that it is crucially important. The 21 threats identified were categorized into four major groups: threats to security, welfare, freedom, and identity.

Security Category:

1. Threats to physical existence (acts of violence, warfare, terrorism, or any form of aggression that directly endanger the well-being of individuals or their property).
2. Economic threats (financial instability, poverty, or disruptions to trade and commerce that can have adverse effects on the economic well-being of individuals and societies).
3. Cyber security threats (unauthorized access, hacking, data breaches, identity theft, and other malicious activities that target computer systems, networks, or online platforms, posing risks to digital security and privacy).
4. Environmental threats (risks associated with natural disasters, climate change, pollution, deforestation, and other factors that pose challenges to the health of ecosystems and the sustainable use of natural resources).



5. Political and social threats (challenges to political stability, such as political unrest, corruption, social turmoil, ideological conflicts, and human rights violations that can undermine social cohesion and the well-being of individuals and communities).

Welfare Category:

6. Threats to welfare and financial stability (social exclusion, inequality).
7. Threats to adequate living standards (lack of access to essential services such as housing, food, electricity, gas, water, and other livelihood necessities).
8. Threats to stable employment (limited job opportunities or the inability to secure stable and decent employment, leading to financial stress, reduced access to resources, and decreased overall well-being).
9. Threats to social security (inadequate healthcare, social assistance programs, and pension schemes that fail to provide necessary support to individuals and communities).
10. Threats to potential education and skills development (restricted opportunities for quality education and skill-building, hindering personal growth and socioeconomic advancement).
11. Threats to potential health inequities (inadequate access to clean water, inadequate sanitation, prevalence of infectious diseases or malnutrition).

Freedom Category:

12. Threats to democracy and freedom (suppression of political dissent by governments, restriction of media independence).
13. Threats to effective democratic governance (inadequate or corrupt democratic institutions, lack of transparency and accountability in governance, and limited political participation, which undermine the democratic process and restrict citizens' ability to engage meaningfully in decision-making).
14. Threats to freedom of speech (imposed restrictions on freedom of expression, including censorship, intimidation of journalists, online surveillance and control over media outlets; curtailment of individuals' ability to express their opinions, share information, and participate in public discourse).
15. The human rights violation threats (torture, arbitrary detention, discrimination, and persecution that infringe upon individuals' fundamental human rights, compromising their freedom and hindering their pursuit of personal aspirations).
16. Threats to civil liberties (restrictions on civil liberties, such as the freedom of assembly, association, and peaceful protests, which impede citizens' ability to exercise their rights and voice their concerns).
17. Social and cultural oppression threats (societal norms, traditions, and cultural practices that discriminate against specific groups, including women, minorities, or marginalized communities, and perpetuate discrimination, prejudice, and social exclusion, undermining the principle of equal freedom for all).

Identity Category:

18. Threats to equality, inclusion and impartiality (discrimination, prejudice, social exclusion, discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or other aspects of identity, as well as depriving individuals or groups of social, political or economic opportunities because of their identity).
19. Threats to cultural diversity and heritage preservation (cultural assimilation) (imposition of pressure to conform to dominant cultural norms and values, often at the expense of destroying one's own cultural identity and cultural heritage).

20. Identity suppression threats (prohibiting or restricting individuals or groups from expressing their cultural, linguistic or religious identity, which undermines diversity and destroys the richness of cultural heritage).
21. Stereotyping and misrepresentation threats (negative stereotypes and misrepresentation in media, education, or public discourse that perpetuate harmful narratives about certain identities, contributing to discrimination and bias).

Key Concerns of the Respondents

The Armenian respondents' perspectives indicate a comprehensive view of peace-building, incorporating security, welfare, freedom, and identity. The calculated average ratings for each category are as follows:

- Security Category: The average rating is 7.64.
- Welfare Category: The average rating is 7.12.
- Freedom Category: The average rating is 6.72.
- Identity Category: The average rating is 6.94.

Fig.5. Average Ratings Per Category

Security 7.64 out of 10	Welfare 7.12 out of 10
Freedom 6.72 out of 10	Identity 6.94 out of 10

The data suggests that while there are concerns across all categories, the primary focus of respondents is on immediate physical safety, economic stability, and the long-term importance of education and cultural preservation. These priorities reflect a nuanced understanding of peace-building, where immediate threats to safety and economy are as crucial as the sustenance of cultural identity and education for future stability. Based on the average ratings for each category, the prioritization among the Armenian respondents appears as follows:

Security Category (Average Rating: 7.64): This is the highest prioritized category. Within this, the specific concerns are:

- *Physical threats (8.67):* The highest-rated subcategory, indicating extreme concern over violence, warfare, and aggression.
- *Economic threats (7.97):* Also highly rated, showing significant worry about financial instability and its effects on societal well-being.

Welfare Category (Average Rating: 7.12): The second most prioritized category. Key concerns here are:

- *Education and skills development threats (7.49):* Reflecting the importance placed on education for future stability and peace.



- *Welfare and financial stability threats (7.53):* Indicating concerns about social exclusion and inequality.
- *Stable employment threats (7.22):* Highlighting the importance of job security in societal stability.

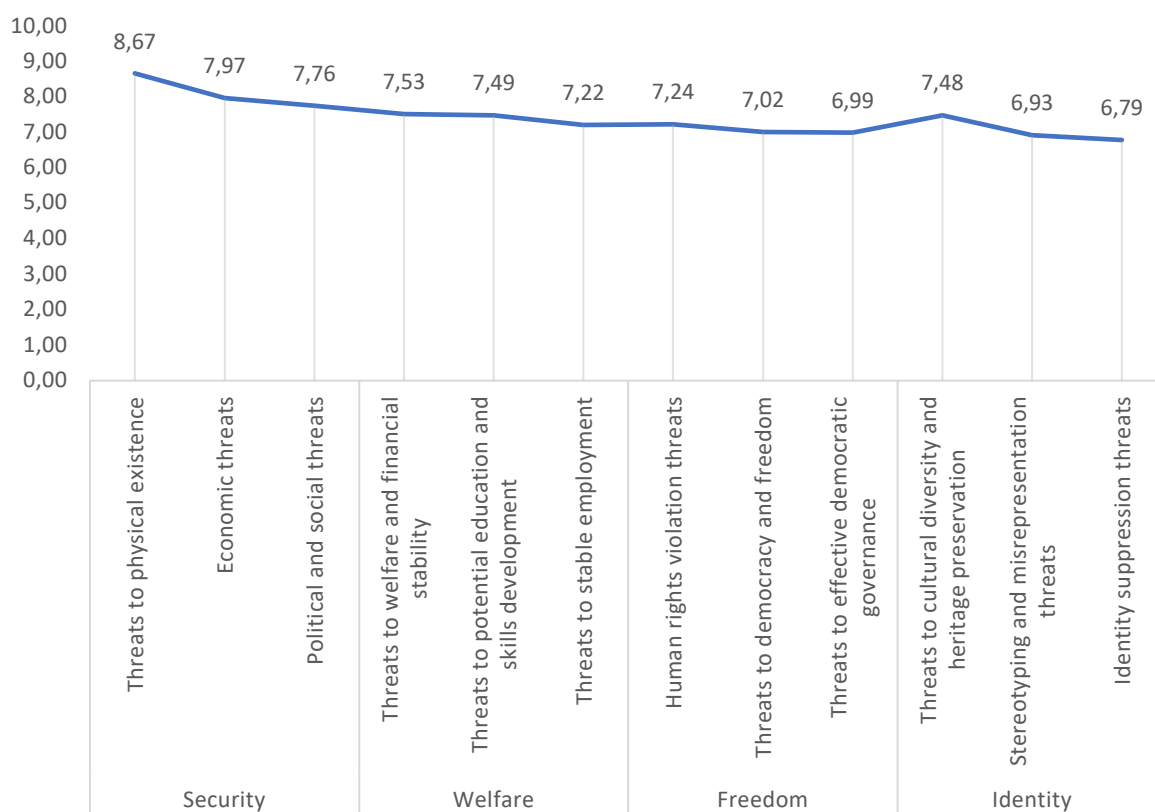
Freedom Category (Average Rating: 6.72):

- *Democracy and freedom (7.02) and Human rights violation threats (7.24):* These potential threats received the highest concern within the freedom category, emphasizing worries about political oppression and human rights issues.

Identity Category (Average Rating: 6.94):

- *Cultural diversity and heritage preservation threats (7.48):* The most prioritized subcategory under identity, indicating a strong emphasis on preserving cultural identity and heritage.

Fig.6. Top 3 Average Ratings Per Category



Key Findings and Insights: Correlations and Patterns

The analysis clearly highlights that security threats are the primary concern among respondents. However, it's worth noting that concerns related to welfare, freedom, and identity also play significant roles in influencing peace-building efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The study uncovers notable variations in how threats are perceived based on region, gender, age, and occupation, underscoring the diverse perspectives in this conflict context.

Respondents from both rural and urban border-adjacent settlements consistently assigned higher ratings to threats, particularly those related to physical security, cultural heritage, education, unemployment, and human rights violations. Over 90% of these respondents rated security threats at 9 or higher. Welfare-related threats also received substantial attention within this group. Identity-related threats were also a prominent concern, with ratings mostly at 8 or higher. However, while human rights and freedom threats were considered important, they received slightly lower ratings, mostly above 7. It can be assumed that the slightly lower ratings for threats to human rights and freedoms indicate a prevailing dichotomy where the securitization of border areas is often prioritized at the expense of democratic principles and human rights.

In non-border settlements, respondents gave relatively average ratings to freedom-related threats, including human rights violations, democracy, effective democratic governance, civil liberties, and social and cultural oppression.

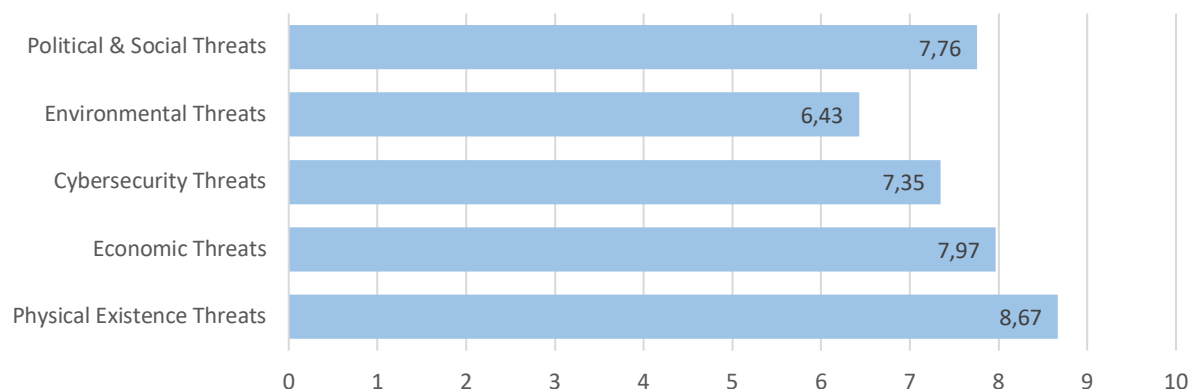
Additionally, gender differences in threat perceptions emerged. Male respondents generally assigned lower ratings to threats compared to female respondents, who rated most categories higher. Notably, the only threat that received a higher rating from men than women was related to civil liberties.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals significant age-related variations in threat perceptions. The youngest group (18-30) attached greater importance to freedom-related threats, while the middle-aged group (45-60) considered them slightly above average. Instead, they focused more on physical, economic, and socio-political threats. The older generation prioritized welfare and rated cybersecurity threats the lowest. Nevertheless, there was a consensus across all age groups regarding the high importance of identity threats, with most ratings falling between 7 and 8.

Analysis of Security-Related Threats by Regional, Gender, Age-Related, and Occupational Groups

Fig.7. Average Ratings of Security-Related Threats Category





1. Physical Threats (Average Rating: 8.67):

Regional Variation: Respondents from both urban and rural areas express considerable concerns about physical threats. Particularly in border regions, residents view aggression and violence as significant impediments to peace. In addition, those living in these border settlements frequently highlight the ineffectiveness of two key entities: the Russian Federal Security Service's border service operating in Armenia, and the Russian peacekeeping deployment in Nagorno-Karabakh. They note these entities' failure to resolve ongoing physical security issues. These concerns are often linked to the mass exodus of the population from Nagorno-Karabakh. Such issues significantly influence the respondents' perceptions of regional stability and safety, emphasizing the profound impact these challenges have on the area's security dynamics.

“Any aggression and violence exclude the establishment of peace.” (Female, public-sector employee, border-adjacent rural settlement in Artanish, Gegharkunik region, age group 45-60)

Gender Perspective: Both genders emphasized physical security, but women expressed greater immediacy in their fears.

“The loss of Artsakh and the fear of more attacks in the near future represent major threats to peace for me.” (Female, unemployed, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 30-45)

Age-Related Concerns: Concern over physical threats is consistently high across all age groups. Both younger individuals (18-30) and those over 60 years of age notably highlight these threats as a major concern.

“Physical threat is currently one of the biggest threats.” (Female, student, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Occupational Variation: The perception of physical threats as significant spans various occupations. This includes the unemployed, private/public sector employees, and students, indicating a broad recognition of these threats.

2. Economic Threats (Average Rating: 7.97):

Regional Variation: Respondents from urban areas and those living in border-adjacent rural areas exhibit diverse perspectives. In urban areas, economic stability is often viewed as important for peace. Conversely, individuals in border areas are less likely to see economic factors as a direct obstacle to peace.

“A strong economy and fair trade are important, but they don't hinder peace. More peace and open borders would further develop our economy.” (Female, public-sector

employee, border-adjacent rural settlement in Artanish, Gegharkunik region, age group 45-60)

Gender Perspective: Both men and women acknowledge the impact of economic threats on peace, but women, in particular, offer deeper insights into how the threats affect peace.

"Economic pressures can contribute to conflict and war." (Female, private-sector employee, border-adjacent rural settlement in Berd, Tavush region, age group 30-45)

Age-Related Concerns: Younger respondents, particularly those from urban areas, are more optimistic about the potential for economic opportunities in a peaceful environment.

"I am hopeful for the opening of our borders and the initiation of free trade, along with alternative trade routes." (Male, public-sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Occupational Variation: Views on economic threats differ among various occupations. Some individuals, especially in the private/public sector, regard economic stability as crucial. Others, however, consider it less critical compared to immediate physical security concerns.

3. Cybersecurity Threats (Average Rating: 7.35):

Regional Variation: Concerns about cybersecurity are more pronounced among urban respondents, indicative of greater awareness in digitally connected environments. Nonetheless, rural residents also recognize the significance of cybersecurity in maintaining peace.

"Cyber wars and cybercrimes are critical dangers in this era, with a lack of media literacy exacerbating the issue." (Male, private or public sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

"Physical and digital security are both essential for peaceful coexistence." (Female, private or public sector employee, border-adjacent rural settlement in Artanish, Gegharkunik region, age group 45-60)

Gender Perspective: Cybersecurity is acknowledged as important by both genders, but women, particularly from rural areas, tend to emphasize its importance more frequently.

"There is noticeable hostility on the Internet." (Female, student, border-adjacent rural settlement in Tavush, age group 18-30)

Age-Related Concerns: Younger respondents demonstrated a heightened awareness of cybersecurity threats. This reflects a generational shift toward greater digital engagement and understanding of online risks.

"We are in the midst of a hybrid war where all methods must be employed to emphasize the value of digital security." (Female, student, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Occupational Variation: Concern about cybersecurity is particularly evident among students and professionals in the private/public sector. This indicates a correlation between occupational exposure to digital environments and the recognition of cybersecurity as a critical issue.

4. Environmental Threats (Average Rating: 6.43):



Regional Variation: There is a notable concern about environmental threats among respondents from both rural and urban areas, especially those in proximity to Lake Sevan. This indicates an awareness of the critical role that environmental factors play in the broader context of country's stability.

"The current risk to Lake Sevan's ecosystem could lead to water scarcity, posing a significant threat to peace." (Female, private or public sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Gender Perspective: Environmental concerns are uniformly recognized by both males and females, highlighting a shared understanding of the importance of environmental health and sustainability.

Age-Related Concerns: Older respondents express heightened concern about environmental issues. This likely stems from their direct experience with and reliance on local ecosystems for their livelihoods.

"Lake Sevan's deteriorating ecosystem, affecting both local and national resources, has become a major issue." (Male, public-sector employee, border-adjacent rural settlement in Artanish, Gegharkunik, age group 60+)

Occupational Variation: Awareness and concern for environmental issues cut across various occupational groups. This broad acknowledgment reflects a general consensus on the critical importance of environmental sustainability for the stability.

5. Political and Social Threats (Average Rating: 7.76):

Regional Variation: Respondents from all areas, whether urban or rural, consistently emphasize the critical importance of political and social stability for peace attainment. This widespread agreement, cutting across regional lines, highlights the recognized necessity of maintaining political and social harmony in the processes of conflict resolution and peace-building. Importantly, individuals from various regions pointed out concerns regarding both internal and external threats to Armenia's political and social equilibrium, with specific references to potential risks emanating from neighboring countries such as Russia and Azerbaijan.

Gender Perspective: Female respondents, especially those in border-adjacent areas, highlight the crucial need for internal societal solidarity and stability. Their comments suggest an acute awareness of how internal discord can weaken a nation's stance and potentially give adversaries an advantage.

"Lack of internal peace can be exploited by external forces." (Female, student, border-adjacent rural settlement in Tavush, age group 18-30)

Age-Related Concerns: Older respondents, both in the 45-60 and 60+ age groups, and from various regions, voice significant concerns about societal instability and the absence of unity. These concerns reflect a deeper understanding of how internal conflicts can impact broader peace efforts.

"A lack of solidarity within society makes it challenging to seek peace externally." (Female, public-sector employee, border-adjacent rural settlement in Artanish, Gegharkunik region, age group 45-60)

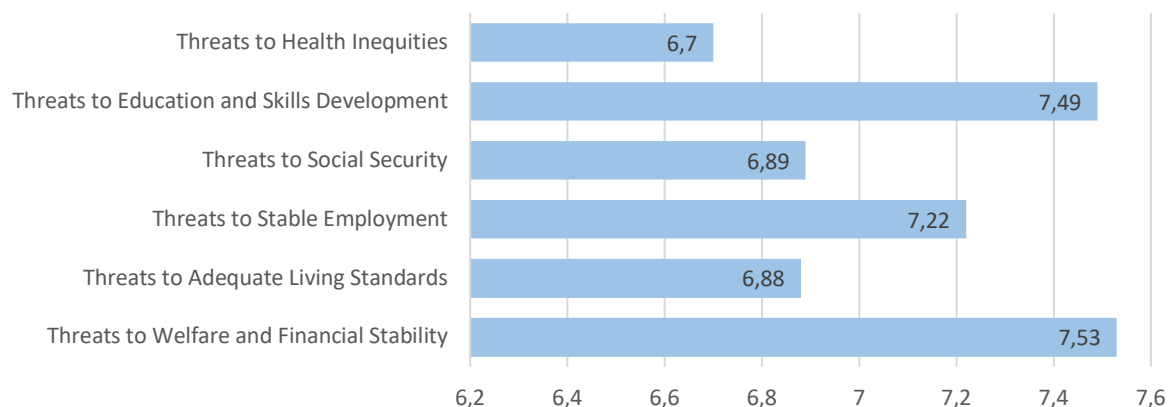
"We consistently struggle with internal cohesion." (Female, private or public sector employee, non-border rural settlement in Tavush, age group 45-60)

Occupational Variation: The perception of political and social threats as being detrimental to peace is a sentiment shared across various occupational groups. This consensus

underscores the belief that political and social stability is not just a political issue but a societal one, with implications for individuals in all walks of life.

Analysis of Welfare-Related Threats by Regional, Gender, Age-Related, and Occupational Groups

Fig.8. Average Ratings of Welfare-Related Threats Category



6. Threats to Welfare and Financial Stability (Average Rating: 7.53):

Regional Variation: In border-adjacent areas, respondents strongly associate welfare and financial stability with security. They perceive that poor welfare conditions lead to emigration, which in turn weakens national security.

"Poor welfare causes people to emigrate, leaving their ancestral homes, thereby weakening the country's security." (Male, public-sector employee, border-adjacent rural settlement in Artanish, Gegharkunik, age group 60+)

In non-border areas, however, many individuals view welfare issues as significant but not directly tied to conflict.

"Poverty and inequality obstruct the path to peace, but they are not pivotal in establishing it." (Female, retired, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 60+)

"When basic needs like food are unmet, it becomes challenging to contemplate peace." (Female, private or public sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Gender Perspective: Both men and women acknowledge the impact of welfare issues, but women, in particular, offer deeper insights into how poverty and inequality affect peace.

"The extended absence of men due to overseas employment undermines women's confidence in handling domestic and land-related responsibilities." (Female, private or public sector employee, non-border rural settlement in Tavush, age group 45-60)

Age-Related Concerns: Older residents, especially those over 60 in rural areas, directly link poor welfare to emigration, underscoring its profound impact on community stability.

Occupational Variation: There were no significant differences in perceptions of welfare-related threats across different occupations.

7. Threats to Adequate Living Standards (Average Rating: 6.88):



Regional Variation: Respondents from both urban and rural settings emphasize the importance of access to basic services. Rural respondents particularly highlight practical issues such as water supply problems.

"Serious water issues in villages severely affect daily life." (Female, private or public sector employee, non-border rural settlement in Tavush, age group 45-60)

"Inadequate living standards also drive emigration." (Male, private or public sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 30-45)

Gender Perspective: No notable gender-based differences were observed in perceptions of living standards.

Age-Related Concerns: The study did not identify specific age-related perceptions of living standards.

Occupational Variation: There were no significant occupational differences in views on living standards and welfare-related threats.

8. Threats to Stable Employment (Average Rating: 7.22):

Regional Variation: In urban areas, particularly Yerevan, there's a significant focus on how unemployment impacts young people and regional economies.

"Stable employment is crucial as the lack of it leads young people to emigrate, affecting all sectors of the economy, depopulating regions, and destabilizing the country." (Female, retired, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 60+)

Gender Perspective: Women are particularly concerned about the impact of employment issues on the absence of the male workforce, affecting family dynamics and stability.

"The closure of the Nuclear Power Plant, reducing job opportunities for men, is a current concern." (Female, local government employee, non-border urban settlement in Armavir, age group 18-30)

Age-Related Concerns: Specific age-related perceptions of employment stability were not identified in the study.

Occupational Variation: There were no significant differences in views on stable employment across various occupational groups.

9. Threats to Social Security (Average Rating: 6.89):

Regional Variation: Rural respondents, particularly from border-adjacent areas, highlight the lack of social security as a factor contributing to community depopulation, linking this issue to broader security concerns.

"The inadequacy of social security is regrettable in communities, leading to their depopulation, which poses risks to border villages." (Female, public-sector employee, border-adjacent rural settlement in Artanish, Gegharkunik, age group 45-60)

Gender Perspective: Female respondents, especially from rural areas, are more vocal about the deficiencies in social security systems.

Age-Related Concerns: Middle-aged (45-60) and older respondents (60+) show heightened concern regarding social security aspects, often rating this issue higher in importance.

Occupational Variation: Employees in the public sector express greater concern regarding threats to social security.

10. Threats to Education and Skills Development (Average Rating: 7.49):

Regional Variation: Respondents from both border-adjacent and non-border urban areas emphasized the long-term impacts of current educational inadequacies on future peace and societal development. Concerns were raised about distorted educational materials and a lack of critical thinking skills among the youth.

“We will feel the threats of education and skills in 20 years, with distorted books written at this moment, with youth that does not learn, does not have basic knowledge, does not know history and does not develop.” (Female, retired, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 60+)

“The educational sector is the most important and necessary for the establishment of peace.” (Female, State institution employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 60+)

Interestingly, in border-adjacent areas, respondents consider the problem of poor-quality education also in the context of security or preserving identity.

“The field of education should be in the center of attention as much as possible, it is important that the history is written correctly, without distortions and without false content.” (Female, Local government employee, border-adjacent settlement in Syunik, age group 18-30)

“The generation is very weak, illiterate, does not know its history, the history books contain falsified information, the teachers do not teach to think.” (Female, retired, border-adjacent urban settlement in Tavush, age group 60+)

However, a significant number of responses indicated that respondents do not necessarily connect good-quality education with peace.

“I find it difficult to connect education with peace.” (Female, public-sector employee, non-border rural settlement in Berd, Tavush, age group 45-60)

Gender Perspective: Predominantly, it is women who highlight the importance of education in fostering a stable and peaceful future.

Age-Related Concerns: Older respondents, particularly those aged 45-60 and above, emphasize the need for a correct and unbiased educational system.

“Educational programs are still very bad.” (Female, Local government employee, border-adjacent urban settlement in Berd, age group 45-60)

“If a person is uneducated, she/he is easily manipulated. Quality education is an important factor for a sustainable future.” (Male, private sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 45-60)

Interestingly, younger respondents seem more likely to see the connection between proper education and peace.

“I believe that by raising the level of education, we can achieve the establishment of peace.” (Female, state institution employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

“Education is perhaps the most important point and is interrelated with all other threats, the more educated people are, the more they are able to cover their needs



and life's needs, and already think about peace.” (Female, state institution employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

“Education is the basis of everything. If we have a good education system, when the teacher is educated and knowledgeable, and does not spread hatred and does not harm the mental world of children, when everything is in its place, we will be able to have a society that thinks about peace.” (Female, student, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Occupational Variation: There were no significant occupational differences in perceptions of education-related threats across various professions.

11. Threats to Health Inequities (Average Rating: 6.70):

Regional Variation: In many non-border urban settlements respondents frequently highlighted the issue of clean water when discussing health inequities. These concerns were also linked to the broader context of Armenian security.

“The problem of clean water is very topical right now in the regions of Armenia, and it can be a threat.” (Female, private entrepreneur, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

“The main reason for wars is the lack of clean water resources.” (Female, private sector employee, non-border urban settlement in Armavir, age group 30-45)

Gender Perspective: Female respondents from various regions, particularly in urban settings, express significant concerns about health inequities, focusing especially on water resources.

“Health inequities threats are very significant and are the main concern for me.” (Female, private sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

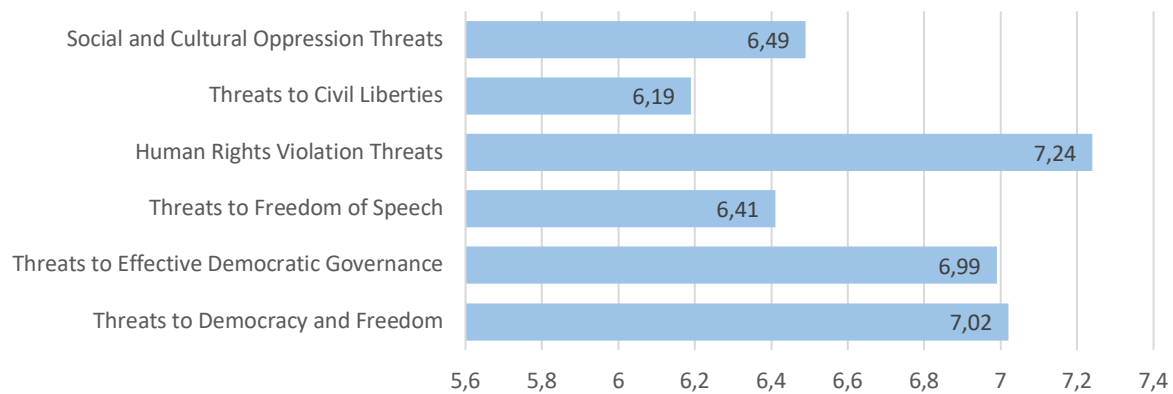
“Water resources are not inexhaustible, and it can be and become a cause of war. I should mention that now our clean water supply is endangered, and poisoning can be expected every day. Moreover, mining is a threat and can accelerate the depletion of clean water resources and lead to disasters.” (Female, state institution employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Age-Related Concerns: There were no significant age-related differences in perceptions of health inequity threats, indicating a widespread concern across various age groups.

Occupational Variation: Similarly, there were no significant occupational differences in the perception of health inequity threats, suggesting a common view of these threats across diverse professional sectors.

Analysis of Freedom-Related Threats by Regional, Gender, Age-Related, and Occupational Groups

Fig.9. Average Ratings of Freedom-Related Threats Category



12. Threats to Democracy and Freedom (Average Rating: 7.02):

Regional Variation: A wide range of opinions emerged regarding democracy and freedom, with some individuals considering them pivotal for stability while others perceived them as potential threats to security. Notably, these varied views did not align with any specific regional trends, suggesting that concerns about democracy and freedom are consistently held across different regions.

"Restrictions are necessary to some extent. It's a security issue." (Male, retired, from a border-adjacent rural settlement in Movses, Tavush, age group 60+)

Gender Perspective: The study did not reveal any significant gender-based differences in the perceptions of threats to democracy and freedom.

Age-Related Variations: Among older respondents, particularly those aged 60 and above, there was a tendency to view certain restrictions as necessary for ensuring security.

Occupational Variations: Perceptions of threats to democracy and freedom did not significantly vary across different occupational groups.

13. Threats to Effective Democratic Governance (Average Rating: 6.99):

Regional Variation: The study showed minimal differences in perceptions between urban and rural respondents on threats to democratic governance, with urban respondents placing greater emphasis on this threat. However, no significant regional variation was found between responses from border-adjacent and non-border areas.

Gender Perspective: Both male and female respondents expressed concerns about democratic governance. Males, particularly from urban areas, emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability.

"Everything depends on effective democratic governance." (Male, private sector employee, non-border rural settlement in Kapan, Syunik, age group 18-30)

"Corruption is a threat. It has always existed, even during the Soviet Union, and it will not disappear." (Male, unemployed, border-adjacent urban settlement in Berd, Tavush age group 45-60)

Age-Related Variations: The study did not find a correlation between age and perceptions of threats to effective democratic governance.

Occupational Variations: Responses varied across different occupations, with employees in the private and public sectors more frequently highlighting threats to effective democratic governance than representatives of local governments or state institutions.



14. Threats to Freedom of Speech (Average Rating: 6.41):

Regional Variation: Urban residents, particularly in Yerevan, expressed varied concerns regarding freedom of speech. Some advocate for controlled expression to prevent misinformation, recognizing the delicate balance between free speech and responsible communication.

"For me, one of the pillars of democracy is freedom of speech, but people in Armenia cannot use it correctly... But if there are restrictions from the state, then it is a serious threat." (Female, unemployed, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 30-45)

"Of course, I rate this a 10, but I think that at the moment there are no threats to freedom of speech, intimidation of journalists, etc. in Armenia..." (Female, student, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Conversely, some views suggest that while freedom of speech is crucial, it is not directly linked to the prospects of a dignified and long-lasting peace.

"It is a cause of internal conflicts... But I do not think that this is a threat to the establishment of a decent and long-term peace." (Female, public-sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Gender Perspective: Female respondents, particularly in urban areas, emphasize the importance of responsible free speech and the impact of misinformation.

Age-Related Variations: Younger respondents (18-30), especially in urban environments, show heightened awareness and concern for the nuances of freedom of speech.

"At the moment, I think that freedom of speech is not restricted in Armenia, but if there are forced restrictions, it will be one of the most serious threats." (Female, state institution employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, Age group 18-30)

Occupational Variations: The study did not find significant occupational differences in perceptions of threats to freedom of speech, indicating a uniform understanding across different professional sectors.

15. Human Rights Violation Threats (Average Rating: 7.24):

Regional Variation: A common concern about internal human rights violations leading to social unrest is evident across various regions. Respondents acknowledge that such violations could potentially escalate external threats.

"Human rights violations will lead to rallies and unrest, which can give an opportunity for external threats to escalate." (Male, public-sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 30-45)

Gender Perspective: Male respondents, particularly from urban settings emphasize the broader implications of human rights violations, noting their potential to exacerbate external threats.

Age-Related Variations: Concern over human rights issues is notably pronounced among middle-aged respondents.

Occupational Variations: The study indicates a discernible variation in the emphasis on human rights threats across various occupational sectors. Employees in the private and public sectors tend to be more outspoken about internal threats, whereas individuals in local governments or state institutions express greater concern about external threats to

human rights. This latter group frequently references human rights violations experienced by Armenians during the 44-Day War and the subsequent exodus of the Armenian population from Nagorno-Karabakh.

16. Threats to Civil Liberties (Average Rating: 6.19):

Regional Variation: Respondents' views on civil liberties varied, with some indicating that issues regarding civil liberties do not exist in Armenia, while others expressed concerns about their practical application. Despite these differing views, the study did not reveal any clear correlation with regional variation.

"Problem related to civil liberties does not exist in our country. That is why I rate this a '3'." (Female, local government sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Armavir, Age group 18-30)

"It is not a threat, because civil liberties are not restricted in Armenia, and any person or group can raise their concerns, hold rallies and that will not be hindered by the law." (Female, state Institution employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 60+)

"Based on recent demonstrations, there seems to be freedom of assembly in Armenia, but we often notice arbitrariness of the police." (Female, state institution employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Gender Perspective: This threat received a higher rating from men.

Age-Related Variations: Older respondents displayed more skepticism regarding the genuine exercise of civil liberties, suggesting a difference in perception based on age.

"For us, this is now a formality; theoretically, you can organize and participate in peaceful demonstrations, but if the government does not cooperate, they come and handcuff you, and that is very bad." (Female, retired, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 60+)

Occupational Variations: Responses to civil liberties issues varied across different occupations, with public sector employees tending to be more critical of the state of civil liberties.

17. Social and Cultural Oppression Threats (Average Rating: 6.49):

Regional Variation: Particularly in border areas there is a significant concern about the preservation of cultural heritage and traditions.

Gender Perspective: Female respondents express concerns about cultural oppression and its impact on identity.

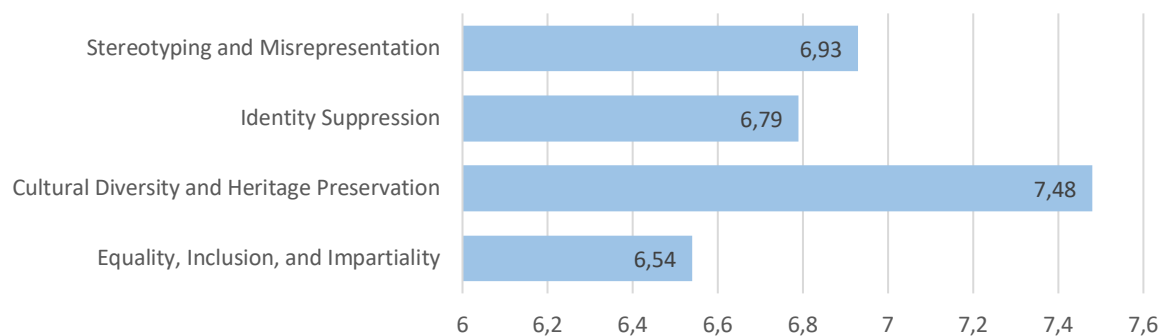
Age-Related Variations: Younger respondents are more sensitive to social and cultural oppression issues.

Occupational Variations: Students and public sector employees show heightened awareness of these threats.

Analysis of Identity-Related Threats by Regional, Gender, Age-Related, and Occupational Groups

Fig.10. Average Ratings of Identity-Related Threats Category





18. Threats to Equality, Inclusion, and Impartiality (Average Rating: 6.54):

Regional Variation: The respondents from border settlements, compared to those from non-border areas, assigned higher ratings to perceived threats. They primarily expressed concerns about the oppression of minorities, referencing historical events where the Armenian population in Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh faced suppression before the first Nagorno-Karabakh war.

Gender Perspective: The emphasis placed by female respondents on the oppression faced by minorities reflects a gendered sensitivity towards issues of equality and inclusion. Women's responses in the study indicate a particular awareness and concern about the rights and treatment of minority groups. This gendered perspective suggests that women may be more attuned to or affected by the dynamics of social exclusion and discrimination.

Age-Related Variations: The study did not identify significant age-related differences in the perception of threats related to equality, inclusion, and impartiality. This suggests that concerns regarding these issues are consistently recognized across different age groups.

Occupational Variation: The study did not reveal any significant occupational differences in perceptions regarding threats to equality, inclusion, and impartiality.

19. Threats to Cultural Diversity and Heritage Preservation (Average Rating: 7.48):

Regional Variation: Respondents from both rural and urban border settlements expressed heightened concerns about threats to cultural heritage, rating these higher than respondents from non-border areas. The respondents specifically referred to recent examples of mistreatment towards Armenian heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan following the 44-Day War.

Gender Perspective: Female respondents from urban settings, express concerns about cultural assimilation, indicating an awareness of the importance of preserving cultural diversity.

Age-Related Variations: Older respondents, particularly those over 60, show a deep concern for the preservation of cultural diversity and heritage, possibly due to a longer historical perspective.

“We have witnessed so many negative actions from their side [Azerbaijan], our expectations for anything positive are minimal.” (Female, private-sector employee, border-adjacent rural settlement, Tavush region, age group 60+)

Occupational Variation: Those in state institutions seem particularly aware of the threats to cultural diversity and heritage, suggesting a link between their professional roles and an understanding of these issues.

Identity Suppression Threats (Average Rating: 6.79):

Regional Variation: Respondents in border-adjacent settlements, which are closer to conflict zones, gave higher ratings to identity suppression threats. This heightened concern likely stems from their direct exposure to the conflict and its impact on cultural and identity expression.

Gender Perspective: Women, especially in urban areas, emphasize the seriousness of identity suppression, suggesting a gender-based perception of these threats.

Age-Related Variations: Younger respondents (18-30) in urban areas indicate a recognition of the need for serious work on this issue, showing a generational concern for identity expression.

“At this moment, addressing this issue should be a matter of serious priority.”
(Female, private-sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Yerevan, age group 18-30)

Occupational Variation: Individuals employed in the private and public sectors, particularly those in urban environments, demonstrate a keen awareness of the importance of addressing identity suppression.

Stereotyping and Misrepresentation Threats (Average Rating: 6.93):

Regional Variation: Respondents from border-adjacent areas express concerns about negative stereotyping and its impact, indicating a sensitivity to media and educational narratives in Azerbaijan and highlighting the issues related to complete mistrust between the conflict affected societies.

“Over the past 30 years, we have refrained from creating negative stereotypes and have consciously avoided instilling aggression in our children. We have not influenced them with words of hatred, which contrasts with the approach taken by Azerbaijan.” (Female, private-sector employee, non-border urban settlement, Berd, Tavush region, age group 60+)

Gender Perspective: No specific gender specific variations were highlighted in the responses.

Age-Related Variations: The analysis did not reveal any specific age-related differences in perceptions of stereotyping and misrepresentation threats.

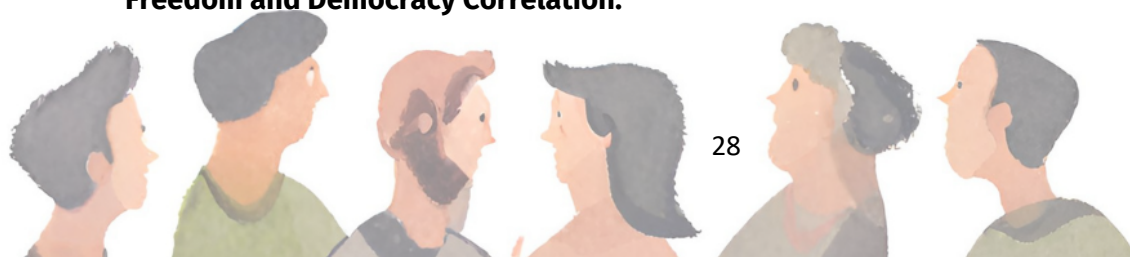
Occupational Variation: There were no significant occupational differences observed in the perception of stereotyping and misrepresentation threats among respondents.

Other Correlations

Welfare and Identity Correlations

The analysis indicates that welfare-related threats, such as financial stability, adequate living standards, stable employment, and social security, are viewed as important. Additionally, identity-related threats, including equality and cultural diversity, are highly rated. These two categories are correlated with respondents from border settlements who gave high ratings to security threats also prioritizing identity-related threats (rating them 8 and above). This correlation suggests that individuals who are concerned about their well-being and welfare are also likely to be concerned about issues related to identity and cultural preservation.

Freedom and Democracy Correlation:



The study revealed that respondents generally rated threats to freedom (such as democracy, democratic governance, and civil liberties) as lower in importance. This suggests a correlation between freedom-related threats, with respondents in areas with established democratic institutions potentially perceiving fewer threats to freedom. Conversely, in regions with a less democratic context, respondents may view freedom-related threats as more significant.

Uncovered Dilemmas and Contradictions:

Security vs. Freedom: There is a notable tension between the desire for physical security and the need for political freedoms and human rights. Some respondents view certain restrictions as necessary for security, potentially at odds with the principles of democracy and free expression. Notably, this conflict between security and democratic values has been a central theme of discussion in Armenia for many years. The issue forms the basis of academic research^{vii} by Professor Anna Ohanyan from Stonehill College in Massachusetts. In her work, Professor Ohanyan emphasizes the risks of forcing a choice between security and democracy within the Armenian context.

Economic Stability vs. Peace: While economic stability is widely regarded as essential for peace, numerous respondents from areas adjacent to the border do not perceive economic factors as immediate barriers to peace. Instead, the debate centers on the priority of this aspect: whether economic stability is a prerequisite for peace or a result of establishing long-term peace. This divergence in opinions indicates varying perspectives on the importance of economic conditions in conflict resolution and peace-building efforts.

Cultural Preservation vs. Integration: The emphasis on preserving cultural diversity and heritage suggests a possible tension with integration and coexistence efforts. There is a fear of cultural assimilation, indicating a protective stance towards cultural identity.

Regional Differences in Perception: While there are common concerns across regions, the intensity of certain threats, such as cultural preservation and economic instability, varies between border-adjacent and non-border areas, reflecting differing experiences and priorities.

Integrating Research Findings into Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace Agreements: Implications for Treaty Development

Formulating and executing a comprehensive peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan, one that effectively addresses the complexities identified in this study, presents a formidable challenge. This difficulty is compounded by several critical factors: a deeply entrenched history of rights violations, significant power imbalances and the prevalent use of force in diplomacy, a fragmented regional scenario with competing mediation efforts, and an increasingly challenging global landscape for sustainable peace agreements. These elements underscore the complex nature of the South Caucasus region and its extensive geopolitical implications.

Nevertheless, the core aim of this study is to give prominence to the voices of individuals from both border and non-border communities, enabling them to voice their specific needs and concerns. This research highlights the necessity of moving beyond the mere act of treaty signing. For a peace agreement to be effective, it must integrate a detailed understanding of the socio-economic, security, and cultural environments in which it will be implemented. Adopting such a holistic approach is essential in significantly diminishing the potential for future conflicts and enhancing stability in the region.

The involvement of "ordinary people" in shaping potential action paths and trajectories for various local and international, governmental and non-governmental entities is crucial element of Peace Dialogue's initiative. This approach ensures that the peace processes are driven by and cater to the needs and interests of those most affected by them. The peace treaty, underpinned by the findings of this needs-based study, is envisioned not just as a mechanism for immediate conflict resolution, but as a guide for establishing lasting peace and stability in the region. It calls for a dedicated effort from both Armenia and Azerbaijan to address the multifaceted needs of their populations, ensuring that the treaty transcends a mere diplomatic accord to become a framework for enduring peace and development.

This publication is founded on research conducted solely in Armenia, as previously mentioned. It's important to note that this study did not involve interviews with displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh. Additionally, a more comprehensive report detailing focus group discussions centered on people's needs will soon be released. This current report excludes interviews carried out in Azerbaijan by partners of the Peace Dialogue NGO. Consequently, the recommendations and proposals offered herein should be viewed as a foundation for ongoing discussions among politicians, experts, and peace practitioners. They also hold potential as a basis for dialogues between public group representatives from Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Incorporating the findings from the comprehensive study into a conceptual peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan involves creating a detailed framework that addresses the key areas of concern: *Security, Welfare, Freedom, and Identity*. Each of these areas encompasses specific issues that were highlighted as significant by the study's respondents. Here's a breakdown of how these findings could be translated into treaty provisions:

Specific Provisions for Security Category

- Establishing the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and mutual respect that guide the treaty.



- Starting demarcation and delimitation processes between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The involvement of international mediators is preferred to ensure impartiality and effectiveness. This process will prioritize the specific needs of border communities, focusing on fair and equitable access to essential natural and technical resources. These resources include pastures, fields, water sources, and other critical assets that are vital for the sustenance and prosperity of these communities.
- Establishing a permanent ceasefire and creating demilitarized zones, especially in highly contentious areas.
- Implementing joint security initiatives, possibly under international supervision, to ensure physical safety and prevent acts of aggression. As a possible step a Joint Peacekeeping and Monitoring Commission can be established. This initiative could be effectively executed under the guidance of the EU's CSDP Mission. This commission would include representatives from both Armenia and Azerbaijan to oversee the enforcement of ceasefire agreements and prevent escalations.
- Developing cross-border economic initiatives that can benefit both nations, promoting economic stability and reducing the likelihood of conflict due to resource competition.

Specific Provisions for Welfare Category

- Ensuring all citizens have access to essential services like housing, food, and healthcare. *For instance, rebuild and improve infrastructure in affected areas, ensuring access to essential services like healthcare, electricity, and water supply.*
- Creating job opportunities and implementing programs to promote stable employment, particularly in border areas. *For instance, implement economic development projects, particularly in border areas, to enhance financial stability and reduce migration due to economic hardship.*
- Strengthening social security systems to provide adequate support to all, especially in border-adjacent rural communities.

Specific Provisions for Freedom Category

- Committing to democratic principles, transparency, and effective governance to address concerns of political and social threats.
- Protecting the freedom of speech and ensuring civil liberties, with mechanisms to monitor and address any violations.
- Establishing strict measures against human rights violations, possibly with international oversight or support.
- Boosting media literacy in societies affected by conflict is crucial to increase their resilience against media manipulation and hate speech. This enhancement will empower individuals to critically assess and understand media content, fostering a more informed and discerning approach to consuming information. Such an initiative aims to mitigate the impact of misleading narratives and reduce the spread of animosity and misinformation.

Specific Provisions for Identity Category

- Safeguarding cultural diversity and heritage, with specific provisions to protect minority rights and historical sites.
- Promoting educational programs that respect cultural diversity and historical accuracy, focusing on developing critical thinking skills and reducing misinformation.
- Implementing strict laws against discrimination, stereotyping, and identity suppression, ensuring equality and impartiality for all groups.

Other Provisions

- Establishing a joint commission with representatives from both Armenia and Azerbaijan, including international observers, to oversee the implementation of the treaty.
- Actively engaging border communities in the demarcation and delimitation processes is essential to ensure that decisions are made in alignment with the specific needs of these areas. This approach emphasizes the importance of incorporating local insights and requirements into territorial negotiations, thereby fostering decisions that truly reflect and address the unique challenges and priorities of the communities directly impacted by these boundaries.
- Providing a clear process for resolving disputes that may arise from treaty implementation.
- Scheduling regular meetings to review progress, address any emerging issues, and make necessary adjustments to the treaty provisions.
- Involving local communities, especially those from border areas, in the monitoring process to ensure that the treaty reflects and responds to the needs of the people it affects.
- Keeping provisions for amendments, considering the fluid nature of the conflict and the possibility of changing circumstances.
- Setting a fixed duration for the treaty with the possibility of renewal or revision, based on mutual agreement.

These conceptual measures, grounded in the study's findings, aim to lay the groundwork for a lasting peace that addresses the deep-rooted issues affecting both nations. It acknowledges the complexities of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and strives to create a sustainable framework for peace and development, taking into account the diverse needs and concerns of the affected populations. By structuring the treaty in this manner, with specific articles dedicated to each key area of concern, it can be possible to create a comprehensive and actionable document that is sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the affected populations. The treaty should be a living document, adaptable to changing circumstances and capable of fostering a sustainable and enduring peace.



Conclusion and Recommendations: Future Research and Considerations

Drawing upon the thorough examination of the needs and concerns of those impacted by the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, it is suggested that the following recommendations be adopted to bolster the Peace Treaty and lay the groundwork for its human-centered drafting and implementation. These recommendations are again organized into four principal domains: *Security, Welfare, Freedom, and Identity*.

- **Establish the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and mutual respect that guide the treaty:** These principles should act as a guarantor of goodwill, explicitly ruling out any new territorial claims and prohibiting the use or threat of forceful actions.
- **Establish a Joint Peacekeeping and Monitoring Commission:** This commission would include representatives from both Armenia and Azerbaijan, with possible participation from neutral international bodies (guarantors), to oversee the enforcement of ceasefire agreements and prevent escalations. The border communities can be also involved in the work of such Commission.
- **Invest in Border Security and Initiatives:** Allocate resources for border security improvements in conflict-affected areas to ensure the safety of local populations.
- **Implement Conflict-Sensitive Economic Development Programs:** Develop cross-border economic initiatives, promoting economic stability and reducing the likelihood of conflict due to resource competition.
- **Cross-Border Humanitarian Aid Programs:** Establish joint Armenian-Azerbaijani humanitarian aid programs, with international support, to assist populations in conflict zones, focusing on providing essentials like food, water, and medical supplies.
- **Invest in Infrastructure and Essential Services:** Rebuild and improve infrastructure in affected areas, ensuring access to essential services like healthcare, electricity, and water supply.
- **Employment and Economic Development Initiatives:** Create job opportunities and economic development projects, particularly in border areas, to enhance financial stability and reduce migration due to economic hardship.
- **Joint Media Initiatives:** Develop bi-national media projects aimed at promoting understanding and reducing misinformation, thereby enhancing freedom of speech and reducing the likelihood of propaganda-driven and hate speech-driven conflicts.
- **Civic Education Programs:** Implement education programs focused on democratic values, human rights, and the importance of civil liberties, fostering a culture of respect for freedom and pluralism.
- **Transparent Governance Mechanisms:** Establish transparent, accountable governance processes in conflict areas, with oversight mechanisms to ensure that local populations can participate meaningfully in decision-making processes.

- **Cultural Exchange and Preservation Programs:** Foster programs for cultural exchange and the preservation of cultural heritage, emphasizing the importance of respecting and preserving the diverse cultural identities of the region.
- **Anti-Discrimination Laws and Enforcement:** Implement and strictly enforce anti-discrimination laws, ensuring equality and inclusion for all ethnicities, religions, and genders.
- **Education Reform for Inclusivity and Diversity:** Reform educational curriculums to include content that reflects the diverse cultural and historical narratives of the region, promoting mutual respect and understanding.

These proposals, grounded in the specific needs of the populations, aim to address the root causes of the conflict's intractability and pave the way for a sustainable and peaceful coexistence between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is crucial that these initiatives are implemented with a spirit of collaboration, mutual respect, and a long-term commitment to peace and stability in the region.

The pursuit of a lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan is a complex and multifaceted endeavor. It requires dedicated efforts not only in diplomatic negotiations but also in addressing the underlying needs and fears of the affected populations. The integration of these findings into policy-making, diplomatic efforts, and cross-border initiatives can pave the way for a sustainable resolution to this long-standing conflict. The commitment to a human-centered, needs-based approach remains fundamental in ensuring that any peace treaty or agreement is not only signed but also successful in fostering enduring peace and stability in the region.

Conflict Resolution and Diplomacy

Amplifying Local Voices: Future peace initiatives should continue to integrate the perspectives of those directly affected by the conflict, particularly from border and non-border communities. This approach ensures that the peace treaty is not only a diplomatic agreement but also a reflection of the people's needs and concerns.

Flexible Diplomatic Framework: The peace process should remain adaptable to the dynamic geopolitical landscape and the evolving needs of both nations. Diplomatic efforts need to focus on creating mutual understanding and addressing core issues of the conflict, including territorial disputes and security concerns.

International Mediation and Support: Continued involvement of international bodies, such as the European Union and the OSCE Minsk Group, is crucial. Their role in mediating and providing a neutral platform for dialogue can help overcome the stalemates often encountered in direct negotiations.

Domestic Initiatives

Building Internal Cohesion: Strengthening internal societal solidarity within both Armenia and Azerbaijan is vital. This includes addressing internal political and social threats, fostering national unity, and ensuring that domestic policies align with peacebuilding objectives.

Educational Reforms and Historical Narrative: Future research should focus on the role of education in peacebuilding. Developing educational materials that promote a balanced



historical narrative and encourage critical thinking can significantly contribute to long-term peace.

Infrastructure and Economic Development: Addressing the economic and welfare needs identified in the study is crucial. This involves reconstructing damaged infrastructure, providing adequate living standards, and creating stable employment opportunities, particularly in affected regions.

Cross-Border Initiatives

Enhanced Cross-Border Cooperation: Promoting initiatives that foster cooperation in areas such as trade, environment, and cultural exchanges can build trust and reduce animosity between the two nations.

Joint Security Mechanisms: Establishing joint security measures along the border, potentially under international supervision, can help prevent future escalations and build confidence.

Addressing Human Rights and Civil Liberties: Both nations should work towards upholding human rights and civil liberties. Establishing joint commissions to investigate and address any violations can be a significant step towards reconciliation.

Future Research Directions

Expanding the Study's Scope: Future research should include perspectives from displaced persons in Nagorno-Karabakh and conduct similar studies in Azerbaijan. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict's impact on all affected populations.

Long-Term Impact Studies: Research focusing on the long-term psychological and societal impacts of the conflict can provide insights into the needs for mental health support and social reconciliation programs.

Endnotes

ⁱ European Parliament, Plenary– October 2022; Question time: Heightening tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan/
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/733675/EPRS_ATA\(2022\)733675_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/733675/EPRS_ATA(2022)733675_EN.pdf)

ⁱⁱ New Eastern Europe: What’s behind the new round of clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan:

<https://neweasterneurope.eu/2022/09/20/armenia-azerbaijan-pelosi-russia-ukraine/>

ⁱⁱⁱ CivilNet.am: Who really are Azerbaijan’s ‘environmental activists’ blockading Karabakh?:

<https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/686152/who-really-are-azerbaijans-environmental-activists-blockading-karabakh/>

^{iv} Please, find the tool under the following link: <https://inclus.com/en/>

^v Transcend International: A Peace Development Environment Network: The Basic Need Approach by Johan Galtung, Pg.12: <https://www.transcend.org/galtung/papers/The%20Basic%20Needs%20Approach.pdf>

^{vi} Online Course on Transforming Civil Conflicts, Grenoble, 2011: Positions, Interests and Needs. Source:

https://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-experience-770_en.html

^{vii} CivilNet.am: Security vs Democracy: A False Choice for Armenia: Anna Ohanyan:

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