

Talks aimed at resolving the Karabakh conflict fail

On 24 June, talks between Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Serzh Sargsian of Armenia concerning the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, conducted under Russian auspices in Kazan, ended in failure. The lack of progress in the talks does not mean armed conflict is more likely, but it may contribute to increased tensions between the parties.

The talks were preceded by pressure from the international community; the US President phoned the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the eve of the talks; the French President sent a letter to Serzh Sargsian, and the presidents of Russia, France and the US released a declaration at the G8 summit in May. They had counted on progress in the Karabakh talks in the form of a 'road map' based on the so-called Madrid principles of 2007. However, there was no such expectation on the part of the two states at the heart of the conflict. The failure of the talks (after the meeting, only a cryptic statement about "joint agreement on a number of issues" was issued) clearly demonstrates that the existing formula for resolving the Karabakh conflict has been exhausted and will not produce any real results. This is the result of a lack of political will to resolve the conflict, the changes in the material capabilities of Azerbaijan and Armenia (the rise of Azerbaijan's importance and military power over the past five years, and the weakening of Armenia) and Russia's unclear position. In the current circumstances, any resumption of the conflict would be risky and irrational for both parties. However, the dynamics of events in the region (signs of crisis in Armenia, the presidential elections in Russia, the rise in Turkey's position) means that this cannot be ruled out. <ola>