

ENSURING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES BY AZERBAIJAN IN THE CONTEXT OF REINTEGRATION OF DE-OCCUPIED KARABAKH TERRITORIES: CONCLUSIONS FOR UKRAINE

Author:

Oleksii Avdieiev

After the successful completion of the territorial integrity restoration process, the government of Azerbaijan is focusing its efforts on a new program of national significance – the reconstruction of liberated territories. Massive resources are directed towards its implementation, essential for demining the areas and restoring the infrastructure destroyed during the Armenian occupation. The successful conclusion of this process aims to ensure the return of tens of thousands of Azerbaijani refugees to Karabakh and transform the region into a developed, modernized part of the state.

Studying the Azerbaijani experience on this matter is of practical interest for Ukraine, as similar issues may become relevant for our country in the future. Kyiv has much to learn from Baku, particularly regarding strategic planning, task prioritization, and mobilization of resources to address corresponding issues. However, significant differences in the nature of the Armenian-Azerbaijani and Russian-Ukrainian conflicts, as well as variations in the resources possessed by Azerbaijan and Ukraine, make it impossible to fully replicate the Azerbaijani experience in Ukrainian realities.

Victory in the 44-day war of 2020 and successful completion of the anti-terrorist operation in September 2023 led to the restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The success achieved under the leadership of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, posed a new question for Baku – ensuring the restoration and development of the liberated territories. Considering the relevance of a similar issue in the perspective of Ukraine, Azerbaijan's experience in this field is of certain interest.

Demining of the liberated territories

The mine threat remains a key security challenge for the restoration of Azerbaijan's liberated territories. The establishment of minefields was an important component of defensive measures carried out by Armenian forces throughout the entire period of occupation. Moreover, the mining was done constantly and chaotically, complicating the detection and neutralization of minefields.

After the end of the 44-day war, Azerbaijan demanded corresponding maps from the Armenian side, documenting the placement of mines. However, Yerevan delayed their transfer and, ultimately, could only provide fragmented information. In Baku, this was perceived as a sign of Armenia's unwillingness to make concessions. At the same time, it should be taken into account that the Armenian leadership might indeed not have possessed all the information on this issue.

A significant threat during 2021-2023 remained the sabotage actions of Armenian formations aimed at planting new mines in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan. Incidents involving detonations of such mines became the reason for the start of an anti-terrorist operation by the Azerbaijani armed forces in September 2023¹.

According to calculations of international experts, Baku needs about thirty years and 25 billion US dollars to resolve the issue of demining territories².

Demining of the liberated territories is carried out by the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA). It was established on January 15, 2021, based on the National Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Clearance of Territory from Mines, which had been functioning since 1998. In fact, the reorganization/rebranding of the structure was linked to assigning to it an extremely relevant task – demining the territories that were liberated as a result of the 44-day war in 2020.

According to the ombudsman of Azerbaijan, Sabina Aliyeva, as of December 4, 2023, Azerbaijan's losses due to the mine threat since 1991 amounted to 3416 people. It is emphasized separately on the relevance of this problem after the completion of the 44-day war in the liberated territories. Over three years, 65 people (mostly civilians) were killed by mines, and 272 individuals were injured³.

¹ Statement by Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defense. MoD of Azerbaijan, 19.09.2023. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/statement-by-azerbaijan-s-ministry-of-defense-49350.html>

² Азербайджану потребуется около 30 лет и \$25 млрд на разминирование территорий – Алиев. Интерфакс-Азербайджан, 13.10.2022. URL: <http://interfax.az/view/878441>

³ Azerbaijani ombudswoman says 3,416 mine victims registered since 1991. Anadolu, 04.12.2023. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/azerbaijani-ombudswoman-says-3-416-mine-victims-registered-since-1991/3072738>

The restoration of the ruined infrastructure

The liberated territories of Azerbaijan were devastated during the period of occupation. The issue of infrastructure restoration is particularly relevant for territories beyond the borders of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), which were under the control of Armenian formations. Except for the areas between Karabakh and Armenia (specifically the Lachin Corridor), they were predominantly used for military purposes – as a so-called "security belt". In addition, the Armenian command carried out a planned campaign to erase any memory of Azerbaijani habitation in these territories.

As a result, most of the settlements located here were destroyed. Currently, they need to be restored practically from scratch. According to preliminary estimates by Azerbaijani experts, the process of restoring the region may take up to ten years and cost over 10 billion US dollars⁴.

Simultaneously, the restoration of Karabakh is a new priority national program for Baku – which replaced the previous prioritization of restoring the territorial integrity of the state. All resources are directed towards its implementation, and its successful execution from the Azerbaijani authorities' perspective is no less important than victory on the battlefield.

Azerbaijan approached the reconstruction of Karabakh and adjacent regions systematically. The corresponding regulatory framework was promptly established. In November 2020, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev signed a decree to create a Coordination Headquarters for the implementation of recovery and construction work in the liberated lands. Subsequently, he made changes to the division of the country into economic regions to streamline the reconstruction process of the liberated territories. By the decree of July 7, 2021, the Karabakh and East Zangezur economic regions were established here⁵. On August 12, 2021, the decree "On urban planning in liberated territories" was signed, according to which currently all works are being carried out⁶.

The process of reconstruction requires significant funds. Within the budget for the year 2021, the Azerbaijani government allocated 2.2 billion manats (1.29 billion US dollars) for the restoration of liberated territories⁷. In 2022, in the revival of liberated lands, 4.315 billion manats or 2.5 billion US dollars were invested. Within the framework of the state budget for 2023, 5.26 billion manats or 3.1 billion US dollars were allocated for current and

⁴ Huseynov V. Azerbaijan to re-build the liberated Karabakh. Euractiv, 11.12.2020. URL:

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/azerbaijan/opinion/azerbaijan-to-re-build-the-liberated-karabakh/>

⁵ В Азербайджане созданы Восточно-Зангезурский и Карабахский экономические районы. Anadolu, 07.07.2021. URL:

<https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/мир/в-азербайджане-созданы-восточно-зангезурский-и-карабахский-экономические-районы/2296925>

⁶ Залагодження заморожених конфліктів: досвід Другої Карабаської війни та її уроки для України. К., 2022, С. 64

⁷ Азербайджан готовится к «большому возвращению» в Карабах. Anadolu, 02.03.2021. URL:

<https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/мир/азербайджан-готовится-к-большому-возвращению-в-карабах/2161575>

new reconstruction projects in the Karabakh and East Zangezur regions. At the same time, President Ilham Aliyev confirmed that by the end of the current year, the total investments for ensuring this direction will reach 12 billion manats or 7 billion US dollars.⁸

In the process of restoring Karabakh, Azerbaijan cannot count on broad international support – due to contentious assessments by the world community of the situation in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict zone. Under such conditions, it is natural that business from countries that are consistent allies of Baku plays the most active role in ensuring the region's reconstruction. Primarily, this concerns Türkiye – which not only is a strategic ally of Azerbaijan but also has a powerful national construction industry. Azerbaijan's Minister of Economy, Mikayil Jabbarov, during the opening ceremony of the Azerbaijani-Turkish Investment Forum in December 2023, announced that the value of contracts concluded with Turkish companies for the restoration of Karabakh has already exceeded 3.4 billion US dollars⁹.

Azerbaijan also counts on state-private partnership. In particular, with the aim of sharing the financial burden and reducing the load on the State Oil Fund, the Karabakh Restoration Fund has been created¹⁰. Funds of the fund are formed from voluntary contributions, grants, and other sources.

Reconstruction of the residential infrastructure of the region

One of the priority tasks for the Azerbaijani authorities in the context of ensuring the future development of the liberated territories is the restoration of settlements destroyed during the period of occupation. The symbol of work in this direction is the reconstruction of the city of Aghdam. As of the end of the 1980s, it was inhabited by over 28,000 people, but it was completely ruined during the period under the control of Armenian formations. Following the results of the 44-day war, Azerbaijan regained control of the city and immediately began implementing an ambitious reconstruction project.

At its core is not just the restoration of the city but the construction of a new Aghdam. Modern Aghdam will include the territory of the old city and eight surrounding villages of the Aghdam district. The total area of the Aghdam agglomeration will be 1750 hectares, to which 2450 hectares of suburban green zone should be added.

The city will be zoned and divided into a historical center, administrative, residential, green, and industrial/agricultural zones. The industrial area (industrial parks) will be built in close

⁸ More Azerbaijanis Resettle in Liberated Lands under Great Return Program. Caspian News, 26.10.2023. URL: <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/more-azerbaijanis-resettle-in-liberated-lands-under-great-return-program-2023-10-26-14/>

⁹ Названа стоимость контрактов, заключенных турецкими компаниями в связи с восстановлением Карабаха. Media.Az, 21.12.2023. URL: <https://media.az/economy/1067941134/nazvana-stoimost-kontraktov-zaklyuchennyh-tureckimi-kompaniyami-po-vosstanovleniyu-karabaha/>

¹⁰ “Qarabağ Dirçəliş Fondu” publik hüquqi şəxsin yaradılması haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin Fərmanı. President of Azerbaijan, 04.01.2021. URL: <https://president.az/az/articles/view/49876>

proximity to the city to ensure stable employment for the population. The territory of Aghdam will have the creation of an artificial lake planned; also, two canals will pass through the city. The historical center will include a palace complex, the mausoleum of the Karabakh khans, the Shahbulag Castle, and a new mosque. The center will be built according to the traditional architecture of the cities of Karabakh. The administrative center will consist of a football stadium (for 30,000 people), municipal buildings, a theater, a concert hall, and the Karabakh University. A park with a memorial museum in honor of the victory of the Azerbaijani army and an open-air concert hall will also be built. 23% of the city's territory will consist of forest and park areas.

According to plans, the population of the city will be 100,000 people, making Aghdam the largest city in Karabakh and the sixth largest city in Azerbaijan. 70% of the population will reside in apartment buildings, while 30% will live in private houses. Each private house will be allocated 4-5 hectares of land for agricultural purposes. Sugovushan and Khachinchay reservoirs, as well as artesian wells, will be used for water supply. At the initial stage, 1,750 residential houses and 23,000 apartments in apartment buildings will be built in the city.

Aghdam is intended to be comfortable for people. The city plans to construct a wide network of pedestrian paths and bike lanes. The city's transportation system will be circular. Additionally, a tram line will be built separately from the roadways. For the first time in Azerbaijan, the concept of a "smart city" will be applied.

Similar approaches are being applied to the revival of rural areas in Karabakh. The development of the region's agricultural sector is being implemented on the basis of the "smart village" principle. One of the main goals of implementing this concept is to ensure rural residents' access to all necessary services provided in cities. Also, the "smart village" concept aims to help residents earn more¹¹.

Example of rebuilding the corresponding infrastructure is the village of Agali in the Zangilan district. It acts as a kind of showcase of the efforts of the Azerbaijani government to introduce modern approaches to the reconstruction of the agricultural sector in the liberated territories. In the "smart village", standards of contemporary urban planning are applied, aimed at ensuring the necessary well-being of the population.

The project is implemented in five directions: providing the population with housing and social services, developing production, "smart agriculture", and a power supply system using alternative sources.

At the initial stage, the construction of 200 houses (including two- and three-story buildings), 4 two-story non-residential buildings, a school with 360 student places, and a

¹¹ Что представляют собой "умные города" и "умные села", которые будут созданы в Карабахе?. Trend.Az, 11.08.2022. URL: <https://www.trend.az/azerbaijan/business/3452978.html>

kindergarten with 60 places is carried out. The work is carried out using completely isolated innovative building materials¹².

Reconstruction of regional transport infrastructure

The effective development of the liberated territories of Azerbaijan is possible only in the case of restoration and development of its transport infrastructure. This task is relevant not only in the context of ensuring a stable domestic transport network but also in utilizing the transit potential of the country. Work in this area is actively implemented after the end of the 44-day war. The first direction is the construction of a road network. According to Baku's plans, 84 bridges and 33 tunnels will be built in the region, including a strategic object under the Murovdagh Ridge.

In the southern direction, the issue is particularly relevant in the context of Azerbaijan's desire to unlock the Zangezur Corridor – to Nakhchivan and Türkiye. As part of the corridor's preparation, rapid development of transport infrastructure along the Azerbaijani territory along the Iranian border – in the direction of Goradiz-Zangilan – has been carried out. The 23-kilometer section of the railway from Goradiz (Fizuli district) to Agbend (Zangilan district) has already been put into operation, which is part of the prospective Zangezur route¹³.

At the extremely important from a political point of view project was the construction of an alternative corridor to the Lachin route from the border with Armenia to the territories held by Armenian groups until September 2023. The need for its creation was recorded in the trilateral ceasefire statement of November 10, 2020. Its implementation allowed Azerbaijan to appeal to the necessity of the Armenian side fulfilling the conditions of the statement and finally regain control of the city of Lachin at the end of August 2022.

In addition, a transport artery was developed to the city of Shusha, the cultural capital of Azerbaijan, the liberation of which became a key victory in the 44-day war. The new transport artery, the "Victory Road", was built in the shortest possible time during 2020-2021. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev laid the foundation for the Ahmedbeyli-Fizuli-Shusha road on November 16, 2020. The construction of the new 101.5 km road was the first project implemented in the liberated territories. The road starts in the Fizuli district and continues through the city of Fizuli and the Khojaly district to Shusha.

In the construction of the Victory Road, Azerbaijani companies ("Special Road Maintenance No. 16" LLC and "Highways Operation No. 7" LLC) and Turkish companies ("KOLİN" Construction Tourism Industry, "Tic. Anonim", and "Azvirt" LLC) were involved in coordination with the State Agency of Azerbaijan Automobile Roads. Ten underground

¹² Сьогоднішня панорама «Умного села» Агалы. Azertag, 18.11.2021. URL:

https://azertag.az/ru/xeber/segodnyashnyaya_panorama_umnogo_sela_agaly_foto_video-1929182

¹³ Залагодження заморожених конфліктів: досвід Другої Карабаської війни та її уроки для України. К., 2022, С. 64

crossings and four car bridges with lengths of 111.4 m, 45 m, 90 m, and 93.4 m were built on the road. The Victory Road was officially put into operation on November 7, 2021, on the anniversary of the return of the city of Shusha under Azerbaijani control.

Another direction of transport infrastructure development is the construction of new transport facilities. The rapid development of airports in the region is underway.

In the shortest possible time, an airport was built in Fizuli. In January 2021, the President of Azerbaijan instructed the construction of an international airport here. On January 14, the foundation-laying ceremony for the future airport took place near the village of Mirzajamalli in the Fizuli district. The construction of the takeoff and landing strip was completed at the end of July 2021. On September 5, 2021, its inspection was carried out: the first plane, one of the largest cargo planes, Boeing 747-400, belonging to the Azerbaijani airline Silk Way Airlines, landed at Fizuli Airport. This plane delivered cargo to Karabakh for the first time by air. Later, the first passenger flight was operated at Fizuli Airport by the Airbus A340, owned by Azerbaijan Airlines. It brought journalists and representatives of various structures to Karabakh. Finally, on October 26, 2021, the official opening of the Fizuli International Airport took place. The ceremony was attended by President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In October 2022, with the support of Turkish companies, a second airport was built in the region. It is located in the city of Zangilan. The government of Azerbaijan also plans to build an airport in Lachin – its construction will be completed at the turn of 2024-2025¹⁴. In case of complete unblocking of transport routes in the region, this infrastructure may become an important transport hub.

The provision of return of refugees to the region

The strategic goal of the Azerbaijani government after restoring the territorial integrity of the state remains the return of the Azerbaijani population to Karabakh and adjacent areas. The programs for the restoration of liberated territories are united under the plan "Great Return". In November 2022, President Aliyev signed a decree approving the "First State Program of the Great Return to the Liberated Territories of Azerbaijan". Within its implementation, it is planned to return 750,000 people to the region.

The focus is primarily on people who were forced to leave their homeland due to Armenian occupation and their descendants. The Azerbaijani authorities deliberately did not make special efforts for their integration into the communities where they had lived for the past decades – because it would signify a demonstration of uncertainty about the prospect of

¹⁴ Залагодження заморожених конфліктів: досвід Другої Карабаської війни та її уроки для України. К., 2022, С. 64

liberating the occupied territories. At the same time, today Baku is trying to create favorable conditions in Karabakh that could encourage even those people who had no connections with this region in the past to move. Significant investments in the reconstruction of the region turn it into a kind of "showcase" for the country, characterized by potentially better living and employment conditions than in most other regions of Azerbaijan.

The process of the return of the Azerbaijani population to Karabakh is already underway. Since 2022, former displaced persons have been resettled from temporary places of residence in various parts of Azerbaijan to the Zangilan, Fuzuli, and Lachin districts. In particular, on July 19, 2022, the first group of 96 former families of internally displaced persons (over 420 individuals) returned to the village of Agali in the Zangilan district. The process of populating this settlement continued in the following months. As of the end of October 2023, the population of the village was already 744 people. It is expected that in the initial stage of the resettlement program to the Fuzuli district, a total of 144 families, consisting of 509 individuals, will return¹⁵. During the period from May to July 2023, 351 individuals from 93 families relocated to renovated or newly constructed residential complexes in the city of Lachin. Additionally, in March of this year, 20 families, comprising 90 individuals, returned to the village of Talish in the Terter district. By the end of 2023, residents of the Lachin villages of Sus and Zabukh are also expected to return to their homes¹⁶.

According to the plans of the Azerbaijani government, by the end of 2023, for permanent residence in the liberated territories, 2 thousand families or 10 thousand individuals are supposed to return. The completion of the first stage of the "Great Return" program by the end of 2026 will allow 34.5 thousand families or 140 thousand individuals to return to the liberated territories in the Karabakh and East Zangezur regions¹⁷.

Reintegration of the Armenian population

Throughout decades, the accompanying challenge to liberate the occupied territories for Azerbaijan's authority remained the question of building relations with the Armenian minority residing in the region. On one hand, Azerbaijan had to take into account the meticulous attention of the world community to this issue; on the other hand, it could not dismiss the deep antagonism towards Armenians that had developed in Azerbaijani society after the military defeat in the 1990s.

¹⁵ Government of Azerbaijan Advances "Great Return" Program. Caspian News, 23.08.2023. URL: <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/government-of-azerbaijan-advances-great-return-program-2023-8-22-0/>

¹⁶ Government of Azerbaijan Advances "Great Return" Program. Caspian News, 23.08.2023. URL: <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/government-of-azerbaijan-advances-great-return-program-2023-8-22-0/>

¹⁷ More Azerbaijanis Resettle in Liberated Lands under Great Return Program. Caspian News, 26.10.2023. URL: <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/more-azerbaijanis-resettle-in-liberated-lands-under-great-return-program-2023-10-26-14/>

Azerbaijan sought to approach the resolution of this problem cautiously. The issue of special status for Karabakh was unacceptable to Baku. During the active phase of the 44-day war in 2020, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev spoke about the possibility of certain cultural autonomy for the region¹⁸. At the same time, even this idea has already disappeared from the official rhetoric of Baku after the victory. Instead, in the public sphere, Azerbaijan emphasized the application of multiculturalism policies to the Armenian population of Karabakh, presented as the basis of Baku's minority policy. Azerbaijan is ready to grant civil rights to those Armenians who lived in the region before the conflict began, as well as to their descendants. They are supposed to be integrated into the functioning of the state as equal citizens.

At the same time, a different approach is demonstrated towards illegal settlers who moved to Karabakh after its occupation. The Armenian government facilitated the resettlement of refugees who fled conflict zones in Syria and Lebanon to Karabakh. Regarding them, Baku takes a tough position, emphasizing that they illegally entered the territory of Azerbaijan and must leave it.

According to Western press reports, the population of Azerbaijan does not accept the idea of the reintegration of the Armenian population. It is not willing to return to the times when Azerbaijani and Armenian communities lived together¹⁹. Simultaneously, the character of the political system of Azerbaijan simplifies the process of shaping public opinion. The absolute control of Ilham Aliyev's regime over the politics and information space of the country plays a positive role in this case. If necessary and desired, he can ensure a gradual change in the population's position.

A separate issue for the Azerbaijani side is the restoration of justice – specifically, holding accountable those responsible for committing crimes. Overall, Azerbaijan insists on the necessity of pursuing two groups of people. The first group includes the higher leadership of the so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic" (NKR), accused of organizing and supporting the separatist-occupational administration. The second group consists of individuals guilty of crimes against the region's population, including ethnic cleansing and deportations in the 1990s. The search for those responsible for the Khojaly massacre becomes particularly relevant. In the fall of 2023, the Azerbaijani authorities successfully managed to detain a large number of individuals accused of committing these crimes, including the former "state minister" of the so-called NKR, Ruben Vardanyan, three former "presidents" of the NKR – Arkadi Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan, and Arayik Harutyunyan, among others.

¹⁸ Алиев не исключил "культурной автономии" для армян Карабаха. Радио Озоди, 22.10.2020. URL: <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/30907433.html>

¹⁹ Азербайджан повернул собі Карабах. Чи дійсно це кінець багатолітнього конфлікту? BBC, 16.10.-2023. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c4nx4z2l2rzo>

Events have shown that the Armenian population of Karabakh did not trust the promises of the Azerbaijani authorities regarding the possibility of living on the territory of Azerbaijan as full-fledged citizens. After the actual capitulation and dissolution of the so-called NKR in September 2023, there was a mass exodus of the Armenian population from the Karabakh region. According to the Armenian side, virtually the entire population of the region left.

In general, this turn of events suits Baku. Obviously, it is easier for Azerbaijan to engage in the reintegration and restoration of the region without a critical mass of disloyal population. President Ilham Aliyev understood that any acts of oppression against the Armenian population would be highly publicized in Western media. The Armenian diaspora could use this to fuel anti-Azerbaijani sentiments. The events in the region in the fall of 2023, when the voluntary departure of the Armenian population from the territory of Karabakh was presented as "ethnic cleansing" or "genocide", effectively supported the validity of such a position.

For Aliyev, who is already criticized in the West for the undemocratic nature of his regime, it is not beneficial to further tarnish his image. Therefore, the implementation of any organized repression against Armenians in the liberated territories was unlikely. Instead, the Azerbaijani authorities provided clear instructions to avoid this. At the same time, the nature and intensity of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict created a threat of incidents at the grassroots level.

Under these conditions, it is objectively advantageous for Azerbaijan for the Armenian population of Karabakh to leave the region. This eliminates a factor that could trigger unwanted incidents. Perhaps for this reason, immediately after the completion of the anti-terrorism operation in 2023, Azerbaijan delivered fuel to the region as humanitarian aid – to create conditions for the rapid departure of people.

Conclusions

The involvement of significant resources and the comprehensive approach of the Azerbaijani government to the process of rebuilding liberated territories leave no doubt about its successful completion. Certainly, the scale of the task will require some time for its implementation, but the successes already demonstrated by Baku prove that the ambitious goals set can be entirely achievable. Transforming Karabakh into a developed region will allow for its resettlement, both through the return of refugees and internal migration processes.

At the same time, the Azerbaijani government is practically relieved of the need to address the issue of reintegrating disloyal population. The departure of Armenians from the territory of Karabakh under the conditions of restoring Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is an optimal

scenario for Baku. For a certain period, this process negatively affected Azerbaijan's image globally, but with time, the effect of this is likely to diminish.

In the context of applying Azerbaijani experience to Ukraine, it is advisable to pay attention to the following aspects of Azerbaijani policy that are worth considering:

- Complete subordination to the state, mobilization of its resources, and planning of policies for the implementation of the program to restore liberated territories.
- Baku's unyielding stance on issues of its own interests, especially in the context of restoring justice and adhering to legal norms, at a time when the global community seeks to exert pressure on Azerbaijan by appealing to general moral issues.
- Emphasis on innovative, modern development of the liberated territories, within which Karabakh is not just restored but is expected to become one of the most developed regions of the country in the future.

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Author:

Oleksii Avdieiev

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Centre for International Security

Borodina Inzhenera Street, 5-A, Kyiv, 02092, Ukraine

Phone: +380999833140

E-mail: cntr.bezpeky@gmail.com

<https://intsecurity.org/>

