

THE CONFLICT OF AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAGORNO KARABAKH: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Every conflict and war has a pre-history, such as Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is one of them. In the current scenario, the Nagorno-Karabakh has become the centre of international politics. The article focuses on the conflicts of Nagorno Karabakh, about its actual geo-location, integrity, and sovereignty. Also, in this study, we have tried to highlight the political agenda of the world's top leading countries like Russia and France was backed by Armenia. At the same time Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Israel supported Azerbaijan. On 10th November 2020, after six weeks of fierce fighting, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to end the military operation over the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, the ceasefire brokered by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Armenian leader Nikol Pashinyan has described the decision to agree on a ceasefire as 'painful' for him and their citizens, while Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has claimed victory. Perhaps, the objective of the full involvement of Turkey in this fight was to give a signal of emerging as a leading country in the Muslim World. The ceasefire was organized by Russia between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which keeps Turkey and western countries out of the final peace talk, which seems like Russia wants to show remains a dominant power and its impact in the South Caucasus.

Keyword: *Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, political agenda, fierce fighting, peace talk, South Caucasus.*

Introduction

The word 'Nagorno' derives from the Russian word 'Nagorny,' which means 'Mountainous.' The Russian/Soviet sources often call the territory 'Nagorny Karabakh' or the 'NKAO,' which is the Soviet abbreviation which translates as 'Autonomous Territory of Mountainous Karabakh.' In Azerbaijan, the territory is stated as 'Daghlig,' which means 'Upper or Mountainous Karabakh.' The Armenians gave an ancient name to this region, 'Artsakh.' Finally, the newly designed government in the territory called it the 'Nagorno Karabakh Republic' (Sienrukos, 2006).

The Nagorno Karabakh region became the main centre of a full-scale war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020. Since 1994 many ceasefires were violated, but it was most recently clashes on 27th September, 2020 and later turned into a material war was continued until the ceasefire not signed by both countries on 10th of November, 2020. A memorandum of understanding was signed on 11th Nov 2020. And Azerbaijan retained the control over Nagorno Karabakh region on 1st December, 2020. In the whole war the most important thing was that the moral support of Turkey changed into the involvement of military support, and the more interesting thing was that Turkey facilitated and sent their troops, artillery, and latest drone technology to fight against Armenia alongside Azerbaijani forces. Probably Azerbaijan was the closest country to Turkey by Culturally, Turkic ethnicity, and two languages. The primary reason seems to reflect this conflict; for Azerbaijan, it was the matter of territorial integrity and the matter of Right to Self-determination, propounded by

Nagorno Karabakh backed by Armenia (Ergun Ayca, Anar Valiyev, Panorama Dergisi, 2020).

The Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict began in the late 80s because of the chaos that occurred as a result of the ethnic conflict that occurred as a consequences of the territorial struggle involving Azerbaijan and Armenian. This chaos comes along with the chaos that occurs during the process of the collapse of the Soviet Union, where the ethnonationalism of ethnic non-Russians in their respective territories increased to leads to independence. Disintegration of the Soviet Union led to the collapse of the bipolar world order and the domination of the two powers during the Cold War in the realm of international relations. One of The problem that arose after the collapse of the Soviet Union was problems in the Caucasus region. Causes of trouble in the past The Caucasus region is all about border and energy issues. The Caucasus is a complex region because it connects. Russia with the Asian region. One of the problems the author raised is the conflict in Nagorno -Karabakah between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Result and Discussion

Azerbaijan is a secular state with a Turkic origin majority of Shia Muslims community - was fleetingly independent (from 1918 to 1920) following the fall of the Russian Empire subsequently, it was integrated into the Soviet Union for seven decades. Azerbaijan was engaged with Armenia in the prolonged Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Nagorno-Karabakh was a predominantly ethnic Armenian region that Moscow recognized in 1923 as an autonomous oblast within Soviet Azerbaijan. A separatist movement was emerged during the late Soviet period; by that movement, Azerbaijan lost their control over the Nagorno Karabakh. As we discussed before, the first conflict over Nagorno Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan was started from 1988 to1994, when both countries declared their independence. Many international organisations were advocated a peace settlement in this conflict, but the conflict went through a number of phases and has not reached a final solution. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk group, which was the main institution of the peace process in disputed region. Before it, we have to discuss deeply the history of the disputed region.

Background of the Conflict

Armenia and Azerbaijan are two former Soviet Union countries, which are located in the South Caucasus region. In 1988, when the glasnost policy by President Mikhail Gorbachev was implemented, there were demonstrations in the autonomous region of the Nagorno-Karabakh oblast which is predominantly inhabited by ethnic Armenians but located in Azerbaijani territory demanding to be merged with Armenia. This demand was of course rejected by Azerbaijan, which felt that Nagorno-Karabakh was its territory. The Soviet Union itself refused to transfer the Nagorno-Karabakh region to Armenia (Fatoni, 2019).

The Azeri-Armenian dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh dates back from the early 1920s, just after the end of World War I when the great Ottoman Empire was on its death bed, led to large-scale conflicts and atrocities amongst Armenians and Turkish peoples. Hostility was increased between Armenians and Turkish peoples when Armenians were raising the idea of national sovereignty; later, it became the root of massacres for the Armenians in the Eastern part of Anatolia. After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, conflict and violations were begun between the Armenians and Turkey's neighbor Azerbaijan. Till now, many wars and conflicts occurred over

Nagorno Karabakh. This war was the longest-running and bloodiest of the post-Soviet conflicts.

It was the time when the Soviet Union losing its grip and announced a new policy, called 'Glasnost', that gave more political freedoms to its people. But the consequences were different, since the 1980s, both Armenia and Azerbaijan engaged in violence and ethnic cleansing in their attempts to gain control over the disputed territory. Russian support for the Armenian people make stronger in the war and increased interference by multiple outside powers that intervened to balance Russian power in the territory. Nagorno-Karabakh was internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but in 1988, a war began between Armenia and Azerbaijan with long-standing tension over the Karabakh region and later became an independent territory from Azerbaijan through a national referendum. Since then, Nagorno-Karabakh had internationally recognized as the part of Azerbaijan but is controlled by separatist ethnic Armenians sponsored by the Armenian government. Until recently, negotiations mediated by international powers had failed to deliver a peace agreement. According to Hilary Sienrukos, more than 20 to 30 thousand peoples were lost their lives, and up to 8 million Azerbaijani families who were living in the Karabakh region were estimated to displace from their homes in the region, both sides a ceasefire agreement was signed freezing the conflict in 1994 (Waal, 2005).

Armenia is the Christian majority country while Azerbaijan is the majority of Muslims. Turkey has close relations with Azerbaijan, while Russia is tied with Armenia, and also Russia has a good relationship with Azerbaijan. Since 1994, The Minsk Group of the OSCE became the head of the mediator and proposed negotiations on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict between both countries. A committee of three co-chairs: the US, Russia, and France, had been formed over the dispute of Nagorno Karabakh for finding a final solution, but Azerbaijan's regime refused to recognized and directly talk with the self-Styled the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. These three countries want to maintain the peace in the disputed region to get their economic profit in the Oil and Gas industry from the Caspian Oil. Therefore, it was the priority of stability in the region, but these international communities didn't reach any particular solution for the peace in the territory (Pashayeva, 2009).

In 1999, the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia were met separately, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty of Organization) in Washington. President Heyder Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Robert Kocharian of Armenia signed an agreement on the "Goble Plan," which was given by the former U.S president Poul Goble, and the plan included the territory exchange from both sides. However, this plan was also failed to making any solution to the conflict. Hilary Sienrukos wrote in his thesis and stated that.

Again in 2001, at the OSCE sponsored Key West talks in Florida, optimism was high that a settlement was close. President Heyder Aliyev, however, was seen by many in the Azerbaijani elite as offering too much to Armenia. Aliyev suggested allowing Nagorno Karabakh to become part of Armenia in exchange for the right of return of refugees and a concession of a road link to the independent state of Nakhichevan across Azerbaijan to Armenia. Copies of the peace plan were leaked to the press and the response in both countries was hostile; particularly in Azerbaijan. Aliyev proved unable to gain support for the plan within the Azerbaijani government and a window of opportunity closed that has as of yet, not been re-opened (Sienrukos, 2006).

However, the current President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, has been more often and talking for a long time that he will go to war again to take back lost Azerbaijani lands. Thus, Azerbaijan's position seemed to harden. Meanwhile,

Azerbaijan planned a comeback and regain control over their lost region. The government of Azerbaijan spent \$24 billion on its military from 2008 to 2019. The amount was six times more than Armenia.

Nagorno Karabakh War of 2016

The Nagorno Karabakh War of 2016, also known as the ‘Four day War’ or April Clashes, started along the Nagorno-Karabakh Line of contact in April 2016, between Artsakh Defence Army (backed by Armenia) and Azerbaijani Army. The Nagorno Karabakh was the region where the majority of the population were Armenian Christian. The first serious conflict over Nagorno Karabakh was started in 1980, during the last stage of the Soviet Union, and the parliament of Nagorno Karabakh voted to become part of Armenia. In the response counter protests emerged inside the whole country, while Armenian people rallied for unification. In 1988 the bloodiest conflicts started, and the Soviet Union had almost collapsed and disintegration at that time, eventually both Armenia and Azerbaijan declared their independence. Therefore, a full-scale war was started in 1991 between Azerbaijan and Armenia, thousands of people were died and millions of people were enforced to flee their homes in the area. later Nagorno Karabakh declared itself an independent. Mediators were unsuccessful in getting any solution to the conflict, despite its many ceasefire and agreements that were violated by both Countries in the region, which were brokered by the mediator Minsk group of OSCE (Ali, 2020).

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan claimed themselves as the real owner of the unrecognized administration territory of the Nagorno Karabakh. The agenda of peace and negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia was continued for twenty-five years. Due to these problems, both countries displaced many citizens from their homelands, but still, both parties had not reached any conclusion.

The Second Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020

There were three attempts at a ceasefire under the auspice of France, Russia, and the US have failed. During the war, Azerbaijan continued its military operations to take control over its provincial integrity. President Aliyev has consolidated his popular support in the country. The previous slogan ‘no peace no war status quo’ despite it, there was not an option anymore for Azerbaijan, though the terms and conditions which would inform the content of peace talks were yet to be seen. The international community’s call for an end to the war is important, but not enough, particularly because of the increasing number of civilian casualties (Aliyev, 2020).

The six weeks long full-scale war was started on 27th September, 2020 between Armenia and Azerbaijan, along the Nagorno-Karabakh Line of Contact, to liberate its territories, in which Azerbaijan become victorious. Many people and civilians died in this war about hundreds of casualties, including 50 civilians in Nagorno Karabakh and 98 civilians in Azerbaijan. According to Aljazeera, “In 44 days of fighting that began in late September and left more than 5,600 people dead on both sides, generally soldiers”(Al Jazeera,2020).

Finally, on 9th November 2020, a peace agreement was signed by both countries, and Azerbaijan regained control over the disputed region and take control over three major Districts- Agdam, Lachir, and Kalbajar hopefully, it would be the last conflict between both countries. And Azerbaijani successfully established peace, ensuring the safety by the taskforce, and retake the territorial integrity over the Nagorno Karabakh, while the OSCE’s Minsk group and the other US, EU had been

failed to restore the peace in the region till now. Although we can argue that current Turkish involvement can be seen as a natural continuum of its long-standing discourse, the current conflict provided yet another opportunity structure to both countries to strengthen their existing relationship, cooperation, and strategic partnership. It was not last, besides both countries too did joint military exercises for a bilateral and friendly relationship to each other. In a statement, the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan clearly supported Azerbaijan and Stated that “The Turkish nation stands by its Azerbaijani brothers with its all resources and strengthen its solidarity” and also the Turkish Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar stated that they would stand by “Azerbaijani Turkish brothers with all resources till the end”. (Aliyev, 2020).

In the war, Azeri forces backed by Turkey-supplied armed drones (equip with the latest Technology) and other military equipment, which was eased to defeat the Armenian army and took back territories, was succeeded in taking control of over 40% part of the Nagorno Karabakh. The Second Nagorno Karabakh War was the biggest geopolitical beneficiary for both Turkey and Russia. While Turkey was directly involved to the side of Azerbaijan in this war, but Russia gave support indirectly to their ally Armenia, as well their relations are close to Azerbaijan. After the glorious victory of Azerbaijan, Erdogan attended the Military parade and said in his speech that “Armenia and expressed hope the country would ‘take lessons’ from the defeat and take steps that would pave the way for a new era in the region. ‘We hope that Armenian leaders will assess this carefully and take courageous steps to build a future based on peace and stability’”. Further he said that the “Turkey’s continued support to Azerbaijan: ‘As long as Turkey and Azerbaijan work for hand in glove, they will continue to overcome all difficulties and run from one success to the next’” (Al Jazeera, 2020).

Russia would not like to lose Azerbaijan, where anti-Russian sentiments were had not come from Azerbaijan’s side. However, Russia still offered to Armenia to hold their power over Shusha and Lachir corridor. Russia became the first country to brokered a ceasefire between both Armenia and Azerbaijan, but it was violated after some time. The Russian President Vladimir Putin tried to negotiate between both parties to agree on possible peace talks.

Iran was not openly involved in this war due to close relations and its geographical closeness with Armenia since 1994. Both countries have close bilateral and military equipment transfers. Iran and Azerbaijan have historical allies but Iran always suspicious about its population percentage consist Azerbaijan Turks; therefore Iran went to close with Armenia in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The cause of this stand of Iran resulted in many protests across the country by the Iranian Azerbaijani Turks.

According to Al Jazeera, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev thanked Turkey for the support, and he mentioned in his speech. “From the first hours of the war, we felt the support of Turkey, this is an example of our unity, our brotherhood.” And also Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said that the country was able to “restore historical justice” and blamed Armenia for starting the fighting (Al Jazeera, 2020).

In an effort to mediate the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russia can be said to have fulfilled its role and responsibility as a mediator of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It can be concluded that Russia is actively and positively involved but on the other hand is also an actor that has the potential to trigger tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russia's involvement in the Nagorno – Karabakh conflict is as a mediator who is in the position of co-chairman of the OSCE Minsk Group. In its

involvement as a mediator, Russia has facilitated negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan even by being the most active mediator since 2010. Several negotiations facilitated by Russia also resulted in several agreements that support the development of conflict resolution such as the Confidence Building Measure (CBM).

Conclusion

As per the above study, it seems to be clear that the involvement of these world's leading countries in the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno Karabakh conflict was the preparation of the main fronts for upcoming world war III. The role of Turkey was most important in this war, who had been extending only moral support to Azerbaijan, but has expanded the scope of its involvement through military support; even more hazardous are the reports that Turkey is facilitating the participation of mercenaries from Syria and Libya to fight alongside Azeri forces. The advanced involvement of Turkey in the conflict seems to be the emerging future leader of the Islamic World, even some prominent historians and thinkers connect it with the revival of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had adopted an offensive way since 2016 when a military coup attempt was failed in Turkey. The more interesting thing was that Turkey supported Azerbaijan openly, but Russia didn't oppose it; both were trying to become a regional power and were to be a major regional security actor too in the south Caucasus. Armenia backed Russia was failed to convince Azerbaijan on Peace talk at an early stage. After six weeks of full-scale war, Russia brokered a peace agreement with the restoration of Azerbaijan's power over Nagorno Karabakh. However, it also structured in more effective, substantial, and it was a recapitulative way. After 27 September 2020, nothing was the same between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Some citizens and villagers set their own homes on fire before leaving for Armenia.

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Mumim Ahmad Khan

The Conflict Of Azerbaijan And Armenia With Special Reference To Nagorno Karabakh: An Overview

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