

# THESIS

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THE HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN-AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT REGARDING TO THE  
NAGORNO-KARABAKH REGION

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## Table of Content

1; Introduction.....	6
2; Chapter I: Main actors of the conflict .....	7
2; 1: Azerbaijan .....	7
2.2: Armenia .....	10
3: Nagorno-Karabakh .....	13
.....	13
4: The first Nagorno-Karabakh war.....	19
4: The 1994 peace agreement.....	23
5: Azerbaijan and Armenia between the two wars .....	26
6: The second Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020 .....	33
7: The ceasefire deal of 2020 .....	35
7.1: Azerbaijan.....	35
7.2: Armenia .....	39
8; the role of nationalism in the conflict and in alliances .....	41
9; the geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabakh .....	45
10: Geopolitical interests in the region during and after the war .....	48
10.1Azerbaijan:.....	48
10.2Armenia: .....	48
10.3Turkey:.....	49
10.4: Russia.....	50
10.5: Iran .....	52
10.6: Georgia .....	55
10.7: The US.....	56
10.8: The European Union.....	57
10.9: Israel .....	58
12: Russia-Ukraine war and Nagorno-Karabakh.....	59
13: Conclusions:.....	61
13: References:.....	62

## List of Figures

1. Figure: Map of Azerbaijan:

[https://www.google.com/search?q=azerbaijan&sxsrf=ALiCzsbJtGXWf4HNiar\\_Md0jLGtW6ksPLA:1652031392122&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ah\\_UKEwi40qPCuND3AhXGxqQKHRynAb4Q\\_AUoAnoECAIQBA&biw=1536&bih=696&dpr=1.25#imgrc=O\\_P4YucAb81KXM](https://www.google.com/search?q=azerbaijan&sxsrf=ALiCzsbJtGXWf4HNiar_Md0jLGtW6ksPLA:1652031392122&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ah_UKEwi40qPCuND3AhXGxqQKHRynAb4Q_AUoAnoECAIQBA&biw=1536&bih=696&dpr=1.25#imgrc=O_P4YucAb81KXM)

2. Figure: Map of Armenia:

<https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/armenia-map.html>

3. Figure: Map of Nagorno-Karabakh:

<https://www.worldatlas.com/geography/nagorno-karabakh.html>

4. Figure: Military spending of Azerbaijan in billion\$

[https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/mil\\_spend/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/mil_spend/)

5. Figure: Military spending of Azerbaijan % of GDP

[https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/mil\\_spend/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/mil_spend/)

6. Figure: Military spending of Armenia million USD

<https://tradingeconomics.com/armenia/military-expenditure>

7. Figure: Military spending of Armenia % of GDP

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/810319/ratio-of-military-expenditure-to-gross-domestic-product-gdp-armenia/>

## Literature review

The topic of Nagorno-Karabakh is a veiledly studied subject. It is studied by experts on the subject of the history of conflicts in the Post-Soviet countries. For this thesis I used variety of sources from authors to governmental websites.

For authors, the main author that I cited is Thomas De Waal. Thomas De Waal is an expert of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. I used his book called *The Black Garden*. This book is a great source on the war that was fought from 1988-1994. This books gives a comprehensive overview of the political situation of the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He also gives a detailed insight into the war itself. From year to year, he shows us how the tides of this war changed.

For the political side, I used many governmental websites, such as the Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Nagorno-Karabakh governmental websites.

I also used non-governmental organization's website as well, such as the United Nations.

The variety of sources gave me a lot of information to be able to write a detailed thesis about this subject.

## 1; Introduction

In 2020, heavy fights broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The reason for the war was the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The region is a landlocked area, with a territory of 4,400 km<sup>2</sup>. Nagorno-Karabakh is located inside Azerbaijan, However, the territory is populated by mostly ethnic Armenians. Tensions between the two nations have been present in the past. They accused each other of unrightfully claiming the territory, and discriminating against their marginalized minority. In this conflict, not only these two countries participated. They also had allies, which supported them, as a result, this war became a proxy war for big powers. In this thesis, I am going to reveal the events that lead to this strange location of the territory, the conflicts that this caused, the international actors that are involved, the war itself, and its consequences.

My main focus area in this research is going to be the role of nationalism in this conflict. How does nationality influence the start of the war, during the war, mainly focused on alliances that greatly affected the outcome of this war?

I also focus on the regional powers, their influence, and involvement in the conflict, as well as the European Union's role too.

## 2; Chapter I: Main actors of the conflict

The two main actors in the conflict: are Azerbaijan and Armenia. In this part, I am going to describe the two main actors of the conflict: Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the contested territory, Nagorno-Karabakh.

### 2; 1: Azerbaijan



1. Figure: Map of Azerbaijan

Source:

[https://www.google.com/search?q=azerbaijan&sxsrf=ALiCzsbJtGXWf4HNiar\\_Md0j\\_LGtW6ksPLA:1652031392122&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi40qPCuND3AhXGxqQKHRynAb4Q\\_AUoAnoECAIQBA&biw=1536&bih=696&dpr=1.25#imgre=O\\_P4YucAb81KXM](https://www.google.com/search?q=azerbaijan&sxsrf=ALiCzsbJtGXWf4HNiar_Md0j_LGtW6ksPLA:1652031392122&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi40qPCuND3AhXGxqQKHRynAb4Q_AUoAnoECAIQBA&biw=1536&bih=696&dpr=1.25#imgre=O_P4YucAb81KXM)

First, I will give a general overview of the country Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is a country located on the border of Europe and Asia. The country is located within the Caucasian mountain range, and it is bordered by the Caspian Sea from the east. Azerbaijan has a territory of 86 600km<sup>2</sup> Azerbaijan is bordered by Russia, Armenia, and Iran. Azerbaijan's capital city is Baku., which in and itself has a population of 2,2 million citizens. Azerbaijan has a population of 10, 93 million as of 2020 according to the World Bank. (WorldBank.org).<sup>1</sup>

Azerbaijan is a Muslim majority country, more than 90% of the population identifies itself as a follower of the Muslim faith.

Azerbaijan has a long and rich history. It has a history of being influenced by other great powers during the vast majority of its history. It was in the middle of great empires interests' sphere. During the time of the Roman Empire's existence, the area was fought between the

Roman and the Persian Empire. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the territory was taken over by the Sassanid Iran Empire. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the territory was conquered by the Islamic Persian Empire. The Persian Empire was a Sunni Islamic Empire, and they brought their religion into this area. The population was forced to convert to the Islamic Shi'a religion. After this conquest, the area was controlled by different dynasties. One of them established the Seljuk Empire in 1067. After the fall of the Seljuk Empire, the Timurid Empire conquered the region. Their leader was Timur-Lenk. After the death of Timur-Lenk, the Shiravansas returned to Azerbaijan to govern its territory. For hundreds of years they were successfully governing this territory. However in 1501 the Safavid dynasty from Iran gained control over the territory. They converted the Sunni Islamic population into Shi's Islamic. The Safavid's governed Azerbaijan more than 200 years. Their rule was ended by the Russian's. During the Russo-Persian war between 1722-1723, the Russian Empire defeated the Persian Empire. However the Safavid's held control over this area for a longer time. Various khanates ruled over, until Russia attacked them again. The second phase of the Russian conquest occurred between 1804-1813. The war ended with a Russian victory, as they were far superior militarily to their enemy. The war was ended with a peace treaty. This treaty is called the "Treaty of Gulistan". In this treaty, most of the former khanates had been seized by the Russian Empire.<sup>2</sup> (The territory of

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<sup>1</sup> WorldBank.org: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=AZ> Downloaded: 2021.04.15

<sup>2</sup> Timothy C. Dowling: Russia at war: From the Mongol Conquest to Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Beyond p.: 729



Azerbaijan turned out to be a really important province of the Russian Empire. The area of Azerbaijan is rich in oil. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, oil production has started by investors. As a result, the town of Baku and the other areas undergone a massive infrastructure upgrade. The first oil pipeline was built in 1878, which connected the drilling place, with Russia. It was also important to connect this area with other cities in the region, and with Russia. As a result, railway networks has been built, which made the connection faster and easily available, and also boosted the export of the oil to other states as well. <sup>3</sup>

Azerbaijan was controlled by the Russian Empire until its collapse in 1917. In 1917, a communist revolution broke out in Russia. As a result, the Russian Empire had been dissolved, and briefly lost its occupied territories.

As a result of the collapse of the Russian Empire, Azerbaijan was able to establish its own independent country. It finally happened in May 28, 1918. <sup>4</sup>

However, this autonomous country did not lived for too long. In just two years, in April of 1920, the Soviet Red Army marched into the capital city of Azerbaijan, with basically none, or very little resistance from the Azerbaijanis population. This meant, that Azerbaijan became one of the Soviet Republics of the Soviet Union, under the rule of the Azerbaijani Communist Party.

Azerbaijan remained the part of the Soviet Union for 71 years until its collapse. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan declared independence, and the head of the Communist Party, Ayaz Mutalibov became the president. However his presidency was overthrown, and a new elections were held. In this election, Abulfaz Elchibey won the majority of votes. His presidency did not lasted long either. In the following year in June 1993 was overthrown by Heydar Aliyev, a former KGB official. He finally conciliated his power, and governed Azerbaijan until his death in 2003. Following his death, his son, Ilham Aliyev took the presidency, which he holds until this year. <sup>5</sup>

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[https://books.google.hu/books?id=KTq2BQAAQBAJ&pg=PA728&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.hu/books?id=KTq2BQAAQBAJ&pg=PA728&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)

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<sup>3</sup> [Minenergy.gov.az https://minenergy.gov.az/en/neft/neft-senayesinin-inkisaf-tarixi](https://minenergy.gov.az/en/neft/neft-senayesinin-inkisaf-tarixi)

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<sup>4</sup>Britannica.com <https://www.britannica.com/place/Azerbaijan/Russian-suzerainty>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Azerbaijan/Nagorno-Karabakh-conflict-dissolution-of-the-Soviet-Union-and-presidency-of-Heydar-Aliyev>

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## 2.2: Armenia



2. Figure: Map of Armenia

Source: <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/armenia-map.html>

Armenia is a landlocked country, located in the Caucasian Mountain chain. Armenia has a territory of 29,743km<sup>2</sup>. Armenia has a population of 2,963,236. As of 2020, according to the World Bank<sup>6</sup>. Armenia's capital city is Yerevan, which has a population of 1,075 million. Armenia is bordered by Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Armenia is religiously speaking a Catholic nation. It was the first country to adapt Christianity as a state religion.<sup>7</sup> However the country is massively diverse in regards to religion. In the country there are Yazidis, Christians and Muslims as well.

Armenia has a long and rich history. The first sovereign Armenian State was founded in 860 BC, under the name of Kingdom of Uratu. This Kingdom lasted until the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, it became the territory called the Satrapy of Armenia, which was ruled by different dynasties. This territory later became the Kingdom of Armenia. Kingdom of Armenia had its heights and lows during its existence. It reached its highest territory in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, under the rule of Tigranes the Great. This was the time, more specifically in 301 when Armenia adopted Christian religion as a state religion. This was the first state in history to do such.

<sup>6</sup> Worldbank.org. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=AM>

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<sup>7</sup>Britannica.com

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Armenia>

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In the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Kingdom started to lose its power, and at the end, it was split between the Byzantine Empire and the Sasanian Empire. It regained its autonomy 9<sup>th</sup> century, under the rule of the Bagratuni dynasty. The power started to decline again thanks to the fighting with the Byzantine Empire. As a result, the kingdom was conquered by the Seljuk Empire in 1045.

From this date, Armenia existed only as an area called Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from 1080-1375, in the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in the South-East region of today's Turkey. It was mainly formed by Armenian refugees, who fled from the core Armenian Kingdom, as a result of the Seljuk invasion.<sup>8</sup>

Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, Armenia was split up to two parts which were known as Western and Eastern Armenia. The Western part of Armenia, came under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and had been the part of it, until the broke up of the Ottoman Empire.

The Eastern Part had been conquered by the Persian Empire, which later became the Iranian Empire. During the Iranian -Russian war, the Russian Empire conquered from the Iranian Empire.<sup>9</sup>

From this point, both part of Armenia was under subject of Empires Rule, and there had been atrocities committed against them.

Between 1915 and 1917, the Armenian genocide took place. It was an ethnic cleansing committed by the Ottoman Empire. During this two years many atrocities had been committed by the Ottoman Empire. There were approximately 1, 5 Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire before 1915. During the two year genocide, it is estimated, that between 664 000 and 1, 2 million Armenian died during this period.<sup>10</sup>The Ottomans executed thousands of able bodied man, or sent them to forced labour, or forced them into the military. Hundreds of

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<sup>8</sup> Britannica.com: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Little-Armenia>

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<sup>9</sup> Thimoty C. Dowling: Russia at war: From the Mongol Conquest to Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Beyond:[https://books.google.hu/books?id=KTq2BQAAQBAJ&pg=PA728&dq=russo+persian+war+1804-1813&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=QnOXVJXpCcz7UPevhPAK&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=russo%20persian%20war%201804-1813&f=false](https://books.google.hu/books?id=KTq2BQAAQBAJ&pg=PA728&dq=russo+persian+war+1804-1813&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=QnOXVJXpCcz7UPevhPAK&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=russo%20persian%20war%201804-1813&f=false) p.:729

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<sup>10</sup>Encyclopedia.ushmn.org: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-armenian-genocide-1915-16-overview>

Downloaded: 2022.04.24

thousand Armenian woman, children and elderly people had been sent into the Syrian Desert, which is called a Deathmatch. During these marches thousands died, because of the lack of food, water and exposure of diseases. Those whom made it alive the journey, horrific circumstances waited them in refugee camps with no food, water or medical assistant. Many Armenian where forcibly converted into Islamic fate, and were also forced to marry into an Islamic household. They also separated children from their family, and had to undergo the same process: forcibly convert them into Islamic fate, and forcibly marry them into Islamic households. <sup>11</sup>

These atrocities and their circumstances led to the word genocide which defied these atrocities committed against the Armenian minorities, because of their nationality. This event also was the first genocide committed in the history. <sup>12</sup>

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire after World War 1, Armenia was able to declare its autonomy. In 1918, the First Armenian Republic was born. This was a short lived autonomy. Numerous problems emerged, which the new republic weren't able to solve. War, mass influx of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire, hunger and diseases. <sup>13</sup>

In 1920 Turkish nationalists attacked Armenia, and they defeated them. On 1920 December 9<sup>th</sup>, the treaty of Alexandropol was signed. According to this treaty, the former territories of the Ottoman Empire had to be returned to Turkey. Also a new autonomous territory was created by Turkey, which is called Nakhichevan.

In the same year on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, the Soviet Union attacked Armenia. With little resistance, the Soviet Army swept through Armenia, and annexed the country into the Soviet Union, under the name of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. The Armenian SSR remained as a republic of the Soviet Union, until it's collapsed in 1991.

After the Independence, Armenia became a democratic country.

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<sup>11</sup> Encyclopedia.ushmn.org : <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-armenian-genocide-1915-16-in-depth?parent=en%2F11616>

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<sup>12</sup> Encyclopedia.ushmn.org:<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-armenian-genocide-1915-16-overview>

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<sup>13</sup> Richard G. Hovannisian 1971: <https://archive.org/details/republicofarmeni0000hova/page/6/mode/2up p.:6>  
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### 3: Nagorno-Karabakh



3. Figure: Map of Nagorno-Karabakh

Source: <https://www.worldatlas.com/geography/nagorno-karabakh.html>

Nagorno-Karabakh is an enclave, located inside the territory of Azerbaijan. An enclave as defined by Merriam -Webster dictionary is “a distinct territorial, cultural, or social unit enclosed within or as if within foreign territory”.<sup>14</sup> Nagorno-Karabakh lies within the territory of Azerbaijan. It has an area of 4 400km<sup>2</sup>. The total population of Nagorno-Karabakh 146,573km<sup>2</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Merriam-Webstwer.com: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/enclave>  
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as of 2013. As regarding to the ethnicity of Nagorno-Karabakh, 95% of the population is Armenian.<sup>15</sup>

The territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognised as the part of Azerbaijan by a UN resolution. In 2008, the United Nations voted in the matter of the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. In a vote of 39 country in favour of the proposal and 7 country voted against the resolution, with 100 countries abstention, the resolution passed. In that resolution it's stated, that the United Nation is standing with the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. It is also demanded, that Armenian troops that are occupying the territories within Azerbaijan. The UN resolution also expressed that the Armenian population should be able to live in peace and to be equal to the Azeri population.<sup>16</sup>

In 1923 Nagorno-Karabakh became an autonomous territory within Azerbaijan, despite the fact that 95% of the population of is Armenian. Since then, Armenian population complained that they have been discriminated by Azerbaijan.<sup>17</sup>

These ethnic tensions during the full strength existence of the Soviet Union had been under control. However during the 1980, when the Soviet Union started to lose its power, these ethnic tensions surfaced from the depths, and where hard to get under control again. The tensions between the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

In the 1988, the Armenian living in Nagorno-Karabakh started to protest against the bad treatment from Azerbaijan, and that they wish to be the part of Armenia. The Azerbaijani government tried to violently suppress the separatist protesters. After the dissolution of the USSR, both Armenia and Azerbaijan became independent, a full blown war broke out between the two countries. It lasted from 1988 until 1994. The Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous territories' parliament voted in favour of seceding from Azerbaijan, in favour of joining into Armenia, as the population being over 95% Armenian, whom are accused Azerbaijan of not treating them well, under their occupation. The process started in a peaceful manner, because they were under the control of the USSR, which is kept any nationalistic uprising under control, to keep the stability of the USSR, and to avoid nationalistic secessions from the USSR.

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<sup>15</sup> Nkrusa.org: [http://www.nkrusa.org/country\\_profile/overview.shtml](http://www.nkrusa.org/country_profile/overview.shtml)  
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<sup>16</sup> Un.org: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2008/ga10693.doc.htm>  
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<sup>17</sup> Nationalgeographic.com: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/how-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-shaped-by-past-empires>  
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However, as the USSR started to lose its power, the ethnic tensions grew between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

This violence resulted in an ethnic cleansing to be committed by both sides. In 1988, in the city of Sumagit, In Azerbaijan, an ethnic cleansing had been committed against the Armenian population. Between 1988 February 26<sup>nd</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup> mobs of Azeri people formed, and attacked ethnic Armenians in the streets of Sumagit. They even broke into the Armenian homes, where they killed them and looted their home. During those days, according to official data, 26 Armenian was killed. The Azeri leadership was heavily criticised for its slow and unproportioned answer to contain those groups. The police forces did not show up during the first three days of the pogrom, and when they did, they were unable to contain the mobs. The situation was so out of control that military units needed to be deployed to finally contain the violence. The slow response, and the inflammatory comments that Azeri leadership visited the town, and addressed the protesting crowd, that they should be go after the Armenians, to drive them out from the territory. Those factors combined, it is believed that this pogrom was premeditated by Azeri officials.<sup>18</sup>

The other notable atrocity that was committed in Azerbaijan is the Baku pogrom. A pogrom is “a mob attack either controlled or approved by authorities”<sup>19</sup>It happened on between January 12<sup>th</sup> and January 19<sup>th</sup> 1990. On January 12<sup>th</sup> 1990, massive rallies were held in Baku by the Azerbaijani Popular Front. During the rally, some extremist wing of the Azerbaijani Popular Front started to make inflammatory comments about Armenians, who lived in Baku. They called for the deportation and the killing of the Armenian minority. These inflammatory comments resulted in the pogrom of Baku. It lasted 7 days, and resulted in 48 deaths, according to the Human Rights Watch.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Communications-unlimited.nl: <https://www.communications-unlimited.nl/massacre-in-response-to-self-determination-the-1988-sumgait-massacre-as-a-manifestation-of-azerbajians-anti-armenian-policy/>

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<sup>19</sup> Britannica.com: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pogrom>

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<sup>20</sup> HRW.org: <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/communal/>

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Not only Azerbaijan committed ethnic cleansing of minorities. In Armenia, there were also two notable incidents: The Gukark pogrom in between March and December of 1988, and the Khojaly massacre in 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1992.

The Gukark pogrom happened in between March and December of 1988. It happened after the pogrom in Sumagit in Azerbaijan. Gukark was a district inside the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. In this district, a number of Azerbaijanis lived there. The events happened in Gukark are pretty similar to the events in Sumagit. Groups of young Armenians gathered in groups, and attacked Azerbaijanis. Ethnic Azerbaijanis were also fired from their jobs and different organisations. Armenians broke into their homes, stole personal belongings. They even destroyed Azeri businesses like factories and shops. During this several months, according to official Soviet data, 11 people were killed during the pogrom. To minimise the effects of the events, the Karabakh Committee—which was a group of Armenian intellectuals, whose main goal was to find a way to unite Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia—decided to help out the Azerbaijanis, by sending troops to the streets of Gukark. However this did not turn out to be enough, and Azerbaijanis were attacked by Armenians, while Azerbaijanis were evacuated. Eventually, all Azerbaijanis were evacuated from the city of Gukark.<sup>21</sup>

After the evacuations ended, Soviet officials arrived to Armenia, to investigate the incidents that had been committed. The official investigations did not find out who perpetrated the crimes, and no one was charged with anything. However, the leader of the Armenian Communist Party had been suspended from their position, because of their attitude shown towards the events that occurred in those months.

In Armenia, there was another pogrom committed four years later on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February in 1992. It was the time, when Armenians made significant advances in the war. The Armenian forces captured the city of Khojaly. The city was populated by 6300 Azerbaijanis before the war. The Armenian army besieged the town of Khojaly. The town's defence consisted of only 160 armed men. The Armenian army launched a full attack against the town. Previously, the town had a road connection to cities to Shusha, and the capital city of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert, and held the region's only airport, which was vital for each side for transporting food and weapons, for the Azerbaijanis to flee from the town. The town was blockaded by Armenian forces. The town hosted Russian troops in the city, however they left the town of

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<sup>21</sup>caucasusedition.net: <https://caucasusedition.net/gugark-after-sumgait/>  
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Khoyali, and the defenders numbers dropped dramatically. The town became under blockade by the Armenian army. There were no road connections, electricity and food supplies.

Before the siege, according to the Armenian officials, warnings and an ultimatum was issued to the city defenders and for the civilians. There where warnings for the citizens of Khoyali, to leave the city.

For this purpose, they maintained a humanitarian corridor. The humanitarian corridor is “the United Nations considers humanitarian corridors to be one of several forms of a temporary pause of an armed conflict. They are special military zones in a specific area for a specific time- and both sides of an armed conflicts agreed to them.”<sup>22</sup>

This was confirmed by an investigation in Strasbourg 2010. In this case an Azeri filmmaker Ramiz Fataliyev, and the major of the town at that time, Elmar Mammadov testified in this manner. Ramiz Fataliyev. Both testifier accepted the fact that there were a human corridor set up by the Armenian Army.

The major of the town, Elmar Mammadov testified that he was informed by the Armenian Army about the incoming attack, and the existence about the humanitarian corridor for the citizens of the town. He also requested helicopters from the Azerbaijani government for the evacuation of the citizens. However there was no answer and help sent from the government.

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According to Azeri filmmaker, Ramiz Fataliyev, who directed the Azerbaijanifilm studio, which documented crimes that were committed by the Armenians against the Khoyali citizens. He also blamed the leadership for not taking any actions to evacuate the citizens from the town. He believed that the government thought that if they are evacuating the city, it would mean, that Armenians can freely capture the city. He thinks that this was a huge mistake on the government side. They were thinking that the holding the city was more important than saving its residents. He said: “Lack of political foresight led to Khoyali incident”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Deutsche Welle.com:What are human corridors? <https://www.dw.com/en/what-are-humanitarian-corridors/a-61030061>

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<sup>23</sup> Web-archive.org

<https://web.archive.org/web/20121209150626/http://ebooks.preslib.az/pdfbooks/rubooks/xocxronk.pdf> p.15

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<sup>24</sup> azadliq.org: <https://www.azadliq.org/a/1818751.html>

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On 1992 February 25<sup>th</sup>, the siege of the city begun. The Armenian army stormed the city, and captured it in one night, as there were only little resistance from the Azerbaijani side. The Armenian army captured the city, and that's when the atrocities started to happened. Many refugees despite the warnings stayed in the city. The city was under a heavy shelling from the Armenian forces. The casualties are unknown, as Armenians are not willing to release the number of casualties. On the ground, Armenian troops entered in the city, and started shooting at fighters, and innocent civilians as well. When refugees tried to escape from the city, shots were fired upon them, and many of them were killed.

Those who were able to escape from the city and the fires that were shot towards them, many of them were left to wander in the mountains surrounding the town in harsh conditions. Many refugees were captured by Armenian military, and many refugees froze to death because of the cold weather at the time. <sup>25</sup>

The death toll of the Khojali massacre is disputed. The Azerbaijani officials' claims that there were 613 Azerbaijanis were killed. The number includes 169 women and children as well. <sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> web-archive.org:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20100731043945/http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/karabah/Hojaly/Chapter1.htm>

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<sup>26</sup> BBC.com Nagorno-karabakh: Remembering the victims of Khojali <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17179904>

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#### 4: The first Nagorno-Karabakh war

As I described earlier, the full scale fighting erupted in 1992. Before that there were mainly ethnic conflicts between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in mixed ethnic towns like for example: in Baku in Azerbaijan, or in Gukark in Armenia. The other two notable atrocities were committed during the full scale war.

In the early months of the war, in 1992, the capital city of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert became the subject of heavy shelling from the Azeri army. The shelling was indiscriminate according to the Human Right Watch. The Human Right Watch stated, that the shelling's targeted non-military objects, like civilian homes, hospitals and other non-military objects.

The Azeri shelling of Stepanakert was a direct response for the attack of towns of Khoyali- where the described atrocities were committed- and Shusha, which was a strategically really important city for Azerbaijan, as the shelling of Stepanakert was conducted from this city. This town was also important for ground attacks against Stepanakert. The Azeri army launched an invasion against the capital city of Nagorno-Karabakh from Shusha. On the way to Stepanakert a town called Karintak, which would be another base for future attacks from Azerbaijan against Stepanakert. However, the capturing of Karintak failed, because the defenders of the town repulsed the attacks from the Armenian Army. After the fall of Khoyali, Shusha became even more important for the Azerbaijanis. They sent reinforcement for the defense of the town, as well as for the attack of Stepanakert.

The Armenian Army launched an attack against the Azeri controlled city on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1992. Despite the fact that there were more men and armament for the Azeri's, the Armenian troops captured the city. This was a huge loss for Azerbaijan, as they lost their base for the planned attacks in the future.<sup>27</sup>

This victory pushed the Armenian Army forward. They attacked the city of Lachin. The city was strategically really important, because it had a narrow corridor, which connected the Azerbaijani territories with Nagorno-Karabakh. This was a major victory for Armenia and a huge loss for Azerbaijan. As for Azerbaijan, this was the main connection with Nagorno-

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas De Waal. Black Garden Azerbaijan and Armenia through Peace and War 2003  
[https://preview.aer.io/Black\\_Garden-Mjc1Njcx?social=1&retail=1&emailcap=0](https://preview.aer.io/Black_Garden-Mjc1Njcx?social=1&retail=1&emailcap=0)  
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Karabakh, so they were essentially drove out from Nagorno-Karabakh. For Nagorno-Karabakh, it was important to be able to get supplies from Armenia.

This loss costed the position of the reigning president, Ayaz Mutallibov to lose the presidency. After president Mutallibov stepped down. He was deemed as a weak president, and blamed the loss of the cities of Shush, and the strategically important Lachin city and the corridor with Nagorno-Karabakh. The Azerbaijani Popular Front elected the next president. The next president elected was Abdulfaz Elchibey, who was elected in June 16<sup>th</sup> 1992. He had closer ties to Turkey, than Russia. This was a really important, because this influenced alliance to the extent that in my opinion influenced the outcome of the war. Azerbaijan got closer to Turkey regarding to alliances. Turkey Armenia got closer to Russia, who begun to deliver armament worth of more than 1 billion USD, while Russia's role on army supplement reduced significantly.<sup>28</sup>

In June 1992, Azerbaijan decided to launch an attack against the Armenians, to recapture the cities that Armenians previously captured some months ago. The counter attack against the front in Lachin and Shusha collapsed. It happened, because many volunteers for the Armenian Army left their divisions, and went back to their homes. As a result less numbers were available for the Armenian army, to hold off the Azerbaijani counter attack. The Azerbaijani Army took back several cities, and brought the region of Shahumia under their control.

The quick advance prompted fear in Armenia, that they might lose the war, so they stepped out, and decided to officially supply the separatist with armaments and other necessities, to contain the advance of the Azerbaijani counterattack, to prevent more territorial loss for Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia itself. This statement became real, when the Armenian government announced partial mobilization of its army, to send them into Nagorno-Karabakh to help stopping the Azeri advancement. As a result of the mobilisation, 15 000 new service members had been drafted into the army. With the more numbers, the Armenians were able to stop the advancement of Azerbaijan, and they could stabilise their frontline.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Brown E Michael: The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict 1996 p: 125  
[https://books.google.hu/books?hl=en&lr=&id=xDCpQqOd31wC&oi=fnd&pg=PP11&dq=Brown,+Michael+E.+\(1996\).+The+International+Dimensions+of+Internal+Conflict.+Cambridge:+MIT+Press.&ots=8ill7kjDAq&sig=imszcbXgMGrLAdb0II0vhBGAEMk&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.hu/books?hl=en&lr=&id=xDCpQqOd31wC&oi=fnd&pg=PP11&dq=Brown,+Michael+E.+(1996).+The+International+Dimensions+of+Internal+Conflict.+Cambridge:+MIT+Press.&ots=8ill7kjDAq&sig=imszcbXgMGrLAdb0II0vhBGAEMk&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)  
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<sup>29</sup> Thomas De Waal: The Black Garden Azerbaijan and Armenia through Peace and War 2003 p202

In late August, the Azerbaijani Army launched a smaller counter offensive against the territories captured formerly by the Armenian Army. This attack focused on the southern part of Nagorno-Karabakh. The targeted town was Martuni, which was guarded by smaller forces. They have become under heavy artillery fires, but despite their smaller numbers, and lack of adequate equipment's, the defenders of the town hold on, and repelled the attacking forces.

As winter approached into the Caucasus, the full scale fighting stopped, to be able to save up electricity and fuel for heating. The winter in 1992-1993 was extremely cold. The infrastructure was severely damaged during the fighting. Electricity, water and heating was cut off, roads and railways had been damaged, so transportation was harder. Food shortages were also present during the winter, and many aid was sent to the area from Russia, and for Armenia, Armenians whom lived in diaspora also sent them goods and money donations to help Armenians survive. Azerbaijan was also getting help from Turkey. Turkey sent them food, medicine and weapons.

However the stalemate only lasted for couple of months. After the new year in April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1993, the Armenian military started a military campaign against Azerbaijan. This was prompted by the fact, that Russia supplied armaments to Armenia worth 1billion USD\$.

The first mayor target of this new campaign was a town of Kalbajar. The town of Kalbajar was overrum by the Armenian forces just in matter of hours. The Azerbaijani forces had been completely whipped out, left behind military equipment.

This embarrassing defeat for Azerbaijan, cost the sitting president to lose his power. As a result, Abulfaz Elchibey stepped down from presidency on the 18<sup>th</sup> in June 1993. The power had been transferred to Heydar Aliev. He was appointed as a new president on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1993. <sup>30</sup>

This change in the presidency, caused political instability in Azerbaijan. This lead to the fact that they were unable to focus on the frontline. Armenia took advantage of the unstable situation in Azerbaijan, and made quick progress in the area.

Armenian advanced, and captured territories from Azerbaijan, and began the siege of the town called Agadam. They captured the city on July 23<sup>rd</sup> with basically no resistance from the

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<http://library.asue.am/open/1876.pdf>

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<sup>30</sup> president.az: <https://president.az/en/pages/view/azerbaijan/leader>

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Azerbaijani Army, due to the internal political conflicts in Azerbaijan, which left them with no strong support<sup>31</sup>.

As a result of disintegrated political power in Azerbaijan, and the brutal losses in towns, territories, and equipment, the Azerbaijani army was nearly completely annihilated. They were so desperate, that they needed foreign mercenaries to help them out for more time. This was the time, when between 1500 and 3000 Afghani mujahedeen joined in the side of Azerbaijan. <sup>32</sup>.

On October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1993, Heidar Aliev was elected as a president of Azerbaijan. He promised to his supporters, that he will bring stability the country, and turns the flow of the war in favour of Azerbaijan.

In January 1994, Azerbaijan launched the final attack wave of this war. In the beginning of the offensive, they successfully managed to recapture some of the territory of Fuzuli region. The region was heavily guarded, and the Azerbaijanis met with unprecedented resistance from the Armenian defenders. The attack against Fuzuli started in early 1994. The Azerbaijanis made quick progress, and tried to take control over the town of Fuzuli. The defenders of the town held off the Azeri attack, and defended Fuzuli.

After the failed capture of Fuzuli, the next target of Azerbaijan was the region of Mardakert. The town locates inside the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, so the aim was to recapture this region from Armenia. The first wave of the Azeri attacks were successful. They captured some regions, but shortly after their offensive slowed down, and stopped completely.

As I mentioned before, Armenia offered official help for the rebels in Nagorno-Karabakh by conscripting nearly 10 000 army member. By the help of these newly conscripted personals, Armenia Nagorno-Karabakh was able to stop this advancement of Azerbaijan. This defeat was the last blow for Azerbaijan. They already where lack on manpower, which was proven by the fact that Mujahedeen fighters were called upon, and boys as young as 16 were forced to join the Army.

The Azerbaijani Army morale hit the all-time low, as a result of constant and significant losses and the unsuccessful offensive.

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas De Waal: The Black Garden Azerbaijan and Armenia through Peace and War 2003 p 215  
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<sup>32</sup> Ioannis Charalampidis: Sponsored To Kill: Mercenaries and Terrorist network in Azerbaijan 2013 p6  
<http://karabakhfacts.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Ioannis-Charalampidis-Sponsored-to-Kill-ENG.pdf>  
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After the failed offensives, the Azerbaijani leadership realized, that there is no chance to win this war. They have exhausted their manpower, and they were so weak, that the Armenian military could easily march into Baku. To take these factors in account, they decided to start negotiating a peace agreement.

#### 4: The 1994 peace agreement

There were many attempts to solve this crisis peacefully during the war. In March 1992, the Conference on Security and Cooperation created the Minsk Group, to help coordinate negotiations, to end the conflict. The Minsk Group was co-chaired by France, the US, and Russia. The other members were the participants of the war, Armenia, Azerbaijan; and other countries such as Turkey, Germany, Italy, Belarus, Sweden and Finland. The task of this newly formed international group was to set up negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan to put an end to the war, and to resolve the territorial disputes in a diplomatic way.<sup>33</sup>

The Minsk group adopted four resolutions during wartime to try to mediate the conflict itself. The four resolutions were: Resolution 822 on April 30<sup>th</sup> 1993, resolution 853 as of July 29<sup>th</sup> 1993, resolution 874 as of October 14<sup>th</sup> 1993 and resolution 884 of November 12<sup>th</sup> 1993.

Resolution 822, which was adopted in 1993 April 30<sup>th</sup>. The resolution is demanded, that to end all hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and return to the diplomatic way of solving this conflict. They also brought attention to the issue of the large number of displaced population on both side and their bad condition, especially in the Kelbadjar region. They also reaffirmed, that according to international law, the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is an Azerbaijani territory, and the borders of the region must be respected.<sup>34</sup>

The next resolution, Resolution number 853, which was adopted on July 29<sup>th</sup> of 1993, is concerned with again the integrity of the territory of the countries. In accordance with this, the Minsk Group condemned the attacking nature of the Armenian Army, They condemned the capture of Agadam, and the surrounding regions. The Minsk Group also advised other countries to stop army supplements, as these supplements would delay the possibility of a ceasefire, as the combatant parties would have much more supplies to last longer. Also they called for an

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<sup>33</sup> osce.org Who we are: <https://www.osce.org/minsk-group/108306>

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<sup>34</sup> Digitallibrary.un.org: Resolution 882 1993 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/165604?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>

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international cooperation to accommodate the thousands of displaced civilian population in both countries.<sup>35</sup>

The third resolution that was implemented was Resolution 874 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1993. This resolution again reassured the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. They also urged the countries to establish a ceasefire agreement, and to cooperate with the mediator of the ceasefire coordinator, the government of the Russian federation.<sup>36</sup>

The fourth and final resolution that was implemented during the war, to help to pave the way to a future peace deal is Resolution number 884 of November 12<sup>th</sup> 1993. This resolution was condemning the advancement of the Armenian Army, and the capture of the Zangelan region, and the city of Goradiz. It urged the Armenian Army, to retreat from these areas, and not to bomb the city itself. They also urged the council to make efforts to support the citizens of the Zangelan region and the town of Goradiz, by supplying them basic necessities. They also urged the two countries to negotiate with the peace mediator, the Government of Russia to end the hostility between them, and be willing to come to the table, to create a stable peace deal.<sup>37</sup>

As it is shown in these documents, the Minsk Group tried to bring the two side together, to find a peace deal to end the conflict, and the suffering of the countries citizen. It is also noticeable, that the Minsk Group's peace deal was mostly mediated by the Russian government. This is because the Russian Government has a fairly good relationship with both country. They never sided with only one of them. They supported both country with armament, and only navigated as the balance of powers changed. And Russia had also planned to restore its former influence on the region, which they held before, so to be able to do it they have come forth as the main peace mediators, however they worked in cooperation with the other members of the Minsk Group.

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<sup>35</sup> Digitallibrary.un.org Resolution 853 1993 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/165604?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>

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<sup>36</sup> Digitallibrary.un.org Resolution 874 1993 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/165604?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>

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<sup>37</sup> Digitallibrary.un.orh Resoluitiom 884 1993

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The major breakthrough for the peace deal was the signing of the Bishkek protocol. On 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1994 the participant countries delegations met in Bishkek, which is the capital city of Kyrgyzstan. The participants agreed to support the peace initiative that was put forward by the CIS-the Commonwealth of Independent Countries, which are including the former Soviet republics that are not in the EU-. This initiative that was put forward contained the cessation of the armed conflict, and to accept the document as a ceasefire. The ceasefire that was accepted in May 5<sup>th</sup> in Bishkek must be in force from midnight of May 8<sup>th</sup> to May 9<sup>th</sup>.<sup>38</sup>

As a result of the peace deal, Armenia occupied a large piece of territory from Azerbaijan. This territory was mostly situated between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Nagorno-Karabakh declared itself as an autonomous region, but was never recognised by the international community.

The peace deal was effective for more than a decade. However the tensions still remain high even today. Ever since then, the conflict had been frozen, but never been fully resolved. Nagorno-Karabakh is really important for both.

For Armenia, it is really important, because more than 90% of the population living in Nagorno-Karabakh are ethnically Armenians. They hold the viewpoint that the Azeri's are a repressive country, that does not respects the Armenian population, and does not views them as equal citizens to the Azeri's.

Nagorno-Karabakh is really important for Azerbaijan as well. They are claiming this land on the basis of the international law. On the basis of international law, Nagorno-Karabakh is nor does an autonomous region, nor a part of Armenia, rather than a territory which is belong to Azerbaijan.

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<sup>38</sup> Peacemaker.un.org: The Bishkek Protocol:  
<https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/Bishkek%20Protocol.pdf>  
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## 5: Azerbaijan and Armenia between the two wars

After the signing the ceasefire in 1994, Azerbaijan lost the war. They lost significant chunk of their territory in the surrounding areas of Nagorno-Karabakh, and their lost Nagorno-Karabakh itself.

After the massive defeat, the Azerbaijani army was completely destroyed and exhausted. The number of casualties of this war for Azerbaijan is unclear, as the numbers provided by Azerbaijan are contradictory to the numbers provided by other countries and organizations. According to the official number provided by the Azerbaijani Parliament, there were 20 000 Azerbaijanis killed, and 50 000 wounded during the conflicts. This data has been contradicted by the US State Department, which reported 25 000 dead.<sup>39</sup>

Azerbaijan also lost many military equipment, and the morale of the army was very low after the defeat, and the loss of Azerbaijani territory.

The Azerbaijani leadership realised that they need to reform the military, to be able to defend the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The reforms implemented under the presidency of Heydar Aliiev. This reform was a complex, and a long term improvement effort from 1994 to 2016. It targeted many areas of the military such as: recruiting members, modernising the equipment and the supply facilities for it, they also reformed the training and education of the soldiers, and improved the military cooperation with other countries.

The government started to invest into the Azerbaijani Army. Their goal was to suppress Armenia's military spending.

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<sup>39</sup> Thomas De Waal: The Black Garden 2003 p 285 <http://library.asue.am/open/1876.pdf>

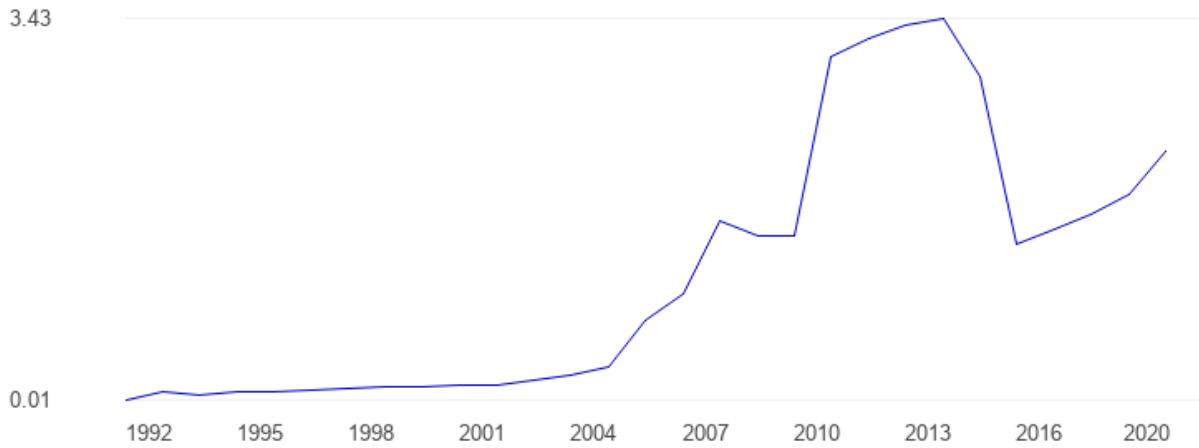
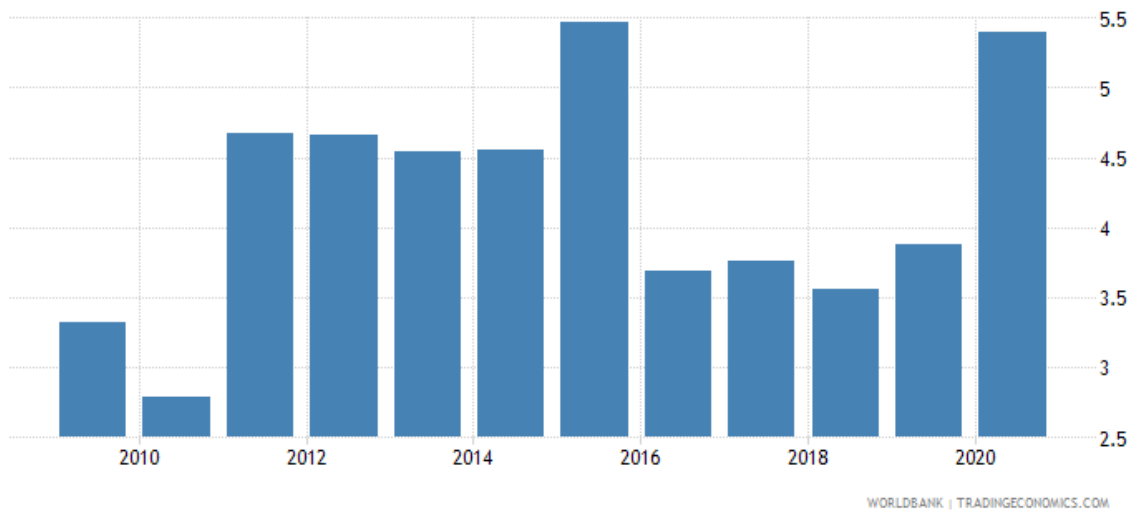


Figure 4: Military spending of Azerbaijan in Billion\$

Source: [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/mil\\_spend/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/mil_spend/)

As a result of this policy, the budget of the Azerbaijani Army growth significantly. As the chart above shows, from 1992 until 2015, the military budget growth significantly. It has reached the peak in 2015, when the government spent 3.43 Billion\$.<sup>40</sup>



<sup>40</sup> theglobaleconomy.com Azerbaijan military spending  
[https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/mil\\_spend/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/mil_spend/)  
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Figure 5: Azerbaijan military expenditure in % of GDP

Source: [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/mil\\_spend/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/mil_spend/)

The amount of 3, 43 Billion\$ accounted for 5, 5% of Azerbaijan total GDP. The financing of the military largely came from the oil revenues.

Azerbaijan also reformed the education of army personals. In 2009 they adopted the “Law on the Education the Republic of Azerbaijan”. This law contained a part regarding the military education in particular. The added the military part in 2010 May 24<sup>th</sup>, called “the regulation of the establishment of the military education system” and the “list of military education institutions”. These added parts set out new tasks for the military education field, to train and educate better military servicemen. The task of education had become the task of the Ministry of Defence, and the military education universities, and the universities got a special status as well. <sup>41</sup>

As we can see from this new policy, that the education of military personals in each level is really important for Azerbaijan. The new institutions with new tasks and benefits will be able to provide the Army of Azerbaijan with well-trained military personals in each level of the military, so the whole military is a hard-hitting military, which can defend Azerbaijan territorial integrity from any insider or outsider threat.

Azerbaijan not only focused on the educational area of the military, but they also tried to strengthen the relationship and cooperation with different countries and organisations.

Azerbaijan started to open up relationship with NATO. The first contact of Azerbaijan with NATO happened in 1992. In 1992, Azerbaijan joined a new body of NATO, North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). The NACC was a political forum created in 1991. Its goal was to create a forum for cooperation for the Post-Soviet countries, whom were in the Warsaw Pact before. The aim of this Council was to build trust between Western countries, and countries

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<sup>41</sup> mod.gov.az: The military education system of Azerbaijan Arm. <https://mod.gov.az/en/the-military-education-system-of-azerbaijan-army-326/#:~:text=Military%20education%20system%20comprises%20the,state%20education%20standards%20and%20capable> Downloaded: 2022. 04. 30.

whom were the part of the former Warsaw Pact. The NACC later became the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC).<sup>42</sup>

The next major step towards more integration into NATO, was the signing of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) agreement. This program is the part of NATO, and its aim is to build trust and cooperate with Post-Soviet countries in six different area.

The six different areas are:

- military training cooperation with other militaries
- military exercises with other nations military
- disaster planning and response cooperation
- cooperation on environmental and scientific issues
- professionalization
- policy planning advises
- Relation building with civilian government.

The PfP cooperation was a big success. Many other countries joined, not just Azerbaijan.<sup>43</sup>

The next major step for Azerbaijan to strengthen the cooperation with NATO was to join the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). The IPAP is the successor of the PfP cooperation. It was launched on the Prague Summit of 2002. Azerbaijan joined the cooperation in 2005 May 27<sup>th</sup>. This cooperation is offering a country specific tool for cooperation with NATO members. This cooperation also helps bilateral cooperation of both IPAP and NATO member countries.<sup>44</sup>

Azerbaijan not only had close ties to Western alliances, but Turkey has become a really important ally. Turkey and Azerbaijan has shared close ties since the independency of Azerbaijan. Its main reason is the close cultural and historical relationship of the two country. Culturally both country is a Turkic ethnic country, and both country follows the Islamic

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<sup>42</sup> nato.int Euro-Atlantic Partnership [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_67979.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67979.htm)  
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<sup>43</sup> sto.nato.int: <https://www.sto.nato.int/Pages/partnership-for-peace.aspx>  
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<sup>44</sup> nato.int: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49290.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49290.htm)  
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religion. Because of the cultural and historical similarities, they are often referred as “two states, one nation”. Apart from cultural similarities, they also have economic interests, as both country has massive oil reserves. And the most important fact, is that Turkey supports Azerbaijan militarily with drones and other equipment.

Also historically Turkey did not had good relationship with Armenia. Turkey still denies the Armenian genocide that happened between 1915 and 1917.

Armenia won the first Nagorno-Karabakh, and felt it’s militarily superior to Azerbaijan. Armenia also had a good relationship with Russia, and felt that they have a good ally in this conflict. The international community was also slowly pushing towards Armenia, given their troubled history with the Armenian genocide committed by Turkey between 1915 and 1917. However, after the Nagorno-Karabakh war Armenia occupied Azerbaijani territory, and recognised the autonomy of Nagorno-Karabakh itself. This occupation violated the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. According to international laws, Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan, and the occupation of this territory is a violation of these laws and resolutions. This resulted in

The Armenian military expenditures also significantly growth, in 2019, Armenia payed 652 billion USD, to its military. It is significantly less amount than the amount that Azerbaijan payed. However it is notable, that Armenia does not have large amount of natural resources that can help to finance its military that easily.

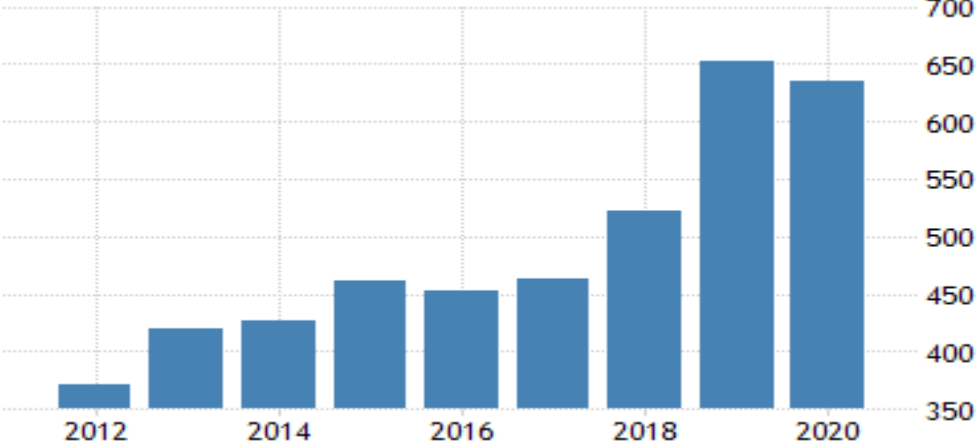


Figure 6: Military spending of Armenia million USD

Source: [tradingeconomist.com https://tradingeconomics.com/armenia/military-expenditure](https://tradingeconomics.com/armenia/military-expenditure)

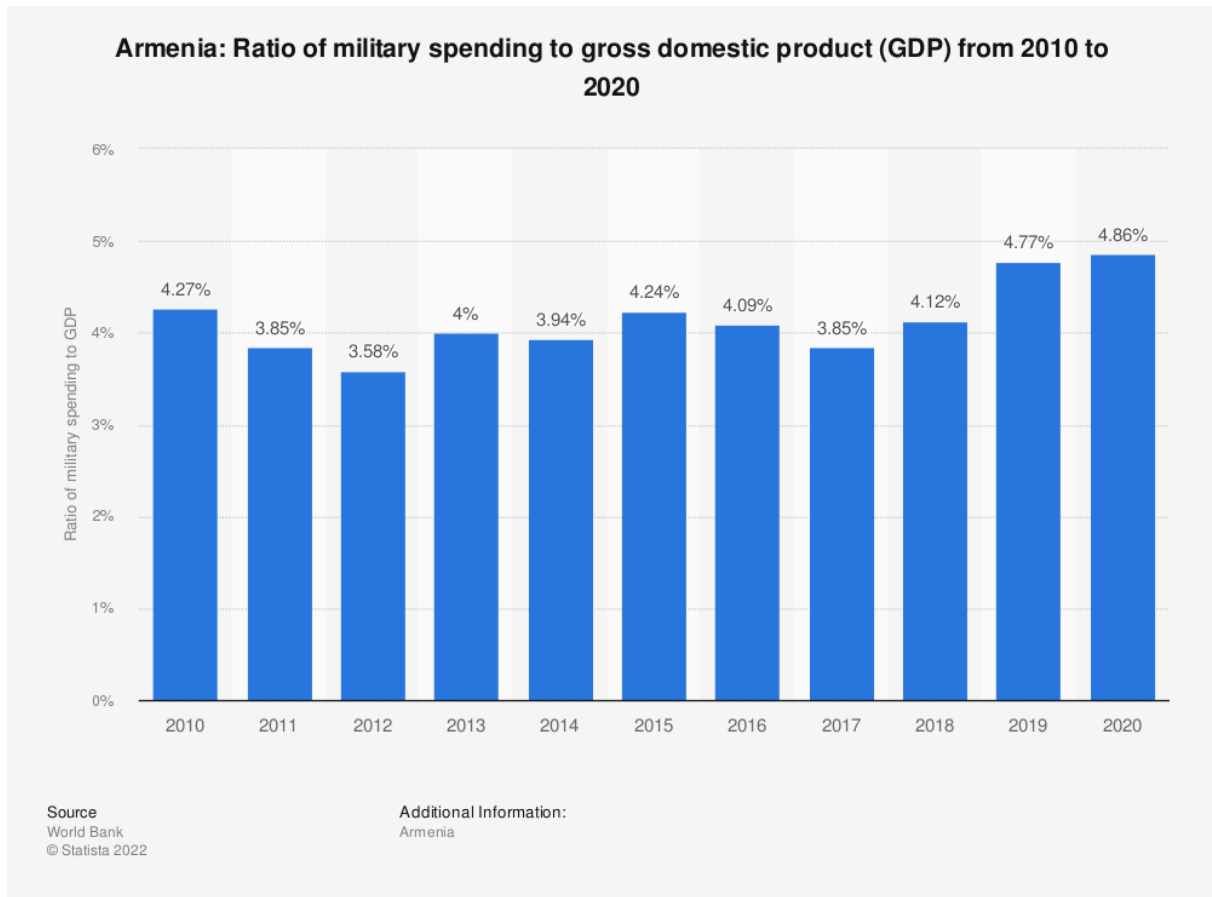


Figure 7: Armenia military spending of GDP (%)

Source: Statista.com: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/810319/ratio-of-military-expenditure-to-gross-domestic-product-gdp-armenia/>

As the diagram above shows, Armenia consistently spending around 3,5-4,86% of its total GDP on military.

It is also notable that Armenia heavily relied on Russia, for supporting its own military. Between 2011 and 2020, 94% of the military equipment that Armenia imported are coming from Russia.

Also two factors in 2008 played a huge role on the unpreparedness of the Armenian Army for the upcoming 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. In 2008, a financial crisis hit the world, and

Armenia, as well as Russia attack on Georgia. The first one was bad financially, however it led to the fact, that Western countries did not pay that much attention to the region. Secondly, the Russian attack against Georgia showed that the International Community is unable to stand up strongly against a Russian invasion, hence having Russia on their side, showed to be a good step as Armenia relied heavily on the Russian army supplies. However, when in 2018, when Azerbaijan attacked Armenia in the “four-day war”, Russia did not intervene, which should have been a warning sign, that Russia will not directly intervene in a war situation, rather than be a mediator in this conflict.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, the political leadership of the country is also acting strangely. In 2018 Nikol Pashinyan was elected. First, he was on the peaceful solution to this problem. Even the Azerbaijani political leadership was positive toward him, and saw a good partner, with whom they can solve this issue peacefully. However, in 2019, Pashinyan suddenly changed his rhetoric regarding to the conflict.

He denied the OSCE’s Madrid principles which were the basis of the peace negotiations for a long time.

In his statement he said that “there are no specific documents means that there are also no basic principles”.<sup>46</sup> This statement is equal to deny the Madrid principles that served as a basis for the peace talks. He also stated in August 2019, in a speech in Yerevan, that “Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenia, period”.<sup>47</sup>

He would sought to change the fact, that the leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh should be able to participate in the peace talks, which was not possible, since international laws do not recognise Nagorno-Karabakh as a country, so they are not able to send diplomats into the talks.

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<sup>45</sup> silkroadstudies.org: How did Armenia so badly miscalculate its war with Azerbaijan  
<https://www.silkroadstudies.org/publications/joint-center-publications/item/13418-how-did-armenia-so-badly-miscalculate-its-war-with-azerbaijan.html>

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<sup>46</sup> news.am : <https://news.am/eng/news/511864.html>

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<sup>47</sup> silkroadstudies.org: How did Armenia so badly miscalculate its war with Azerbaijan  
<https://www.silkroadstudies.org/publications/joint-center-publications/item/13418-how-did-armenia-so-badly-miscalculate-its-war-with-azerbaijan.html>

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As we can see how the two country behaved between the two wars, it seemed that another war is inevitable.

Azerbaijan increased spending on the military, and forming close alliance with Turkey, showed that they are preparing to take revenge on the lost war and to regain the lost territories.

Armenia also started to build up its army, with the help of Russia. However, their “readiness” for the war showed more in rhetoric. Nikole Pashinyan’s statements like “Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenia”. Also the way he acted during the peace talks –mainly the denial of the OSCE Madrid principals-, and the involvement an unrecognised territory to the peace talks showed his intentions. His intensions from the “peace-making” leader into a more confrontational leader, which was shown the best in the interview he gave the BBC Hard Talk. In which the end of the interviewer, Stephen Sackur concluded that “you clearly are not a peacemaker”.<sup>48</sup>

And indeed, these hostile behaviour towards each other, the army and alliance building led to a second war over Nagorno-Karabakh territory in 2020.

## 6: The second Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020

The second Nagorno-Karabakh war broke out on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2020. Azerbaijan launched an attack against Armenia. Their goal was to reclaim the lands that are in Armenian control since the lost First Nagorno-Karabakh war.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> caspiannews.com BBC anchor presses Pashinyan on Armenia’s Occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh  
<https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/bbc-anchor-presses-pashinyan-on-armenias-occupation-of-nagorno-karabakh-2020-8-16-15/>

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<sup>49</sup> warontherocks.com: <https://warontherocks.com/2020/10/the-second-nagorno-karabakh-war-two-weeks-in/>  
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The first assault was launched by Azerbaijan alongside the “line of contact”, which is a decided line of border between the two countries over Nagorno-Karabakh since the First Nagorno-Karabakh war.

Azerbaijan launched a powerful military assault, which led to the Armenian Army having to abandon their line of defense. This move resulted in territorial gain for Azerbaijan between the 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of September of the offensive.<sup>50</sup>

The Armenian Army retreated to the Northern part of Armenia, into the mountainous territory. This move slowed down the advancement of the Azerbaijani Army, as the territory was much easier to defend. This resulted in a stalemate between the two army, for almost three days between the 30<sup>th</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, with shooting at each other without any significant territorial gain.

The Armenian Army decided to launch a counteroffensive in the mountainous region. The counteroffensive was successful, until they arrived to the more open fields. In these open field, Azerbaijan had the military, more especially in air superiority thanks to the large number of drones that were provided by Turkey and Israel. The drone attacks against the Armenian positions resulted in huge losses for Armenia.<sup>51</sup>

The so called position wafer and the counter offensive claimed big losses in each side. However on the sixth day of war, Azerbaijan started the shelling of Stepanakert, the capital city of Nagorno-Karabakh. In response, Armenia started shooting towards Azerbaijan territory. They targeted the city of Ganja and destroyed Azeri military infrastructure.<sup>52</sup>

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, Azerbaijan conducted a large military organization, to resupply the army with equipment and manpower. This military conduction proved to help the Azerbaijani army, to make significant advancement. This mainly happened in the southern part of the country, which is more flat, and easier to manoeuvre with the military with the help of drones From Turkey. Thanks to the reinforcements, Azerbaijan was able to capture the region of Jabrayil and Füzuli.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>warontherocks.com: <https://warontherocks.com/2020/10/the-second-nagorno-karabakh-war-two-weeks-in/>  
Downloaded: 2022. 05. 03.

<sup>51</sup> warontherocks.com: <https://warontherocks.com/2020/10/the-second-nagorno-karabakh-war-two-weeks-in/>  
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<sup>52</sup> warontherocks.com: <https://warontherocks.com/2020/10/the-second-nagorno-karabakh-war-two-weeks-in/>  
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<sup>53</sup> warontherocks.com: <https://warontherocks.com/2020/10/the-second-nagorno-karabakh-war-two-weeks-in/>  
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After a 10 hour long negotiation in Moscow between Azerbaijan and Armenia resulted in a ceasefire deal. However, this ceasefire was a short lived ceasefire. The Azerbaijani army continued the shelling of Nagorno-Karabakh's capital city, Stepanakert.<sup>54</sup>

Azerbaijan also made quick advancement on the southern part on the Iranian border, and secured the southern part of the country.<sup>55</sup>

Azerbaijan launched an attack against the Lachin region, with the highly important strategic object for Armenia, the Lachin-corridor. The Lachin-corridor is the only mainland connection between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The capture of this corridor and region would be a devastating loss for Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh both in logistically and morally.<sup>56</sup>

On November 8<sup>th</sup> of 2020, the Azerbaijani army started the attack of the city of Shusha. Shusha is the second largest city in Nagorno-Karabakh with around 4000 people. The city is also important for strategic reasons. The town's strategic point is stems from the fact that it is very close to the capital city of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert. It is around 13 km from the capital city, and this location can be the staging point, from where the Azerbaijani army is able to launch its attacks against the capital city of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert<sup>57</sup>.

The capture of Shusha was a big success for Azerbaijan, but a huge loss for Armenia.

## 7: The ceasefire deal of 2020

### 7.1: Azerbaijan

After the capture of Shusha, the president of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan signed a ceasefire agreement.

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<sup>54</sup> Theguardian.com: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/10/fresh-azerbaijani-shelling-shatters-peace-after-fragile-ceasefire-agreed>

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<sup>55</sup> timesnownews.com: <https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/azerbaijan-claims-full-control-of-border-with-iran/671484>

Downloaded: 2022. 05. 04.

<sup>56</sup> asiatictimes.com: <https://asiatimes.com/2020/10/azerbaijans-next-move-will-make-or-break-karabakh-war/>

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<sup>57</sup> Theguardian.com: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/08/azerbaijan-claims-to-have-captured-key-city-in-nagorno-karabakh>

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The ceasefire agreement was brokered by the Russian Federation. The armistice came in effect on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2020. It was signed by the president of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, the president of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, and the president of Russia Vladimir Putin.

The ceasefire consisted of nine main points that would ensure peace in the region. The important nine points are the following:

1. A complete ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan from the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2020.
2. The Agadam district must return to Azerbaijan by the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2020.
3. The peace-making forces of the Russian Federation shall be deployed into the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as in the Lachin Corridor.
4. The Russian forces shall be deployed for five years from now on. This time can be extended as if any party notifies the Russian Federation of this request.
5. A peacekeeping centre shall be built for the management of the peacekeeping tasks.
6. The district of Kalbajar must be returned to Azerbaijan by the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, as well as the Lachin region as of 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020. However, the 5km wide Lachin Corridor must remain under the control of the peacekeeping units of the Russian Federation. The road between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh via the Lachin Corridor must be built in the future. Additionally, Armenia has to ensure the free and safe movement of people and goods in the Lachin Corridor.
7. Internally displaced population and refugees must be able to return into the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.
8. Armenia and Azerbaijan must exchange prisoners of war, and the bodies of the fallen ones.
9. All business and personal traveling must be ensured between the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhcivan Autonomous Republic and the mainland of Azerbaijan, must be respected by Armenia, and must be supervised by the peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Statement by the prime minister of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Russia and President of the Russian Federation (2020.11.10): <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384>  
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As we can see from this peace deal, this deal covered many areas of the aftermath of the conflict. It addressed the territorial claims of the two country. Armenia had to hand over some regions that were under occupation since the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. These territories were the integral part of Azerbaijan, and the international community voted numerous times, that the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must be respected, and the Armenian army is an occupying force in this territory.

Also addressed the migration situation in the region. As a result of the war thousands of people had to flee from Nagorno-Karabakh. Most of them fled to Armenia, as they were ethnically Armenian. This ceasefire ensured, that they are able to return to their homeland peacefully.

This ceasefire negotiation was brokered by Russia, to gain back some of the power they had during the USSR. The three Caucasian countries were part of the USSR as republics. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the USSR started to lose its power in the region, and when the USSR collapsed, these former republics declared independence, and Russia lost its influence in the region. This ceasefire deal is a great opportunity for Russia to gain back some power in the region. The peacekeeping forces of Russia will represent its power in the region. Holding critically important strategic points like the Lacin Corridor is a major help for Russia, to restore its presence in the Caucasus, and keep this conflict under control.

The fallout of the peace deal was different in the two countries.

In Azerbaijan, people celebrated on the streets of Baku, with the flags of Azerbaijan, Turkey, and other allied nations. The victory achieved by Azerbaijan boosted the popularity of Ilham Aliyev. His popularity reached its highest after the announcement of the victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh war against Armenia. The opposition that formerly criticized him stooped doing that, and they even admitted his achievements after they won the war. This victory and “liberation” of territories from Armenia, forged a sense of national unity in Azerbaijan<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ryon Synovitz December,17 2020 RadioFreeEurope Radioliberty: <https://www.rferl.org/a/nagorno-karabakh-legacy-azerbajani-president-aliyev/31006302.html>

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. This permanent unity and sense of victory can overshadow the problems that Aliyev faced before the war. Such problems like corruption in the government, and the mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Transparency International Organization, Azerbaijan scored 30 out of 100 on their ranking, which places them the 128<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in 2021. This shows that corruption is a huge issue in Azerbaijan. Corruption is never good for a country, because of it results in a loss in national revenue, which can lead to economical regression.<sup>60</sup>

Another problem that the president may face if these glorious days pass, it's the mismanagement of the Covid-19 pandemic. In Azerbaijan, the healthcare system is in bad condition. The Azerbaijani government invested a lot into the healthcare system, however, it did not result in real changes. There are staff shortages and bad conditions in the hospitals. Hospital staff is underpaid, and they sometimes have to accept unofficial payments from patients for services that usually do not cost money. This problem affects the poor people in the society, who are not able to pay this much money, and they could leave untreated. This can be the result of the big problem of corruption. Even if the Azerbaijani government is allocating funds for the healthcare system, the funds are not been used correctly or got stolen, it will not lead to improvements in the healthcare system.<sup>61</sup>

Azerbaijani government also used the Covid-19 pandemic before the war, to silence opposition politicians and anti-government activists. The government introduced strict measures to combat the spread of Covid-19. Free movement of people had been tightened, they had to call or text a government hotline before leaving their homes, and have to have a permit for that. The government also introduced fines for breaking these laws. This can be a fine of 100-200 manat or 30 days in jail. The Azerbaijani government abused this system and arrested opposition activists and anyone who dared to criticize his actions.<sup>62</sup>

The war caused massive damage to Azerbaijan's infrastructure. According to experts' calculations, the total cost to rebuild the damaged infrastructure is around \$100 billion.

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<sup>60</sup> Transparency.org 2021: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/aze>  
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<sup>61</sup> Arzu Geybulla (2020): Endemic briber and poor services are hampering the country's response: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/azerbaijans-healthcare-creaks-under-covid-19-burden>  
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<sup>62</sup> Humanrightswatch.org (2020): <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/16/azerbaijan-crackdown-critics-amid-pandemic>  
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Azerbaijan does not have this much money on its own, so it will need the help of the international community. To be able to even just start negotiations to request funds, Azerbaijan needs to appeal to its western partners. They have to show that they are not willing to take more military actions against either Armenia or Nagorno-Karabakh. Also, it is important to clear any possible glance of accusations against them for committing ethnic cleansing or human rights violations.

Some experts also cite, that any kind of closure to western partners could be halted or permitted by the Russian peacekeeping army that is stationed nearby. It is not unimaginable, that Russia would intervene in case Azerbaijan decides that it would like to move toward the west.<sup>63</sup> This precedent happened during 2014 in Ukraine.

## 7.2: Armenia

In Armenia, the ceasefire was received very negatively by the Armenian population. The ceasefire deal meant that Armenia had to give up territories to Azerbaijan in return, for peace. This viewed as a betrayal by the Armenian population. Massive protests broke out against the president, and his decision.

The protesters demanded the resignation of President Nikol Pashinyan. They criticized his acceptance of the peace deal. By this peace deal, Armenia had to hand over territory that had been under their control since the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. Those territories were really important for Armenians, as they hold some sacred places for them.<sup>64</sup>

There were thousands of people gathering in governmental buildings after the announcement of the peace deal. The crowd on 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, stormed the parliament and demanded Pashinyan step down as a prime minister. They blamed the terms of the peace deal on Pashinyan and demanded to step back. The police arrested hundreds of protesters during that night.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ron Synovitz (2020): Analysis: Nagorno-Karabakh war transforms the legacy of Azerbaijani president Aliyev: <https://www.rferl.org/a/nagorno-karabakh-legacy-azerbaijani-president-aliyev/31006302.html>  
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<sup>64</sup> Theguardian.com(2020): <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/05/armenian-protesters-demand-prime-minister-quit-over-deal-with-nagorno-karabakh>  
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<sup>65</sup> Middleeastmonitor.com(2020) <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20201110-armenians-storm-parliament-beat-speaker-after-ceasefire-with-azerbaijan/>  
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In 2021, Nikol Pashinyan finally resigned from his position in April 2021. This resignation triggered a snap election, due in 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2021. <sup>66</sup>

In the 2021 elections, 1,281, 375 voter turned up. This number is 49% of the total eligible voter population. The election was won by the Civil Contract party. The party received 53, 95% of the total votes, which meant 688, 761 votes. After the Civil Contract Party, the second strongest party became the Alliance Armenia with 21, 11% of the votes, and the last relevant party became the I Have Honor Alliance with 5, 22% of the votes. <sup>67</sup>

The Civil Contract Party is led by Nikol Pashinyan. He was elected Prime minister again, but lost many seats compared to the last election. The newly elected president will have a lot of things to do, in order to be able to deliver for his country. Pashinyan has to learn from the big defeat from Azerbaijan in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war.

The Armenian President recently meet with the European Council leader Charles Michael, and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in 2022 April. They agreed to set up a bilateral commission to coordinate the future events for a peace agreement, brokered by the European Union. <sup>68</sup>

This is a major step towards a peaceful solution to the problem. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan shows willingness to cooperate with each other, under the mediation of the European Union. This is a big step, because for years, Russia was the main mediator of the ceasefire deals. This helped them to gain more power in this region, which they lost when the USSR collapsed, and the former republics became independent countries. So the aim of the ceasefire deal is to gain control in the region again, thanks to the 2000 peacekeeping army. This can also be interpreted as Russia does not want a full peace agreement between the two countries, because that would mean that their peacekeeping forces must leave the region, which would result in the loss of their power. So the best for Russia is that the conflict remains at least frozen, but not fully finished.

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<sup>66</sup> france24.com (2021): <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20210328-armenia-pm-pashinyan-to-resign-in-april-ahead-of-snap-election-to-defuse-crisis>  
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<sup>67</sup> electionguide.org: <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/3702/>

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<sup>68</sup> Deutschewelle.com (2022): <https://www.dw.com/en/armenia-azerbaijan-agree-to-peace-talks-two-years-after-nagorno-karabakh-fighting/a-61388096>  
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On the other hand however, the European Union's goal is to find a solution that is acceptable for both parties. The ideas of the European Union like: freedom of religion, democracy, and respect of human rights can help this progress. On the other hand, Russia does not value these values, and thus their goal is not to create peace, but rather to keep their power and influence in the region.

## 8; the role of nationalism in the conflict and in alliances

The role of nationalism and even ethno-nationalism is strongly present in the region. In the past, when different empires ruled over the territory, and after the fall of the USSR, when the two country became independent.

To better understand this topic, it is best to define the terms of nationalism, and ethno-nationalism

According to the Meriam-Webster definition of nationalism is the following: "loyalties and devotion to a nation especially: a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups"<sup>69</sup>.

This means that a person, who belongs to a nation, and believes in nationalistic ideas, will promote his /her country's culture, and language, and be convinced that his or her nation is the best in the world. This can be done in a peaceful manner respecting other nations, or violently without any respect for other nations.

The peaceful way of nationalism is called civic nationalism. Civic nationalism is a classical liberal-viewed form of nationalism. This kind of nationalism is inclusive and supports diversity inside the country. They provide equal rights and liberty to every citizen who lives in the country. The only exclusion is if a person is a citizen of a different country. Civic nationalists argue that a sense of national belonging to a state is necessary for a country to be able to function, and laws make any sense. <sup>70</sup>

On the other hand, ethno-nationalism is an exclusive kind of nationalism. Ethno-nationalism is exclusionary, because it defines nationality based on birth, race and ethnicity. This kind of nationalism does not allow any diversity, and discriminated against all people in the

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<sup>69</sup> Meriam-Webster.com: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nationalism>  
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<sup>70</sup> Stefan Aurel, 2014: Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe p.5  
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country, if they are not look like them. This leads to racism, and violation of human rights like education in their own language. Ethno-nationalism often leads to violent confrontation between different nationalities or races in a given country. Sometimes it can go as far as government sponsored violence against minorities.

The Caucasian region was under the rule of greater powers during history. It was partially under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and the Iranian Empire.

The most notable one was the Russian Empire. During the tsarist rule, national minorities were oppressed and were forced to accept that the Russian Empire forces their language, and religion on them.

Azerbaijan was always close to Turkey, as they both were ethnic Turks, and followed Islamic religion. After the fall of the USSR, it only got stronger, sometimes they referred to each other as brother nations. This strong alliance will have a significant advantage for Azerbaijan in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war.

Some part of Armenia was under the Ottoman Empires rule. After the fall of the empire, the newly formed Turkey, started to oppress the Armenian minority. Turkish groups systematically started killing, deporting ethnic Armenian population. The Armenian genocide, which was state sponsored, and overlooked is a prime example of ethno-nationalism. During the Armenian genocide approximately 1-1, 5 million people were killed. Turkey still denies that the genocide of Armenians ever happened. Despite that in 2022 the US declared it a genocide. This genocide, which was the form of ethno nationalism will greatly influence the alliances later during the conflict with Azerbaijan.

After the fall of the Russian and Turkish empires, the Caucasian countries became independent for a short period of time.

After the formation of the Soviet Union, the region with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia was conquered again. They have become republics of the Soviet Union.

In the Soviet Union the countries enjoyed different levels of freedom, which depended on the current leader of the USSR.

Under the rule of Joseph Stalin, nationalism was only acceptable if it supports the communist ideology. This kind of nationalism was called Soviet patriotism. This meant the support for the Soviet Union. Every other kind of nationalism was viewed as chauvinist nationalism, which was not allowed during the Stalinist era, as they thought it was some bourgeois ideology that would ruin the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup>

During Stalin rule, in 1923 Nagorno-Karabakh became the part of Azerbaijan, despite being 94% of its population ethnically Armenian. Ethnic Armenians were complaining about the treatment they get from the Azerbaijani SSR. Their rights were not respected, they were discriminated. The Armenians tried to protest, and deliver petition for changes, but those were denied by the Communist Party, as those demands were not aligned with the communist nationalism.<sup>72</sup>

Major improvements were made in the glasnost and perestroika era of the Soviet Union.

The glasnost and the perestroika era was a new era of the Soviet Union. It gave republics and citizens more freedom, and the central government intervened less.

The freedom given to these two republics also emerged decade-old nationalist conflicts in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

In Armenia, after the glasnost and perestroika were announced as new directions from the government, nationalistic ideas started to emerge. The main face of this nationalist movement was Levon Ter-Petrosyan. He called for the unity of the ethnic Armenians. He leads protests during the 1980s to support the glasnost and perestroika policies and demand more rights and freedoms. When he became the first president of Armenia, these protests became more nationalistic and demanded the unification of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. He held a referendum, regarding to Nagorno-Karabakh. In that referendum, more than 90% of Armenians suggested that Nagorno-Karabakh must return to Armenia.<sup>73</sup>

This shows how nationalism evolved in Armenia, after the fall of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>71</sup> Encyclopedia.com: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/nationalism-soviet-union>

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<sup>72</sup> Erin Blakemore (2020): <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/how-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-shaped-by-past-empires>

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<sup>73</sup> Caucasusedition.com: <https://caucasusedition.net/the-rise-of-new-nationalism-in-armenia-azerbaijan-and-georgia-in-the-late-1980s-and-early-1990s/>

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The same pattern can be observed in Azerbaijan as well.

After the fall of the USSR, nationalistic movements also emerged in Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, a nationalist party, the Azerbaijan Popular Front emerged in 1989. The party advocated for a free Azerbaijan from the Soviet Union. They also raised concerns about Azeri the population living in Armenia. They were concerned about their lack of representation, and demanded autonomy for them. At the same time Armenians claimed, that Nagorno-Karabakh seceded from Azerbaijan and join to Armenia. This made the Azerbaijani population frustrated, as they claim that Nagorno-Karabakh is the part of Azerbaijan.

These decade-old conflicts erupted in wars between the two countries with outside support.

During the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war, these historical events had big influences on the alliances and the outcome of the war.

Turkey fully supported Azerbaijan, as they were brother nations. Turkey sent advanced military equipment, and the deciding factor of this war was drones. The drones were really helpful for Azerbaijan, as Armenia was unable to protect itself from these attacks.<sup>74</sup>

Armenia allied itself with Russia. It occurred, because the other strong country, Turkey was also an enemy to the Armenians, because of the genocide of Armenians committed by Turkey between 1915 and 1917, when around 1 million ethnic Armenian died.

However, in this war, Russia did not intervene militarily on the side of Armenia. This meant that Armenia remained alone against Azerbaijan and Turkey. Armenia did not have the same military equipment, as they could not spend that amount of money on their military as Azerbaijan. The lack of defensive equipment against drones and tanks meant that Armenia was not able to hold back the Azerbaijani army. This led to the fact that Armenia surrendered to

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<sup>74</sup> Thewashingtonpost.com: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/turkey-drones-libya-nagorno-karabakh/2020/11/29/d8c98b96-29de-11eb-9c21-3cc501d0981f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/turkey-drones-libya-nagorno-karabakh/2020/11/29/d8c98b96-29de-11eb-9c21-3cc501d0981f_story.html)

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Azerbaijan, and lost Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the territories that they held since the first Nagorno-Karabakh war.

As it is showed above, nationalism played a huge role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Nationalism was the main driving force of this war. Both country claims Nagorno-Karabakh as its own territory. Armenia claims that the ethnic Armenians who have lived there for hundreds of years, are now they are under the oppression of the Azerbaijani government. They wanted to have more freedom for the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh.

## 9; the geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabakh

Nagorno-Karabakh, and the Caucasus region was referred as “Eurasian Balkans” by Zbigniew Brezezinski in his book called “The Grand Chessboard”. The Caucasus was the core of this so called “Eurasian Balkan”. This region is a highly tense region for variety of reasons:

- It has various natural resources like oil in Azerbaijan, and minerals in Armenia. The contest for these resources can lead to conflicts between the two nation
- The region is heterogeneous regarding to its population. In Armenia, the population is over 90% Armenian. This heterogeneousness can be said about Azerbaijan, where the population is over 90% Azerbaijani. The only exception is Nagorno-Karabakh. The population of Nagorno-Karabakh is over 94% ethnically Armenian. However, the enclave is internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan. The ethnic Armenians complained about this, and the treatment from Azerbaijan. This ethnic conflict and nationalistic sentiments can create hostilities between the two countries.
- The arbitrary borders are often contested between the two countries. This is especially true for Nagorno-Karabakh. The population is ethnically Armenian, but they are internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan. Many secession attempts were made from Nagorno-Karabakh to join Armenia, but they were declined or not recognized by the international community.
- In terms of geopolitics, the Caucasus was always in the sphere of local and extra-regional powers. Most notable ones are Russia and Turkey. The rivalry for the geopolitical influence in the region between Turkey and Russia heavily affected the region. Turkey supported Azerbaijan, as they both ethnically Turks and practice Islamic religion. Armenia is supported by Russia. Armenia sided with Russia, because of the historical conflicts between both Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Russia and Turkey are the two main international actors in the region for the influence on this region. Russia has a military basis in Armenia, namely in the city of Gyumri.

Turkey also has military bases in Azerbaijan as well. They have cooperated with the armies on various levels. They held joint military exercises, and Turkey supplies Azerbaijan with drones and other military equipment. Turkey, which is a NATO member, supports Azerbaijan for various reasons. One of them is the Pan-Turkism or Turanism. This ideology supports the cooperation between ethnic Turkic countries. And because Turkey is the largest and most powerful ethnic Turkic country, so this was the main factor for supporting Azerbaijan.<sup>75</sup>

For Turkey, the large amount of natural gases was important as well. Turkey and Azerbaijan shares pipeline which is the part of the Nabucco pipeline. Turkey needs import natural gas for its economy, which largely comes from Azerbaijan. So for economic reasons it is beneficial for Turkey to support Azerbaijan.

For Russia, this territory is also important for geopolitical reasons. First of all, the most important for Russia, is to counter the growing influence of Turkey. Also Russia has a way of thinking about the former soviet republic. The term of “near-abroad” refers that thinking. The term “near abroad” refers to the former USSR republics that are now independent countries. In these countries, Russia wants to maintain its presence and power. This can be achieved by supporting loyal political allies, with investing into these countries economy as well. The other way is military presence, and participation in different intergovernmental political organisations like the Commonwealth of Independent Nations, or the Collective Security Organisation (CSTO). The Caucasus is important for Russia security as well. The mountain chain provides defence from a possible attack from that region.

As it is showed, the region is important for both countries to have some influence. But it is a slippery-slope territory. Turkey is a NATO member country, while Russia is not. To avoid any direct confrontation between Russia and Turkey it is important to manoeuvre really carefully.

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<sup>75</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications: <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p26

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If any direct action happening between the two country, that could lead to catastrophic outcomes. It would mean that the NATO alliance would be directly involve in military actions against each other, which could lead to much bigger conflicts, not just the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. After the ceasefire deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which was brokered by Russia, this threat is much less, when the fighting took place. According to the ceasefire deal, Russia deploys 2 000 troops to maintain peace. The presence of these peacekeepers can minimise the chance of another war. If anyone attacks the other side, it would face against the Russian army. If Armenia decides to attack Azerbaijan, it would meant that they would face against Azerbaijan, who is backed by Turkey, and the Russian peacekeeping forces, and would also lost their only alliance. If Azerbaijan attacks Armenia for further territorial gains, it would also face the Russian peacekeeping forces, and it would be possible, that Turkey would not support this action, as they would not want to confront Russia.

Russia increased its presence, when successfully brokered a peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The ceasefire deal came after the Azerbaijani army captured Shusha. After these attacks, the Armenian army was exhausted, and surrendered. Then on November 9 2020, the president of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia signed a ceasefire deal to end all hostilities. Armenia had to give back territories to Azerbaijan, and 2000 Russian troops will ensure the peace of the territory. Russians will ensure that the territorial changes will occur peacefully, and no atrocities will be committed against the civilian population.<sup>76</sup> The peace-deal also ensured that the Lachin corridor must have been rebuilt for transportation and travel between the enclave of Nakchivan and Azerbaijan. Also the economic sanctions and restrictions must be lifted, so trade and travel can resume as it was before the war.

This ceasefire deal is supporting the long term goal of Russia. Armenia will rely of the help of the Russians to rebuild its military and economy as well. Also Azerbaijan suffered losses in the military and economic infrastructure, and will take time and money to rebuild it. Russia by this ceasefire deal can balance the relationship between the two country, and providing them

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<sup>76</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications: <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p30  
Downloaded: 2022.05.07

military equipment's and can invest in both countries to help rebuilt them, and while doing that, they can make economic power in both countries. <sup>77</sup>

## 10: Geopolitical interests in the region during and after the war

The Caucasus is lies between Europe and Asia. It was fought between big powers, like the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire or the Iranian Empire. After the disillusion of these empires, the successor country tried to uphold the influence in the region. In this part, I am going to analyse the influence and the goal of the countries that influence in the region.

### 10.1 Azerbaijan:

Azerbaijan is a really important country in the region. It has the largest oil reserves in the Region in the Caspian Sea. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan tried to become self-sufficient in the energy sector. Azerbaijan started building more pipelines in the direction of Turkey and Europe. It is really helpful to Turkey and the EU, because they will be able to lower their gas dependence from Russia. This can happen through the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline, which links up to the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline. This made Azerbaijan a really important business partner to Turkey, and the EU. <sup>78</sup>

### 10.2 Armenia:

Armenia in the region is situated between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Both countries are follows the Islamic faith. Armenia follows the orthodox variant of Christianity, and was the first state to make it state religion. Armenia is strongly dependent on Russia for oil and military equipment's. Russia and Armenia cooperated militarily Russia helped educate military personals, and held joint military exercises.

This happened because Armenia does not have any relations with Turkey, after the Armenian genocide, which Turkey denies still today.

After the war ended with Azerbaijan, Armenia had to accept the peace deal, which was brokered by Russia. According to this bill, Armenia had to hand over territories outside Nagorno-

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<sup>77</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications: <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p37  
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<sup>78</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications: <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p47  
Downloaded: 2022. 05. 08.



Karabakh, which they controlled since the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. The acceptance of the peace deal led to massive protests in Armenia. Protesters called Pashinyan a traitor, and demanded his resignation. After months of protests, Pashinyan held a snap election, on which he eventually won. Pashinyan did not change his foreign policy after his re-election. He stayed within the influence of Russia, which he got heavily criticized for. Armenia was still relying on Russian oil, and military equipment. He also failed to call out Russia on supplying equipment to Azerbaijan as well, because that would mean that he would lose Armenia's only ally in the region. The deployed Russian peacekeeping forces are preventing Armenia from a possibility to take back the land they have lost.

To summarize the geopolitical situation of Armenia after the war:

- Armenia stayed in the economic and political orbit of Russia
- Armenia still depends on Russian natural gas
- Armenia's military is also heavily reliant on Russian military

### 10.3 Turkey:

Turkey was always a close ally of Azerbaijan. This can be explained by the similar ethnicity and religion of the two countries. During the first Nagorno-Karabakh war, Turkey did not send any kind of help to Azerbaijan. This radically changed in 2020. In 2020 Turkey provided military equipment such as drones to Azerbaijan. This comes as no surprise, as Turkey does not have any alliance with Armenia, since the Armenian genocide in 1915.<sup>79</sup>

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict provided a possibility for Turkey to increase its influence in the region. The aim of Turkey is to be a competitor in the region, and to increase their influence against Russia, who is the biggest influence in the region. After Azerbaijan won the war, Turkey profited from the ceasefire deal. According to the ceasefire deal, a new corridor should be built, connecting the Nachikewan enclave, which has a border with Turkey, into the main territory of Azerbaijan. This road corridor means that Turkey is able to access further trade routes into Asia. It will also be in connection with the Chinese One Belt One Road initiative. This access can boost the Turkish trade with other countries. Turkey also became the largest Azerbaijani oil importer. The gas import from Azerbaijan was 23% in 2020. The income

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<sup>79</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications: <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p54  
Downloaded: 2022. 05. 08.

from the gas deal provides the money, to invest into its army, and maintain its military supremacy over Azerbaijan.

The main rivalry in the region regarding to outside support in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is between Russia and Turkey.

Russia has still the bigger influence in the Caucasus, thanks to its historical past with the region. The three Caucasian countries were the part of the Soviet Union. After the broke up of the Soviet Union, the newly formed Russia lost its influence that had in the past. But still, compared to Turkey, Russia was the more influential, even thou they lost a lot because of the dissolution of the USSR. Turkey is challenging the still hegemonic Russian influence over the region. By being allied to Azerbaijan, Turkey has a militarily and economically strong ally in the Caucasus. Alliance is easy to form and maintain between the two countries, because of the similarities. Both countries are ethnically Turkic, and follows the Islamic religion. Sometimes they refer to Azerbaijan and Turkey as “two states, one nation”. By supporting Azerbaijan, Turkey gains more influence, even on the expense of the Russian influence. These ambitions comes after the 2016 coup. After the coup, Erdogan strengthen his position as President, and started to expand his countries influence area. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war provided opportunity to Turkey. By being the victors ally, Turkey could influence the outcome of the ceasefire deal, even if that influence is not to big compared to Russia, it is still a big jump, considering that before they did not even have this influence. As a part of the ceasefire deal, Turkey was able to send troops into Nagorno-Karabakh to take part in the peacekeeping mission.<sup>80</sup>

Turkey supporting Azerbaijan both militarily and diplomatically paid off in this conflict. They gained influence in the region, and stepped up as a competitor to challenge Russia’s hegemonic influence in this region.

#### 10.4: Russia

Russia influence in this region is the biggest of all countries. This comes from the fact, that the Caucasian countries formerly been the part of the Soviet Union. After the fall of the USSR, the former socialist republics became independent countries. What helps Russia in its ambition, to take influence in the region is, that the US and the EU are not prominent in the region. The only

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<sup>80</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications: <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p56

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competing partner for influence is Turkey. In this conflict which is now a “frozen conflict” since the ceasefire deal, Russia plays a huge role, as they brokered the ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Russian interventions in foreign affairs increased for example in Syria, Libya, Yemen, and this kind of interventionism can be observed in the Caucasus. Even though Russia is intervening in different conflicts around the world, their interventions rarely attempt to solve the conflict. Russia intervenes, to counter the intervention of other nations, mainly the US influence in a given conflict. This results in, that Russia always support the opposite side, which is not supported by the Western countries. This can be observed for example in the Syrian civil war. Western alliance supported the rebels, who fought against Bashar el-Assad, while Russia supported the government of Syria.

The ceasefire deal, which was brokered by Russia is a massive win situation in the region, and regarding to international powers as well. The peace deal was negotiated within the OSCE Minsk Group. This Minsk Group was set up during the first Nagorno-Karabakh war, to try to solve the conflict in a diplomatic way. The Minsk group consisted of Russia, France and the US. The 2020 peace deal was negotiated within the Minsk Group. During the negotiations, Russia seemed to be the one, who dominates the terms of the ceasefire deal. The goal of this ceasefire deal was to increase their influence in the region.

This reflects pretty well in the accepted deal:

- Russia was able to deploy 2000 troops as peacekeeping forces between Armenia and Azerbaijan, to ensure that the chance for a future war is minimal
- Russia was able to prevent the influence of other states from the Minsk Group, like France or the US
- Russia denied the request of Turkey, to join to the peacekeeping mission, by sending their own troops to Azerbaijan. This move countered the growing influence of Turkey in the Caucasus.
- Russia held Armenia in its influential sphere, as they still rely on Russian gas and military equipment's

Taking these main points in consideration, Russia is clearly the winner of this situation in the Caucasus. Russia held on, and even increased its influence, while in the meantime reducing the other powers influence in the region.<sup>81</sup>

### 10.5: Iran

Iran has various reasons to be considered a key player in the region. During its history, Armenia and Azerbaijan were both part of the Persian Empire. This makes Iran to be concerned about the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Apart from historical ties to the region, Iran has more relevant issues, which makes them care about Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Iran has a border with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. To keep the border safe, and not to be involved in the conflict, Iran had to manoeuvre really carefully, taking different factors in account. Iran did not took anyone's side in this conflict. Iran did not prefer anyone in this conflict. The actions by Iran consisted of many different factors.

These main factors are the following:

- Iran own security is the number one issue
- The contamination of ethnic unrest from ethnic Azerbaijanis in Iran
- Relation with third party countries like Israel, Turkey and Russia

Iran approach to Nagorno-Karabakh is very pragmatic. They do not side with anyone because of similar identities, but they mitigate based on various factors

Azerbaijani factor:

In Iran there is a large community of Azerbaijanis living in the northern part of Iran. They could affect the decision of the Iranian government. There were large protest by Azeri's to pressure the Iranian government to help Azerbaijan in the fight. Iranian governments tried to ignore the effects of these protests, to be able to continue its mostly neutral stance on the issue. Even though both country is religiously Islamic, there is a big difference between the two. In

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<sup>81</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications: <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p65

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Azerbaijan, the state is separated from religion, which makes Azerbaijan a secular country. In Iran however, the state adopted the Islamic religion as a state religion. This difference can create fears from each side. Azerbaijan fears, that extremist Islamic ideas and Muslim extremist can spread to Azerbaijan, which would danger the secular state. Iran on the other hand is fear, that the Azeri minority in the north becomes more loyal to Azerbaijan than to Iran. This can cause ethnic conflict inside Iran.

The other factor that Iran considers is the third parties in the conflict. Azerbaijan is strongly sided with Turkey, who supports the Azerbaijani army with equipment's. Iran and Turkey has a negative relationship with Turkey. The other country that is involved in this conflict, and makes it harder for Iran to side with Azerbaijan. This country is Israel. Azerbaijan has a good relationship with Israel, as they rely on their help militarily. Azerbaijan imports Israeli drones and other military equipment's for its military. Iran and Israel are the biggest enemies on earth. Iran made statements and threats to eradicate Israel from the map, because they oppress Islamic religious population. The alliance between Azerbaijan and Israel makes hard for Iran to side with Azerbaijan in this conflict.<sup>82</sup>

Armenian factor:

Armenia since its independence, maintained good relationship with Iran. For Iran it was vital, as they shared borders with each other. It is important to keep peace between the two countries, for the sake of Iran's national security. For Iran it is easier to cooperate with Armenia than Azerbaijan for various reasons:

- Armenia has close ties to Russia. Russia and Iran are usually have a good relationship with each other.
- The relationship of Azerbaijan with Israel makes it impossible to side with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan also host Israeli espionage in the country.<sup>83</sup> Iran fears, that this would increase the demand of Azerbaijanis to secede from the country.

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<sup>82</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications: <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p68

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<sup>83</sup> middleeastmonitor.com(2021): <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20211009-iran-israels-espionage-in-azerbaijan-fully-monitored/>

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- Regarding to the economy, Armenia is more important for Iran than Azerbaijan. Armenia provides land connection to Georgia, and Russia, which helps Iran with trading in this region.

After the 2020 war, the region became more compacted. 2000 Russian peacekeepers is stationed not that far from the Iranian border in Nagorno-Karabakh. Despite the good relationship with Russia, this can raise concerns for Iran's own safety. Despite the hostilities between Azerbaijan and Iran, Azerbaijan needs Iran for supplying natural gas to the Azerbaijani enclave Nakhchivan.

This shows the complexity of this region for Iran. On the one hand there is a country, with an Islamic population, which is allied to Israel, thus alliance between Azerbaijan and Iran makes harder to happen. However Azerbaijan is relying on Iran to supply natural gas to the Azerbaijani enclave Nakchivan on the Iranian border.<sup>84</sup>

On the other hand, there is a religiously Christian country, with whom making alliance is easier. It is occurring, because Armenia is an ally of Russia, with whom Iran has a good relationship. Armenia is important economically as well. It provides access to the market of Georgia and Russia via road connections.

This stamps from the fact, that third party alliances are as important as bilateral alliances. Economic factors are also should take account in this region, to determine who to ally with.

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<sup>84</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications: <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p70  
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## 10.6: Georgia

Georgia is the one of the three countries in the Caucasus. Georgia also became independent, after the fall of the Soviet Union. Georgia is very close to the hotspot of the conflict, so it is important to take into account Georgia's geopolitical rule in this country.

When the war broke out in September 2020, Georgia internal security become riskier, as the war was raging in its neighbourhood. The aim of Georgia was to stay neutral in the conflict. Georgia had a good relationship with both Azerbaijan and Armenia. This made staying neutral a bit more simple. To ensure neutrality in this conflict, Georgia banned the transporting of military equipment's through its territory.<sup>85</sup> This ban dissatisfied Russia, as they were supplying Armenia with military equipment's. This could escalated into a conflict between Russia and Georgia, as troops were stations in South-Ossetia since the 2008 war between the two countries. However further escalation did not occurred between the two country.

Georgia also had to keep neutrality up inside its own territory. In Georgia there is a massive community of Armenians and Azerbaijanis as well. According to cia.gov, 6, 3% of Georgia's population is ethnically Azeri, and 3.9% of the population is ethnically Armenian.<sup>86</sup> There were some tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis during the war.

Despite trying to show neutrality in this conflict Georgia had to rely on Azerbaijan for oil export. Georgia is dependent of the Azerbaijani oil, because 95% of the imported oil comes from Azerbaijan. If the war would have been longer, sooner or later, Georgia had to make favours for Azerbaijan, to be able to buy oil from them.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> civil.ge(2020): <https://civil.ge/archives/374997>

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<sup>86</sup> cia.gov: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/georgia/#people-and-society>

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<sup>87</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications:

<https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p71

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## 10.7: The US

During the presidency of Donald Trump, retreating from certain international conflicts can be observed. During the presidency of Donald Trump, the US became the main focus, and less international interventionism occurred. This shows in the slogans like “Make America Great Again”, and “America First”. This attitude can be clearly shown in this conflict. During the first Nagorno-Karabakh war, the US was one of the main actors to find solution to the conflict. In the 2020 conflict, this kind of democratic interventionism is what missing, and its gives Russia a chance, to increase its influence in the region.

The US still played some role in this conflict through the Minsk Group. The US is a part of the Minsk Group, which is an intergovernmental organization that was created to find peaceful solution to the conflict and war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The US co-chairs this organisation with Russia and France. The US urged the fighting countries, to return to the diplomatic way of solving conflicts, through the Minsk Group.<sup>88</sup>

Despite the lack of care for this regional conflict, the US has some interest in this region. First interests is to contain the interest of Russia in the region. If the US would have intervened more aggressively, Russia could not brokered the ceasefire deal, to its own benefit.

The other important interest for the US is the access of transport routes of hydrocarbon from Azerbaijan to the western markets.

However if the US intervenes for a longer time, it could lead to worsen the US-Russia relationship, which could backfire, and make things even more complicated, than they are now is.

The US also worked to improve the relationship between Turkey and Armenia. In recent months, Turkish and Armenian ministers of foreign affairs meet, and discussed the further cooperation between the two countries.<sup>89</sup>

If this leads to positive outcomes, not only Armenia and Turkey will be better off, the US would be able to regain some influence in the region.

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<sup>88</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p73

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<sup>89</sup> Daniel Bellamy (2022): <https://www.euronews.com/2022/03/12/meeting-of-turkish-and-armenian-foreign-ministers-a-sign-of-improving-relations>

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## 10.8: The European Union

The European Union was very busy with some very serious problems during the Nagorno-Karabakh war.

The main problems were the followings:

- Covid-19 pandemic
- Brexit
- Tension in the East-Mediterranean

The European Union's record in expanding its influence, and intervening in conflicts, has been pretty bad in the recent years. There is no way to step up as united union, to propose solutions to conflicts, with European values.

The only country from the European Union that was able to make any kind of influence in the region was France. France is the member of the Minsk Group. In that organization, France is a co-charier alongside with Russia and the US. However even France was unable to react fast for the situation. Russia brokered the deal only couple days after the parties started negotiating. France supported the ceasefire <sup>90</sup>deal that was brokered by Russia.

However, after recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, and solving the issue of Brexit, the EU was able to focus on different issues. One of them was to negotiate a peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, the President of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev held an in person meeting in Brussel, which was led by Charles Michel, the head of the European Council. In that meeting, both parties committed for finding a peaceful solution to the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the meeting, they accepted to set up a bilateral border commission. This commission will be the organisation in which through Azerbaijan and Armenia will work together with the EU to find a peace agreement. <sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Maj Gen P K Mallick (2021): Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Implications <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Armenian-Azerbaijani-Conflict-over-Nagorno-Karabakh-Geopolitical-Implications.pdf> p76

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<sup>91</sup> deutchewellw.com(2022): <https://www.dw.com/en/armenia-azerbaijan-agree-to-peace-talks-two-years-after-nagorno-karabakh-fighting/a-61388096>

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## 10.9: Israel

Israel has a good relationship with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan imported weapons from Israel for many years before the 2020 war. However, Israel tried to appeal to Armenia as well, by providing them humanitarian aid. This aid was denied by Armenia, and accused Israel with supporting “terrorists” in Azerbaijan. <sup>92</sup>

After these allegations, Israel became much more important ally of Azerbaijan. Israeli president sent a letter to Aliiev, in which he ensured, that Israel will support Azerbaijan territorial integrity, and will help them with weaponry and humanitarian aid. <sup>93</sup>

Azerbaijan since than had a good relationship with Israel. There are daily flights between Baku and Tel-Aviv, and Azerbaijan promised to open an embassy in Israel. <sup>94</sup>

At first glance, this strange relationship between Azerbaijan and Israel; a Muslim and a Jewish country can seem to be odd. The rational behind it, that Israel wants to showcase that, there can be a possibility of high level cooperation between a Jewish state, and a Muslim state. <sup>95</sup>

This is the strategy, that Israel follows, in which the very long term goal is that this somehow changes Iran attitude towards them. They plan this strategy, with the large number of Azerbaijanis living in Iran. In Iran’s northern part. If the Azeri minority is able to see, that Israel can work together with a Shi’a Muslim country like Azerbaijan, they can change man minds in Iran that it is beneficial for them to cooperate with Israel.

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<sup>92</sup> Jpost.com (2020): <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/armenian-pm-to-post-israel-joins-forces-with-the-devil-647790>

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<sup>93</sup> en.trend.az(2020): <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3316717.html>

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<sup>94</sup> i24.tv(2021): <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/diplomacy-defense/1617996668-azerbaijani-official-the-time-has-come-to-open-an-embassy-in-israel>

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<sup>95</sup> azertag.az(2016):

[https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Israeli Prime Minister Azerbaijan is an example of what relations can be and should be between Muslims and Jews-1019078](https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Israeli_Prime_Minister_Azerbaijan_is_an_example_of_what_relations_can_be_and_should_be_between_Muslims_and_Jews-1019078)

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## 12: Russia-Ukraine war and Nagorno-Karabakh

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022, Russia attacked Ukraine. The Russians expected a quick victory, but this is not the case in Ukraine. In Ukraine, the people strongly resisted against the Russian army. This resistance surprised the Russian government. Russia found itself in a long lasting war. The International community came together to condemn the actions of Russia. They introduced large scales of sanctions against Russia, and their goal is to isolate Russia from the rest of the world.

This war also can influence the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, especially Armenia's situation, who is close ally of Russia.

The Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal was brokered within the Minsk Group. The Minsk Group is co-chaired by France and US. Since the Russian attack against Ukraine, the International Community came together, to try and isolate Russia. This can affect the legitimacy of the Minsk Group, and the Russian peacekeeping forces in Nagorno-Karabakh. Both co-chair members are taking active part to support Ukraine against Russia. This can mean, that once the war is over, France and the US will leave the Minsk Group. If this happens, it would be the end for the Minsk Group. It would be a huge loss, because this was the only governmental organisation, were the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh was able to be discussed.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, currently 2000 Russian troops are deployed as peacekeeping units. After the invasion of Ukraine, the perception on Russian peacekeeping forces dramatically changed. Now the Western World is really sceptical about the Russian peacekeeping units. Previously accepted, that only Russia is able to sustain present in long term.<sup>96</sup>

There were rumours, that peacekeeping units will leave Nagorno-Karabakh, as they are needed in the Ukrainian front. However these claim were denied by Russia.

For Armenia it is vital for Russia to stay in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia is unable to defend itself, if the Russians leave the area. To ensure that the Russian troops stay in Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia stayed neutral during the whole war. Armenia did not even condemned the Russian invasion in the United Nations.

There is also a fear, that after Ukraine, or if Ukraine falls, Armenia can be a potential country to be corporate into Russia even more than now. Armenia is already dependent on

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<sup>96</sup> oc-media.org(2022): <https://oc-media.org/opinions/opinion-russias-war-could-spell-trouble-for-armenia-and-nagorno-karabakh/>

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Russia. Russia finances Armenia's military, as well as provides almost all of natural gas to Armenia. But despite these dependence on Russia, there is still a democracy in Armenia. Armenians can held elections, and chose from many parties. Armenia has freedom of speech and freedom of press, and freedom in general. Russia also respected the democratic will of the country, and tried build good relationship with them.

However, Russia will be or is shifting right now more totalitarian, and they will also extend that into Armenia. There are fears that Armenia would lost its freedom, and became a Russian puppet state. If that is happening, Armenia can became a totalitarian country. A country were is no freedom of press, freedom of speech and no democratic elections held. It will take huge efforts for Armenia to escape from the "Big Bear" hand. <sup>97</sup>

On the other hand, for Azerbaijan it is an option for making a move to conquer more land for themselves. Russia being distracted is a perfect circumstance for this. There have been rumours, that peacekeeping forces had to be relocated to Ukraine, as they were needed on the front. If the Russians leave Nagorno-Karabakh it is a big chance for Azerbaijan to advance into Armenian territory. <sup>98</sup>

However, as I mentioned before, Armenia and Azerbaijan already started to negotiate an EU brokered peace deal, which would solve the crisis. If both countries committed to this, than an Azerbaijani attack against Armenia is pretty low, as it would mean the end of the negotiations.

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<sup>97</sup> oc-media.org(2022): <https://oc-media.org/opinions/opinion-russias-war-could-spell-trouble-for-armenia-and-nagorno-karabakh/>

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<sup>98</sup> chathamhouse.org(2022): <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/03/russia-distracted-azerbaijan-escalates-karabakh>

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### 13: Conclusions:

My hypothesis at the beginning was, that nationalism influenced the war between two countries.

Nagorno-Karabakh has a complex and difficult history. It is located inside Azerbaijan, but the population is over 90% ethnically Armenian. During the Soviet Union this conflict was under control by the communist party. During the 1980s and 1990s perestroika and glasnost period, the USSR started to lose grip on the area. Finally in 1991 the two country became free again. Nationalistic ideas and sentiments come up from the citizens over the control of Nagorno-Karabakh. These kind of ideologies were not permitted under the USSR. Both country claimed the territory its own. Azerbaijan claimed based on international law, while Armenia claimed on nationalistic ideas. In 1992 a bloody war broke out for the control of this territory. In 1994n a ceasefire was brokered, and the territory became under Armenian occupation. This defeat angered Azerbaijanis, as they lost major territories. For couple of decades, the conflict was a “frozen conflict”. This reignited again in 2020, when Azerbaijan launched an attack against Armenia. The reasons were nationalistic. Armenia occupies territories that are ours, so they need to be liberated. This war lasted little longer than 40 days, with an Azeri victory, and land conquer, But this time, the things became more complex with different outsider support.

While the nationalistic sentiment of this conflict remained for Armenia and Azerbaijan, for the outside supporters it did not really mattered. There were far more important factors than nationality. Factors like resources, third party interactions and so on. This is why it occurred, that an Islamic state (Iran) supported a Christian State (Armenia); and a Jewish State (Israel) supports an Islamic State (Azerbaijan). And because of that, Iran does not support Azerbaijan, despite both being Islamic state.

In conclusion: Nationalism was more relevant in the first Nagorno-Karabakh war for both the combatant countries and its allies. After some decades later, nationalistic ideas reduced only to the fighting countries. The allies take in account more factors like: third parties, geopolitical influence spheres and so on. This clearly shows that nationalistic ideas are an older concept, and there are more geopolitical factors that countries take in account before siding someone in a conflict

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Németh Balázs

hallgató aláírása