

Forum: The United Nations Security Council

Issue: The Situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan

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Introduction

The long-standing dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, also commonly referred to as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, commenced in 1988. This occurred after the publication of a piece of legislation by the Nagorno-Karabakh government, proclaiming intentions to join the Republic of Armenia while geographically being situated in then-Soviet Azerbaijan. The combination of their chronic ethnic clashes, political tensions after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the declaration of Nagorno-Karabakh's sovereignty, all contributed to the situation escalating to an unmitigated war. The undermining agents that fueled the conflict were cultural disagreements between nations and the historical claims of ownership of the land formally anointed as Nagorno-Karabakh or Artsakh. Additionally, both groups portrayed different cultural standings, where Armenia consisted of a Christian majority and Azerbaijan embodied the Turkic Muslim population which intensified ethnic disputes. These past issues integrated with all ongoing during the primary periods of the dispute manifested the territorial conflict's continuity for several years to come.

During the first Karabakh war (between 1988-1993), 30,000 casualties took place and over a million Armenians and Azerbaijanis became conflict refugees and/or internally displaced persons (IDPs) (*Global Conflict Tracker*). These premature phases of the war were among the most precarious periods with devastating repercussions. As the conflict progressed and the use of ammunition and projectiles ascended, the detrimental side effects were demonstrated through the rapidly augmenting death rates in both nations. The ceasefire enforced in 1994 was aggressively pressured by the American forces provided to the seven controlled districts in Nagorno-Karabakh, which ultimately contributed to the demographic upheaval of individuals

across the Armenian and Azerbaijani borders. Additionally, the closure of the Lachin Corridor restricted the supply of all essentials - food, water, electricity, and medicine, and resulted in the starvation of Artsakh's 120,000 inhabitants (*Drion*). This promoted Azerbaijan's agenda to regain control over Nagorno-Karabakh and was then identified as a form of genocide, which subsequently heightened political pressure on Azerbaijan and intervention from the Russian Federation, which ultimately resumed the dispatching of all humanitarian aid via the Corridor.

The mass displacement of individuals from Artsakh to both countries in retrospect to their native ethnicity - implicated certain financial strains on the Armenian economy. They welcomed 100,000 Armenian Karabakh residents into Yerevan (decided capital of Armenia), which figuratively represented 4% of their initial population. The scarce resources were further distributed among the increased number of civilians, leading to exacerbated shortages, for which the monetary strength required was exhausted. To tackle the destructive economic leakage, stipends for all arriving individuals were immediately decreased from \$250 to \$125 every month, and volunteering receptions allocating essentials were advocated nationally (*Castillo*). Armenia faced additional internal political unrest instigated by the friction between the projected opinions of The People of Armenia and Nikol Pashinyan's friendly diplomatic objectives. Antithetically, throughout the continuance of the war, Azerbaijan's military remained robust and absorbent of all tensions, which played a profound role in harnessing one-third of Nagorno-Karabakh. It further supported the enforcement of a military blockade within Nagorno-Karabakh to prevent the trade of illicit arms, which provided Azerbaijan with a tactical advantage. The nation also faced the loss of 3,000 soldiers (*BBC*) and the destruction of expansive infrastructure. Encompassingly, the dispute ramified scarring consequences for the countries, presenting them with exorbitant economic and political impairments.

In recent context, the past two years have had fluctuating insights regarding the war. In 2023, the disregard for mutual standoff was seen when Azerbaijan dispatched artillery attacks as a sign of a reignited war against Armenia. This was identified as the second Nagorno-Karabakh battle and continued for 44 days with a total of 6,200 casualties from both nations. However, further progression and intervention of external parties decidedly caused the dissolution of the

separatist government of Nagorno-Karabakh and enforcement of a ceasefire on January 1st, 2024, advertently resulted in Azerbaijan taking territorial claim over the nation and social unrest within Armenia after losing hopes of gaining control over Artsakh. This was progressively overseen as peace acts were taken in April of 2024, through border delimitation efforts and aiming to reunite the nations. While recent efforts prove constructive possibilities, the importance of the war and the blunders that occurred throughout it as imperative to understand and tackle, to provide for the struggling citizens and aid in the recuperation of both nations moving forward.

Definition of Key Terms

Ethnic War

A dispute between two or more parties regarding either political, economic, social, or cultural factors. These usually occur when all ethnic groups involved aim to conquer the same prospect. The most recurring objective is land, which can correspondingly be categorized as a **territorial conflict**.

Conflict Refugees

A group of people crossing international borders in search of safe consolidation, to flee persecution and/or conflict in their home countries. They cannot return without being at constant risk of losing their lives or getting severely hurt. This is a legal term that is backed by certain rights and protections that each refugee is entitled to.

Humanitarian Aid

Assistance is provided to individuals during crises, which may include natural disasters, violent conflicts, pandemics, and/or other emergencies. The goal of providing essential resources - food, water, shelter, medicine, education, protection, etc.- is to improve living conditions for distraught populations. International organizations such as the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other NGOs regulate these operations.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Individuals who are forced to flee their homes due to conflict, human rights violations, natural disasters, or more, within the borders of their country. This is a legal term that does not hold much place value, which is why they do not receive the same level of protection under international law, as refugees.

Separatist Government

A governing body is established by a group of citizens within a country that seeks detachment from the larger state to form an individual entity. They lack international recognition and typically form in areas that feel marginalized in terms of their cultural, ideological, or religious beliefs.

Lachin Corridor

A crucial mountain pathway connecting regions in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. It is densely populated with ethnic Armenians, however, it also converges into Azerbaijan's internationally recognized borders. This route's primary purpose is to transport supplies across both nations and is monitored by Russian peacekeepers to ensure security and safe passage.

Ceasefire Agreements

A formal, usually temporary, legislation issued to stop hostile acts between two or more nations to freeze active war. This is usually done to provide time for nations to negotiate, pass humanitarian resolutions, and reduce any immediate threats that the war poses. These agreements are more often than not, brokered by key parties to facilitate constructive discussion.

Peacekeeping Coalition

The formation of an organization where countries come together to address and resolve a specific war or conflict. Such formations usually involve parties directly or passively involved with the dispute themselves, this may be to forward their own political agendas or avoid threats posed to their nation due to the war itself.

Proxy Influences

This is interference by nations that are not directly involved with the conflict but are related to countries through political ties. These nations may use their stance to provide aid to the warring countries in the form of monetary assistance, military equipment, or diplomatic support. Concerning the Nagorno-Karabkh conflict, the key parties can be identified as Turkiye and Russia, which have engaged in several operations in support of Armenia/Azerbaijan.

Key Issues

Unresolved Cultural Dispute

The ethnic instabilities between the respective cultures rooted in Armenia and Azerbaijan caused detrimental clashes and contributed to the conflict as a whole. The difference in religious backgrounds promoted disagreements between the countries and stood as the main standpoint for the territorial claims made over Nagorno-Karabkh. From Armenia's perspective, the land of Nagorno-Karabkh stands as a symbol of historical heritage development and is considered the 'cradle of Armenian civilization', dating back to its Christian era. Whereas, Azerbaijan considers the land of Artsakh as a topographical possession and argues its geographical location to be within the nation's legal borders.

Considering the consequences of this ideological dispute justifies the ordered destruction of cultural Armenian cross-stones and memorials in Nagorno-Karabakh, by Azerbaijan. This followed multiple riots within Yerevan concerning the longstanding cultural dispute and the ineffective response that Nikol Pashinyan was having to these concerns and other political attacks.

Additionally, while the above implications refer to more recent events, the killing of over 100 citizens (*BBC*) between Armenians and Azerbaijanis after forced upheaval from their home countries, was a more direct ramification after the war started in 1988. Therefore, the derivative understanding that is compiled is the importance of the issue in understanding the topic as a whole. It stands as a major element in the war between the two nations, the persistent hatred between nationalities, and reminds the focal point of multiple attacks launched in the past years.

Ineffective Mediation Mechanisms

The territorial conflict called for intervention from multiple third parties that brokered political decisions between the countries, of who, the key nation involved was The Russian Federation. Although multiple other nations played a role in the war, the presence Russia had and its impact on all deals implemented were far greater than the rest. This mediation, while proving impactful for specific cases, was quite mild in most situations. Such intervention ultimately led to messier legal requirements and drew more nations into all legislative deals. In the specification, the **Minsk Group** has received criticism for its consistent effectiveness and redundancy in the resolution of the conflict due to a sheer lack of commitment.

Such continued engagement by external nations has resulted in delayed procedures, further causation in breach of ceasefire agreements, and wastage of scarce resources. Cases such as the deployment of heavy artillery in April 2016 and September 2023, were direct violations of an enforced peace treaty. These prove the incompetence of such intercession, per the ignorance of all humanitarian impacts of the war. The lack of proper political aid and streamlined resolution has exuberated the conditions of the dispute and extended its continuation, therefore making it an important obstacle involved in the situation in Artsakh.

Humanitarian Crisis and Mass Displacement

The lack of sufficient resources across Armenia and Azerbaijan has caused a public welfare crisis and unsustainable living standards for all Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In combination with the 100,000 people displaced between Artsakh and Armenia (*Al Jazeera*) and more than 700,000 Azeries being expelled from Armenia (*Human Rights Watch*), the exceeding humanitarian crisis caused by violent conflict has resulted in critical conditions for all persons inhabiting the countries.

This was especially prominent during the closures of the Lachin corridor, which resulted in borderline genocide of ethnic Armenians residing in Artsakh. While intervention from the Russian Federation and other bodies allowed the re-opening of the pathway and diplomatic

enforcement of peacekeeping forces, the recurrent blockades did not cease. This is the root cause of the multiple humanitarian calamities and lack of sufficient resources.

Furthermore, this crisis implicated international alarm and called for humanitarian aid operations that have ultimately proved ineffective due to major political instability. Including the provision of €12 million from the EU to strengthen the missions in Armenia (*European Commission*) and \$4.1 million from the USA to Nagorno-Karabakh for managing the provision of care packages. While these initiatives were impactful in the short term, their ability to continuously aid citizens was depleted as political tensions grew.

This penultimately returned to the restriction of most essential resources, which further resulted in starvation, deterred physical and mental health, and the lack of accommodatable infrastructure/shelter for individuals living in war-torn nations. Its contribution to economic and political volatility for the Armenian and Azeri governments was substantial, as it led to a strain on resources and social insecurity for citizens. Therefore, its role in the discussion of the issue as a whole became vital.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The Russian Federation

Russia is traditionally allied with Armenia, but its political relations with Azerbaijan have deepened over the last few months of the conflict. Its diplomatic ties with Armenia are derived from its positions in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a military alliance organization headed by Russia. However, the oil and gas resources that Azerbaijan provides to Europe also make the nation a critical ally for Moscow. Therefore, Russia's continuous intervention to avoid conflict between the countries is understood.

This is illustrated through its position in the Minsk Group - speculating all legalizations and deals made between Armenia and Azerbaijan and establishing resolutions that work towards dissolving the conflict. While the country's efforts have been questioned from time to time, it

maintains a prevalent view of the conflict and works towards maintaining peace. This is mainly due to its alliance with both nations and political stakes. Although it presents concern about the conflict, its war with Ukraine has led to substantial diminishing of resources and contribution to the nation's ineffective stance in the Minsk Group. It has, however, made helpful decisions, such as the deployment of peacekeepers at the Lachin Corridor, disarmament of ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, and sold batches of sophisticated armory to Azerbaijan and, thus, conclusively holds an important role in the war.

Turkiye

Turkey is an internationally recognized ally of Azerbaijan and has provided aid in the past through the provision of military experts, ammunition, and multiple Turkish Bayraktar TB-2 drones, which allowed the nation to gain a tactical advantage over Armenia in the second Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020. The reasoning for the unwavering backing that Turkey has provided Azerbaijan with roots to the pan-Turik cultural and linguistic similarities between the nations.

Moreover, Turkiye's diplomatic stance included supporting Azerbaijan's official claims over Nagorno-Karabakh. Its involvement includes a regional strategy that entails counterbalancing Russia's contribution to the war and increasing its influence in the South Caucasus, which coherently works towards Turkiye's agenda for the geopolitical enhancement of the international stance. All in all, Turkiye is an important player in the military advantage Azerbaijan has had during the dispute, however, in comparison to other parties, its relevance to the issue is not as profound.

The OSCE Minsk Group

The Minsk Group is an internationally recognized body, established in 1994 by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, to seek a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and facilitate certain negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is co-chaired by the United States, Russia, and France - who all have political ties to either Armenia and/or Azerbaijan.

It has been criticized heavily for its ineffective resolutions and delayed action to resolve the long-standing territorial/ethnic conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh. While the organization has implemented multiple peace treaties that have contributed to a few months of frozen conflict, there has been no long-term solution provided. It engaged in multiple peace discussions encompassing all relevant parties to make decisions considering multiple perspectives.

The extent of the salience they have contributed has been extensively minimal over the past years. This includes the weak calls for humanitarian access, penetrated ceasefire agreements, and the impasse of established Madrid Principles (a legislative document outlining terms of a peaceful resolution of the dispute). Holistically, the effect of the organization was limited, however its role in the conflict was extensive.

Iran

Iran is allied with Azerbaijan and has recurrently emphasized the territorial rights that Azerbaijan has on Artsakh, in order to eradicate the threat of changes in its international borders that may directly threaten Iran's own ethnic population, such as the Azeri population resident in Northern Iran. While it retains positive relations with Armenia, the centered focus of the aid it provides predominantly lies with Azerbaijan due to strong cultural bonds.

Instead of interfering in military matters and other fueling agents of the war, Iran approaches the conflict with an interesting perspective. Consering peaceful negotiations and exceedingly diplomatic resolutions, rather than mediating in ways similar to other acting agents. This was recognized during the second war of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, where it argued the excessive supply of military aid that exacerbated the violence and threatened Iran's national security.

The United States of America

The USA holds a position in the OSCE Minsk Group, acting as the co-chair on all discussions concerning the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. It shows minimal political

preference for Azerbaijan’s territorial claims and Armenia’s community rights. The USA consistently engages itself with all peace negotiations involving the conflict and has pushed for the dissolution of the conflict. It has advocated for the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) within the war-torn nations, and condemned the use of aggressive violence from both sides, in addition to promoting humanitarian aid. Other than purely diplomat appearances to ensure its political security, the nation has had no further effect on the war.

Development of Issue/Timeline

Date	Event	Outcome
1988-1991	Official initiation of the Nagorno-Karabakh war.	Due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the announcement of Nagorno-Karabakh's interest in sovereignty - tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan loosened, causing an all-out war with the displacement of more than a million citizens.
1992-1994	The First Nagorno-Karabakh war takes place.	Over 30,000 civilians lost their lives as Armenia conquered Azerbaijani territory extending beyond Artsakh and establishing a buffer zone outside the Lachin Corridor.
1994	Establishment of the OSCE Minsk Group and implementation of Russia-brokered ceasefire	This created an international body that oversaw all peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and resulted in the first round of frozen conflict.
April 2, 2016	Penetration of previous ceasefire and initiation of the April War.	Azerbaijan was accused of targeting multiple civilian communities and infrastructure. This led to the death of over 200 civilians from both sides of the dispute followed by heavy aerial bombardments.

April 5, 2016	Another ceasefire is enforced after agreement from all parties.	This allows the nations to heal and stands as the next duration that the war is effectively contained and frozen.
September 27, 2020	The start of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war after another breach in the ceasefire	An offensive attack was launched by Azerbaijan to regain control, where 3,000 Azeri and 4,000 Armenian soldiers were killed in combat.
November 9, 2020	A fourth ceasefire agreement is brokered by Russia.	The conflict is frozen once again, and to guarantee safe circulations through the Lachin Corridor and the countries themselves, Russian peacekeepers are deployed.
2022	Fighting breaks out once more, and political friction increases.	Armenian and Azeri troops initiated conflict that resulted in the death of an additional 100 Armenian deaths and 70 Azeri demises.
2023	Blockade of the Lachin Corridor	After a month of combat, the Corridor is closed and the supply of humanitarian aid to all individuals is restricted for 24 hours. After which, the majority of ethnic Armenians flee.
2024	The separatist government in Nagorno-Karabakh is formally dissolved.	After intervention from external parties, and gruesome accusations made by both countries, Nagorno-Karabakh is officially dissolved.

[Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue](#)

Formation of the OSCE Minsk Group

The establishment of the OSCE Minsk Group, as stated, was to primarily facilitate peace discussions and implement viable resolutions that would aid in a catalyzed dissolution of the

dispute. It included The United States of America, Russia, and France. This allowed concentrated debate on the war and derivatively divulged in forming effective solutions to resolve the dispute. However, throughout the war, the essential impact that the organization contributed was minimal, causing it to receive backlash. This was a result of the lack of commitment from all parties involved, and thus the continued aggression between the nations.

The Minsk Group, did, however, pass legislations such as the Madrid Principals, Paris Principals, and the Basic Principals. These enlisted redrafted versions of the guidelines mandated for Armenia and Azerbaijan to follow to maintain peace. They broadly covered; the return of displaced persons, the establishment of the Lachin Corridor, and the overall maintenance of territorial integrity. Though, these were disregarded as demonstrated by the violent ongoing between the nations. While certain resolutions were coherently passed, they served no initiative as their influence was scarce and their impact even lesser.

Brokered Ceasefire Agreements

There were multiple ceasefire agreements, that essentially halted any use of ammunition or other artillery to assert violent attacks between the countries - throughout the war. This was because of the ineffective implementation of the initial agreements, brokered by Russia. While these were detrimentally futile in the long-term understanding of the war, they allowed the conflict to freeze in short durations. Thus, the enforcement of other tactics and peace discussions were scheduled during these time periods, to work towards developing a workable resolution plan for the conflict.

These ceasefire legislations were imperative during most periods due to the intense hostile conditions within the nations during an active war. The most prominent ceasefire agreements include those passed in 1994, 2016, and 2020, however, throughout the continuity of the dispute, multiple other minor armistice agreements were integrated to control the situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Funding Humanitarian Aid

While multiple NGOs and organizations work towards transporting free aid to civilians, the maintenance of its steady supply was vital for the humanitarian welfare of all internally displaced persons. The European Union and the United States of America were primary actors on the note of providing monetary support to Armenia and Azerbaijan due to their strong financial position as preliminary allies to the nations.

Moreover, the EU supplied around €17.5 million to Armenia for the regulation of humanitarian aid and the distribution of sufficient care packages containing a set amount of essentials for all citizens. While, the United States of America donated \$4.1 million to Artsakh, to refurbish infrastructure to provide shelter for harmed individuals and simultaneously issue psychological help for trauma-induced individuals. These resources allowed the respective nations to consolidate the repercussions of the war for immediate reaction. However, it is not a sustainable method of resolving the issue within the long-term view.

Possible Solutions

Optimization of Existing Bodies

While organizations such as the Minsk Group exist, their function in aiding and abetting individuals in these war-torn countries and providing meaningful solutions is limited. Driving change to better such bodies would reciprocate in a more constructive set of resolutions. This is integral to, not only, tackling hostile international issues such as the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but avoiding the wastage of scarce resources for redundant, drawn-out missions.

Implementing set goals, regulations, and mandate requirements is essential to strengthening such international organizations. These would encourage constructive deliberation and guarantee a minimum level of progressive influence. Their predicted impact would be far greater than the current contributions by preexisting bodies, as they would drive necessary resolution and effectively force production participation from all relevant stakeholders.

Enforcing Irrevocable Peace Treaties

While the passing of numerous ceasefires and peace legislations have been witnessed during the Nagorno-Karabakh war, the ease with which they are breached is a core derivative of the war. Establishing fundamentally irrevocable legal controls would increase the impact of such agreements. While lenient documents still freeze conflicts for shorter durations of time, implementing stronger legislation is likely to extend the life of these peace treaties and increase the possibility of catalyzed resolution. Aspects such as funding, constant discussion on solutions, and other operations, are imperative to reinforce documentation for overcoming such catastrophes. Implementation of such a solution accounts for stricter policies and guidelines to avoid legal loopholes and an adherence method to ensure its proper implementation and that all involved parties abide by the agreement(s) passed.

Funding Constructive Relief Operations

The monetary aid provided by the European Union and the United States of America allowed Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia to develop and reconstruct from damages inflicted by the war. However, other relief operations conducted by various organizations did not influence the impact required. For this essential reason, the increase in constructive funding for humanitarian operations conducted by internationally recognized bodies is vital. The availability of resources and effective allocation of all financial assets are compulsory to successfully complete such relief operations.

Specifically, such missions would comprise facilities to aid mental distress and can account for experts to combat trauma responses, in addition to the deliverance of fundamental essentials. Relief operations may typically focus on the limited requirements needed to sustain a habitable level of life, however, the inclusion of medical surveillance increases its hypothetical impact and proposes brighter prospects for individuals in such war-torn nations.

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Appendix:



Figure 1: Visual representation of the location of the conflict and the area surveillance by Russian peacekeepers.

