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Makale Türü Araştırma Makalesi

THE NEW BALANCE OF POWER IN THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT IN 2020

2020 Yılı Dağlık Karabağ Çatışması Bağlamında Güney Kafkasya'da Yeni Güç Dengesi

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ÖZ

ABSTRACT

Önemli bir tarihsel geçmişi olmasına rağmen, Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasından sonra egemenliğini kazanmış olan Azerbaycan ve Ermenistan arasındaki Dağlık Karabağ sorunu 1992'den günümüze kadar Güney Kafkasya'daki en önemli çatışma konusunu oluşturmuştur. BM Güvenlik Konseyinin birden çok kararına ve uluslararası topluma rağmen buradaki Azerbaycan topraklarını işgal etmiş olan Ermenistan ABD ve AB'deki güçlü diasporasının etkisiyle bu de facto durumdan geri adım atmamış, bu çerçevede oluşturulan Minsk Grubunun çalışmaları da bu soruna bir çözüm getirememiştir. Bu çalışmayla 2020 yılında yaşanan son çatışmanın analizi amaçlanmıştır. Bu kapsamda, ilk bölümde tarihsel arka plan ortaya konarak tüm taraflar ve etkileri ortaya konmuş, sonrasında çatışmada yaşananlar ve barış anlaşmasına yer verilerek, anlaşma sonrası oluşan son durum incelenmiştir. Sonuçta, çatışmanın bir analizi yapılarak Güney Kafkasya'da ortaya çıkan yeni durum hakkında bir değerlendirmede bulunulmuştur.

Although it has an important historical background, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which gained its sovereignty after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, has been the most important conflict issue in the South Caucasus from 1992 until today. Despite the multiple resolutions of the UN Security Council and the international community, Armenia which occupied the Azerbaijani territories there did not take a step back from this de facto situation with the influence of the strong diaspora in the USA and the EU, and the work of the Minsk Group established within this framework could not bring a solution to this problem. It is aimed in this paper to analyze the above-mentioned conflict in 2020. In this context, in the first part, the historical background is set forth and all parties and their effects are revealed. Later on, the events of the conflict and the peace agreement are included, and the final situation after the agreement is examined. Lastly, an analysis of the conflict has been made in conclusion, and also the new situation that emerged in the South Caucasus has been evaluated.

INTRODUCTION

The South Caucasus has always been an important geography with its geopolitical location and rich underground resources throughout history. In addition to these reasons, the existence of people of different ethnic and religion living in this region and the policies pursued within the framework of the interests of other hegemonic states, especially RF, have also had significant effects. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which gained its sovereignty after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, has been the most important conflict issue in the South Caucasus from 1992 until today. Despite the multiple resolutions of the UN Security Council and the international community, Armenia did not withdraw from the territories occupied

in Nagorno-Karabakh and did not take a step back from this *de facto* situation with the influence of the strong diaspora in the USA and EU, and also the Minsk Group² established within this framework could not solve this problem.

The clashes that started in September 2020 on the line of contact between Azerbaijan and Armenia turned into a war in which large troops participated in the following days. While Armenia declared mobilization, it called even the fighters from its diaspora for battles, while Azerbaijan tried to reinforce its army with a partial mobilization declaration. The parties, who sat at the table for a ceasefire and peace agreement with the mediation of RF on November 9, 2020, started to fulfill the essentials of the agreement as of November 10. Although the just cause of Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, where it has been fighting for nearly 30 years, has not been completely resolved as a result of its military and diplomacy success, it has gone down in history as a success.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although the interests of the Russians went back to the time of Tsars, the Nagorno-Karabakh region came under Russian control after the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of World War I. However, the Soviets provided the regional autonomy in 1923 and attached it to the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. In February 1988, Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region demanded secession from Azerbaijan and its annexation to Armenia. This decision was rejected by Azerbaijan Soviet and Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union (USSR) because the borders of the Soviet Republics could not be changed. Following this rejection, Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh *oblast* (district in the Russian language) unilaterally decided to unite with the Republic of Armenia, and this decision was endorsed by the Armenian Parliament as well in December 1989. The crisis escalated with the onset of ethnic conflicts in the region from Yerevan to Baku this year, and then the declaration of a state of emergency in Baku. Many people were killed and injured during the military intervention on civilians. In 1991, the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians declared the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. This unilateral declaration started a war in the region between the Turkish Azeris and Armenians. Making the situation much worse is the Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh soldiers who committed a massacre against the Azeris in Khojaly (Hocali) in February 1992. As a result of this conflict, more than one million Azeri had to migrate from their homeland mostly to Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, the Soviet Russia and Armenia supported the Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh troops occupied seven nearby provinces belonging to the Azeris when a ceasefire was declared by the Minsk Group until May 1994 (Kamel, 2015: 28). Since then, in Nagorno-Karabakh, a total of 8 (*Shusha, Lachin, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Gubadli, Zangilan*) rayons have been under Armenian occupation (Republic of Azerbaijan Cabinet of Ministers, 2020).

Strongly reacting to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict from its very inception, Turkey has criticized the involvement of Armenians and the Russians. Also, Turkish people from all segments of society organised great demonstrations in favour of “The Azeri brothers”. Certainly, the new Russians who openly supported the Armenians would not be content with this kind of declarations and demonstrations, and they rejected accusations of any involvement in killings and massacres (Çelikpala, 2007: 273; Yapıcı, 2014: 124-125).

Up to the July 2020, no progress has been made, however, on the Nagorno-Karabagh issue mainly because none of the parties have changed their positions, despite many attempts by the Minsk Group. Turkey still supports the Azeris and their thesis for a peace agreement, as the RF does not

² At the meeting in Helsinki in 1992, the then-OSCE Council requested the Chairman-in-Office to convene as soon as possible a conference on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict involving Armenia and Azerbaijan. This event was to take place in Minsk and provide a forum for negotiations towards a peaceful settlement. In 1994, the OSCE Budapest Summit established the so-called Minsk Group, which continues to work for the creation of conditions in which such a conference can take place. The Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group are Ambassadors Igor Popov of the Russian Federation; Stéphane Visconti of France; and Mr. Andrew Schofer of the United States of America. The Group's permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, and Turkey, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan. On a rotating basis, also the OSCE Troika is a permanent member. More information for the Minsk Group see: “Who We Are”, <https://www.osce.org/minsk-group/108306>, (Accessed: 05.10.2020).

give up to be sided with the Armenians. The invasion, which started with the murder of 613 people, 106 women and 83 children, carried out by Armenian soldiers in Khojaly in 1992, continued with the seizure of Shusha and Lachin. Within three years, Armenia completely occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and 20% of Azerbaijani territory, and around one million Azerbaijani citizens became refugees due to the conflict. Due to migrations, the demographic structure of the region changed and the population ratio of Armenians, which was 77% before the conflicts, rose to 95%, and all Azerbaijanis at the rate of 21% were displaced. After the clashes that caused the deaths of approximately 30 thousand people, a ceasefire agreement was signed on May 12, 1994. The agreement has been violated many times until today. Azerbaijan authorities claim Armenia that 900 settlements, 150,000 houses, 7,000 public buildings, 693 schools, 855 kindergartens, 695 health centers and hospitals, 927 libraries, 44 temples, 9 mosques, 473 historical monuments, palaces and museums, 40,000 museum exhibits, 6,000 industrial and agricultural enterprises, 160 bridges and other infrastructure facilities were destroyed in Karabakh from 1988 to 1993 (Republic of Azerbaijan Cabinet of Ministers, 2020).

CONFLICT PARTIES AND OTHER ACTORS

United Nations (UN)

After the clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan started in Nagorno-Karabakh, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has taken 4 resolutions since 1993, and in all of them, it was decided to end the occupation of Armenia in this region and to establish peace by rapidly declaring a ceasefire. In its resolution no. 822 dated April 30, 1993, UNSC called for an immediate withdrawal by stopping the attacks of the Armenian troops on Kelbajar and other occupied areas of the Azerbaijan Republic after the attacks in April 1993.³ The resolution no. 853 dated July 29, 1993, has called for the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Aghdam and other recently occupied areas of the Azerbaijan Republic.⁴ In resolution no. 874 dated November 14, 1993, UNSC has made a decision for the maintenance of the ceasefire, the end of the conflict and the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the recently occupied Fuzuli districts of Azerbaijan, Jabrayil, Qubadli, and other recently occupied territories.⁵ Finally, in the resolution 884, dated October 12, 1993, UNSC condemned the recent violations of the ceasefire established between the limbs that resulted in the resumption of conflicts; called the Armenian Government to stop the attacks by their armed forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Azerbaijan Republic; the immediate cessation of armed attacks from the parties and called Armenia to withdraw from the Zangilan district of Azerbaijan and has reaffirmed UN Resolutions no. 822, 853, 874.⁶

Azerbaijan and Ermenian

Azerbaijan is a presidential republic declared independence from the Soviet Union on 30 August 1991. It has 10,2 million population which consists of Azerbaijani 91,6 %, Lezghin 2 %, Russian 1,3 %, Armenian 1,3 %, Talysh 1,3 %, other 2,4 % and Muslim 96,9 % (predominantly Shia). The economy of Azerbaijan having 172,2 billion dollars (2017 est.) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) mostly depends on global oil prices. Its economy largely has important ties with RF and the other former Soviet Republics and also has an expanded trade relations with Turkey and European Union (EU). Azerbaijan's economy generally depends on the export of oil and natural gas which is larger than 90% in total export (Yesevi and Tiftikçigil, 2015: 32). The share of the natural gas in primary energy consumption of Azerbaijan is 68 %, oil is 30 %, and hydro-energy and the other is 1 %. In 2017, Azerbaijan produced an estimated 800,000 barrels per day (b/d) of petroleum and other

³ For more information, see the original document in *Resolution 822*, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/822\(1993\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/822(1993)), (Accessed: 24.11.2020).

⁴ For more information, see the original document in *Resolution 853*, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/853\(1993\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/853(1993)), (Accessed: 24.11.2020).

⁵ For more information, see the original document in *Resolution 874*, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/874\(1993\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/874(1993)), (Accessed: 24.11.2020).

⁶ For more information, see the original document *Resolution 884*, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/884\(1993\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/884(1993)), (Accessed: 24.11.2020).

liquids and consumed about 120,000 b/d. Azerbaijan Petroleum and Other Liquids Consumption (2004-2017) is shown in the Figure-1.

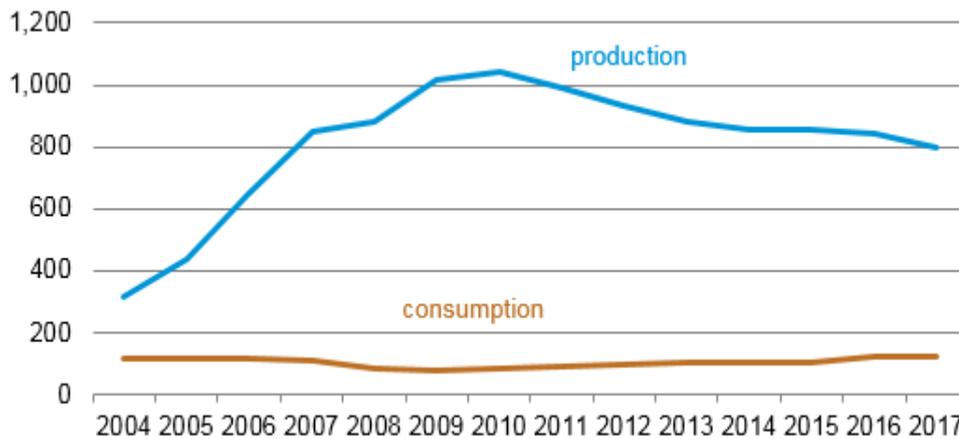


Figure-1: Azerbaijan Petroleum and Other Liquids Consumption (Thousands b/d)

(Source: EIA, <https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/country/AZE>, 20.10.2020)

Armenia has a population of 3.02 million which is Armenian 98.1%, Yezidi (Kurd) 1.2%, other 0.7%. It has a developing economy of 28.34 billion dollars GDP (2017). Its economy is particularly dependent on Russian commercial and governmental support because of the large amount of Russian-owned and/or managed firms especially in the energy sector. Armenia is a member of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union since January 2015. It is also interested in pursuing closer ties with the EU as well, signing a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement in November 2017 (CIA, 2020).

The two countries have begun an armament race in which the Russian military equipment has been imported in large numbers in recent years. Azerbaijan budgeted 1.7 billion dollars for its army amounting to 5.1% of the country's GDP in 2016. Its modernized armed forces feature a range of new equipment, 85% of which is imported from Russia. On the other hand, Armenia also allocates 4.29% of its GDP to the military (Baranec and Juraj: 2020). The estimated personnel and the military equipment numbers of the Azerbaijan and Armenian Armies has been shown in the Table-1.

Table-1. Personnel and the Military Equipment Numbers of the Armies (2020).

	Azerbaijan	Armenia
Active Duty Personnel	80.000	65.000
Fighter Jets	37	18
Attack Aircrafts	30	17
Attack Helicopters	16	15
Tanks	595	460
Armored Fighting Vehicles	220	165
Artillery	270	169
UCAVs/Drones	200	100

(Source: The table is prepared by the author using datas in the following documents: Niall McCarthy, Armenian & Azerbaijani Military Strength Compared, <https://www.statista.com/chart/23056/estimated-military-strength-of-armenia-and-azerbaijan/> ; Mike, Eckel, "Drone Wars: In Nagorno-Karabakh, The Future Of Warfare Is Now", *Radio Free For Europe*, <https://www.rferl.org/a/drone-wars-in-nagorno-karabakh-the-future-of-warfare-is-now/30885007.html>, (Accessed: 20.10.2020)

The Unmanned Combat Air Vehicles (UCAVs) and drones are being used to shape the battlefield to a far greater extent than ever before in this conflict in the Caucasus and elsewhere. The Azerbaijan Army has more drones than Armenians. These arms have caused enormous losses especially to the Armenian Army on the battlefield and played a major role in the capture of military/political objectives (Eckel: 2020). The Armenian Army has at its disposal a brigade of 300 kilometers ranged Iskander-E systems, also at the same range of SS-1C Scud-B missile systems, and at least four Tochka-U which have a range of 120 kilometers. On the other hand, Azerbaijan Army has three Tochka systems with 185 kilometers range and 400 kilometers ranged Israeli LORA tactical missiles. These weapon systems which have been used much more times in the conflict caused very important impacts and threats for each other's critical infrastructure or civilian centres (Kofman and Nersisyan: 2020).

Russian Federation (RF)

It is not possible to evaluate the recent conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh independently from the "aggressive realist" foreign policy pursued by (RF) in the Middle East, Black Sea, and Southern Caucasus. This policy of RF was revealed with its attitude in Georgia, Ukraine, and finally Syria and caused regional crises. RF currently maintains its military units consisting of warplanes, helicopters, armoured units and air defence systems in Georgia and Armenia. RF wants also to continue to have a say in the region by increasing its influence on Azerbaijan and Armenia with its foreign and economic policy. In this context, Armenia has signed a 25-year basing agreement with RF in 1997 that provided for the significant Russian military presence in Armenia, including 18 MiG-29 fighters in Yerevan, along with infantry, armor, artillery, air defense and other supporting regiments near the city of Gyumri. In 2010, the lease on the base was extended through 2044. RF stations more than 5,000 troops in Armenia, including 3,000 officially reported basing at the 102nd Military Base located in Gyumri. RF has also deployed a helicopter squadron at the Erebuni air base which is connected to this base in 2013 (Aliyev, 2020).⁷ Notably, in 2016, Armenia obtained Russian Iskander (SS-26 Stone) short-range, mobile ballistic missile systems, which increased dissatisfaction with Moscow within Azerbaijani society and its political establishment.

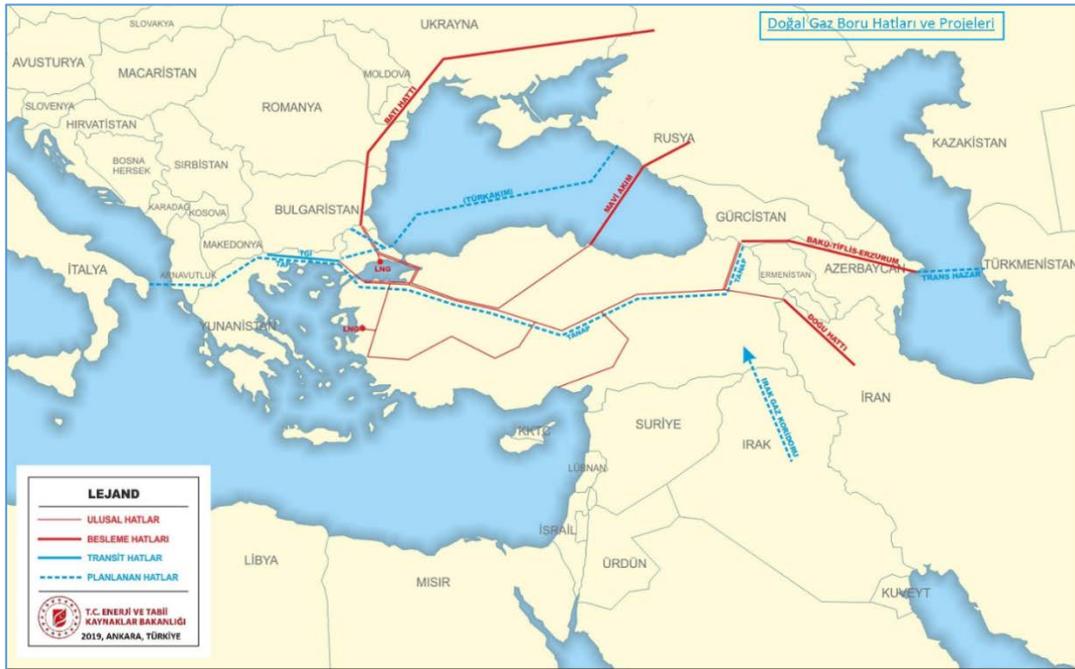
On the other hand, RF is trying to increase military and economic relations with Azerbaijan. RF has long been Azerbaijan's main arms supplier. Between 2013 and 2017, RF's share was 65 % of Azerbaijan's total foreign weapons imports. "The Defence Ministers' Cooperation Plan" was signed in December 2015. Azerbaijan has also imported UCAVs from Turkey and Multiple-Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS), drones, surface-to-surface missiles, and the other military equipments from Israel, Belarus, Ukraine, Czech Republic in recent years (Aliyev, 2020). Azerbaijan has very deep historical, cultural cohesion and mutual economic-military relations with Turkey. It is usually used the catchword "one nation, two states" for the relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Recently, their armed forces have conducted a large-scale joint military exercise on Azerbaijani territory in August 2020 (Singh, 2020).

Turkey

After gaining independence, Azerbaijan primarily signed 'Military Training Cooperation Agreement' to establish, train and improve the Azerbaijan Army, activities such as military training, cooperation and logistic support were initiated in 1992. In this context, Azerbaijani students had been sent off to the Turkish Army military academies for education and also military advisors have sent to Azerbaijan (Yüce, 2016: 56). Later on, 'Strategic Partnership and Mutual Aid Agreement' had signed which was decided to establish a 'High-Level Cooperation Council' during the visit made by Turkish former president Abdullah Gül to Azerbaijan in August 2010. As well as political relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan, the economic relations have improved the volume of trade from 325 million dollars in 2000 to 1.85 billion dollars in 2018, as a result of these

⁷ For more information, see "102nd Military Base", <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/102-military-base.htm>, (Accessed: 20.10.2020).

efforts. In the meantime, Turkey-Azerbaijan-Georgia and Turkey-Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan the tripartite mechanisms we have developed with Azerbaijan have provided a political framework for regional cooperation. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Natural Gas Pipeline (BTE) were implemented within the scope of cooperation on energy issues. With this line, the agreement of which was signed in November 1999 and finished in June 2006, it is aimed to transport the oil produced in the Caspian Region, especially the Azeri oil, to Ceyhan through Azerbaijan and Georgia. The BTC Crude Oil Pipeline continues to transport Turkmen and Kazakh oil, as well as Azeri oil (Semercioğlu, 2020: 124-125). A giant Caspian gas field Shah Deniz field in the Azerbaijani part of the Sea of Phase 1 of the project is 6.6 billion m³ of gas sold to Turkey every year since 2007. Carrying natural gas to Azerbaijan in the Caspian Sea to Europe Shah is the Southern Gas Corridor starting point Seafood Phase 2 field from the year 16 billion m³ of gas produced and this gas 6 billion m³ to Turkey, scheduled to be sold to the transit through the European market via Turkey has 10 billion m³.



Map-1: Turkey's Natural Gas Lines and Projects

(Source: <https://enerji.gov.tr/bilgi-merkezi-dogal-gaz-boru-hatlari-ve-projeleri>, 20.10.2020)

For Azerbaijan, Turkey is the second country in exports and 5th in imports. The fact that the borders are closed between Armenia and Turkey prevents direct commerce between the two countries. Accordingly, Turkish products make their way to Armenia mostly through Iran and Georgia (Akman, 2020).

Iran

Iran is an important state and a regional power in the Middle East which has a very old historical background, human resources and cultural wealth with 1.35 million km² land and 84.9 million population (2020 est.). Its ethnicity is Persian, Azeri, Kurd, Lur, Baloch, Arab, Turkmen and Turkic tribes. Persian Farsi is the official common language, Azeri, and other Turkic dialects, Kurdish, Gilaki and Mazandarani, Luri, Balochi, Arabic are also used. Iran's community religion is largely Muslim (official) 99.4 % (Shia 90-95%, Sunni 5-10%) and other (includes Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian) 0.3%, unspecified 0.4% (2011 est.). Iran's economy is marked by statist policies, inefficiencies, and reliance on oil and gas exports, but Iran also possesses significant agricultural, industrial, and service sectors with a GDP 1.64 trillion dollars (2017 est.) (CIA, Iran, 2020).

The diplomatic relations between Iran and Azerbaijan which are the coastal states of the Caspian Sea started in 1992. Because the fact that both countries have a large Muslim Shia population brings them closer to each other having similarities and differences in terms of socio-cultural and contemporary values. Azerbaijan's secular state structure and Iran's tendency to support religious groups in Azerbaijan arise as a matter of dispute. The Azerbaijani Administration does not want the radicalization of religion and sees this issue as an important national security issue (Erendor and Öztarsu, 2019: 162) On the other hand, since accepting its independence in 1991, Iran has emerged as one of Armenia's most reliable allies. The two countries have developed cooperation in many fields, especially in the transportation and energy sectors, without experiencing ethnic or religious conflicts. The alliance relationship established by Tehran with Armenia offers an alternative to its international isolation, and creates a trump card for the so-called Azeri irredentism against Azerbaijan at the same time (Moniquet and Ravcimore, 2013: 4-5).

European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) started to establish relations with Azerbaijan and Armenia, which declared their independence in the South Caucasus after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. By the effect of the international security environment that emerged after the September 11 attack in the USA in 2001, EU especially concentrated his attention on this region as also the former Eastern Bloc countries in Europe. The inclusion of these states in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004 signalled the EU's geopolitical interests in this part of the World. The enlargement of the EU on May 2004 has also brought a historical shift for the Union in political, geographic and economic terms, further reinforcing the political and, economic interdependence between the EU and Armenia and also Azerbaijan (Nuriyev, 2007: 1-2). EU has planned to develop an increasingly close relationship, going beyond co-operation, to involve a significant measure of economic integration and political cooperation with these countries. This politics has declared with the ENP action plans (Association Agendas For Eastern Partner Countries) which includes the partner country's agenda for political and economic reforms, the measures to deepening trade and economic relations, with short and medium-term priorities of 3 to 5 years by EU.⁸

The EU and Azerbaijan signed a 'Partnership and Cooperation Agreement' in 1999. The negotiations are underway on a comprehensive agreement concerning the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and issues related to non-CFSP issues, including basic provisions on democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights covering political, trade, energy, and other specific issues, also the abolition of visa from February 2017. The EU is covering over 50% of Azerbaijan's trade as the biggest trade partner of Azerbaijan and is also the biggest investor in the country with nearly €7 billion of direct investment. The oil exports from Azerbaijan consist of 5% of EU imports. After the completion of the Southern Gas Corridor project, which aims to bring gas from the Caspian Sea to Europe, Azerbaijan's energy exports to the EU are expected to increase further (EU Neighbours, 2020).

Armenia, the other actor of South Caucasus, has relations with EU which are based on the 'EU-Armenia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement' in 1999. On the other hand, Armenia has decided to join the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia, shortly before the cooperation agreement with the European Union entered into force in January 2015. Because of it, the negotiation process with the EU on the association agreement ended. Henceforth, the negotiations for a new EU-Armenia agreement based on EU values, but in line with Yerevan's new obligations vis-à-vis EAEU were launched in December 2015. And the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was also concluded quickly in February 2017. This agreement has been temporarily implemented since June 2018 until it was ratified by all EU member states (Jiráček, 2020: 2-3). As a result of these developments, EU became the Armenia's first trading partner, with close to 30% of its exports. Additionally, the

⁸ More information see. EU ENP Action Plans, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/8398/enp-action-plans_en, (Accessed: 20.11.2020).

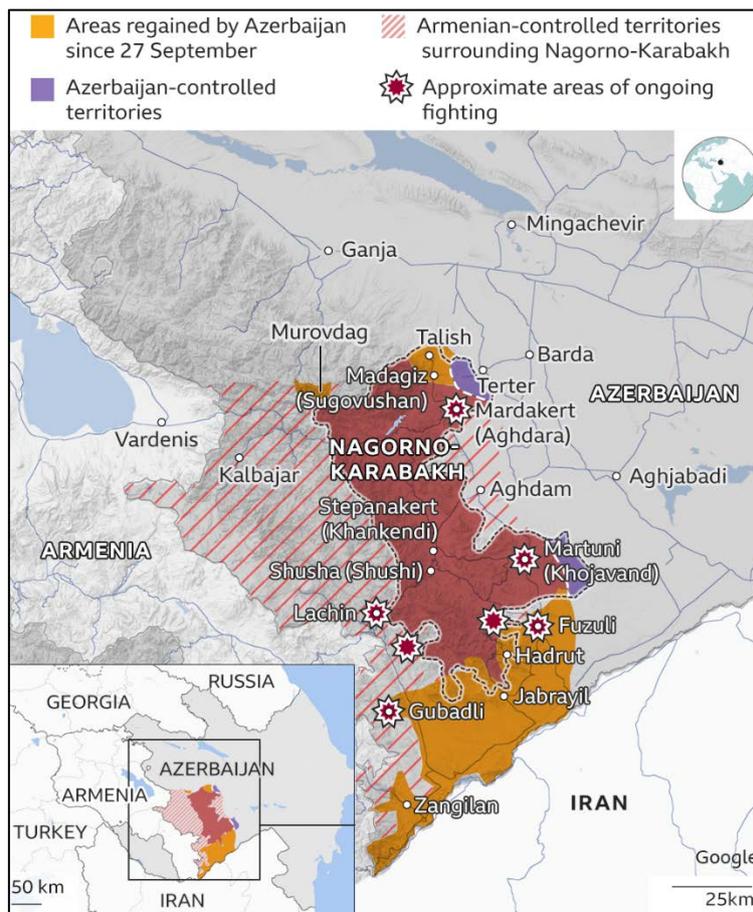
Union has given steady support to the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group to solve the conflict over the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region for over 30 years with the aim of resolving the conflict in a peaceful manner (EU Neighbours, 2020).

THE FINAL STATE OF THE CONFLICT AND THE PEACE AGREEMENT

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War

The last conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh that had already started, turned into a war between the two countries when the Azerbaijani army counterattacked on Armenia's attack on civilian targets in Terter and Fuzuli settlements on September 27, 2020. In response to the conflict which both sides reported military and civilian casualties, Armenia declared martial law and total mobilization, while Azerbaijan declared a post-martial law curfew and a state of war along the borderline on September 28. Numerous countries and the United Nations strongly condemned the conflict and urged both sides to ease tensions and resume negotiations without delay.

During the conflict, as well as soldiers killed and wounded from both entities, 21 Azeri civil people died and dozens more were reportedly wounded in the strike which the Armenian Army carried out on October, 28 on the Azeri town of Barda (BBC News, 2020). Azerbaijan also has accused Armenia of destroying some of the targets in the city of Terter and nearby villages in Azerbaijan. On the other hand, it has been asserted that some of the strategic city of Shusha, and some other residential areas nearby were also attacked by Azerbaijani forces. It has been also reported by some local officials over 1,000 Armenian troops have been destroyed and 50 civilians have been killed, Azerbaijan officials has reported at least 90 civilian deaths and more than 400 wounded (DW, 2020). The Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh has shown in the Map-2.



Map-2: The Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

(Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54722120>, Accessed: 26.11.2020)

The Peace Agreement

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, with the mediation of Russian President Vladimir Putin, signed the Armistice Agreement on November 9, 2020, and it was announced that all conflicts in the Nagorno-Karabakh region were ended as of November 10 (The Economist, 2020). According to the Ceasefire Agreement, The Republic of Armenia shall return the *Kalbajar District* to Azerbaijan by November 25, 2020, and the *Lachin District* by 1 December. The *Lachin corridor* [5 km (3.1 mi) wide], which will provide access from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia and bypass the town of *Shusha*, shall remain under the control of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation. Azerbaijan won many of the concessions it has sought for decades in negotiations as Armenia has agreed to progressively withdraw from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and to replace Russian 1,960-strong peacekeeping contingent (The New York Times, 2020).⁹ The new position in Nagorno-Karabakh after 2020 War is shown at the Map-3.



Map-3: Nagorno-Karabakh After 2020 War

(Source: <https://www.dw.com/en/nagorno-karabakh-thousands-displaced-by-war-return-home/a-55690512>, Accessed: 25.11.2020)

CONCLUSION

The international community and international organizations (UN, NATO, etc.) did not take a peaceful stand in terms of the process of resolving the dispute in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the past 30 years. Particularly its provision of increasing the efforts of the Minsk Group used the event to diplomacy could not give a solution to the matter. At the same time, the involvement of the regional countries such as Russia, Iran, and the Armenian lobby in the EU and USA made the solution of the problem more difficult. The fact that the USA does not pay enough attention to the developments in this region due to its focus on the presidential elections held in November 2020, increased the influence of RF in the region as Turkey. On the other hand, Azerbaijan has increased the effectiveness of all national power elements, especially its military capability, compared to the

⁹ For more information, see the original document: Президент России, "Заявление Президента Азербайджанской Республики, Премьер-министра Республики Армения и Президента Российской Федерации", <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384>, (Accessed: 25.11.202).

previous years, is seen as an important factor in the recovery of the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh according to international law.

It is possible to say that Azerbaijan won the absolute victory in the conflict between Azerbaijan and the Armenian Armed Forces, which started on September 27 and ended with the agreement on November 9, however, all the places under Armenia's occupation in Nagorno Karabakh did not survive. The strategy implemented by the Azerbaijan Army in the operation, advanced weapon systems, especially the drones and UCAVs, and the training and high morale of its soldiers had a great impact on this success. Turkey's people and Azerbaijan's public support had also a very considerable effect on this achievement.

The fact that the UN's thought about the rights of Azerbaijan in the region were usurped by Armenia according to international law prevented the global and regional actors from intervening in this conflict. On the other hand, the focus of the international community on the Covid-19 pandemic and the US elections were other factors that prevented the focus on this conflict. RF and Turkey as main regional actors in the historical and cultural context of partnerships emerged as directly affecting the actors in this conflict, consisting of peacekeeping measures to be taken by both countries scheduled to join the military elements. The other regional power Iran is content with saying that it can mediate by inviting the parties to calm in the last conflict, because of confronting with serious problems, including severe US sanctions and the coronavirus epidemic, also social actions in broad which they call "economic war and terrorism".

The general approach of the EU in this conflict, except for France, was to stop the war and to establish peace as soon as possible. It is possible to attribute this to the fact that Azerbaijan has a justification on this matter according to the international law and also to the importance given to the trade relations with Azerbaijan based on oil and natural gas of the member countries. On the other hand, France, with the great influence of the Armenian diaspora in its country, took a stance in favor of the Armenians, and finally adopted a resolution recognizing the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh republic in its Senate on 25 November.

Long last, Turkey's attitude in establishing the conflict in favor of Azerbaijan, Armenia relations, which could adversely affect possible to say. As a result, Armenia's international environment with strong lobbying "Armenian genocide" can carry back on the agenda, so that work can be expected to create negative public opinion against Turkey. Again, because of this post-conflict policy followed by the RF, it seems difficult to realize a positive effect on relations with Turkey in the short term.

As a final word, Azerbaijan's success in this conflict declared the emergence of a powerful state in the South Caucasus. The largest share in this success undoubtedly belongs to Turkey's political, military, and moral support. By the policy applied and the result obtained in this process increased the effectiveness of Turkey in the region and the international system.

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