

Security Council: Topic 1

Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

Background:

Armenia and Azerbaijan both became part of the Soviet Union in 1920 right after its formation. The Nagorno-Karabakh had an ethnic majority of Armenians. However, the Soviets gave the area to Azerbaijan. 60 years later, as the Soviet Union was falling apart, the parliament of the Nagorno-Karabakh area officially voted to become part of Armenia, though it still officially remained part of Azerbaijan. While Armenia was trying back the separatist movement, Azerbaijan was clearly against it. This led to ethnic clashes, which escalated into a full blown war following the fall of the Soviet Union. According to an article published by BBC: “tens of thousands died and up to a million were displaced amid reports of ethnic cleansing and massacres committed by both sides”¹. The war ended in 1994 after a Russia-mandated ceasefire. Azerbaijan maintained legal possession of the Nagorno-Karabakh area, but it was a separatist, self-declared republic ruled by ethnic Armenians and backed by the Armenian government. Ever since then, peace talks have been regulated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. Despite this, hostilities did not come to an end and clashes remained frequent. In 2016, there was a serious flare up that led to the death of dozens of soldiers on both sides. In 2018, the prime minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, and Azerbaijan’s president, Ilham Aliyev, set up the first military hotline, which would hopefully be used to communicate before violence got out of hand. However, in 2019 Pashinyan told crowds of ethnic Armenians that Karabakh is Armenian. This claim was condemned by Azerbaijan and caused further tensions.

Current Situation:

In July 2020, fighting broke out once again on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, about 300km away from Nagorno-Karabakh. Soon after, Turkey’s military got involved. On September 27th, another conflict broke out. Both countries accused the other of firing the first shot. According to the Guardian: “since fighting began in late September, thousands have been killed and more than 100,000 displaced in the worst fighting since the early 1990s”². The fighting came to an end in November, when both countries agreed to sign a Russian-brokered peace deal. The deal states that Azerbaijan still controls several areas that the countries were fighting over and that Armenia must remove its troops from there. A ‘peace corridor’ was also established linking Armenia to territory in Nagorno-Karabakh, which will be monitored and policed by Russia. 2000 Russian peacekeepers will help monitor this agreement, though it is unlikely this latest détente will be lasting.

¹ Armenia-Azerbaijan: Why did Nagorno-Karabakh spark a conflict? (2020, November 10). Retrieved November 13, 2020, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54324772>

² Losh, J., & Roth, A. (2020, November 10). Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal brokered by Moscow prompts anger in Armenia. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/10/nagorno-karabakh-armenia-pm-signs-deal-to-end-war-with-azerbaijan-and-russia>

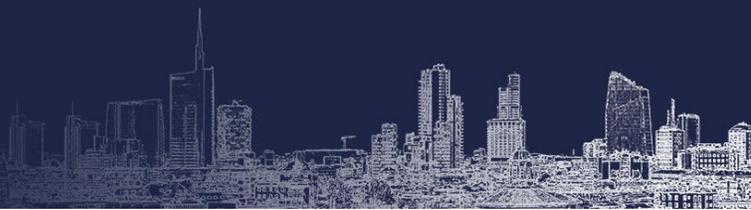


Figure 1³ and 2⁴) Showing changes in areas of control between October 3 and November 10, 2020

Important Resolutions

- RESOLUTION 822 (1993) Adopted by the Security Council at its 3205th meeting, on 30 April 1993
- RESOLUTION 853 (1993) Adopted by the Security Council at its 3259th meeting, on 29 July 1993
- RESOLUTION 874 (1993) Adopted by the Security Council at its 3292nd meeting, on 14 October 1993
- RESOLUTION 884 (1993) Adopted by the Security Council at its 3313th meeting, on 12 November 1993

³ "War Returns to Nagorno-Karabakh." The Economist. Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/10/03/war-returns-to-nagorno-karabakh>.

⁴ "A Peace Deal Ends a Bloody War over Nagorno-Karabakh." The Economist. Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/11/14/a-peace-deal-ends-a-bloody-war-over-nagorno-karabakh>.



Important bloc positions:

Russia

Armenia has good relations with Russia. There is a Russian military base in Armenia, and both Armenia and Russia are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) military alliance. While Russia has also maintained relations with Azerbaijan, in this conflict it sided heavily with Armenia and gained influence in the region. In particular, it got its wish to control the area in the corridor linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, allowing it to monitor what is transported there.

Turkey

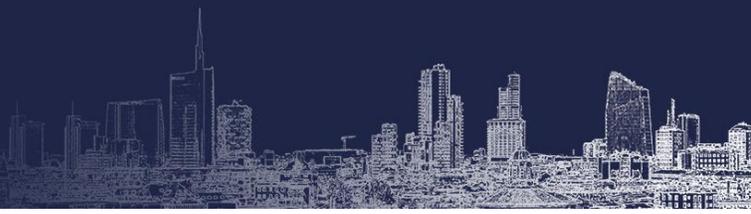
Turkey was the first nation to recognize Azerbaijan's independence in 1991. The Turkish government considers Azerbaijan to be a country with similar values, leading them to be allies. Turkey has no official relations with Armenia. In 1993 Turkey shut its border with Armenia in support of Azerbaijan. While Azerbaijan ostensibly lost this latest conflict, Turkey did gain influence in the region. Turkey and Russia remain entangled in several proxy wars against each other.

Possible solutions:

- Ensure that the peace treaty is maintained and followed with the help of the UN peacekeepers who can check that both sides follow the agreement.
- Demand an end to violence and external meddling in local politics.
- Hold periodic meetings to discuss the situation to prevent its escalation and to stop any successive conflict from taking place.
- Hold a UN mediated referendum to ensure that the solution that has been imposed is truly in the best interest of the population of both countries, and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Further reading:

- <https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/11/14/a-peace-deal-ends-a-bloody-war-over-nagorno-karabakh>
- <https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/10/29/the-fighting-in-nagorno-karabakh-reflects-decades-of-conflict>
- <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/11/09/europe/nagorno-karabakh-shusha-armenia-azerbaijan-russia-intl/index.html>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/article/armenian-azerbaijan-conflict.html>



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- O'Brien, M. (2020, October 21). Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Shortage of Specifics Complicates Search for Solutions. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from <https://www.justsecurity.org/72974/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-shortage-of-specifics-complicates-search-for-solutions/>
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