

Forum: United Nations Security Council

Issue: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

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## Introduction

The Nagorno-Karabakh is a territorial dispute which began in 1988, with the first war lasting around 6 years. The conflict began due to the rising ethnic tensions between the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as a result of the dissipation of the Soviet Union. The first war consisted of both regions involved in undeclared war in the mountainous region of Karabakh, with Azerbaijan furtively attempting to suppress the growing secessionist movement in the region. In the time that Azerbaijan declared its independence from the Soviet Union, the Armenian majority voted to separate from Azerbaijan, consequently proclaiming the area of Nagorno-Karabakh. By 1992, heavy conflict erupted along the border, and by the time the first war came to a close in 1994, the Armenians controlled most of the conflicted region as well as 9% of Azerbaijan's territory outside said conflicted region. From 1994 until 2020, there have still been numerous violent clashes along the border, including 2008, 2010, 2011-2013, and sporadically from 2014 until November 2020. By this time, Russia brokered a peace deal, causing an end to 44 consecutive days of conflict across the border in 2020.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **Secessionist Movement**

A secessionist movement refers to a movement that is similar to those such as separationist, with potential end goals of autonomy and self-governance.

### **Autonomy**

Autonomy refers to the freedom of control from external forces, where a person, community or state has the authority to govern itself.

### **Ceasefire**

A ceasefire is an agreement between two or more groups or member states to suspend any and all hostile or aggressive actions and activities during a conflict or war.

### **Martial Law**

A martial law refers to the uncompromised and thorough military control over the complete suspension of regular governmental law, especially in the case of emergency or conflict.

### **State of Emergency**

This term refers to the situation in which a nation is experiencing a disaster and consists of the government of said nation taking full control and suspending all regular procedures in order to regain control as quickly as possible while attempting to avoid general catastrophe.

## **History**

Naturally, one of the most prominent points on the timeline of the conflict was its beginning point in 1988. The rise in tensions in the region, initially belonging to Azerbaijan, began due to the large ethnic Armenian population residing in Nagorno-Karabakh. Because of this, there was a vote, where the residents of the conflicted region rejected the Azerbaijani rule and wished to join the Armenian republic. This led to the Armenian separatists seizing control and killing over 30,000 innocent people of both Armenian and Azerbaijani ethnicities in the process, after the crumbling of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 1994 there was an internationally-brokered ceasefire, however due to lack of reinforcement and international attention, there have continued to be numerous clashes along the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as around the conflicted region of Nagorno-Karabakh. After years of quiet and lack of fighting, there was a sudden, serious clash between the conflicting forces in early-mid 2016, and dozens of lives were lost: According to the organization Crisis Group, as of February 5, 2021, there have been around 5,157 deaths during the 2020 war, including 174

non-combatants killed on both sides combined, as well as 93,000 people displaced as a result of the conflict. There wasn't any further major escalation of fighting until September 2020, where there were also civilian casualties. The conflict in this region is particularly concerning to the international community due to the presence of important oil pipelines and supplies, and the conflict may interfere or damage these assets.



Figure 1: A map of the conflicted region and the two major parties involved

## Key Issues

It is widely known that, unlike the past, without proper and successful mediation efforts, there is a large possibility that tensions will further escalate and conflict may break out again. Many peace talks and mediation efforts hosted by external powers, member nations, and international groups have taken place, all to no avail. Tensions have continued to rise and both sides remain unfaltering in their stances against each other. One of the main concerns is the oil supply that could be hindered. Azerbaijan produces 37.5 megatonnes of oil per year, and the supply transportation could be badly affected by the ongoing and unstable conflict in the same region.

Another key issue regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the persistent common distrust the two countries have between each other. Because of this, no matter how many peace talks or mediation efforts there are, there can never be any true resolution or sense of security for these two nations, nor the Nagorno-Karabakh region. For example, there have been various failed peace talks hosted by a large number of groups, nations and organizations. For example, the Minsk Group and the Russian Federation, hosted both in their own countries or neutral areas, such as Geneva. Because of this, the two countries essentially hold each other hostage, neither being able to gain much of an upper hand, regardless of how much territory they claim from their small skirmishes back and forth across the border. Both fear for their populations in the area: The majority of ethnic-Armenian people as well as the minority of ethnic-Azeri populations, and therefore this conflict and territorial dispute becomes touchy for both sides.

## **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

### **Azerbaijani Republic**

Azerbaijan, naturally, is one of the key players in the conflict. Nagorno-Karabakh's territory is within the borders of Azerbaijan, and therefore Azerbaijan is inclined to protect its territory. Additionally, the Nagorno-Karabakh region has a minority population of Azerbaijani people, and therefore the Azeri government is concerned with their safety and potential silencing. Protecting their people and territory are of utmost importance and priority to the Azeri government, and therefore is incentive enough to prevent them from backing down. They have attempted at peace talks with Armenia, albeit unsuccessfully, and have the backing and support of Turkey. This situation is very high-risk for Azerbaijan.

### **Republic of Armenia**

This situation is equally as high risk for Armenia as it is for Azerbaijan. Armenia holds a strong stance as the residential population in the Nagorno-Karabakh territory is mostly ethnically-Armenian, and they wish to formally join Armenia. However, after the dissolution of the USSR, because the Azeri borders claimed Nagorno-Karabakh within their own territory, the Armenian people residing there had no choice but to either stay and be a part of Azeri

government or to be permanently displaced from their homes. The Armenian government recognizes the requests of the Armenian majority in Nagorno-Karabakh and seems to be willing to do everything in their power to aid them, regardless of Turkey's pressure on their west borders and Azerbaijan's pressure on its eastern side.

### **Turkey**

Turkey has been putting a lot of pressure on Armenia by making their support for Azerbaijan's cause quite clear. Although they supported the international community's call for a ceasefire, they were quite clear in their support for Azerbaijan's actions in claiming the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Turkey and Armenia already have very tense relations due to the mass slaughter of 1.5 million Armenians in the late Ottoman period, which Turkey refuses to acknowledge. Although Turkey has not played a significant role in previous conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia, in this particular situation, Turkey is openly encouraging Azerbaijan to remain assertive on the matter.

### **The OSCE Minsk Group**

Created in 1992, the OSCE Minsk Group's main purpose was to provide a place in Minsk in order to enable negotiations and peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. After this, the main purpose of the OSCE Minsk Group became finding a solution to the conflict between the two nations. They also attempted de-escalation and promoted peace talks by deploying peacekeeping forces.

## **Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
1921	USSR declares Nagorno-Karabakh an autonomous region with Soviet Azerbaijan
1988	Armenian officials in Nagorno-Karabakh formally request the transference of the previously-declared autonomous region from Soviet Azerbaijan to Soviet Armenia. First Nagorno-Karabakh war begins.
1991	The USSR collapses, Armenia and Azerbaijan gain independence.

1991	Azerbaijan abolishes the autonomous title of Nagorno-Karabakh, and Armenian authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh declare the region independent.
1992	Massacre of Azeri citizens in Khojali, 30,000 dead and 350,000 Armenian refugees created, around 600,000 internally displaced Azeri people (according to UNHCR).
1994	First Nagorno-Karabakh war ends. Call for ceasefire. Armenian forces have the upper hand: they now control 13% of previously Azerbaijani territory, including the Nagorno-Karabakh territory.
April 1994	Azerbaijan violates the ceasefire called for by the UNSC and regains some territory.
May-June 1995	A new round of peace talks and negotiations hosted by Moscow fails.
April 2016	Intense fighting - the worst seen since 1994, with over 300 casualties. After 4 days of conflict, a new ceasefire is called for, however it is violated multiple times.
October 2017	The Minsk Group hosts the presidents of the two states in Geneva for new peace talks.
September 27, 2020	Renewed conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh territory begins.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh Ceasefire Agreement, 9 November 2020
- The Situation of the Occupied Territories in Azerbaijan, 14 March 2008 (A/RES/62/243)
- Resolution 822 (1993), 30 April 1993 (S/RES/822)
- Resolution 853 (1993), 29 July 1993 (S/RES/853)
- Resolution 874 (1993), 14 October 1993 (S/RES/874)
- Resolution 884 (1993), 12 November 1993 (S/RES/884)

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Stemming from past resolutions and attempts to solve the issue at hand, there have been numerous calls for ceasefires, though they have been repeatedly violated. For example, the most recent call for ceasefire was a resolution signed on the 9th of November in 2020, mediated by the Russian president Vladimir Putin, which followed the most recent violent clash

which began on the 27th of September, 2020. However, on Sunday 13th of December, 2020, this ceasefire was violated, both sides claiming that the other had provoked them into taking violent action against one another. This particular conflict resulted in four deaths reported by Azerbaijani authorities, and six injuries reported by Armenian authorities. Following this, there were several reported accusations from both sides, reporting attacks and injuries as well as fatalities.

Included in the several resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), there is clear mention of the Minsk Group being involved in the mediation between the two conflicted nations: Armenia and Azerbaijan. The OSCE Minsk Group, created in 1992 by the Conference on Security in Europe with its main purpose being to mediate the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, has attempted to be involved and find a solution to the issue at hand as efficiently as possible. However, regardless of the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group, the most that they have been able to accomplish is to call for ceasefires. Any and all peace talks and negotiations hosted in neutral countries for the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan resulted in the one and only solution being brought to the table: ceasefires. Seeing as these have been repeatedly violated for around three decades, this solution has not been perfectly successful in the past, regardless of the brief pauses in fighting in between.

## Possible Solutions

1. Promoting economic interdependence between Armenia and Azerbaijan
  - **Pros:** This could lead to both countries wishing for the other to prosper and grow economically, which in turn would increase their economic growth rates. This would result in both governments wishing to promote the other in a good light, especially to stop potential attacks on the shared borders of Nagorno-Karabakh.
  - **Cons:** This move could lead to an economic war. The toxicity between the two governments may remain, and both may try to sabotage each other and would be willing to suffer the losses, most likely before the two nations become too interdependent.
2. Both sides of the conflict must condemn hate speech and the inciting of violence and anger towards one another within their respective communities.

- **Pros:** This will reduce the amount of self-driven violence both in the conflicted region of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the population masses within the clear borders of both nations. This may help to simmer down the anger on both sides, and give both sides the opportunity to come to a rational solution and work towards peace.
- **Cons:** This has the potential to incite anger in the general population at their respective central governments and may cause them to overthrow the governments, or result in protests and internal self-led rebellions and military groups to fight for themselves, outside of governmental control.

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## Appendix or Appendices

- I. Useful resource on the military capability of Armenia in comparison to the military capability of Azerbaijan:  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/10/30/whats-turkeys-role-in-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict>