
POSITION OF GEORGIA AND INFLUENCE OF KARABAKH CONFLICT ON REGIONAL SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

In 2020, the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia broke out again in Nagorno Karabakh. Consequently, there were a number of battles due to worsening situation. Both sides try to get military advantage by getting their “allies” involved into the battle.

A level of Importance of neighbor states’ positions into that conflict was too high, especially Russian Federation and Turkey who were concerned as sides of conflict. Those two states were actively involved with political and military power in Karabakh’s war.

Result of this war was vitally important to South Caucasian states’ regional security and future in general.

There was an assumption if the war had continued for a long, South Caucasus would have become a hot spot in region. Also, it’s being considered that situation was tensioned in the Middle East as well which might have had affected on situation in our region.

As I mentioned above, besides Armenia and Azerbaijan there were two neighbor countries Turkey and Russia, considered as conflict sides. They were trying to take advantage in that conflict and spread their influence in region more. It must be underlined that Russia got a good chance to re-activation in Caucasian region. For that Karabakh war was one of the best chances. However Turkey’s position was counter wise and against Russia’s will to get more influence over Caucasus. Turkey had its own interests in Region and tried hard to use this conflict to weaken Russia’s positions and spread its own.

It’s important to mention that Georgia’s position as a neutral state was quite different from involved countries; therefore, Georgia’s interests were different from Turkey’s and Russia’s goals. Personally for Georgia, Russia’s influence is a huge disadvantage because RF has occupied more than 20% of Georgia.

Georgia came up many times with a message to cease fire and solve conflict peacefully.

Keywords: Karabakh, conflict, hostilities, treaties, states, region and problem.

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INTRODUCTION

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Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is not a new phenomenon. It originates even before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The conflict spanned three decades of ethnic conflict between the two Soviet republics, And then it turned into a protracted conflict between two independent countries, which created a serious threat to the security of the South Caucasus region. There are three sovereign states in this region (Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia), which have territorial conflicts. It should be noted that the territorial problem is one of the important factors in the existence of conflicts. Neighboring ethnic groups differ sharply from each other in their culture, religion, language and political orientation. Therefore, we can say that these conflicts have a political, ethnic, economic, ideological and territorial character. The Kremlin, which is still actively involved in the ongoing political processes in the South Caucasus, has played a big role in creating the conflict situations in the South Caucasus region. The conflicts in this region are united by one of the factors that, unfortunately, none of them could be resolved so far and they remain "frozen conflicts" to this day. It is a fact that peace talks related to "frozen conflicts" do not give the desired results.

The goal of the conflicts in the South Caucasus, specifically between Armenia and Azerbaijan, is to regain control of the Russian Federation in the region. He uses different means for this. Among them is the soft power policy, which is one of the good levers for managing "frozen conflicts". The political and economic situation created in the South Caucasus gave the Russian Federation the impetus to use "soft power" to activate the Karabakh conflict, but this conflict also turned into military actions. The Karabakh conflict ended with concrete results based on certain agreements, but the conflict remained unresolved.

MAIN PART

The beginning of the Karabakh conflict

The Karabakh conflict started even during the Soviet Union, in the region inhabited by ethnic Armenians on the territory of Azerbaijan - Nagorno-Karabakh. Ethnic Armenians demanded separation from Azerbaijan and reunification in the Republic of Armenia. On December 1, 1989, the Supreme Council of Soviet Socialists of Armenia made a decision on the accession of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region to Armenia. The Republic of Armenia has taken upon itself the implementation of the security policy of this region. This action was followed by an appropriate response from the side of Azerbaijan, permanent demonstrations began, which soon turned into mass violence. The central government of the Soviet Union tried to resolve the conflict. At the beginning of 1990, a state of emergency was introduced in Nagorno-Karabakh and the regions bordering Iran, and later in the city of Baku.

The next stage of this process was the entry of Soviet troops into the conflict zone, but the actions of the collapsing Soviet empire were not enough to resolve the conflict.

The years 1988-1991 can be considered a "relatively peaceful" period of this conflict.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, Azerbaijan and Armenia regained their independence. During this period, Baku revoked the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, and on December 10 of the same year, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh held a referendum independently of Azerbaijan and declared the whole of Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent republic. From this period, large-scale military operations begin between Azerbaijan and Armenia in Karabakh.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, both countries received a large amount of weapons and military equipment from the military bases of the local Soviet Union. As for the military generals, in this regard, Armenia had a more experienced management team than Azerbaijan, which was reflected in the combat tactics and the course of military operations. In 1994, Armenia won the war. He established control over 7 districts besides Nagorno-Karabakh, including the Lachin Corridor (this is a strategic territory from the political and economic point of view). The first phase of the conflict was concluded in May 1994 by the "Biscuit Protocol" signed between the representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, the unrecognized Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Russian Federation.

The government of Azerbaijan did not adapt to the unfavorable situation created in Karabakh, which led to certain political and military confrontations. In connection with this, the OSCE Minsk Group (1994) tried to solve the mentioned problem. OSCE representatives offered both sides a certain plan for solving the issues related to the solution of the problem, which was firmly rejected by both the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides. At the same time, US representatives were also involved in solving the Karabakh conflict, but the fact is that the problem still remains to be solved.

Apart from that, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan clashed several times regarding the Karabakh conflict, but they could not reach a consensus. The fact is that both countries had begun to prepare for the coming war, albeit with different ambitions and objectives. Azerbaijan has gradually made progress in terms of military development compared to Armenia. He invested a lot of money to buy modern weapons and military equipment. At the same time, he trained the combat units and increased their fighting ability.

The hostilities, which were suspended in 1994, were renewed on a large scale in the spring of 2016, which lasted for 4 days. Both sides used all available means for military operations. This military conflict is known as "April War".

This is considered to be a kind of intelligence-based combat operations for planning future military operations. Again, the conflict was stopped, not resolved, through neighboring

countries and international organizations. "Frozen conflict" was acceptable to the Russian Federation, which is used as necessary in terms of strengthening its political influence in the South Caucasus.

A new confrontation for Nagorno-Karabakh

Long-term peace in the South Caucasus and the balance of power depend on several major geopolitical players. Mainly these players are: USA, Russian Federation, Turkey, Iran and European Union. Recently, Azerbaijan correctly assessed the political situation in the region before starting new military operations: Economic problems in Russia and Putin's possible departure from power, Russia dissatisfied with the policy pursued by the government of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and the US presidential elections, which weakened attention to the region. Turkey's unconditional support to Azerbaijan was also added to this.

The military escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which began on September 27, 2020, clearly showed us that the ongoing conflict has an international character and has gone far beyond that. From the beginning of the military clashes, the parties to the conflict announced full mobilization. Military aviation, drones, heavy artillery, ballistic missiles and others were used during the conflict. There was also a place for online information warfare and propaganda, which is characteristic of the new war model.

Azerbaijan, fully supported by Ankara, demonstrated its military superiority soon after the start of hostilities. He was trying to confuse his opponent. Azerbaijan developed combat operations on the entire front, because the advance did not concentrate on a specific direction and did not mobilize forces in one direction. On the Armenian side, the northern and central directions were well fortified, both from the terrain and from the quality of the military forces deployed there. Nevertheless, he was still forced to change his plan in light of his opponent's actions. The Azerbaijani side soon gained the upper hand in the northern direction. They practically blocked the Lachin alternative highway (Vardenis-Martakert M11), thus limiting the Armenian side from maneuvering in the rear and using the logistical opportunity. As for the central direction, mainly the artillery confrontation was going on between the warring parties, maneuver elements were not involved in the fighting. The Azerbaijani side focused on the territory along the Iranian border, which made it possible to create a springboard in the direction of the Lachine corridor.

After the establishment of this bridgehead, the Lachine Corridor was attacked and soon regained control of this corridor. The hostilities took place with the advantage of the Azerbaijani side. With "exhausting distance warfare" and high-precision weapons, they were able to neutralize the Armenian forces on the defensive. In our opinion, Azerbaijan was able

to defeat the enemy by controlling the airspace (including unmanned aerial vehicles) and artillery superiority.

It should be emphasized that the city of Shusha, in Nagorno-Karabakh, was decisive in both the first and second wars. Proof of this is that in 1992, the loss of Shusha by Azerbaijan became a prerequisite for the loss of the war. And in 2020, it became the key to his victory. After the first war, the glass was leveled to the ground. The Azerbaijani population fled from there. Now the Armenians have left the city.

The aforementioned military operation, i.e. the second Karabakh war, lasted 44 days. Various parties were involved in the settlement of this conflict, among them the Minsk group was very active, which, as we have already mentioned, was created precisely because of this conflict.

The ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan took place with the intervention of the OSCE Minsk Group, which was created to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The active intervention of the Russian Federation in solving this problem, and the agreement reached between Armenia and Azerbaijan in this way, left the Western countries in a sidelined position, and opened the way for Russia to act in the South Caucasus.

The position of the Georgian side

We will highlight separately the position of Georgia during the Second Karabakh War. As we mentioned above, major geopolitical players were involved in this war.

including the neighboring countries of the South Caucasus. Their positions and the degree of involvement have already been discussed in the mentioned article. Now we will focus on the position of Georgia. It should be noted that Georgia has always acted as a mediator in the Karabakh conflict, because maintaining peace in the South Caucasus region is vital for our country. For Georgia, which aspires to join the European Union and NATO, it is unacceptable to strengthen the political influence of the Russian Federation in the South Caucasus, one of the favorable moments of which is the involvement of this country in the Karabakh conflict. During the second Karabakh war, as in the previous period, the Georgian side urged the warring Armenian and Azerbaijani sides to sit down at the negotiating table and resolve the conflict through dialogue. The ongoing combat operations in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 clearly showed that Russia has been given a favorable situation for strengthening its political influence in our region. This is an undesirable situation for Georgia. In the end, the situation turned out in such a way that the solution of this problem was mainly due to the activity of the Russian Federation. Despite this, the interrupted military operations established peace in the region.

CONCLUSION

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, conflicts were not alien to the post-Soviet countries. Among them are the countries of the South Caucasus region. Unlike Armenia and Azerbaijan, Georgia has internal territorial conflicts.

As for Armenia and Azerbaijan, the territorial conflict between them began before the collapse of the Soviet Empire and continues to this day. Various circumstances contributed to the intractability of this conflict. One of these circumstances is the Russian factor.

The presence of the "frozen conflict" in our region helps this country, because it also has the opportunity to revive the frozen conflict at any time in order to strengthen its weakened political influence in the South Caucasus. A good example of this is the second Karabakh war, which Russia used well.

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