

## Situation in Nagorno-Karabakh

**Forum:** Security Council

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### Introduction

Sudden violence has occurred between Armenia and Azerbaijan military in 12 May 2021, the first minor military contact ever since the ceasefire agreement of 2020 Armenia-Azerbaijan war. This territorial conflict started off with Azerbaijan soldiers occupying the Armenian provinces of Syunik and Gegharkunik, all of which surround the strategically significant site, Nagorno-Karabakh.

Due to this military contact, fifty combatants died initially and possibly more deaths and collateral damages associated. This recurring tension between two countries has become great again recently that some researchers even claim the imminence of yet another war, especially now when Russian Federation and EU, the key mediators of previous conflicts, are busy with their own political and



*Azerbaijan and Armenia territory*

economic affairs. As indicated above, there has been a long history of conflicts between Armenians and Azerbaijan, which now manifested by the military competition around the official recognition regarding whose claim of the region, Nagorno-Karabakh. This is because the place has been important historically, geographically, and politically to both ethnic groups; One of which is that Armenians are Christian, while Azerbaijanis are Muslim. For centuries, Armenian and Azerbaijan inhabitants built ethnic, religious community in the region over time, and co-existed much of the time but also outcompeted each others throughout the modern period after the dismantle of the Soviet Union in 1991. Until now, Armenians declares the independence of the Republic of Artsakh, non official Armenian country located in Nagorno-Karabakh, after the First Nagorno-Karabakh war. In contrast, Azerbaijanis initiated and signed after the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war the ceasefire agreement to retrieve the lost provinces including Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflict became so heated and serious recently that this flare-up violence might lead up to greater conflict as war, along with the ongoing turmoil in nearby Russian-Ukraine border regions. This gives members of the Security Council sufficient reasons why it has to intervene to achieve peaceful settlement of the conflict.

### Background

In order to understand the root of the conflict, it requires understanding of general information about both countries before, during, and after their reluctant coexistence under the Soviet regime. Armenians were deeply Christian ethnic group who lived in Caucasus for

centuries. In fact, they are the descendant of the state that recognized and adopted Christianity first as country's primary religion. On the other hand, Azerbaijanis are majorly consisted of the descendant of Ottoman empire, practical authority for many centuries in the Middle East. The history of conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijanis started roughly at this time much like any other ethnic groups who struggled to live under the slightest toleration of Ottoman Turks in eighteenth century. In 1915, Ottoman Turk committed genocide over Armenians who allegedly gained the favor over Russians and tried to leverage the frailty of the Ottoman empire on the region at the time to Armenian's advantage. Due to the genocide, maximum 1.5 million Armenians died which has provoked outrage of Armenians ever since. In 1922, the Ottoman empire officially faded and so as the Azerbaijanis Turks' control over the Caucasus region. At last, both ethnic groups who lived in the same region joined Trans-Caucasian Soviet Socialist Republic. Unlike one would perhaps expect, the historical data and articles show no notable conflict between the two ethnic groups under the Soviet regime from 1922 to 1991. However, when the time nearly approached Glasnost and after the dismantle of Trans-Caucasian Soviet Socialist Republic, the tension of independence and dominium over the Nagorno-Karabakh region escalated. In 1988 referendum, overwhelming Armenian population voted for the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and gained de facto control in 1992 after the declaration of independence. Immediately, there was a resentment from Azerbaijanis who tried its own independence on the region hat led to the First Nagorno-Karabakh War until 1994, when Russia mediated the war. The result of the war was more favorable to Armenians because they were able to acquire many disputed regions that include Nagorno-Karabakh with their overwhelming population. The fact that Armenians acquired Nagorno-Karabakh was more than just important because of the reputation of the place. Beside the reason that Armenians lived in the region for centuries, Shusha city in Nagorno-Karabakh is a spiritual site for both ethnic groups. The city became a main fortification in eighteenth century founded by local Armenian



*Russian Oil Pipeline Map*

prince with many Armenian churches like Ghazanchetsots Cathedral. On contrary, it is also a birth place of Azerbaijan poetry and music. In Azerbaijan, there is a phrase, “Without Shusha, there is no Karabakh, and without Karabakh there is no Azerbaijan”. However, for nearly thirty years after the war, the situation of both countries changed completely. Although both countries main export is related to minerals, petroleum industry in Azerbaijan started to grow

immensely and outweighed the GDP of Armenia, accumulating much wealth to prepare the expansion of various industry. Moreover, as Azerbaijan occupied the region touching the coastline of Caspian sea, they were able to use ocean as a place to facilitate their trading, which Armenia has no access to due to its landlocked territory. On top of that, Türkiye, a large neighboring country whose descendant the same as that of Azerbaijan, lent better access of black sea to Azerbaijan, which led to oil pipeline exclusively through Georgia and Azerbaijan, but not Armenia. These several factors caused the economic gap between Azerbaijan and Armenia

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enlarge. By the time when the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war occur, the military expense of Azerbaijan was ten times larger than that of Armenia.

### Analysis

The two countries are currently fighting over territory, Nagorno Karabakh. Starting from January 2023, Azerbaijanis troops blockaded the Nagorno-Karabakh region, where some Armenians who belong to the Republic of Artsakh still live, in order to reclaim the lands they were promised by Armenia. The agreement from the last ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan is clear that Azerbaijan would claim Nagorno Karabakh and its surrounding provinces. However, people



*Russian Peacekeeper Holding a Ground*

of the Republic of Artsakh rejects the validity of the agreement between only those two countries without the Republic of Artsakh itself. However, it is to be noted that Republic of Artsakh is not an officially recognized country and has no recognition to their autonomy and practical law binding treaties so far. Therefore, the main issue would be rather Armenia, Azerbaijan, and other countries would see this negotiation unfair without taking into account the Armenian Separatists in the Republic of Artsakh.

Meanwhile, Armenia wants Russia to enact Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which is the law that threat to one country amounts to the threat to the whole member nations of the organization. However, neither Russians nor experts expect that the provision would actually be invoked, especially when Russian Federation is currently going under its own war. Furthermore, it is not the intended goal that the UN Security Council try to achieve: de-escalation. In order to achieve the goal, Russian peacekeepers are in control of the field, who control the in and out of people, goods, and weapons. However, there are dissenting opinions from both Armenia and Azerbaijan people living in the disputed area. Azerbaijanis say that “The Russian peacekeeper, like his comrades before him, could not bear the legitimate demands of the citizens of Azerbaijan,” who wants strict observance of the Russian peacekeepers solely to facilitation of the land transfer process and human migration. While the Armenians in the region claim that the Russian peacekeepers blockade their necessity like food and medicine and virtually help Azerbaijanis military.

Therefore, it could be said that the current state of issue includes two side of stakeholders: government and civil society. The first issue at stake is whether the military tension that could led up to another war would de-escalate or not without further transgressing or blockading each side’s territory. The second issue is whether the people in Nagorno-Karabakh, regardless of their nationality, could represent themselves clearly by their own in their lives depending on the current transition.

### Position of Key Nations & Organization

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### *Russian Federation*

Russians have always been crucial part mediating the relationships between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Although the countries were not the same, the unintended coexistence was thrown under the Soviet regime, and the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War was mediated by Russian federation. Now, the Russian Federation has military and economic strategic relationship with both Armenia and Azerbaijan whose troops currently serve in the Lachine corridor as peacekeepers between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

### *Türkiye*

From the beginning of the conflict until now, Türkiye was both mediator of the war and supporter of Azerbaijan due to religious, ethnic, and economic commonalities. They helped Azerbaijan with military commodities when the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war broke out. Even before that, they helped Azerbaijan with various commerce opportunity and access to Black sea. Until now, they maintain close relationship together and sharing their economic advantages like maritime trade route and oil production with each others. They also helped mediating the conflict along with Russia and EU.

### *United Nations and European Union*

United Nations and European Union has kept showing their concern over the escalation of contact between two countries before the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war began and did so continuously until now. The March and April in 2022 was negotiated by EU, but still the negotiations brought by them seems temporary and unstable, as further escalation arises after the mediation.

## **Possible Solutions**

There are not many radical solutions for current state between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Technically, both side claims that whenever the conflict occur, their motives were sole defense which nobody started the attack first. Since the issue now is reasonably tied with regards to exercising the right to protect one's country, any type of political or economic sanction is not recommended. However, there should be a collective action from the UN Security Council if the one of the country chooses expansionist policy to attack the other.



*Citizen Commiserating Casualties*

First, peacekeeping troops should be assured that they safely protect citizens and prevent voluntary military action in the disputed area. During the territorial decision and population migration process, there might be some contact between the peacekeeping troops and local people sometimes due to miscommunication and other due to political motivation. Nonetheless, it is crucial to build a trusty relationship between the peacekeepers and local

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people. In order to achieve that, UN Security could also deploy UN peacekeepers with that of Russia to make sure that civilians' lives are properly protected.

Second, increasing the communication from both countries and re-negotiating the territory issue could contribute to the alleviation of the tension. Although as one might expect, the regional emotion and hatred against each other is too great that the discourse would become over heated and polarized, when the risk to another war becomes imminent, surrounding countries or UN's intervention for peaceful discourse is definitely a better option than right out fight.

Actions proposed above are for the de-escalation of tension. However, when another war actually takes place, one should seriously deliberate the intervention of UN Security Council to halt the war and especially when crimes against humanity occur like genocide. In such case, further actions would require also for the internally displaced people and refugees. However, one should also be reminded that it is not always justified to intervene in the war.

### **Glossary**

*Nagorno-Karabakh:* It is a mountainous region landlocked in South Caucasus, a disputed region between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

*Ceasefire Agreement:* It refers to the temporary stop of war by mutual agreements from countries part of the war.

*Glasnost:* It is the economic and political policy implemented at the last period of the Soviet Union characterized by less communist control over countries' politics and economy.

*Shusha:* It is the second largest city in Nagorno-Karabakh, a religious and ethnic center for Azerbaijan people and a historically significant site for Armenians.

### **Timeline**

1915 ~ Genocide 1917 A.D. – Armenian occurred by Ottoman Turk resulting in the death of a million.

1922 – Armenia became part of the Trans-Caucasian Soviet Socialist Republic.

1988 – Referendum to decide the sovereignty of Nagorno-Karabakh region takes place which became Armenian territory

1988 - Subsequently the First Nagorno-Karabakh war broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

1991 – USSR dissolves and so did Trans-Caucasian Soviet.

2020 – The Second Nagorno-Karabakh war occurred and ceased by negotiation.

2022 – On March and April, negotiation between Armenia and Azerbaijan was mediated by EU.

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