

# **The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Deal and the Future of the Region**



**Centre for Studies in International Relations and Development (CSIRD)**

**Sagnik Sarkar**

## ***Abstract***

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war was one of the deadliest escalations in the region. Despite lasting for only forty-four days, this War was known for the heavy loss of property and lives, both on Azerbaijan's and Armenia's side, as well as the use of modern weaponry and technology. The OSCE Minsk Group, the Body meant to negotiate talks between the conflicting sides, Armenia and Azerbaijan, had always failed to construct a Peace Agreement with respect to the region since its inception. However, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, a historic peace deal was signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia, brokered by Russia, to bring the War, and the conflict to a halt.

Through this paper, the author tries to analyse the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Deal and seeks to find out how this deal will shape the future of the region, and whether this deal, which could not be penned down after almost three decades of negotiations, would really end violence. He also tries to highlight what will be the future of Turkey and Russia, two of the most important regional players in the region, post this deal. Towards the end, the author tries to answer two questions, whether the deal would mark an end of 'Nagorno-Karabakh,' and whether Transcaucasia is gradually transforming into a 'post-post Soviet' space.

## **Nagorno-Karabakh: Transcaucasia's Region of Turmoil**

Located in the strategically important Transcaucasia, Nagorno-Karabakh is a region located in the Southwest of Azerbaijan. It was an autonomous oblast(province) of the former Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (S.S.R.) and in the period just preceding the disintegration of the Soviet Union became the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, a self-declared state whose independence was not internationally recognized. The old autonomous region occupied an area of about 1,700 square miles (4,400 square km), while the forces of the self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh presently occupied some 2,700 square miles (7,000 square km). The general region includes the north-eastern flank of the Karabakh Range of the Lesser Caucasus and extends from the crest line of the range to the margin of the Kura River lowland at its foot<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup>"Nagorno-Karabakh", Encyclopaedia Britannica, November 12,2020, Accessed December 7, 2020  
[Nagorno-Karabakh | History, Map, & Conflict | Britannica](#)

## Strategic and Geopolitical Importance

The mountainous region of Transcaucasia presently includes territories held by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Due to its close proximity to Eastern Europe, the Anatolian Peninsula, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Black Sea, and the Caspian Sea, it has often found itself at the crossroads of imperial ambitions since classical antiquity<sup>2</sup>.

In accordance with the Geopolitical Analytical framework put forward by Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Caucasus, which is the very core of what is referred to as the ‘Eurasian Balkans’, is an extremely volatile region because of the following reasons<sup>3</sup>: -

- i. It has vast deposits of Natural Resources, including energy and minerals
- ii. its heterogeneous blend of peoples whose bitter interethnic rivalries have lasted for centuries
- iii. The prevalence of arbitrary and often contested borders
- iv. its pivotal position in terms of geopolitical influence and international trade flows attracts the interest of both local and extra-regional powers

As recent events suggest, Brezinzski’s predictions have indeed become foretelling. The “Eurasian Balkans” have witnessed a wave of conflict, rising geopolitical tensions, and strategic competition over the past three decades<sup>4</sup>.

Transcaucasia itself is attractive for its position as a corridor from the Caspian to the Black Sea, keeping in mind the geo-economic nature of the Baku—Tbilisi—Ceyhan oil pipeline , but also for its natural resources, including oil deposits, minerals and arable land which is suitable for producing agricultural goods like fruits and wine. Nagorno-Karabakh highland region also happens to be rich in industrial metals, gold, gemstones, and construction materials<sup>5</sup>.

Indeed, it is the strategic and geopolitical significance of the region which makes it so fought for since times immemorial. Wars and tensions have often taken place in the region, with the most recent one happening in 2020, despite being a turbulent year itself. One thing must specifically

---

<sup>2</sup> Jose Miguel Alonso-Trabanco, “ *Geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabakh War*”, Geopolitical Monitor, November 10,2020, Accessed December 8, 2020

[Geopolitics of the Nagorno-Karabakh War | Geopolitical Monitor](#)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid [2]

<sup>4</sup> Ibid [2]

<sup>5</sup> Ibid [2]

be kept in mind that even though the Conflict in this region might look like a local dispute over unsettled scores, but it is also a confrontation that risks triggering far-reaching geopolitical shockwaves. The mountains and highlands of the Caucasus have captivated the imaginations of countless generations, but it has also been an epicentre of decisive worldly events throughout history. Ancient local animosities have been rumbling for centuries and the region's geostrategic importance as a critical pivot has acted like a magnet attracting the imperial ambitions<sup>6</sup>.

## **The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Historical Sketch**

Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian enclave situated in Azerbaijan, is claimed by the Azeris to be under their jurisdiction in the recent past, while Armenia claims it to be a part of their own since times immemorial. The area has been controlled by innumerable dynasties and various ethnic communities in its long history. When Transcaucasia became part of the Soviet Union, administrative boundaries between the Union Republics were unclearly defined. They were of little salience locally. However, when Republican boundaries became international borders the framing of the relationship between nation, people, ethnicity, and territory by the state assumed increased relevance. In addition, contested maps resulted in debates regarding exact location of the lines dividing the states. Karabakh's demands to be united with Armenia had already become a regular occurrence in the final days before the disintegration of the USSR and in the months that followed growing Azeri and Armenian nationalism resulted in conflict and displacement<sup>7</sup>.

There are many aspects to the problem; geopolitically, Turkey, Russia and US are seeking for more power and influence in the strategically important region; geoeconomically, the region has overwhelming presence of natural resources and multiple existing and planned pipelines, besides also the human costs in any conflict<sup>8</sup>.

## **The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War: As Things Happened**

A peaceful revolution at Armenia in 2018 had seen protest leader Niko Pashinyan become Prime Minister, after free elections, replacing long-time leader Serge Sargsyan from power. Pashinyan

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid [2]

<sup>7</sup> Anita Sengupta, *"Territorial Integrity and Self Determination"*, Asia in Global Affairs, November 11 2020, Accessed January 8 2021

[Territorial Integrity and Self Determination | Asia in Global Affairs](#)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid [7]

had agreed with his Azerbaijani counterpart President Ilham Aliyev to de-escalate tensions in the region, and to set up a new military hotline between the two countries<sup>9</sup>. But in August 2019, Pashinyan, while addressing the Ethnic Armenians assembled in the main city of Karabakh, Stepanakert, claimed that ‘Artsakh<sup>10</sup> is Armenia, full stop’. These comments sparked fury and were condemned by Aliyev<sup>11</sup>.

Fighting broke out in July this year on the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, some 300km away from Nagorno-Karabakh. These clashes claimed the lives of at least 16 people, prompting one of the largest demonstrations in Baku. Falling under the corridor of oil and natural gas carrying pipelines from the Caspian Sea, any sort of upsurge in violence was bound to shake markets up<sup>12</sup>. There were fears that the energy and transport projects that connect Central Asia to Europe bypassing Russia, including a BP Plc-operated oil pipeline that carries nearly 1.2 million barrels daily from Baku to Turkey’s Ceyhan, would fall vulnerable to the feud<sup>13</sup>.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2020, Armenia claimed that Azerbaijan had launched an offensive at Stepanakert (the region’s capital), and civilian targets were attacked. At least 23 people lost their lives. Armenia later claimed to have brought down two helicopters and three Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), besides destroying three tanks, in response to the attack<sup>14</sup>.

Azerbaijan denied the Armenian defence ministry’s claims, accusing Armenian forces of launching "deliberate and targeted" attacks along the front line. It stated that Armenia had attacked civilian settlements and military positions along the Line of Contact, forcing Azerbaijan

---

<sup>9</sup> “Armenia-Azerbaijan: Why did Nagorno-Karabakh Spark a Conflict?”, BBC, November 12 2020, Accessed December 9, 2020

[Armenia-Azerbaijan: Why did Nagorno-Karabakh spark a conflict? - BBC News](#)

<sup>10</sup> Artsakh is the Armenian name of the Nagorno-Karabakh region

<sup>11</sup> Ibid [9]

<sup>12</sup> “Armenia and Azerbaijan Fight over Disputed Nagorno-Karabakh”, BBC, September 27 2020, Accessed December 12 2020

[Armenia and Azerbaijan fight over disputed Nagorno-Karabakh - BBC News](#)

<sup>13</sup> Zulfugar Agayev and Sara Khojoyan, “Azeris, Armenians Plunge into war as Russia, Turkey watch,” Bloomberg, September 27 2020, Accessed December 12 2020

[Azeris, Armenians Plunge Into War as Russia, Turkey Watch - Bloomberg](#)

<sup>14</sup> “Tensions Flare Between Armenia and Azerbaijan over New Clashes”, The Gulf Times, September 27 2020, Accessed December 13 2020

[Tensions flare between Armenia and Azerbaijan over new clashes \(gulf-times.com\)](#)

to undertake ‘retaliatory measures.’ Martial law was declared amid violence in some parts of Azerbaijan, Armenia as well as Nagorno-Karabakh<sup>15</sup>.

This upsurge of events in this region brought international players into the fray. Turkey immediately pledged support for Azerbaijan, with whom it shares close ties, primarily because Azerbaijanis are predominantly Turkic people. It also accused Armenia of ignoring efforts to negotiate a resolution, further demanding them to withdraw from the lands it occupied 30 years ago<sup>16</sup>. Russia, seen as an ally of Armenia, on the other hand, called for immediate ceasefire and talks to stabilize the situation in the region. US President Donald Trump said that his Nation was seeking to stop violence. France, which has a large Armenian community, called for immediate ceasefire, while Iran, which neighbours both these warring nations, offered to broker peace talks. The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also expressed his concern about the escalation of violence, requesting both the parties to stop fighting<sup>17</sup>, and so did the UN Security Council<sup>18</sup>

Turkey’s emphatic support towards Azerbaijan may have played a role in sparking off the revolt. In August, the Azerbaijani defence minister said that with the help of the Turkish military Azerbaijan would take back its lost territories, which he mentioned as a "sacred duty"<sup>19</sup>. The country has a defence and mutual assistance pact with Turkey as well. Extensive joint exercises were held in late July and early August with as many as 11,000 Turkish troops taking part. Turkish Air Force fighter jets, armed drones and long range-artillery trained alongside the Azerbaijani armed forces<sup>20</sup>. Armenia also accused Turkey of sending Syrian mercenaries to fight on Azerbaijan’s side<sup>21</sup>. Turkey's involvement is thought to have been an attempt to extend its

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid [12]

<sup>16</sup> Carlotta Gall, “Turkey Jumps into another conflict: This time in the Caucasus”, New York Times, October 1 2020, Accessed December 18 2020

[Turkey Jumps Into Another Foreign Conflict, This Time in the Caucasus - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/01/world/europe/turkey-jumps-into-another-foreign-conflict-this-time-in-the-caucasus.html)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid [12]

<sup>18</sup> “UN Security Council calls for Immediate end to Fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh”, France 24, September 30 2020, Accessed December 19 2020

[UN Security Council calls for immediate end to fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh \(france24.com\)](https://www.france24.com/en/20200930-un-security-council-calls-for-immediate-end-to-fighting-in-nagorno-karabakh)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid [12]

<sup>20</sup> Alex Gatopolous, “The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict is ushering in a new age Warfare”, Al Jazeera English, October 11 2020, Accessed December 21 2020

[The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is ushering in a new age of warfare | Conflict News | Al Jazeera](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/11/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-is-ushering-in-a-new-age-of-warfare/)

<sup>21</sup> Vladimir Ishachenkov, “Russia Sponsors Nagorno-Karabakh Cease-fire Talks”, Associated Press, October 9 2020, Accessed January 1, 2021

sphere of influence, both by increasing the standing of Azerbaijan in the conflict and by marginalizing Russia's influence over the region<sup>22</sup>.

It is believed that the war began likely with an Azerbaijani offensive, with their primary strategic goal of reclaiming the territories they lost to Armenia in the war three decades ago, especially Fuzuli and Jabrayil. The scale of offensives suggested that this time, the ambitions were more than ever before<sup>23</sup>.

The Second Karabakh War was fought by sides with vastly different resources and technical capacities. Nagorno-Karabakh used technologies and strategies dating back to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century- by employing tanks, lacking a state-of-the-art dynamic defence and almost no drones. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan, an oil-rich state, spend a quarter of a century preparing to fight a modern war, using its revenues from oil to buy modern weaponry. It also had Turkey's direct support in planning of military operations and in arms supplies, including a vast supply of high-precision Bayraktar TB2 combat drones carrying missiles and bombs<sup>24</sup>.

As a result, Azerbaijan controlled the airspace over the war zone throughout the war. In the first days of the fighting, it destroyed dozens of anti-aircraft guns that Karabakh inherited from the Soviet army at the time of the disintegration. Several Karabakh's radars were also taken down, followed by parts of S300 surface-to-air missile systems and the launcher of a Tor missile system, also of Russian make. Drones continued to effectively destroy the military equipment of the Karabakh army, including tanks, armed personnel carriers, and artillery<sup>25</sup>.

Arguably, in military terms, the war in Nagorno-Karabakh has seen the long-expected revolution in military strategy, made possible by Turkey's strategic planning capacity and arsenal of drones.

---

[Russia sponsors Nagorno-Karabakh cease-fire talks \(apnews.com\)](https://apnews.com)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid [16]

<sup>23</sup> Joshua Kucera, "As Fighting Rages, What is Azerbaijan's Goal?", Eurasianet, September 29 2020, Accessed December 21 2020

[As fighting rages, what is Azerbaijan's goal? | Eurasianet](https://eurasianet.com)

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Iskandaryan, "The Second Karabakh War or the First Post-Post Soviet War", Institute of Security Policy Working Paper, 2020

[ISP Working Paper | Alexander ISKANDARYAN | The Second Karabakh War, or the First Post-Post-Soviet War \(institutfuersicherheit.at\)](https://institutfuersicherheit.at)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid [24]

This was the first time in history that the main military goals were achieved by the means of drones<sup>26</sup>.

Subjective factors also played a key role. Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh did not do a good job in terms of fortifying its line of defence. They were also relying on their capacity for defence with artillery and missiles, which turned out to be a grave miscalculation in the modern conditions. Already in the previous major escalation in 2016, there were clear signs of the potential role of drones in a modern war. The Armenian military ignored these trends, possibly due to the exaggerated reliance on the political deterrence and underestimation of the likelihood of a large-scale war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Over-confidence following victory in the First Karabakh War may have played a part, alongside the overall political situation, the change of power in Armenia and turbulence in domestic politics. Combined with strategic miscalculations, all this may have contributed to the Armenians' defeat<sup>27</sup>.

It was by means of drones that Azerbaijan broke through the defence of the Karabakh army in the Horadiz gorge, a key area in the south of Karabakh between the river Araks and a mountain range<sup>28</sup>. Incurring heavy losses, Azerbaijan's troops made slow progress across the defence lines; by October, they broke into the flatland that lies between the south of Karabakh and the border with Armenia. In the northern and central parts of Karabakh, drones were less instrumental due to the geography of the region. The Karabakh army was able to repel Azerbaijan's westward offensive by holding its positions in the semi-circle of mountains that rise in natural terraces. Azerbaijan's successful offensive in the south determined the outcome of the war. Relying on a continuous supply of new armaments, Azerbaijan's army gained control of the entire Araks valley and progressed toward the north, in the direction of the forests of central Karabakh<sup>29</sup>.

Azerbaijan's benefits included logistics and transportation. It delivered military supplies and troops to the frontlines via numerous roads and two railroads. Armenian troops were chiefly transported via one road, the M-12; the only other road crossed several mountain passes and had major vulnerabilities that reduced its capacity. As a result, the rate at which Azerbaijan moved its troops was about ten times faster than that of the Armenians. Azerbaijan's northern offensive

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>27</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>28</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>29</sup> Ibid [24]



against the central parts of Nagorno-Karabakh relied on mountain rifle regiments and special ops units; the need for the latter may be the reason why Azerbaijan imported mercenaries via Turkey from parts of northern Syria under Turkey's control. Outnumbering Karabakh's army, Azerbaijan's troops eventually succeeded in seizing Shusha, and cut off the road to Armenia<sup>30</sup>.

The 2020 Uprising also witnessed what can be called an 'online information warfare'. Social Media handles were fervently used by both the fighting sides for their respective State propaganda<sup>31</sup>. Lasting for just Forty-four days, the Second Karabakh War was one of the largest wars in the former USSR in terms of losses (probably over 10,000 soldiers on both sides), of the daily number of casualties and the number of troops involved, reaching 200,000 on both sides combined by the last days of the fighting. The losses it incurred over six weeks 'are comparable to those of the war in Donbas that lasted almost a year'<sup>32</sup>.

## **The Peace Deal: Its Effects, Significance, Outcomes and Challenges**

### **Effects and Significance of the Deal**

After almost three decades of fighting in the region, and the 2020 war looking to stop by no means after as many as three failed ceasefire agreements, history was created when Armenia and Azerbaijan signed an extremely significant Peace Deal for the region, which would aim to mark an end to the military conflict permanently. Never had a Peace deal of such importance been signed before to end the conflict surrounding this region. A Russia-brokered truce was signed at the end of the war in 1990, but there was no peace deal<sup>33 34</sup>.

### **What has been agreed under the Agreement?**

Observers had predicted an immediate end to the conflict after Azerbaijan liberated the strategic city of Shusha. Under the deal, which came into effect from 21:00 GMT on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020,

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>31</sup> Mansur Mirovalev, "Armenia, Azerbaijan battle an Online War over Nagorno-Karabakh", Al Jazeera English, October 15 2020, Accessed December 30 2020

[Armenia, Azerbaijan battle an online war over Nagorno-Karabakh | Asia News | Al Jazeera](#)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>33</sup> "Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia sign Nagorno-Karabakh Peace deal," BBC, November 10 2020, Accessed January 2 2021

[Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia sign Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal - BBC News](#)

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Korybko, "The Significance of the Nagorno Karabakh Peace Deal," CGTN, November 11 2020, Accessed January 2 2021

[The significance of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal - CGTN](#)

Azerbaijan would hold on to areas of Nagorno-Karabakh that it has taken during the conflict. Armenia had also agreed to withdraw from several other adjacent areas over the next few weeks<sup>35 36</sup>. Out of the 12,000 square kilometers controlled by Nagorno-Karabakh prior to the second war, it is now left with around 3,000, plus a five-kilometre wide corridor to Armenia<sup>37</sup>.

Hence, according to a new agreement, Azerbaijan cemented territorial gains in the four southern districts surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh (Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zangelan, Gubadli) as well as parts of the territory of mountainous Karabakh itself including Madagiz in north-east, Hadrut in south-east and the cultural center of historic Karabakh- Shusha. Armenia agreed to pull out of the three other districts of Kalbajar, Aghdam and Lachin (except for a 5-km Lachin corridor) and transfer these areas to Azerbaijan by December 1<sup>38 39</sup>.

The terms of the agreement also stipulate the presence of a Russian Peacekeeping presence in place of Armenian military and hardware, for the next five years, on the Line of Contact separating the region and the Lachin corridor, which links Stepanakert to Armenia, from Azerbaijan. Russia's defence ministry confirmed that 1,960 personnel would be involved, and reports said planes had left an airbase at Ulyanovsk, carrying peacekeepers and armoured personnel carriers to Karabakh. Part of their role will be to guard the Lachin corridor<sup>40</sup>.

President Putin said that the agreement would include an exchange of war prisoners, with "all economical and transport contacts to be unblocked." Under this agreement, Turkey will also take

---

<sup>35</sup> Naillia Bagirova, Humeyra Pamuk, "US Announces New Nagorno-Karabakh Ceasefire as fighting persists", Reuters, October 26 2020, Accessed January 2 2021

[U.S. announces new Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire as fighting persists | Reuters](#)

<sup>36</sup> Joshua Kucera, "Third Time Unlikely to be a Charm as Armenia and Azerbaijan Agree to another Ceasefire", Eurasianet, October 26 2020, Accessed January 2 2021

[Third time unlikely to be a charm as Armenia and Azerbaijan agree to another ceasefire | Eurasianet](#)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>38</sup> "Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation", The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, November 10 2020, Accessed January 2 2021

[Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation - Conflicts - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation \(mid.ru\)](#)

<sup>39</sup> Farid Guliyev, "End of Nagorno-Karabakh Region?," Global Policy, November 26 2020, Accessed January 2 2021

[The End of the "Nagorno-Karabakh" Region? | Global Policy Journal](#)

<sup>40</sup> Ibid [35,36]

part in the peacekeeping process, according to Azerbaijan's president, who joined President Putin during the address<sup>41</sup>.

Through this agreement, Armenia also guarantees transport through the country from Azerbaijan to its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic exclave on the border with Turkey, and the construction of transport communications will be provided<sup>42</sup>. The agreement, however, makes no mention of the future status of the Armenian-populated areas of Nagorno-Karabakh or of the format of future negotiations to settle the conflict.

### **Responses to the Deal: Who Won and Who Lost?**

With respect to the two warring sides, this deal seems to be more of a victory for Azerbaijan and a setback for Armenia. In fact, victory was in the air of Baku after the agreement was penned down. A real sense of key victory had emerged in the country after a long fight<sup>43</sup>.

The reactions in Armenia were, evidently, completely opposite. Armenia's prime minister said that his decision had been based on "deep analyses of the combat situation and in discussion with best experts of the field", and that "This is not a victory but there is not defeat until you consider yourself defeated."<sup>44</sup>

This deal came in as a shock to the people of Armenia. In the Armenian capital Yerevan, a large crowd gathered to protest against the agreement, according to local media. They broke into parliament and government buildings, shouting "We will not give it up."<sup>45</sup> <sup>46</sup>.The protesters who gathered here overnight accused the government of betrayal. They believed the fighting should have continued until the end and they were confident of victory<sup>47</sup>.

But in Nagorno-Karabakh itself there was no such optimism. The leadership of the enclave earlier admitted that, had the fighting continued, the main city of Stepanakert would have been

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid [35,36]

<sup>42</sup> "Main Points of the Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Deal," The Moscow Times, November 10 2020, Accessed January 2 2021

[Main Points of Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Deal - The Moscow Times](#)

<sup>43</sup> Orla Guerin, "Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia sign Nagorno-Karabakh Peace deal: Jubilant Scenes in Azerbaijan," BBC, November 10 2020, Accessed January 2 2021

[Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia sign Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal - BBC News](#)

<sup>44</sup> Ibid [35]

<sup>45</sup> Ibid [35]

<sup>46</sup> "Azerbaijan, Armenia Sign Peace deal to end conflict," Gulf Today, November 10 2020, Accessed January 2 2021

[Azerbaijan, Armenia sign peace deal to end conflict - GulfToday](#)

<sup>47</sup> Ibid [35]

lost within days. Arayik Harutyunyan, an Armenian leader in Artsakh, said a ceasefire had been unavoidable after the loss of Shusha, which happens to be Karabakh's second biggest town. Battles were already taking place on the outskirts of Stepanakert, and if the conflict had continued the whole of Karabakh would have been lost. There would have been far more losses than gains<sup>48 49</sup>.

Perhaps the arrival of the Deal was evident after the fall of Shusha. Yerevan finally realized the hopelessness of its military and legal position, hence went for the agreement, for which it deserves praise. Baku, meanwhile, changed the on-the-ground reality through its counteroffensive which aimed to implement the four UNSC Resolutions. Moscow and Ankara, meanwhile, leveraged their influence in both warring nations to encourage their leaders to politically resolve their conflict instead of continuing it through military means, in spite of the fact that both these Nations are themselves competing for power in the Transcaucasia<sup>50</sup>.

Although not liked by nationalistic Azerbaijanis who demanded the capture of Stepanakert by force, Aliyev, to his maturity, understood that further military operations would risk thousands of civilians' and soldiers' lives on both sides, and likely earn Azerbaijan international pariah status. He instead agreed to a ceasefire whose terms secure virtually all of Azerbaijan's political objectives at no additional human or financial cost. He also left open the possibility of giving Nagorno-Karabakh a special legal status, which might just be some sort of a regional autonomy. The mere prospect of these possibilities irks millions of Azerbaijanis; but it also provides Armenia a chance to save face<sup>51</sup>.

#### ***Transport Corridor through Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic***

One of the most unexpected outcomes of the deal was that Russia will control a transport communication corridor between western Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic via a sliver of land along Armenia's southern frontier. This stipulation is a major victory for

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid [35]

<sup>49</sup> Yuri Vendik, "Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia sign Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Deal: Defeat Sparks Crisis in Armenia," BBC, November 10 2020, Accessed January 2 2021

[Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia sign Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal - BBC News](#)

<sup>50</sup> Ibid [36]

<sup>51</sup> Matthew Bryza, "Azerbaijan-Armenia peace deal could be the diplomatic breakthrough the region needs", Atlantic Council, November 11 2020, Accessed January 3 2021

[Azerbaijan-Armenia peace deal could be the diplomatic breakthrough the region needs - Atlantic Council](#)

Turkey as it would allow the country to anchor its influence on the Caspian Sea and perhaps, in the longer term, look even further towards its Central Asia kinsmen<sup>52</sup>.

This would create a major dilemma for Iran and Russia, as Tehran and Moscow have historically perceived the Caspian Sea as a condominium between themselves (plus the littoral states since the end of the Soviet Union). Potential Turkish involvement could disrupt this equilibrium and especially Iran's standing. However, this is highly hypothetical. After all, it would need years for this scenario to be realized and even then, the Turkish influence could not be as large as Chinese or Russian<sup>53</sup>.

What bothers Iran is a potentially major shift in the region's transportation routes. For decades Azerbaijan has been dependent on Iran for transiting energy and other supplies to Nakhchivan. The new Karabakh deal could change it. Armenia will now guarantee the opening up of a corridor through its territory to allow Azerbaijan to transport goods directly to Nakhichevan. Quite naturally, this limits Tehran's leverage over Baku<sup>54</sup>.

Ankara has long been working on using the Nakhchivan corridor for geopolitical purposes. This is proved by the quickness with which the Turkish government announced the plans to build a railway to Nakhchivan following the November agreement. This comes after an earlier announcement of a gas pipeline construction to the exclave, and underlines the seriousness behind the Turkish intention, at least regarding the section from the Turkish territory to the exclave itself.

Much, however, remains unclear about the new corridor on the Armenia territory itself. Considering the level of mistrust in Ankara and Baku towards Moscow, whose forces will be controlling this corridor, it is highly unlikely that Azerbaijan and Turkey will be willing to commit large financial resources to rebuild links on the Armenian land. Will the corridor be the Armenian territory, or will it fall under the tripartite administrative regime, is arguably one of the defining questions which remain unanswered. There could also be constant incidents along the corridor as Armenia will remain unhappy with the stipulation. Transit fees could soften

---

<sup>52</sup> Emil Avdaliani, "The Emerging Nakhchivan Corridor-Analysis", Eurasianet, November 23 2020, Accessed January 13 2021

[The Emerging Nakhchivan Corridor - Analysis - Eurasia Review](#)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid [52]

<sup>54</sup> Ibid [52]

Yerevan's position, but why would Russia be interested in the operation of the corridor. If the corridor is operational, these troublesome questions will have to be managed between the two sides sharing no trust in the other. These dilemmas were well summed up in the words of the Iranian official Hedayati. He stressed that Armenia could prevent Turkey's access to the corridor for transfer of freight or passengers through Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan and further to countries to the east of the Caspian Sea<sup>55</sup>.

### ***Lachin Corridor and its Importance: Setback for Armenia?***

The importance of the Lachin corridor lies in the fact that it goes through the Nagorno-Karabakh Territory and through the city of Lachin. the corridor contains the only major highway connecting the de-facto Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. The return of the corridor to Azerbaijan had always been discussed as a very important and separate topic during the three decades of negotiations regarding the region<sup>56</sup>.

The region of Lachin, which is located on the Armenian border, became one of the first targets of the Armenian forces during the war in the 1990s, due to the strategic importance of the "Lachin corridor." As a result of airstrikes and clashes in Lachin, many houses and villages were destroyed, the city was plundered, and a total of 264 people were martyred. Armenian forces occupied Lachin, obtaining a direct link between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and thanks to the road, they occupied the entire Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding provinces. For years, the Lachin corridor became the "lifeblood" for the so-called Armenian administration of Nagorno-Karabakh. Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians used the road for both military reinforcement and infrastructure and commercial needs. Armenians sent the products obtained from agricultural activities in the occupied regions to Armenia through the Lachin Corridor, and from there, electrical energy and weapons had been provided to Nagorno-Karabakh. The Yerevan administration followed an official policy to change the demographic structure of Lachin. During the occupation period, thousands of Armenians were brought from different regions of Armenia and settled in villages abandoned by Azerbaijanis in Lachin. Before the occupation, over 65,000 Azerbaijanis lived in Lachin and there was no Armenian population. Armenians set houses,

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid[52]

<sup>56</sup> "Azerbaijani President announces details on Lachin corridor", *News.az*, December 1 2020, Accessed January 13 2021

[Azerbaijani president announces some details on Lachin corridor \(news.az\)](https://www.news.az/en/news/azerbaijani-president-announces-some-details-on-lachin-corridor)

public buildings and forest areas on fire while leaving Lachin as they did in Kalbajar, which they had previously abandoned. When Lachin was under occupation, the Azerbaijanis ran for their lives from the region without taking their belongings, however, the illegally placed Armenian population took all their belongings and left the area safely<sup>57</sup>.

While the initial version of the Joint Statement on November 10 had contained a provision on keeping this corridor under the control of the Armenian armed forces. Aliyev opposed this, and the control over this corridor was transferred to Russian peacekeepers. Azerbaijan also opposed the idea of a 30-km wide Corridor, and was successful to curtail it down to 5, which he considered wide enough for Azerbaijan, the Armenians living in the region, and for ensuring security<sup>58</sup>. The loss of Lachin Corridor to Azerbaijan would mean it would cut off the Karabakh capital of Stepanakert from receiving fuel, ammunitions and reinforcements; it would also cut off the only the route by which refugees in Nagorno-Karabakh could flee to Armenia<sup>59</sup>.

The simultaneous creation of dual corridors in Lachin and between the two parts of Azerbaijan will greatly improve the South Caucasus' transregional connectivity attractiveness, thus optimistically ushering in a new age of prosperity for the region's inhabitants<sup>60</sup>.

Azerbaijan already sits in the center of the "Middle Corridor" between China and Turkey which transits through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, and the South Caucasus as well as the International North-South Transport Corridor linking Russia and India via Azerbaijan and Iran. All relevant stakeholders might soon be able to tap into Armenia's geostrategic economic potential by including it into these connectivity matrices pending the normalization of relations between that landlocked country and its Azerbaijani and Turkish neighbours<sup>61</sup>.

### **Analysing the Future of the Roles Russia and Turkey in the Deal and in the Future of the Region**

---

<sup>57</sup>Ruslan Rehimov, "Karabakh: Lachin Region handed to its real owners", AA.com.tr, December 1 2020, Accessed January 13 2021

[Karabakh: Lachin region handed over to its real owners \(aa.com.tr\)](https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan/karabakh-lachin-region-handed-over-to-its-real-owners/202012010001)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid[56]

<sup>59</sup> Sebastian Roblin, "Despite Ceasefire, Fate of Nagorno-Karabakh may turn on the Lachin Corridor", October 26, 2020, Accessed January 13 2021

[Despite Ceasefire, Fate Of Nagorno-Karabakh May Turn On The Lachin Corridor \(forbes.com\)](https://www.forbes.com/sites/sebastianroblin/2020/10/26/despite-ceasefire-fate-of-nagorno-karabakh-may-turn-on-the-lachin-corridor/)

<sup>60</sup> Ibid [36]

<sup>61</sup> Ibid [36]



Preliminarily, Azerbaijan and Armenia had agreed to the ‘Basic Principles’<sup>62</sup> in January 2009, but never finalised them. In 2019, Pashinyan reversed course, announcing Armenia was replacing this “land for peace” formula with a new approach of “new wars for territories.” In the end, Azerbaijan’s battlefield victories, coupled with Putin’s intense political pressure, compelled Pashinyan to accept the Basic Principles in the form of the November 10 peace agreement. Tragically, this could have been achieved months ago, without any wartime deaths<sup>63</sup>.

Russia, along with Turkey, are now filling a diplomatic vacuum in the South Caucasus left by the United States’ inactivity after serious military clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia in July. Putin has convinced Aliyev to accept Russian peacekeepers on Azerbaijani territory to secure this peace agreement. This is a high price to pay, given the nefarious role of such troops in destabilizing frozen conflicts in Georgia and Moldova<sup>64</sup>.

But the November 10 agreement also opens the way for Turkey to counterbalance Russia’s regional influence, as Ankara may participate in the peacekeeping operation. And with Armenia’s transit routes with Turkey, as well as Azerbaijan, set to reopen under the peace agreement, Turkey and Armenia may resurrect their 2009 agreement to normalize relations. This could open new opportunities for trade and investment that would catalyze economic growth and help citizens of Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan build a prosperous and peaceful future together. This, obviously, is a possibility<sup>65</sup>.

The timing of the Second Karabakh war was perfectly chosen by Azerbaijan. The US was busy with its own landmark elections. The European Union, on the other hand, was suffering from post-Brexit challenges and overall management issues. The NATO was trying to sort out complicated relations with Turkey. Russia was facing problems in Ukraine and Belarus, dealing with the North Stream, western sanctions and its deteriorating relations with the West in general.

---

<sup>62</sup> The ‘Basic Principles’ of the OSCE Minsk Group which mediates the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh include: (1) Withdrawal of all Armenian troops from the seven Azerbaijani districts surrounding Nagorno Karabakh and return of these regions to Baku’s control;(2) Reopening of all transit routes between Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkey; (3) An “interim legal status” for Nagorno Karabakh itself followed by a “final legal status” ratified by a future popular vote, (which is not explicitly included in the November 10 agreement); (4) Return of displaced Azerbaijanis; (5) A secure transport link between Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh (e.g, “the Lachin Corridor); (6) International Peacekeepers

<sup>63</sup> Matthew Bryza, “Azerbaijan-Armenia peace deal could be the diplomatic breakthrough the region needs”, Atlantic Council, November 11 2020, Accessed January 3 2021

[Azerbaijan-Armenia peace deal could be the diplomatic breakthrough the region needs - Atlantic Council](#)

<sup>64</sup> Ibid [63]

<sup>65</sup> Ibid [63]



All these players, alongside the rest of the world, were also under the pressure of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the South Caucasus was relegated to the farthest margins of international attention, and this was the gamble of Azerbaijan's and Turkey's leadership in starting this war, which worked in their favour<sup>66</sup>.

It is increasingly typical for the modern world that international players are reluctant to interfere in local conflicts. As regional powers rise to prominence, local conflicts do not necessarily become part of global politics. They only attract the attention of the powers that have a stake, usually regional ones. In the former Soviet space, the external players fighting for influence no longer include the United States, more often, it is a regional power<sup>67</sup>.

Turkey played a pivotal role in the unleashing and the outcome of the Second Karabakh War, and became its main beneficiary, possibly even more than Azerbaijan. Already before the War, Turkey had a strong presence in the Caucasus, chiefly in Georgia and Azerbaijan. Despite always supporting Azerbaijan in the conflict, it was the first time Turkey became directly involved in it, in terms with military means. It was Turkey's supply of armaments, strategic planning, command and training of military personnel that enabled Azerbaijan to unleash a state-of-the-art military operation against Nagorno-Karabakh. Judging from the way the fighting unfolded, Turkey's support was pivotal to Azerbaijan's fast and decisive victory<sup>68</sup>.

As a result, the South Caucasus has transformed into a region where Russia and Turkey are competing for power. Moscow will no longer be able to act in this region without coordinating its moves with Ankara. A few months ago, any escalation on the frontline could be stopped by a shout from Moscow; this is no longer the case. It is much like Syria, where Russia must bear Turkish interests in mind. The emergence of Turkey as a political player has overhauled regional politics in the South Caucasus. The presence of Russian peacekeepers, seen as Russia's new leverage over Azerbaijan, is hardly enough to compensate for Turkey's presence. There are in fact reasons to doubt that having peacekeepers in the conflict zone will increase Russia's influence over Azerbaijan. For example, in no way did its control over Abkhazia and South

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>67</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>68</sup> Ibid [24]

Ossetia give Russia leverage over Georgia's domestic or foreign politics. Even in Moldova, Russia's engagement hardly has to do with Russian peacekeepers stationed in Transnistria<sup>69</sup>.

Russian peacekeepers will soon become a source of exasperation for Baku. In popular perceptions, Russia will soon be viewed in Azerbaijan as the player that checked the progress of Azerbaijan's troops, preventing them from resolving the Karabakh problem once and for all. In Armenia, societal attitudes to Russia deteriorated during the war, and its unfavourable outcome will make them worse. Perceptions of security in Russia and Armenia are asymmetric. While in Armenia, the security of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh is not viewed separately from that of residents of the Republic of Armenia, in Russia, the two are quite distinct. Armenia is a member state of the CSTO, whereas the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic is not. These differing perceptions are not acknowledged by Armenian society and cause resentment<sup>70</sup>.

Russia has not lost the South Caucasus though. The Armenian-populated territory of Nagorno-Karabakh outside Azerbaijan's control will remain under Nagorno-Karabakh control even though the ceasefire agreement says nothing whatsoever about its status. Meanwhile, the Turkish military presence in Azerbaijan will become a fact regardless of how it is officially defined. Security used to be a Russian trademark in the former Soviet space; it was adequately marketed and sold well. In the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan and Turkey demonstrated that Russia is not the only supplier of this type of goods and that it faces competition, including from regional powers such as Turkey<sup>71</sup>.

Although the happenings have weakened Moscow's position in the region, but not completely. It was Putin who imposed a settlement on the parties. And it is Russian peacekeepers who will enforce it. That gives Moscow a new lever to use. This counts as a diplomatic victory for the Kremlin; even if it strengthens the influence of its principal outside competitor, i.e. Turkey, in the region. But Moscow will also take comfort from the fact that the United States has not played a decisive role in the settlement<sup>72</sup>.

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>70</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>71</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>72</sup> John E. Herbst, *"Putin Gains and Loses from Armenia-Azerbaijan Ceasefire Deal,"* Atlantic Council, November 10 2020, Accessed January 3 2021

[Putin gains and loses from Armenia-Azerbaijan ceasefire deal - Atlantic Council](#)

Moscow may have had one more reason for not acting decisively earlier to stop the fighting. Besides, Putin was always skeptical of Prime Minister Pashinyan, who came to power after peaceful demonstrations. By allowing Azerbaijan to take back significant swaths of its own territory, Moscow has weakened Pashinyan's position<sup>73</sup>.

### **Outcome and Challenges**

This is a difficult outcome for Armenia, as the demonstrations in Yerevan underscore. Armenia's leadership and perhaps its population had gotten used to a status quo that their economic and military potential could not sustain. The presence of Kremlin peacekeepers makes Yerevan more dependent on the Kremlin. As Armenia's leader, Pashinyan now faces a major challenge, of making the people accept the new Reality<sup>74</sup>.

And while enjoying his victory, Aliyev also faces an important task-the task of ensuring ethnic Armenian citizens in Nagorno-Karabakh and elsewhere equal and would face no threats to their persons or livelihood<sup>75</sup>.

## **Conclusion: The Future of the Region**

### **End of 'Nagorno-Karabakh'?**

The Trilateral Agreement does indeed put an end to 'Nagorno-Karabakh' as we know it, with ethnic Armenians getting a status equal to other minorities in Azerbaijan. There is no Nagorno-Karabakh anymore to match the often used geopolitical/legal label.

Guliyev puts forward three arguments in favour of why 'Nagorno-Karabakh' is an obsolete term right now<sup>76</sup>: -

- Territories that Armenia cease to Azerbaijan following the Military loses are considerable. Redrawn borders shorten the geographically expansive self-proclaimed "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR)", comprising NK and seven adjacent districts, to about 30 percent of its former size. The new status quo also reduces the size of the former Soviet administrative unit named "NKAO" or the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, the region that originally sought to secede from Azerbaijan and join Armenia in

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid [72]

<sup>74</sup> Ibid [72]

<sup>75</sup> Ibid [72]

<sup>76</sup> Ibid [39]

the late 1980s. The so called “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic”, not recognized by the international community or even by Armenia itself, resulted from the merger of the former Soviet-era NKAO with the seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan in 2006 and an ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijani population from those areas. The goal was to create a mono-ethnic Armenian state or province devoid of any other ethnic group. Four of the seven adjacent regions have been retaken by Azerbaijani army, and the district of Aghdam which was a province predominantly populated by Azerbaijani population before the war and is now a ghost town, was handed over to Azerbaijan. Due to the border shifts, the concept of “Nagorno-Karabakh” has faded, both physically and legally. The Armenian military defeat this time around reduces the territory of the former NKAO to a much smaller size, in fact to less than a third of the territory Armenian separatist authorities controlled before war broke out.

- Militarily, the new borders isolate the NKR from its immediate border with Armenia. After border adjustments, the ethnic Armenian-populated areas will be surrounded and placed much deeper inside Azerbaijani territory, and surrounded by a much stronger Azerbaijani military and also possibly Turkish military. Smaller size also makes it harder for Armenian separatists to transfer and transport military hardware. By retaking the strategically located Shusha, Armenian separatists will be much more vulnerable to any attempts to revision the borders by military force. Shusha’s strategical location prevents any military build-up in Stepanakert, which is 10 kilometers away to the north.
- From a legal viewpoint, the agreement does not mention anything about the future status of the Armenian separatist entity, and Russian foreign minister claims that the status “has not been determined”. This means that UNSC resolutions that confirm Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity remain effective. President Putin himself recently stated that from the international law point of view, Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent districts are recognized as “an inalienable part of the Republic of Azerbaijan”. Local ethnic Armenians’ right to self-determination appears to be questionable as is any parallels with Kosovo. If Stepanakert/Khankendi becomes a de facto Russian protectorate, as some experts argue, there is no legal mandate for Russian PC contingent, whose term is limited to 5 years with the possibility of extension, to take over governance

of the Karabakh Armenian entity in international legal terms. The authority of the former separatist governor Arayik Harutyunyan had not been recognized before the war and leaves his future status unspecified. All this leaves Baku the only legitimate and legal owner of Karabakh lands.

### **Future of the Conflict: A ‘Post-Post Soviet’ Space? Violence or Peace?**

‘The war overhauled Armenia’s political layout’. Armenia is going through turbulent times, a state of political crisis and an emotional shock, since the agreement came into effect. Chances of a rather stormy future cannot be ruled out. In the history of the South Caucasus, there were cases when a national leader had to step down following military defeat (Mutalibov and Elchibey in the early 1990s) but there is also one where the president remained in power after losing a war (Saakashvili in 2008). The defeat is bound to directly affect politics of the Country. A Post-War economic decline is a certain prospect, while a Post-War reconstruction of Nagorno-Karabakh is a challenge. Armenia still hosts thousands of refugees who have nowhere to go<sup>77</sup>.

And as vague the region is the future of the conflict. Does the Peace deal, which is a ceasefire agreement and not a Peace Treaty, really stand a chance to keep violence away from this violence ridden region? The trilateral document does not even mention the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. It would be naïve to expect a document signed overnight amidst an escalating crisis to resolve a conflict that did not lend itself to resolution for thirty years<sup>78</sup>.

It also does not sound logical that after the victory, Azerbaijan would readily agree to make compromises which it rejected before the world. Hence whether the parties will indulge into peaceful resolution post the agreement is still left to be answered. In fact, Armenian press themselves reported on 10<sup>th</sup> November itself, that Azerbaijani armed forces carried out artillery and rocket strikes in the directions of Martuni and Karmir Shukha, attacking civilian targets as well<sup>79</sup>. Hence, peaceful cooperation in the region is still a far-off dream.

In Azerbaijan, the victory served to strengthen the regime of President Ilham Aliiev and his spouse Mehriban, who happens to be the Vice-President. Further strengthening its power vertical

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>78</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>79</sup> “Azerbaijan Preparing offensive in Martuni and Karmir Shukha directions”, Armenpress, November 10 2020, Accessed January 3 2021

[Azerbaijan preparing offensive in Martuni and Karmir Shuka direction | ARMENPRESS Armenian News Agency](#)

amidst the rising patriotic spirits, Azerbaijan will become increasingly like a classical Middle Eastern oil state with a power rotation system typical for this type of regime. This will be furthered by Azerbaijan's close relations with Turkey, which surely become Azerbaijan's most important partner with the victory in the war<sup>80</sup>.

Roughly one generation after the disintegration of the USSR, the paradigms of post-Soviet nation-building created in the early 1990s have begun losing their inertia. Models elaborated at the time when the USSR disintegrated are being revised. Frozen conflicts thaw, re-emerging in new forms rather than the ones typical for the last decade of the twentieth century. Regimes transform, and as the Soviet legacy fades into the past, new realities take shape. Russia's influence is no longer what it used to be in the late 1990s when former Soviet republics were viewed as "Russia's near abroad". Russia is competing against other players in the former Soviet space, chiefly against the regional powers that neighbour on it. Accordingly, the former Soviet countries can no longer rest assured that Russia will remain a traditionalist player in the sphere of security, consistently opposing revisionist trends. In the words of Iskandaryan to put it simply, the Post-Soviet space is becoming a 'post-post-Soviet space', and the recent escalation in the Karabakh, and the Peace Deal, is a vivid proof of it. The countries in this space will need to become more self-reliant and to learn to react to external pressures in more flexible ways. The post-post-Soviet space is no longer a unified space with a clear centre and clear rules of the game, with the Second Karabakh War being a convincing example of the same<sup>81</sup>.

As far as the historic Peace deal is concerned, it has put an end to a frozen conflict which has claimed so many lives in the past three decades, at least temporarily. But perhaps only time can tell whether this conflict will remain extinguished forever or will violence re-escalate in the region. Will the shrinking of area and isolation from the Armenian borders mean that the Karabakh Separatists never get their power back? And what is the future of the separatist entity, which has not been 'determined' by the peace deal? Will Azerbaijan keep its promises and grant Armenians in the region equal rights like every other minority? There are a lot of questions left to be answered and one can rely on time to give them to us. It is indeed sceptical to believe that a midnight ceasefire agreement made in hurry will bring an end to a conflict which had not been

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid [24]

<sup>81</sup> Ibid [24]

resolved even after almost thirty years of talks and diplomatic negotiations. But one thing is clear, the War, and the Trilateral agreement shows a big victory for Azerbaijan in the conflict, and perhaps an even bigger victory for Turkey in the region. These happenings surely can further drastically pave the future of the region in the times to come.