



The Karabakh Conflict Between Armenia and Azerbaijan

Causes & Consequences

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ISBN 978-3-031-16261-9 ISBN 978-3-031-16262-6 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-16262-6>

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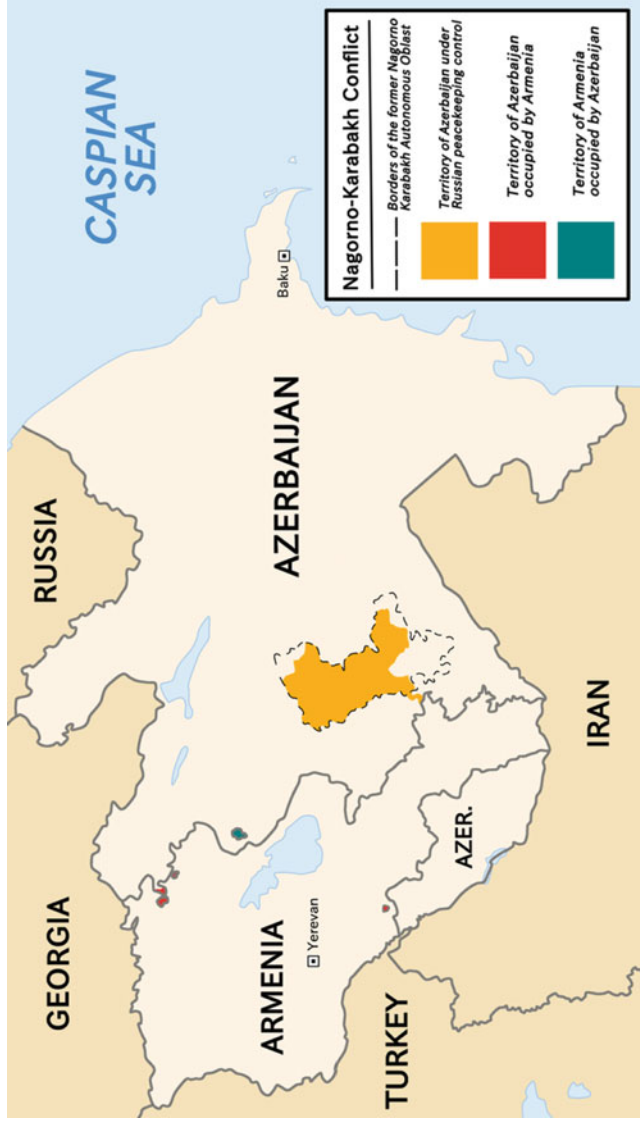
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RESULTS OF ARMENIAN AGGRESSION

The occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Former Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast - NAGAO (1923-1991)
 Territory: 4,388 sq. km
 Population: 189,085
 Population (1989): 145,450 (76.9%)
 - Armenians: 40,688 (21.5%)
 - Azerbaijanis: 1922 (1%)
 - Others: 1025 (0.5%)
 Adm.territorial div.: Mardakert, Askeran, Shusha, Martuni, Hadrut districts

SHUSHA district

Territory: 230 sq. km
 Population: 10,039 (92.5%)
 - Armenians: 1,377 (6.7%)
 - Azerbaijanis: 8,662 (85.8%)
 Date of occupation: May 8, 1992

THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN OUTSIDE FORMER NAGAO

name	date of occp.	area (sq.km)	popul.	ethnic comp.
Lachyn	16.05.1992	1,840	51,594	70,500
Kalbajar	02.04.1993	3,050	57,796	83,200
Aghdam	23.07.1993	1,150	15,170	180,600
Yevlakh	25.08.1993	1,050	15,000	150,000
Gabaly	21.08.1993	1,050	68,369	22,200
Gubadly	31.08.1993	800	28,111	30,700
Zangilan	29.10.1993	710	31,300	60,500

GAZAKH district*

name	date of occp.	area (sq.km)	popul.	ethnic comp.
Basharis Nyrzy	24.03.1992	AMAZONIA		
Kheyrymy	08.03.1992	AMAZONIA		
Ashaghy Askipara	12.03.1992			
Barxudary**	27.04.1992			
Sogut**	27.04.1992			
Gyzykhalyy	05.05.1992			
Yevlakh**	08.05.1992			

*after administrative reform of 31.300
 **the population of the occupied territories of Gazakh dist. was purely Azerbaijani.

*annexed villages.

**former villages.

AMAZONIA

AMAZONIA

AMAZONIA

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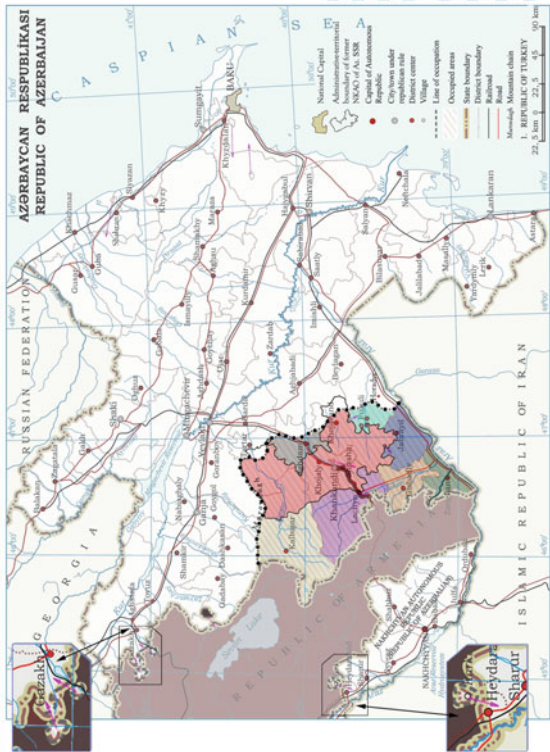
AMAZONIA

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AMAZONIA

AMAZONIA



DESTRUCTION AND DAMAGE

Ind. and agricult.	6,000
Motorways	800 km
Bridges	140
Gas pipelines	2,000 km
Electricity lines	15,000 km
Irrigation sys.	1,200 km
Sowing area	1,000,000 ha
Swimming area	1,200 km
Historical monuments	464
Museum exhibits	40,000
Total	up to 60 billion \$ US

Refugees from Armenia	205,000
IPNs from the occupied territories	66,500
TOTAL:	271,500
Settlers illegally transferred to the occupied territories	936,586
Schools	7,000
Public buildings	693
Healthcare facilities	695
Libraries	927
ACV	398
Artillery	425
Personnel	45,000
Total:	23,000

Settlements	850,000
Public buildings	7,000
Schools	693
Healthcare facilities	695
Libraries	927
Mosques	9
Historical places	464
Museum exhibits	40,000

Armenian Armed Forces in the occupied territories	936,586
Settlers	23,000
ACV	398
Artillery	425
Personnel	45,000
Total:	936,586

Settlements	850,000
Public buildings	7,000
Schools	693
Healthcare facilities	695
Libraries	927
Mosques	9
Historical places	464
Museum exhibits	40,000



Introduction

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (Mountainous Karabakh) in the Caucasus is about an important, long-running, post-Soviet, frozen/unfrozen ethnic struggle between the Indo-European-speaking Armenians and Turkic-speaking Azerbaijanis. Nagorno-Karabakh is a relatively small, but symbolically important area in the Caucasus, which lies between the Black and Caspian Seas, athwart Europe and Asia, at the northern edge of the Middle East, and near one of the ends of the fabled Silk Road where today China's imaginatively bold Belt and Road Initiative reaches Europe. An incredible ethnic and linguistic diversity lies within this rather small, but geographically divided and largely mountainous region. Indeed, depending on how they are counted, there are as many as 50–200 different ethnic groups and 5 different language families (not just languages) including Indo-European (Armenian being one small example) and Turkic (Azerbaijani being a larger representative). The ancient and now assimilated Caucasian Albanians and Iberians—who had nothing to do with their spurious namesakes in Europe to the west—add to the mixed, ethnic confusion. A further, but unrelated aspect of the controversy the term Caucasian can foster arises from its usage as a synonym for the White race as semantically this meaning is clearly misleading.¹

Nagorno-Karabakh has significant relevance for ethnic conflict studies in general, post-Soviet conflict studies in particular, and great power

struggles involving Russia, Turkey, Iran, and even further afoot including among others, the United States and the European Union. Karabakh also has implications for the international oil market transfer from Azerbaijan (rich in oil from time immemorial) to outlets around the world. Continuing conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh might damage important international oil markets seeking to operate in, from, and to Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. As such, the oil market and commerce in general demand a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem since continuation of the conflict or even uncertainty regarding it would jeopardize oil transport.

The most recent war over Nagorno-Karabakh (September–November 2020) was won by Azerbaijan largely by using drones as a very important weapon. This implies that drones might be a very critical ingredient of fighting future wars.² Thus, this interdisciplinary study of the post-Soviet ethnic conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh will impact many subject areas that are widely taught and researched. This study's importance also lies in its originality because, in addition to its broad, inter- and multi-disciplinary purview, it will be one of the first ones written subsequent to the paradigmatic-changing war fought in September–November 2020. Earlier studies are now more than a decade old, and thus dated in their analyses. This new study will remedy this gap in our knowledge.

Karabakh itself is a small, landlocked area of varying sizes, depending on whose precise narrative one hears, in the South Caucasus, now usually referred to as Transcaucasia as distinct from the Russian North Caucasus or Ciscaucasia. Many would divide Karabakh into three areas: Nagorno-Karabakh, Lowland Karabakh to the south, and the eastern slopes of the Zangezur Mountains. Karabakh often is equated with the administrative boundaries of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Russian oblast of 4,400 square kilometers/1,700 square miles. However, the area of the entire region comprises some 8,223 square kilometers or 3,175 miles.³ The region has been known as Karabakh (Black Garden) since the thirteenth century. Since the end of the Second Karabakh War in November 2020, the Azerbaijani authorities prefer simply to refer to the entire region as Karabakh as this implies the reintegration of the territory with Azerbaijan and maintenance of its territorial integrity. The term Nagorno-Karabakh is no longer used. However, this book will continue to employ the term when appropriate since it has long been so widely used.

It is the smaller part known as Nagorno-Karabakh, with its ethnic Armenian majority, that was granted autonomy as an enclave within

Turkic-majority Azerbaijan in the early years of the Soviet Union. As long as the Soviet Union remained strong and unified, this arrangement worked. However, as Ernest Gellner, the renowned scholar of nationalism, warned, “not all nationalisms can be satisfied ... because the satisfaction of some spells the frustration of others.”⁴ In words that seem to have been written precisely for Nagorno-Karabakh, Gellner continued, “This argument is further and immeasurably strengthened by the fact that very many of the potential nations of this world live ... not in compact territorial units but intermixed with each other in complex patterns. It follows that a territorial political unit can only become ethnically homogeneous, in such cases, if it either kills, or expels, or assimilates all non-nationals. Their unwillingness to suffer such fates may make the peaceful implementation of the nationalist principle difficult.”⁵

When the Soviet Union broke up in 1991 and the Armenians won the ensuing war against Azerbaijan over Karabakh, the unrecognized de facto state that the Armenians eventually carved out not only included the entire area of greater Karabakh, but seven more surrounding districts of Azerbaijan. In fact, the Armenian-occupied area of Nagorno-Karabakh covered 4,400 square kilometers, and with the occupied territories it came to approximately 12,000 square kilometers, representing 20 percent of Azerbaijan’s total area. Before the First Karabakh War (1988–1994), some 120,000 Armenians lived in the smaller Nagorno-Karabakh region. On the other hand, an estimated 800,000 Azerbaijanis were forced from the greater Karabakh region and the occupied territories as a consequence of the Armenian invasion of the Azerbaijani territories. At the end of the First Karabakh War, Armenian forces completely ethnically cleansed Azerbaijanis from their homes. Conversely, the same Karabakh conflict was the reason that more than 200,000 Armenians from Azerbaijan were forced to leave their homes. The Sumgait (just north of Baku on the Caspian Sea) pogrom in 1988 resulted in murdering at least 26 (probably more) Armenian civilians,⁶ while the Khojaly (a small town in northern Nagorno-Karabakh) massacre in 1992 saw Armenian militias massacre 613 Azerbaijani civilians.⁷ Both sides poignantly remember their tragedy, but seldom even mention the other’s. The war resulted in major human sufferings on both sides. Specific numbers are often disputed because as the old saw explains, “the first casualty when war comes is truth.”

The occupying Armenian forces refused to use the term Karabakh since it was an Azerbaijani name for the region, instead referring to it

as the Republic of Artsakh, an Armenian term. Not even the kin-state of Armenia legally recognized this *de facto* situation whose successful precedent would have challenged the territorial integrity of every state on earth including of course Azerbaijan and even Armenia on another day in the name of secessionist self-determination. Numerous UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions have recognized this situation.⁸ For example, UN General Assembly Resolution 62/243 adopted on March 14, 2008 declared that it:

Reaffirms continued respect and support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders; 2. *Demands* the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Armenian forces from all the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan; 3. *Reaffirms* the inalienable right of the population expelled from the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan to return to their homes [Armenian and Azerbaijani] ... [and] 5. *Reaffirms* that no State shall recognize as lawful the situation resulting from the occupation of the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, nor render aid or assistance in maintaining this situation.⁹

All this is a far cry from the Armenian propaganda that repeatedly paints the Turkic Azerbaijanis as the aggressors and perpetrators of genocide continuance in the present situation.

Thus, pro-Armenian support largely stems from the residual sympathy for what many perceive as genocide committed against Armenians during World War I. Although the Armenians did indeed suffer greatly in that struggle, so too did the Turks and other Muslim groups. As a result, some question whether the term genocide is appropriate for the Armenian experience during World War I.¹⁰ Of course, whatever historical interpretation one might give to these earlier events, it would not justify blatant Armenian aggression a century later. Thus, the past Armenian experience is largely beyond the scope of this book. Nevertheless, much of the Armenian position on Karabakh implicitly rests on the belief that the Azerbaijani position today regarding Karabakh is simply a continuance of what the Armenians and their many supporters claim was an earlier genocide. This book does not agree with these Armenian and pro-Armenian interpretations. Indeed, this book calls upon the Armenians to accept a reasonable solution based on respect for Azerbaijani territorial integrity and abandon revanchism. Nonetheless, this book recognizes how this tortured history affects the current situation and calls upon the now

stronger Azerbaijani side to offer the Armenians a magnanimous solution that benefits both sides in the future. Otherwise both sides will continue to be condemned to repeat their tragic pasts.

Determined to regain its occupied territory after the First Karabakh War (1988–1994), but long stymied not only by its opponents but its own divisions, Azerbaijan finally recovered its lost territory in the Second Karabakh War won in 2020. However, illustrating the most recent deadly results of this conflict that suddenly unfroze in September–November 2020, Russian president Vladimir Putin declared “there were more than 4,000 killed in both countries ... including civilians, 8,000 wounded and thousands driven from their homes.”¹¹ At the present time, there is only another temporary cease-fire and truce. Unless a more permanent arrangement can be reached, the two sides will probably be condemned to future wars over the same issue.

The meanings of the Karabakh region and conflict differed significantly between Azerbaijanis and Armenians. For Azerbaijan, the earlier loss of Karabakh and the defeat in the first war signified their national humiliation, wounded national identity, shattered ideals of territorial integrity, and the failure of their state project. Azerbaijanis negatively gauged their state and the success of its political leadership against the loss of Karabakh and prior defeat. For Armenians, however, the First Karabakh War symbolized their victory to protect what they saw as a key historical center and to consolidate Armenian national identity and state-building. Using a longer historical lens, the Armenians saw the earlier victory as revenge for Armenian massacres, also called “genocide,” at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in the early twentieth century. Armenia’s military victory against Azerbaijan in the First Karabakh War also emboldened the ties with the diaspora of Armenian communities. The Armenians perceived it as an act in which they, the earlier victim, had become the victor and managed to achieve retribution.

Thus, the Karabakh defeat constantly reminded the Azerbaijanis what they had lost, while the Karabakh victory reminded the Armenians what they could achieve as they sought a strategy of “new wars, new territories.” In the prior conflict, the victorious Armenian army, along with the self-proclaimed Armenian “Republic of Artsakh,” fostered an image of becoming the most powerful army in the Caucasus. Yet, this military victory also facilitated a continuing flow of Armenians emigrating to Russia, Europe, and the United States. While Armenia wanted to expand

its borders, many Armenians, especially those who were upper-middle class and well educated, left their country for good.

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan progressed through several stages. The first concluded with the 1994 cease-fire agreement. Although skirmishes and military movements continued along the contact lines, many experts labeled the situation as a “frozen” conflict. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)’s Minsk Process with its subsequent Madrid Principles assured the status quo in favor of Armenia for more than a quarter of a century. The main issues with which they supposedly dealt with were the return of the occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh; the future status of Nagorno-Karabakh; the return of Azerbaijani refugees; and the status of the “Lachin Corridor” connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

During this period, while Armenia attempted to consolidate its military occupation and aggravate the situation with humiliating rhetoric directed against their enemy, Azerbaijan deployed its resources to prepare for an eventual repeat of the war to liberate their territories and resuscitate their national pride and identity. Azerbaijan cultivated its own rhetoric of humiliation targeting Armenia. In short, Armenia won the war, but not the peace and the conflict drained resources from both countries. Neither the mediators nor the hegemon, mainly Russia, sought to change the dynamics of bilateral relations and instead exploited the conflict for their own interests by selling weapons or pitting one side against the other.

The second, relatively minor stage of the conflict was triggered as a result of a confrontation between the two armies in early April 2016. Still, this was the largest confrontation since the 1994 cease-fire. It lasted for four days and resulted in a few very minor gains for Azerbaijan, which had tried repeatedly to unfreeze the conflict. Therefore, a key question to be explored in this book is when and under what conditions do conflicts frozen in tension thaw and unleash a new round of military activity? Another is how did Armenia’s negative framing of the Azerbaijanis as continuing what the Armenians viewed as the earlier genocide in World War I as well as the Azerbaijanis being lazy, backward, unpatriotic, and corrupt, in turn, shape Armenian military and foreign policies?

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict also has regional implications. Russia and Iran have traditionally supported Armenia, whereas Turkey and Israel have backed Azerbaijan. Russia historically supported Armenia as a fellow Christian state, while Shiite Iran ironically did so to check perceived Azerbaijani territorial aims on Azeri parts of northwestern Iran. On the other

hand, Turkey supported Azerbaijan because of strong ethnic ties and residual fears and animosities toward the Armenians. Israel supported Azerbaijan as a way to gain a listening post next to its greatly feared Iranian foe.

Casting his purview even further, Zbigniew Brzezinski, among the most prominent geostrategists of the contemporary era, recommended Western support for Baku when he explained that “Azerbaijan, with its vast energy resources, is also geopolitically critical. It is the cork in the bottle containing the riches of the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia.”¹² Elaborating, Brzezinski argued how “an independent Azerbaijan, linked to Western markets by pipelines that do not pass through Russian-controlled territory, also becomes a major avenue of access from the advanced and energy-consuming economies to the energy rich Central Asian republics.”¹³ Therefore, to check Russia’s position in the Caucasus, strengthen the Western geostrategic position and access to energy resources, and appeal to the Turkic populations in Central Asia, a strong and independent Azerbaijan was a catalyst.

On the other hand, Armenia believes that it has no option but to depend on Russia, as Armenia sustains a deep, ingrained suspicion toward Turkey and Azerbaijan. Russia exploited this animosity and today major industries and public utility firms in Armenia are owned by Russia. Russia protects the borders of Armenia (but not Nagorno-Karabakh) and, in turn, Armenia provides the locations for Russian military bases. Russia would not prefer Armenia to develop closer economic and political ties with the West. The continuation of the Karabakh conflict serves Russian interests to control Armenia and Azerbaijan. This explains why Russia will hesitate to resolve the Karabakh issue, indeed continue it in its own interests of keeping intact its access to what is perceived as its historical territory via its role as a mediator.

In addition, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict¹⁴ also constitutes the most recent example of the continuing clash between the oft-opposed international legal/political doctrines of self-determination and territorial integrity.¹⁵ Put simply, self-determination refers to the right of a people to choose their own form of government (usually independence), while territorial integrity means the right of a state to maintain its existing borders.¹⁶ The United Nations Charter includes specific references to self-determination in Articles 1(2) and 55, and to territorial integrity in Article 2(4). Thus, in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia has supported the doctrine of self-determination because the vast majority

of its population is ethnic Armenian. On the other hand, Azerbaijan has maintained the doctrine of territorial integrity because Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan.¹⁷

As stated above, in this up-to-date study, the authors analyze the subject from all the main sides in light of the most recent war over Nagorno-Karabakh that raged from September to November 2020. Although there are past studies, no one has analyzed Nagorno-Karabakh in light of this later war and in such a broad perspective that gives weight to all sides of this conflict. As already noted, this is a very appropriate time to reconsider Nagorno-Karabakh in light of its significant importance for ethnic conflict in general, the post-Soviet Caucasus specifically, and the most recent war just fought over the area from September to November 2020. Thus, the main themes will stress these points as well as the importance of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue for the future by considering its precedents and implications for other secessionist wars, how such wars begin and end, the international legal precedents of self-determination vs. territorial integrity, its implications for post-Soviet developments and conflicts in such other regions as Ukraine in 2022 and earlier, and the latest successful weapons developments lessons from the recent war involving drones, and energy-strategic access to oil. Clearly, this up-to-date analysis of Nagorno-Karabakh has importance in a number of different areas.

Following this brief introductory chapter, the present study consists of seven more chapters. Chapter 2 deals with the historical background to the struggle, while the third considers the causes of the First Karabakh War (1988–1994). Chapter 4 details the consequences of the First Karabakh War, while Chapter 5 analyzes the failed OSCE Minsk Process negotiations following the first war. Chapter 6 examines the conflict in terms of the conflicting principles of territorial integrity vs. self-determination. Chapter 7 assesses the causes and consequences of the Second Karabakh War (September–November 2020). The final, eighth chapter summarizes the book's main findings, while making the existentially important fact that international law clearly held that Nagorno-Karabakh belonged to Azerbaijan despite misleading arguments to the contrary about supposed Armenian rights of self-determination often parsed into claims of some type of internal and/or remedial self-determination. Chapter 8 also assesses the all-important leadership role of Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev, and looks to a brighter future for

both sides based on a magnanimous implementation of the results of the Second Karabakh War in late 2020.

NOTES

1. The term Caucasian as a racial synonym for Whites was apparently first introduced in the 1780s by the German anatomist and member of the Gottingen School of History Johann Blumenbach following his impressionistic visit to the region and subsequently flawed attempt at racial categorization. This usage was picked up in the United States and stuck even though literally it only referred to the ethnically mixed, indigenous populations living in the Caucasus, not the White Europeans who were then spreading around the world. Further discussion of this matter is beyond the scope of this book.
2. On this important point, see Seth J. Frantzman, *Drone Wars: Pioneers, Killing Machines, Artificial Intelligence, and the Battle for the Future* (New York and Nashville: Post Hill Press, 2021); Ash Rossiter and Brendon J. Cannon, “Turkey’s Rise as a Drone Power: Trial by Fire,” *Defense and Security Analysis*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2022.2068562>, Routledge, published online May 4, 2022, pp. 8–9; Stephen Witt, “The Turkish Drone That Changed the Nature of Warfare,” *The New Yorker*, May 9, 2022, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/05/16/the-turkish-drone-that-changed-the-nature-of-warfare?utm_source=nl&utm_brand=tny&utm_mailin, accessed May 9, 2022; and Robyn Dixon, “Azerbaijan’s Drones Owned the Battlefield in Nagorno-Karabakh—And Showed Future of Warfare,” *Washington Post*, October 11, 2020, among others.
3. On these figures, see by Robert H. Hewsen, “The Meliks of Eastern Armenia: A Preliminary Study,” *Revue des etudes Armeniennes* NS: IX (1970), p. 288; and *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 264.
4. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Blackwell, 2008), p. 2.
5. *Ibid.*
6. As an Armenian retrospect concluded, “it is certain that the anti-Armenian pogroms at Sumgait constitute a genocide as defined by the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.” Samvel Shahmuratian, compiler and editor, *The Sumgait Tragedy: Pogroms Against Armenians in Soviet Azerbaijan. Eyewitness Accounts*, Vol. I (New Rochelle, NY and Cambridge, MA: Aristide D. Caratzas and Zoryan Institute, 1991), p. 1. “The current situation in the region ... can be traced back to Sumgait.” *Ibid.*, p. 10. Of course, Azerbaijanis would argue

- that the current situation stemmed from earlier Armenian demonstrations demanding that Nagorno-Karabakh be ceded to Armenia.
7. While all Azerbaijanis know about Khojaly and stress the civilian massacre that occurred there as proof of Armenian genocide against them, few in the West have even heard of this tragedy. Thomas Goltz, *Azerbaijan Dairy: A Rogue Reporter's Adventures in an Oil-Rich, War-Torn, Post-Soviet Republic* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Press, 1998) is a rare exception. "Apparently, the idea that the roles of the good guys and bad guys had been reversed was too much: Armenians slaughtering Azeris?" *Ibid.*, p. 124.
 8. See, for example, UN Security Resolutions 822, April 30, 1993; 853, July 29, 1993; 874, October 14, 1993; and 884, November 12, 1993, which all called for "the withdrawal of all occupying forces from ... occupied areas of the Republic of Azerbaijan" as Resolution 822 put it.
 9. UN General Assembly Resolution 62/243, March 14, 2008 on "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan."
 10. For background on this situation, see Michael M. Gunter, *Armenian History and the Question of Genocide* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Turkish-Armenian Historical Controversy: How to Name the Events of 1915?" *Middle East Critique* 29 (May 2020), pp. 1–21. For a sample of the voluminous pro-Armenian literature, see Taner Akcam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); and Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
 11. "Hundreds of Dead Armenian Soldiers Shown in Nagorno-Karabakh," *Novinite.com* (Sofia News Agency), November 13, 2020, <https://www.novinite.com/articles/206519/Hundreds+of+Dead+Armenian+Soldiers+Shown+in+Nagorno-Karabakh>, accessed November 14, 2020.
 12. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 46.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
 14. For background on Karabakh, see Svante E. Cornell, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*, Report no. 46, Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden, 1999; Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Thomas Goltz, *Azerbaijan Dairy: A Rogue Reporter's Adventures in an Oil-Rich, War-Torn, Post-Soviet Republic* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Press, 1998); Michael Kambeck and Sargis Ghazaryan, eds., *Europe's Next Avoidable War: Nagorno-Karabakh* (New

- York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Ohannes Geukjian, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Legacy of Soviet Nationalities Policy* (Farnham, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012); and Arsene Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), among others. More recently since the Second Karabakh War in 2020, see M. Hakan Yavuz and Michael M. Gunter, eds., *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Historical and Political Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2023); Laurence Broers, *Armenia and Azerbaijan: Anatomy of a Rivalry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021); and Fariz Ismailzade and Damjan Krnjevic Miskovic, eds., *Liberated Karabakh: Policy Perspectives by the ADA University Community* (Baku, Azerbaijan: ADA University Press, 2021).
15. Other recent examples that involve various elements of the inherent contradiction between these two conflicting doctrines, but in each case have their unique characteristics it should be noted, include Kosovo, Eritrea, Western Sahara, East Timor (Timor-Leste), Belize, Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), the Basques, Biafra, Catalonia, Chechnya, Eastern Ukraine, the Kurds, Northern Cyprus, and Scotland, among numerous others. For background on over 40 self-determination conflicts including Karabakh outside the colonial context that have appeared virtually impossible to settle, see Marc Weller, "Settling Self-determination Conflicts: Recent Developments," *The European Journal of International Law* 20:1 (2009), pp. 111–164. For many further possible examples, see James Minahan, *Nations Without States: A Historical Dictionary of Contemporary National Movements* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).
 16. The legal doctrines of sovereignty meaning unlimited power or better just independence, and *uti possidetis* meaning that old administrative colonial boundaries would remain legal international boundaries upon independence are closely related to and tend to reinforce the concept of territorial integrity. In general, see Peter Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law*, 7th revised ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 17–18 and 162, 163. The most comprehensive analysis of statehood creation in international law is arguably James R. Crawford, *The Creation of States in International Law*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
 17. As Svante Cornell noted when the present conflict was still in its earlier stages: "The Armenians invoked the principle of peoples'

right to self-determination, and the Azeris defended the principle of territorial integrity.” *Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*, p. 25. Thomas de Waal concurred: “A resolution of the issue had to reconcile the competing claims of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity and Karabakh’s self-determination (or, in blunter language, de facto secession).” *Black Garden*, p. 255.



The Historical Background to the Continuing Conflict Over Nagorno-Karabakh

INTRODUCTION

The Caucasus contains a bewildering number of ethnic groups with their own histories, current needs, and conflicting ambitions. The struggle over Nagorno-Karabakh involves an important, long-running, frozen/unfrozen conflict between the Armenians and Turkic Azerbaijanis over a relatively small, but symbolically important area in the Caucasus. This continuing conflict also has heavily involved Russia and Turkey, among others. Since Nagorno-Karabakh was part of Azerbaijan during Soviet times, Azerbaijan now claims it according to the international legal principle of territorial integrity. However, since the vast majority of its population is ethnic Armenian, Armenia claims it according to the principle of self-determination.

To implement its claim, Armenia invaded and conquered Nagorno-Karabakh and seven more surrounding areas in Azerbaijan upon the breakup of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Thus, as mentioned above, this conflict has important implications for such international law concepts as territorial integrity (maintained by Azerbaijan), self-determination (advocated by Armenia), and peaceful settlement of disputes in general as well as international legal practice regarding United Nations (UN) obligations that “all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity ... of any state” (UN Charter Article 2(4)), the Helsinki Final