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Through Technology

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Topic: The Nagorno-Karabakh region: Finding a solution to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict.

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Introduction

The Nagorno-Karabakh region has been a highly disputed territory between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces throughout the past century. It is a region in the Caucasus, a stretch of land which separates Europe from Asia and has become a target to ethnic war and disputes between the two major powers and their allies. For most of the nineteenth century, the region of Nagorno-Karabakh was ruled by the Russian Empire, however the new countries of Azerbaijan and Armenia were formed when the Empire fell in 1918, and they gained their official independence in 1991. This territory was wanted by both countries and war broke out over the control of this region, and has since then been the trigger of violence. Three years later, in 1993, the Soviets reconquered the Caucasus and drew new borders, which made Nagorno-Karabakh a semi-autonomous region on the Azerbaijan side of the border line. This territory is internationally recognized as being geographically located as part of Azerbaijan, although it is mostly inhabited by ethnic Armenian population.

The conflict can be traced to the early 20th century, although conflict erupted after the ceasefire in 1988 when the Karabakh Armenians sought to be independent from Soviet Azerbaijan to Soviet Armenia. Around 20,000 people died during the first conflict and over one million civilians were forced to flee their homes. This continued for another three years until 1994 when Armenia declared its victory over Azerbaijan and both parties signed a ceasefire agreement in order to establish peace. This pact was largely upheld and respected by both countries, however it was periodically violated and broken recently when another attack was launched in 2020.

This conflict identifies key emerging threats to peace and security for civilians in this region as it slowly transitions to total warfare. Other countries that have gotten involved in this conflict have been on behalf of personal interest towards the retrieval of natural resources in the area. The role of the Caucasus in the global energy trade and the involvement of major regional powers is

crucial to consider when looking for solutions. This region is made up by the nations states of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. It was previously under the control of Imperial Russia, until the Treaty of Gulistan and the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1813 and 1828, when the Persians gave up the Southern part of the Caucasus. The Russians later conquered the rest of the Northern Caucasus in the Caucasian Wars (1817-1864). As a result of this modern war, there have been detrimental social and economic impacts on both countries and has rectified international relations between neighboring countries.

Definition of Key Terms

Ethnic and Territorial Conflict

Controversy over territorial control is an evident component and often the root of many ethnic conflicts throughout history. Ethnic conflicts can be narrowed down to different factors such as language and religion, and ethnic discrimination, whether it be political, economic or social. In many instances, the territory disputed by “rival identity groups” have symbolic value. A report by Queen’s University stated, “In many instances, population movements designed to influence the demographic composition of contested territories have also been observed, further shaping the trajectories of such conflicts.”

Ethnicity

The most obvious component of both ethnic and national conflicts are controversies over territorial control. The term “ethnicity” is commonly used in referring to different identity groups, which determine their personal social boundaries upon influence from religion, language, culture, etc.

Shusha

The city of Shusha is known to have been at the center of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia for centuries now. It is the most important city of the Caucasus, and holds both cultural and religious significance to both parties.

Artsakh

This is the word that the Armenians use instead of the official name of the Republic of Artsakh or the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. The territory is technically recognized internationally as part of Azerbaijan, however this is the subject in question.

Background Information

The Religious Divide

The dispute between both countries over this territory can be traced back over a century and can be rooted to the competition between Christian Armenian, Muslim Turkic and Persian influences. The enclave was populated for centuries by Christian Armenians and Turkic Azeri groups, which later fell under the control of the Soviet Union. This sudden tension between faiths and beliefs is one of the key features for the conflict between both parties and is also attributed to how the war is understood from different views. Although the region's history does play a major role in the development of the conflict, the role of religion in the geopolitical balances of the region also influences international relations among the allied forces. The religious divide between Muslim Azerbaijan and Christian Armenia can be dated back centuries ago, which is many years before the creation of the USSR. With the disintegration of the USSR later in 1991, the newly independent countries of Azerbaijan and Armenia were conflicted over the control of Nagorno-Karabakh since the territory itself has an ethnic Christian Armenian majority, however it was completely surrounded by Azerbaijani controlled land. A report where native Christian Armenians were interviewed about their faith revealed that the Church played a key role in providing both food and shelter to civilians. The Azeri attacks on the city of Shusha had left the cathedral extremely damaged, which had various effects on the population on what they thought of the conflict.

Russian Influences

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region dates back to the nineteenth century and Russia's occupation of the Caucasus region. When both countries were recognized as territories of the Soviet Union, both Armenia and Azerbaijan were Republics under the same rule. Previously there had been no intentions from either republic to gain control over this region, however after their independence, both countries believed that they should have

complete ownership of the Caucasus, as recognition of superior power from the other. When the Russian Empire began to loosen its grip, the first Nagorno-Karabakh War erupted and it was known as an ethnic and territorial conflict that took place from the 1988 to May 1994.

It is the longest-running conflict in post-Soviet Eurasia. In 1988, the ethnic Armenians during that time that lived in this sacred territory had demanded the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) from Soviet Azerbaijan to Armenian jurisdiction. During the collapse of the Soviet Union, tensions grew between both newly independent countries and marked the commencement of a long and tedious conflict that would last several decades. Once the fighting had come to an end in 1994, the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, along with seven other adjacent districts, were all fully or somewhat controlled by the Armenian forces. Several casualties on both sides can be accounted for and more than a million residents of the area were forced to flee from their homes. Azerbaijanis fled Armenia as well as people in Nagorno-Karabakh, and Armenians left their residencies in Azerbaijan.

The Effect of the War on European Affairs

Between the years of 1994 and 2020, there were many violent fronts on both sides and attack drones were introduced to this conflict. Heavy armistice moved towards the frontlines on the borders as tensions rose and a reignitement of the war was expected. In April 2016, there was a four day war between Armenia and Azerbaijan which was a foreshadow of the events of hostility that were to come in the future.

This time of political peace between both countries was broken in September of 2020, when another war broke out that lasted six long weeks starting on September 27. Turkey extended financial and social support to the Azerbaijanis and provided military force, which completely outnumbered the Armenians. Turkey and Russia have strong opposing beliefs, and Turkey knew that their support towards Azerbaijan would alert the Russians of their presence on mutually desired territory. Azerbaijani forces with the help of Turkish military pushed Armenian frontlines on Nagorno-Karabakh and gained control of Shusha, which is the most important city in the region and both countries claim it as a "cradle of their culture". This conflict was put to an end when the Russian Federation brokered a ceasefire around two months after the commencement of the war and drew new borders for the region and the two countries. This ceasefire meant to bring subjective peace and stability after having witnessed the deadliest conflict in over three decades. In the terms it was

said that Azerbaijan now has full control over seven districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as a substantial part in the region itself. The Russian peacekeeping force was sent into the territory in order to ensure the deal was kept on both ends and Turkey also demanded they send in their own peacekeeping forces, however it is still governed by self-proclaimed local authorities. The deal had also called for Turkey to build a road going through Armenia, which would give them direct access to Azerbaijan.

The Path to Peace

Recently on June 15, 2021, Azerbaijan and Armenia signed what is known as the "Shusha Declaration " in order to mend the relationship post-war between both rivaling countries. The main purpose of this agreement is to strengthen defense cooperation and establish new transportation routes. President Erdogan of Turkey claims that Ankara plans to open a consulate in the future, which would be located in the region in order to encourage reconstruction of war-torn areas. The ultimate goal would be to raise awareness in order to promote cooperation on the Zangezur corridor, against terrorism, organized crime and illegal immigration that occurs in this region. The pact calls for mutual support for both countries in case of other external threats and frequent meetings in order to establish decisions on pressing security issues. Erdogan also announced the protection of Nagorno-Karabakh through an alliance made with Turkey, Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. The terms of the ceasefire leave Armenia at a disadvantage and they are unhappy with the outcome, however they agreed to the terms in order to achieve partial peace. Azerbaijan claimed other areas of Nagorno-Karabakh, while Armenia was forced to withdraw from adjacent territories. However, the deployment of Russian troops into Azerbaijan as part of the ceasefire should be viewed closely because their involvement could potentially lead to some repercussions in the conflict resolution process, instead of encouraging peace. There is a five-year mandate in which Russian soldiers were sent to the frontlines as peacekeepers, however if they were to refuse to remove these troops from Azeri territories, it could become yet another conflict.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

Armenia

Armenia is a nation which formerly belonged to the Soviet Republic, and is located in the mountainous Caucasus region between Asia and Europe. It is bordered by Azerbaijan to the east, Iran to the south and Turkey to the west. Armenia had won the first Nagorno-Karabakh War, however with Turkish aid towards the Azerbaijanis, Armenians were forced to give up nearly three-quarters of the territory around this region.

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan plays a crucial role in the development of this conflict over the past century. A total of \$2.2 billion has been spent on arm acquisition and military force, whereas Armenia spent only 634 million. Azerbaijan currently controls a majority of Nagorno-Karabakh and has moved into other formerly Armenian territories. It is bounded by the Caspian Sea and Caucasus Mountains, which ultimately span Asia and Europe.

Turkey

Turkey has had a longstanding relationship with Azerbaijan. In 1991, Turkey was the first country to recognize the independence of the newly founded Republic of Azerbaijan. It is a NATO member that has vowed its support towards Azerbaijan, following the ideal of “two states, one nation”. Turkey is also the main conduit for the international exportation of oil from Azerbaijan and remains politically severed to them. The relationship with Armenia has also been tenuous since centuries ago and upholds no diplomatic affiliation with them.

Russia

Russia is naturally loyal to Armenia and has supported the country during its civil war with Azerbaijan due to a number of political affiliations. Throughout the conflict, Russia has provided economic and political support towards Armenia and sent Russian troops with hopes to strengthen the military force. Armenia and Russia are both members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which was established in 2002 and ensures the “collective defence of any

member that faces external aggression". Russia's influence over the region comes from the early 20th century when the Soviet Union controlled all of the Caucasus.

The United States of America

The USA actively supports Armenia and their efforts towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as to reopen the closed borders between Azerbaijan and Turkey, in order to "promote regional prosperity". They have concluded that the issue for Azerbaijan is oil, whereas for Armenia it is a significant energy shortage. They believe that the outcome will result in the independence for the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, where Armenia will have access through the Lachin corridor, but will give some of the other occupied territories to Azerbaijan. The US has ignored Iran and instead, has encouraged Turkey in their attempts to improve their political affiliation with Armenia, and they also respect Russian authority in the enclave.

France

On November 25, 2021, the Senate had passed a resolution in which the French were asked to recognize the new republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. The Minister of State for Tourism, French Nationals Abroad and Francophonie, M. Jean-Baptiste Lemoine, claimed France's position on this issue. He states that France will not recognize the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. Their main priority is to provide aid for those individuals displaced due to the conflict. He also stated that France will continue to actively support the stabilization of territories in the South Caucasus. There have been previous formal diplomatic relations between France and Armenia since 1992, however France has maintained firm in remaining neutral and looking for the most efficient solution that is beneficial to all parties.

OSCE Minsk Group

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has made many efforts in establishing peace among both countries. In an attempt to secure peace and stability, the Russian Federation, the United States and France have come together to co-chair this organization. They conducted a Field Assessment Mission to the seven occupied territories that Azerbaijan gained control over, which surround the region of Nagorno-Karabakh in order to seek solutions to this

humanitarian crisis. This is considered the first mission by the international community in this specific territory in 18 years since 2005.

OHCHR

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights considered the implementation of Azerbaijan to the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2016. Later in 2020 the UN agreed to put an end to hostilities in the region, although there still remained a concern for the use of mercenaries in and around the conflict zone. They prepared to help the millions of civilians who were forced to flee during the conflict, as well as respond to the humanitarian crisis in all affected areas. This committee is somewhat affiliated to the OSCE and urged the negotiations under their auspices in order to reach a settlement.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
October 23, 1921	The Bolsheviks had previously occupied the newly recognized territories of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and proceeded to proclaim Nagorno-Karabakh an autonomous region within Soviet Azerbaijan. 94 percent of the population was constituted by native Armenians, and they contested this decision.
October 1, 1987	Mikhail Gorbachev's new reforms encouraged society within the region to protest the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Soviet Armenia. These massive demonstrations began to take place and were also tied to other environmental concerns, which ultimately paved the way to independence through the right of expression.
March 24, 1988	The local soviet regime of NKAO appeals to the USSR Supreme Soviet in order to "transfer the NKAO from the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR".
November 18, 1988	An unofficial Karabakh Committee was created

	<p>and it inspired the Pan-Armenian Movement.</p> <p>-“The Nagorno-Karabakh legislature passed a resolution to join Armenia despite the region’s legal location within Azerbaijan’s borders”.</p> <p>-On the 70th anniversary of the First Armenian Republic, Movses Gorgisyan waved the Armenian flag in Yerevan’s Opera Square, symbolizing the people’s support for independence.</p>
December 26, 1991	<p>The USSR collapses.</p> <p>Both Armenia and Azerbaijan declared independence, but Azerbaijan refutes Nagorno-Karabakh’s autonomous status.</p> <p>Later in September, Armenia declared the enclave independent.</p> <p>War erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave.</p>
1991-1994	<p>War was officially declared. In 1992, there were strong opposing beliefs and tensions grew after the massacre of Azeri civilians in Khojali. 30,000 people were killed during this conflict and as a cause of the torn area, 350,000 Armenian civilians became refugees, and 600,000 Azeri internally displaced people.</p>
May 12, 1994	<p>The ceasefire was put into place. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a treaty drafted by the Russian Federation. Armenia gained 13% of Azeri territory after having had the upper hand during the conflict. The UN calls on Armenian forces to withdraw, and the OSCE begins mediating conflict buffer zones.</p>
February 5, 1998	<p>Levon Ter-Petrossiaan, president of Armenia, resigns his position when his peace deal for Nagorno-Karabakh is rejected.</p>
June 14, 1999	<p>Armenian armed force units violated the ceasefire agreement and attacked Azerbaijani troops on the dividing line of Nagorno-Karabakh.</p>
March 5, 2001	<p>Both the president of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, and Armenian president, Robert Kotcharian,</p>

	<p>come close to a mutual verbal agreement to the topic at hand, however it fails to actually be put into action.</p>
<p>March 4, 2008</p>	<p>The Martakert clashes began right after the Armenian election protests had begun. This dispute had been the most severe since the 1994 ceasefire after the first Nagorno-Karabakh War took place.</p>
<p>March 14, 2008</p>	<p>The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 62/243, in which it called for the immediate withdrawal of Armenian forces from surrounding Azerbaijani territories.</p>
<p>June 24, 2011</p>	<p>Failed Russian mediation in the conflict. The Russian president at the time, Dmitri Medvedev, was unsuccessful in securing an agreement for a peace plan in Kazan, Russia.</p>
<p>April 2, 2016</p>	<p>During this time, the Four-Day War broke out in April, which began along the Nagorno-Karabakh line of contact. The Artsakh Defence Army backed the Armenian forces, and was victorious.</p>
<p>May 1, 2018</p>	<p>Armenia withstood a peaceful revolution, which took down its ruler, Serzh Sargsyan, from his position as the country's president. Nikol Pashinyan, who was the leading figure of the protests, then went on to become the prime minister after the elections that same year.</p>
<p>September 27, 2020</p>	<p>A second armed war broke out in the enclave. This time around, Azerbaijan was supported by Turkey and was given Israeli loitering munition drones, while Armenia was still fighting with the assistance of the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh. The conflict lasted for over six weeks, which resulted in thousands of casualties and refugees. On October 10, Russia had officially reported that both Armenia and Azerbaijan had "mutually agreed on a humanitarian ceasefire". Fighting continued to break out afterwards and a second ceasefire attempt on October 17 was</p>

November 10, 2020

signed. However, this was also ignored and then followed by a third failed ceasefire. Then on November 9, the conflict was brought to a close when both countries came together to sign yet another ceasefire agreement in Russia.

Relevant UN Treaties and Resolutions

[S/RES/822 \(Adopted in 1993\):](#)

This resolution was written by the United Nations Security Council and was passed on April 30th. It was co-sponsored by both Turkey and Pakistan, in which it was demanded that both Armenia and Azerbaijan comply with the immediate cessation of all hostilities and to withdraw force from the region of Kelbajar. It also encourages both countries to continue agreements for the resolution of the conflict as a whole “within the framework of the peace process of the Minsk Group of the CSCE”. This resolution calls for the effort to implement “unimpeded access for international humanitarian relief” in the region. The chairman of both CSCE and the Minsk Group then are expected to submit further reports if action in the region to the Council.

[S/RES/853 \(Adopted in 1993\):](#)

Security Council resolution 853, was unanimously adopted on the 29th of July. This resolution was drafted after having reaffirmed Resolution 822. The aim of this resolution was to address the tense relation between Armenia and Azerbaijan and they had “condemned the seizure of the district of Agdam” and called for withdrawal of Armenian forces from these territories. Once again, this resolution calls an immediate ceasefire of hostilities and to immediately stop all attacks of civilians. This resolution urges aid from international organizations in order to assist those who are displaced due to the conflict and to restore energy, transport and economic links.

[S/RES/884 \(Adopted in 1993\):](#)

This resolution passed by the United Nations Security Council, calls for the “withdrawal of occupying forces” from the Zanglean district, Goradiz, and reaffirms the past three resolutions written about this conflict. The purpose of this document was mainly to condemn both countries for their violations towards the ceasefire agreement. It also brings attention to the wrongdoings of the government and calls upon them to force their citizens into compliance. There also had to be a unilateral withdrawal from other territories that are in accordance with the “adjusted timetable of urgent steps” to implement the past Council Resolutions. It once again requests for both countries to not engage in any behavior or negotiations that would bring about further conflict. It also states that the Russian Federation, in support of the CSCE Minsk Group, has the ability to act as seen necessary in regards to upholding the current ceasefire.

[A/RES/62/243 \(Adopted in 2008\):](#)

The title of this resolution is, “The Situation in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan” and was drafted by the United Nations General Assembly. It dwells on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and was adopted on March 14. It is recognized as the fifth official United Nations document on this specific issue, however it is the first time the General Assembly discusses this conflict and produces a document. The resolution urges both nations to refrain from engaging in any activity that would lead to further conflict such as the supply of weapons and munitions.

[The UN pledges humanitarian support \(2020\):](#)

Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, was pleased to support the newly negotiated ceasefire after the rapid conflict outbreak in the nearby territories. He states that the Organization is prepared to provide resources for humanitarian support in the affected areas in order to meet the needs of targeted civilians that are experiencing the backlash of the conflict.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

[Attempts at a process for peace](#)

One aspect that the United Nations has been unsuccessful in is their failure to address their virtual relinquishment of the people in Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as its inability to assume a constructive position in resolving the conflict which has had thousands of casualties and

left more than 1 million refugees. During the early 1990's, the United Nations passed four resolutions on the conflict. In the documents, all of them had demanded "the immediate complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces" from Azerbaijani territories. The resolution also expressed the delegates' concern towards the forced displacement of the civilians in the region and claimed it as a "serious humanitarian emergency". The UN, as well as other major organizations, have done very little in regards to promoting resolution of this conflict. The United Nations had passed the responsibility to the OSCE, which had no previous experience in conflict resolution and enlisting them should not in any way absolve the UN from its commitment to "promote their own resolutions".

Failures of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

The ceasefire/armistice that was brokered by Russia in November of 2020, has only provided a temporal solution, however the role of major organizations has been quite indecisive and indifferent. The armistice is not a temporary solution and the failure to act from multilateral organizations in many different aspects cannot be simply accepted. The conditions for the current ceasefire agreement offers no reason for an enduring course of action that is suitable for both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The agreement in which Russian peacekeeping forces were deployed into the enclave does not provide autonomy for the Armenians that live in Nagorno-Karabakh. Another questionable aspect is the fact that there was an unfavorable impact on the security order after the Cold War, which greatly impacted the framework of the OSCE. The European Union and NATO have decided to remain neutral, however their lack of assistance leaves other organizations such as the OSCE vulnerable to committing grave mistakes.

Possible Solutions

Proposed solutions are extremely important when trying to tackle a threatening imminent problem in society. Without successful intercession endeavors, ceasefire violations and renewed tensions are a menace towards the reignition of the long and tedious conflict between both Armenia and Azerbaijan. It also threatens to destabilize the South Caucasus area, which could ultimately disturb oil and gas exports, which is a dependable source of income for these regions. Russia has vowed to defend Armenia, while Turkey has promised to support Azerbaijan, which

means that the involvement of other major powers can further escalate the problem into a conflict of interest. This is why a solution needs to be put into place in order to avoid discrepancies and other major problems.

There is no specific solution that can be attributed to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia for control of the enclave, Nagorno-Karabakh. One of the first steps would be to mend the relationship between both countries and leave the mutual and historical mistrust behind. Social media can be helpful when looking at this aspect since it has played a significant role in formulating people's political standpoints on this conflict. Instead of pinning both countries against each other, social media can be used as a way to educate people instead of inducing misinformation.

The European Union has stated that they believe the only way to resolve this conflict between Baku and Yerevan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region is through "a political settlement in accordance with international and principles". They seem to believe that there is no military solution to the problem, which is in accordance with previous disobedience from both parties.

Russia's influence over this Soviet successor territory is essential in maintaining impartiality in finding a solution. One important step they should take is to encourage neighboring states to take in the thousands of refugees that were a result of the individuals displaced during the war.

A single solution cannot be attributed to this conflict, however more passive involvement from other major multilateral organizations would be a step in the right direction. Their neutrality in the conflict has not been effective whatsoever and more proposed solutions in turn will dissolve the problem in a competent manner.

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