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## Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Obstacles to Resolution and Analysis of Force Usage

*Ermenistan-Azərbaycan, Dağlık Karabağ Sorunu: Çözüm Yolunda Engeller ve Kuvvet Kullanımının Analizi*

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**Abstract:** *This article examines the origins of Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and traces the major developments on this issue since the end of Cold War. After a careful consideration of the views of Armenia, Russia, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the article describes Azerbaijan's strategic vision for conflict resolution. As the revenues from oil sales strengthen the Azerbaijan economy and helped to increase its military capabilities, Azerbaijan has leaned more toward a military solution. The authors caution that Russia still plays a significant role in this issue and any military step may draw Russian intervention in the region.*

**Keywords:** *The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict, Russia, Western Powers, OSCE Minsk Group*

**Öz:** *Bu makale Ermenistan ile Azerbaycan arasındaki Dağlık Karabağ ihtilafının sebeplerini inceleyerek, Soğuk Savaş'ın bitiminden bugüne kadar bu mesele ile ilgili oluşan önemli gelişmeleri takip etmektedir. Makale Ermenistan, Rusya ve Avrupa Güvenlik İşbirliği Teşkilatı (AGİT)'nin görüşlerini inceledikten sonra, Azerbaycan'ın meselenin çözümüne getirdiği stratejik yaklaşımı açıklamaktadır. Petrolden elde ettiği gelirlerin ekonomisini güçlendirmesi ve askeri gücünü arttırması sonucu Azerbaycan giderek askeri çözümünü öne plana koymuştur. Bu aşamada meselenin ortaya çıkışı ve gidişatında belirleyici rol oynayan Rusya'nın önemli rolü dikkate alınmalı zira herhangi bir askeri adım Rusya'nın bölgeye müdahalesini beraberinde getirebilir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Ermenistan-Azərbaycan Çatışması, Karabağ, Rusya, AGİT Minsk Grubu*

### Introduction

The clash between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been going on for the last 20 years and the uncertainty as to when the conflict will be resolved is still prevailing. First of all, both countries consider each other as enemies who will never be able to come together. More than anything this is because of the fact that each side claims that the other side came to Nagorno-Karabakh region after them and they are the legitimate residents.<sup>1</sup> In such an atmosphere, there has been a belief that there will not be reconciliation and peace between the parties. Although the efforts to reach peace has been accelerated with the incentive of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the peace negotiations that have been going on for more than fifteen years do not meet the expectations or yield any results. To be able to determine the right way to end the conflict, its underlying reasons and consequences should be evaluated objectively. According to the Armenian side of the story,

<sup>1</sup>Takayuki Yoshimura, "Some Arguments on the Nagorno-Karabakh History", p. 58, [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no18/3\\_yoshimura.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no18/3_yoshimura.pdf) (Date Accessed: September 25, 2016).

the conflict has risen up thanks to blockade by Azerbaijan to the self determination of Armenians who live in the Karabakh region.<sup>2</sup> To defend the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, Armenia went into combat and the present status-quo began. Azerbaijan, however, believes that the conflict is the result of the “Hai-Tahd” doctrine, “the Great Armenia” ideology and its occupation policies.<sup>3</sup> Although the Minsk Group co-chairmen have attempted to create reconciliation with the peace negotiations that have gone on since 1994, they have not been able to make any progress. Because either their suggestions are not accepted by the conflicting parties or if one side accepts the suggestions, the other one thinks of them as completely negative. The three suggestions proposed by the Minsk Group of the OSCE are as follows: the “package resolution” presented in July 1997; the gradual resolution presented in December 1997; and the “common state” solution that was presented in November 1998.

The first two of these resolutions have been rejected by Armenia while the last one has been rejected by Azerbaijan. Apart from these resolutions, a new roadmap to resolution of the conflict was drawn in Madrid, Spain on 29 November 2007 in a meeting between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan and co-chairmen of the Minsk Group of the OSCE, which would later be known as the “Madrid Principles”.<sup>4</sup> Another step towards the resolution of the conflict is the Moscow Declaration signed in November 2008. The declaration which was signed by the Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev and the Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan emphasizes the resolution of the conflict through peaceful means and in the framework of the international law. The Madrid principles of 2007 are also emphasized in the resolution. The Madrid principles suggested that Armenians withdraw from territories other than Karabakh that they occupied and then a process towards a referendum to be followed in Karabakh. Armenia did not accept the Madrid principles.<sup>5</sup> Armenia is decisive in not withdrawing from the five regions it occupied (a few years later another two regions) before the status of the Nagorno Karabakh is determined. Armenia believes that if their army withdraws from the five regions it is occupying, it is going to be in a useless situation from a military and geopolitical perspective and the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh will be in danger. Moreover, they believe that when they withdraw their defense system in the war zone, in other words, return the five regions, Azerbaijan will have an advantageous military and Armenia will be weak and at a disadvantage. Therefore, Armenia refuses to withdraw from the territories that it is occupying. While the Armenian side says that the resolution can only be

<sup>2</sup> Роберт Кочарян, “Искать выгоду в сглаживании противоречий”, *журнал Международная жизнь*, No: 2, Москва, 2003, с. 31-32; Владимир Казимиров, “Мир Карабаху. Посредничество России в урегулировании нагорно-карабахского конфликта”, *издательство Международные отношения*, Москва, 2009, с. 271; Рафаел Аветисян, “Армения в структуре современных международных отношений Кавказского региона”, Санкт-Петербург, 2011, *tema dissertatçii i avtoreferata* po VAK 23.00.04, <http://www.dissercat.com/content/armeniya-v-strukture-sovremennykh-mezhdunarodnykh-otnoshenii-kavkazskogo-regiona>.

<sup>3</sup> Эмин Шихалиев, “Психологическая и религиозная подоплека Армянского вопроса”, *журнал “Наследие”*, Москва, No: 6 (48), с. 48-51; Emin Shikhaliev, “Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict in the Context of the Inter-Civilizations Relations”, in *Azerbaijan Language*, Baku, 2011, p. 106-124; Haleddin İbrahimli, “Değişen Avrasya’da Kafkasya”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları Dergisi*, ASAM Yayınları, Ankara, 2001, p. 43-53.

<sup>4</sup> Rövsen İbrahimov, “Dağlık Karabağ Sorununun Uluslararası Hukuk Açısından Değerlendirilmesi”, *Karabağ: Bildiklerimiz ve Bilmediklerimiz, Qafqaz Universiteti Beynelxalq Münaqiseleri Arasdırma Merkezi*, No: 002, Bakı, 2010, p. 395.

<sup>5</sup> Elnur İsmayılov, “Türkiye-Ermenistan Münasebetleri Kontekstinde Dağlık Karabağ Münakaşası”, *Karabağ: Bildiklerimiz ve Bilmediklerimiz, Qafqaz Universiteti Beynelxalq Münaqiseleri Arasdırma Merkezi*, No: 002, Bakı, 2010, p. 173-174; Kamer Kasım, “Türkiye’nin Kafkasya Politikası: Fırsatlar ve Güvenlik Problemleri”, *Türk Dış Politikası Uluslararası III. Türk Dış Politikası Sempozyumu Tebliğleri, Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu (USAK) Yayınları*, Ankara, 2009, p. 63; Emin Shikhaliev, “Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict in the Context of the inter-Civilizations Relations”, p. 65.



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attained by giving Karabakh independence, Azerbaijan emphasizes that there can be no further resolution than giving Karabakh the right to autonomy.<sup>6</sup>

It is against the international rule that Armenia demands in the first phase the status of Nagorno-Karabakh to be determined. The status can only be determined after the occupation is over. It seems that the attitude of states and international organizations as to determine which side is wrong and which is right does not reflect reality. Some UN Security Council Resolutions have been adopted for ending the conflict. These are the resolutions numbered 822 dated 30 April 1993, 853 dated 29 July 1993, 874 dated 14 October 1993, and 884 dated 11 November 1993. Although occupying forces are asked to withdraw from occupied territories in these resolutions, the names of the occupying and the occupied states were not mentioned and the occupying party violated these resolutions.<sup>7</sup>

The resolution adopted in the UN General Assembly on 14 March 2008 is the most important decision taken on this subject during the last periods. The resolution has been passed with thirty-nine votes in favor and seven against, and it emphasizes the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and demands Armenians to withdraw from the occupied territories. The resolution also includes the displaced people's right to return to their homelands. In the 62<sup>nd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, the second article that the Council proposed demanded that "the Armenian forces must immediately withdraw from occupied Azerbaijani territories without any conditions". However the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group of the OSCE, namely Russia, USA, and France, voted against it, which made Azerbaijan lose its trust in the Minsk Group. If the article had been applied, the conflict would have been resolved by now. However, the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group proposed balanced territorial integrity, indicating that a resolution could only be applied with the consent of Armenia.

However, there is no term of balanced territorial integrity in international law. In other words, the incentives that the Western nations advance for the resolution of the conflict yield no results. As a matter of fact, the real reason why these incentives yield no results is that the policies of these states are vague. Western countries find it more realistic for the conflicting parties to reconcile between themselves and they view the issue from the perspective of the Minsk Group of the OSCE. If the parties themselves are going to resolve this issue, it is not possible to understand which duty the Minsk Group of the OSCE is carrying out. Their approach towards the occupation policies of Armenia and the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is evaluated within the framework of the Minsk Group of the OSCE. The indecisiveness of co-chairmen of the European states and especially other Western states of the Minsk Group—the USA and France—their reactions towards the UN Security Council's decisions (March 2008), prove the double-standard policies of the West and behind this approach there are deep-rooted reasons. It is the truth that "the Armenian factor" is a pressure tool that Russia can use both politically and economically against the states in the region and states concerned. Russia uses Armenia as a balancing factor against Turkey's, the USA's, NATO's, and the European Union's policies on Caucasia and, thanks to Armenia, it keeps its political and militaristic existence in Caucasia. With the military bases it has in the region, it keeps Azerbaijan and Georgia under control and it takes the necessary measures against a possible intervention that might be carried out from the South. On the other hand, Russia considers the Caucasian states as its previous provinces and therefore cannot tolerate the independence of Azerbaijan or its

<sup>6</sup>Samir Hamidov, "Dağlıq Qarabağ Münaqişesi 2020-ci ildə: Sülh, Yoxsa Müharibə?" *Dirçeliş-XXI Esr Jurnalı*, No: 153-154, Bakı, 2011, p. 151.

<sup>7</sup>Emin Shikhaliyev, "Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict in the Context of the İnter-Civilizations Relations", p. 215; Araz Aslanlı, "Ermenistan'ın Azerbaycan Topraklarını İşgali Sorununun Hukuki Boyutu: Azerbaycan'ın Meşru Müdafaa Hakkı Devam Ediyor mu?", *Ermeni Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Sayı: 9, Ankara, 2003, p. 104.



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taking part in the energy projects. Moreover, Russia is protecting and arming Armenia to teach a lesson to Azerbaijan. Therefore, it may be understood that Russia supports Armenia against Azerbaijan. However, the indecisiveness of the West about the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and its reaction against the UN Security Council resolution demanding Armenia to withdraw from the occupied Azerbaijani lands prove the incomprehensible policies of the West. If the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is considered as a local conflict, the double standard policy of the West might not be understood, but if the issue is evaluated from a global point of view, the real reasons will appear.

### **1) The Review of the Problem in the Context of Russia's Geopolitical Interests**

The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict has a special dimension for Russia's geopolitical priorities and interests. It is not possible to think of the conflict without Russia. Azerbaijan politician V. Guluzade said: "If the root of the problem that enslaved the Azerbaijani people is observed, it can be seen that the Azerbaijani Turks are the victims of the Russian national ideology of world domination, while the Armenians are one of the tools by which this domination is materialized".<sup>8</sup>

As a matter of fact, for a long time Russia has been working for there to be unrest in Azerbaijan, and to gain back its old influence on Azerbaijan and make Azerbaijan once again one of its colonies. For this purpose, it supports Armenia. However, the real duty of this state as one of the members of the Minsk Group of the OSCE is to work for a permanent and just peace to dominate between the two states. Let us remember once again the second article of the resolution that was approved on 14 March 2008 concerning "the Situation in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan" in the 62<sup>nd</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly. When the resolution was put to vote in the UN General Assembly, Russia was one of the seven states that voted against it.<sup>9</sup> The fact that Russia was on the opposite front proves that Russia does not intend to materialize a peace mission. There is no doubt that as a state that created the conflict itself, Russia will not be willing for the resolution of the conflict without attaining its own demands and interests. One of the issues mentioned here is that it is no coincidence that Russia as one of the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group of the OSCE was added to the orbit of the conflict. More specifically, by getting itself added to this orbit, Russia declared once again that the key to resolve the issue is in its hands. More than anything, Azerbaijan is an important target for Russia.

Because of its foreign policy, Armenia is in a position that is stuck between Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Iran. As a result of the issues such as genocide, occupation, and territorial disputes, Armenia is only expected to have problems with Turkey and Azerbaijan but there are also serious problems in the relations between Armenia and Georgia. In fact, Armenia demands lands from its all of its neighbors. The only country that does not take its demand seriously is Iran. Therefore, Armenia is pursuing a tougher policy against Iran. Observing the political process and the administrative structure in Armenia help to determine the political powers that have interests in the region. In other words, Armenia's policy is unclear because of the powers that have interests in the region. In this case, the resolution of the Karabakh problem is in the hand of those powers. However, it should be known that those powers are not Armenia.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Vefa Quluzade, *Geleceğin Ufukları*, Bakı, 1999, p. 101.

<sup>9</sup>Kamer Kasım, "Origins and Consequences of the Karabakh Conflict", *Basic Principle for the Settlement of the Conflicts on the Territories of the GUAM States*, Baku, 15-16 April, 2008, p. 66.

<sup>10</sup>Beşir Mustafayev, "Karabağ'ın İşgal Süreci ve Bölgede Yaşanan Son Olaylar Çerçevesinde Çözüm Arayışları",



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However, when Azerbaijan refused to conform and avoided building Russian bases on its territories, Russia lost its trust in Azerbaijan and misused its role in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict by legalizing its military existence in Armenia and applied political pressure on Azerbaijan. Armenia believed that this was a wonderful opportunity and in a way capitulated itself to the hands of Russia. It sees itself as Russia's geopolitical operation arena in the Caucasus and the "applier" of Russia because it believes that without Russia it would not be possible to breathe in this atmosphere. This can be compared to artificially-founded Israel's situation in the Middle East, which cannot breathe were it not for the USA. As Russian military was taken out of Azerbaijan and Russia had no confidence in Georgia, Armenia has transformed into the only agent of Russian interests and aims. Armenia has an inclination to continue occupying Azerbaijani territories so long as such policies of Russia continue.

It is possible to review the Armenian geopolitics from Russia's point of view as follows:

- To use Armenia as a balance element against Turkey's policies on the USA, NATO, and the EU;
- To keep Azerbaijan and Georgia under control by keeping its political and military existence in the Caucasus thanks to Armenia and the bases it has in the region;
- To transform Armenia into a watchdog of Russia's political and economic interests in the region;
- In general, to take necessary precautions against interventions that may be carried out from the south by way of defending and controlling the Caucasus.

To observe the issue more broadly, the "Armenian factor" is not only a political but also an economic tool for pressure against Georgia and Azerbaijan. This is mostly because Russia cannot bear the independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan and their energy projects. After Russia understood that it was not possible to keep Western capital away from the Caspian Sea, it tried every way to get Azerbaijani oil flowing through its own territories. In order to demonstrate that the Northern route is much more secure, Russia started the War of Chechnya and then it could get the Baku-Novorossiysk approved initially as an oil export route by way of pressuring the Western countries and oil companies. Russia also asserted that there might be serious ethnic and political problems in the region and it started a huge campaign against the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.<sup>11</sup> Despite all the pressure, Azerbaijan refused to change its oil policy and was able to maintain its national rights on the natural fortune that it had. On the other hand, on 27 June 2007, the European Commission agreed to allow three countries from the Black Sea region (Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania), together with Hungary and Austria, to establish the Nabucco project. This project was a pipeline that would transport as much as 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas a year from Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to the participating countries.

Alternative energy projects were not convenient for Russia, the biggest exporter of oil and gas to world markets and especially to Europe. The real issue that disturbed Moscow was the fact that its chance to put political and economic pressure on former Soviet Republics and European countries diminished and it would no longer profit as much as it used to from the transit charges. After evaluating all of the above, Russia decided to take action in order to gain

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Atatürk Üniversitesi Uluslararası Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi (TAED), Sayı: 49, Yıl: 19, s. 291-292, Erzurum, Haziran 2013.

<sup>11</sup>Ali Hasanov, *Muasir Beynelxalq Munasibetler ve Azərbaycanın Xarici Siyaseti*, Bakı, 2005, p. 672.





back its previous influence as one of the largest powers in the world. Both to prevent the materialization of alternative energy projects and to make Europe economically dependent, on 8 August 2008, Russia attacked Georgia and created two artificial independent states on its territories by destroying its territorial integrity. This can also be considered as the heaviest response to the West. Georgian researcher Nika Chitadze explains Russia's attack on Georgia by Moscow's determination to monopolize the energy transport from Asia to Europe, and to control the pipelines on Georgian and Azerbaijani territories.<sup>12</sup>

In this way, Russia both tried to prevent the materialization of the energy projects creating a medium for serious ethnic and political tensions both in Azerbaijan and Georgia, it supported the separatist powers in both regions, and it increased the number of Russian military bases in Armenia. By the same token, Armenia needed Russia's military support for any military intervention that might come from Azerbaijan or Turkey.

Since 1991 Armenia has been attaching utmost importance to military relations with Russia and the country got full support from Russia for the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories as well. After Armenia became an independent country, it developed its military ties within the framework of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) especially with Russia and within this context, it took part in the Collective Security Treaty Organization which the member states of the CIS signed in Tashkent on 15 May 1992 and got the accepted legislation ratified in the Armenian Parliament on 7 October 2002.<sup>13</sup> A memorandum called "General Aspects of Integrated CIS activities" that the CIS heads-of-states signed was also supported by Armenia. On 10 February 1995 Armenia accepted the treaty "Collective Security Concept Among the member states of Treaty of Collective Security" and in November 1995 the Armenian Parliament ratified it. Within the framework of the CIS, Armenia is represented in two military organs namely "Air Defense System Coordination Committee" and "Military Technical Committee".<sup>14</sup>

The basis for the military cooperation between the two countries was formed when the Armenian and the Russian presidents signed the Moscow Treaty which covered the legal status of the Russian armed forces that were deployed in Armenia on 21 August 1992.<sup>15</sup> The military cooperation between the two countries developed even more during the management of the Armenian head of state Levon Hagopi Ter-Petrosian and various military agreements were signed. Until 1992, the 7<sup>th</sup> Defence Army of the Former Soviet Union remained in Armenia. Around the middle of the same year, the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> divisions of the 7<sup>th</sup> Defense Army were handed down to Armenia. In accordance with the conditions of an agreement signed between Armenia and Russia on 21 October 1994, Russia was allowed to build two military bases in Gyumri and Erevan.<sup>16</sup> As a matter of fact, these military bases were already present in Armenia even before the Soviet Union collapsed. However, after Armenia declared independence, there was uncertainty concerning the legal status of the bases. As Armenia considered the bases as the guarantor of its national independence, it did not create any

<sup>12</sup>Nika Chitadze, "Gürcistan-Rusya Savaşının Ardından Güney Kafkasya'da Güvenlik", Türk Dış Politikası. Uluslararası III. Türk Dış Politikası Sempozyumu Tebliğleri, *Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu (USAK) Yayınları*, Ankara, 2009, p. 123-125, 132.

<sup>13</sup>Национальное собрание Армении ратифицировало устав по организации договора о коллективной безопасности. <http://www.newsrb.ru/allnews/155192/>. (Date Accessed: February 24, 2016).

<sup>14</sup>Hatem Cabbarlı, "Ermenistan-Rusya İlişkileri veya Rusya'nın Bir Eyaleti "Bağımsız Ermenistan", *Ermeni Araştırmaları Dergisi*, ASAM Yayınları, Ankara, 2004, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup>Emin Arif Şihaliyev, *Kafkasya Jeopolitiğinde Rusya, İran, Türkiye Rekabetleri ve Ermeni Faktörü*, Ankara, 2004, p. 113.

<sup>16</sup>Cabbarlı, p. 21.



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problems for Russia on this issue. In August 1997, the Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosian signed the Agreement for Friendship and Mutual Assistance with Russia. The second article of the agreement is as follows: "...If the agreeing parties confront or undergo any type of armed attack, they will start negotiations with each other, provide security and act together for the protection of the security". The third article indicates: "...If the peace and security of the agreeing parties is threatened by a state or a group of states, the agreeing parties will assist each other including military assistance in accordance with the 51st article of the UN agreement on providing peace and security".<sup>17</sup>

In 2000, another agreement was signed between the parties that proposed handing over the military base in Gyumri to Russia for 25 years together with its real estate unrequitedly with the possibility of an extension of 5 years if the parties demand.<sup>18</sup> On 20 August 2010, Russia extended the duration of the military bases in Armenia until 2044.<sup>19</sup>

According to what comes out of these agreements, if Azerbaijan attempts to take back its occupied territories by using its own legal rights, it will confront military intervention from Russia. Russia's military presence in Armenia has enabled Russia to intervene in political events not only in Armenia but all over the Caucasus. Today, Armenia has twenty-nine military posts in total with twelve posts in Gyumri, four in Ahuryan, one in Ashtarak, seven in Erevan, one in Kapan, and two in Nubareshen.<sup>20</sup> If the locations where the Russian military bases are placed is observed, it will be seen that fourteen bases were deployed in regions that are near the border with Turkey.<sup>21</sup> This gives Armenia the chance to focus on Azerbaijan in terms of martial means by diminishing its security needs over the Turkish border.<sup>22</sup> Armenia did not settle with that and it deployed the some of the signal units that left Georgia on 22 December 2002 on its own borders. These units were handed over to Russia's Commandership of South Caucasus Military Units.<sup>23</sup> Since the signing of the agreements between Armenia and Russia for military cooperation, Russia assists Armenia with weaponry and ammunition. In accordance with the information found in the "Media Forum", in 2008 alone the weaponry assistance was worth as much as 800 million dollars.<sup>24</sup>

As it is one of the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group of the OSCE, Russia's attitude is unacceptable for its moderator role. Russia is both moderating between the conflicting parties and arming the Armenia. Moscow's share in Armenia's weapons export is 96%.<sup>25</sup> This figure reveals Russia's role since the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict started. However, Russia claims that its actions are the results of its commitments as a member of Collective Security Treaty Organization and they have nothing to do with its activities in the Minsk Group of the OSCE. Russia even expressed that Azerbaijan would be receiving the same assistance were it a

<sup>17</sup> Cabbarlı, p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> Emin Arif Şihaliyev, *Sivilizasiyalararası Münasibetler Kontekstinde Ermenistan-Azərbaycan Münakaşası*, p. 240.

<sup>19</sup> Elhan Şahinoğlu. Rusya-Ermenistan Askeri İşbirliğine Karşı Türkiye-Azərbaycan İşbirliği.

<http://www.21yyte.org/kose-yazisi-yazdir/5350> (Date Accessed: September 30, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Cabbarlı, p. 36; Emin Arif Şihaliyev, *Sivilizasiyalararası Münasibetler Kontekstinde Ermenistan-Azərbaycan Münakaşası*, p. 240-241.

<sup>21</sup> Cabbarlı, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Hans-Joachim Schmidt, "Military Confidence Building and Arms Control in Unresolved Territorial Conflicts", *Peace Research Institute Frankfurt*, PRIF-Reports No. 89, Frankfurt, 2009, p.11.

<sup>23</sup> Cabbarlı, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Rusiyanın Ermenistana oturduyu 800 milyon dollarlıq yeni silahların siyahısı uze çıxdı.

[http://www.mediaforum.az/articles.php?lang=azp&age=00&article\\_id=20090108032400605](http://www.mediaforum.az/articles.php?lang=azp&age=00&article_id=20090108032400605) (Date Accessed: September 16, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Paul Holtom, "Trends in International Arms Transfers 2011", *SIPRI*, March 2012, books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1203.pdf (Date Accessed: September 16, 2016).



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member if the Organization as well. As can be seen, Azerbaijan is blamed for the whole situation in a sarcastic way. The fact that Armenia is a part of the Organization while occupying 20% of the Azerbaijani territories makes it impossible for Azerbaijan to be a part of it. By being a member of Collective Security Treaty Organization and deploying the Russian military bases on its own territories, Armenia protects itself both from Turkey and Azerbaijan and guarantees the security of Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>26</sup> So, from whom will Azerbaijan protect itself by being a member to the same organization? From Armenia and Russia?

Also after the incidents that arose between Russia and Georgia in August, Moscow headed towards closer military cooperation with Erevan. By taking this step, Russia showed that the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is against its own interests. Were it otherwise, Russia would not have sold weaponry to Armenia that was worth 800 million dollars. This movement does not serve for the purpose of peace in the region, on the contrary, it created a medium for rising tensions and instability. In general, Moscow's remarks on foreign policy shows that it still considers the former territories of the Soviet Union and the Caucasus as its own geostrategic interest region. In this regard, Russia has a key position in the Caucasus, hence the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

## **2) The Review of the Problem in the Context of Western Powers' Double Standards Policy or the Clash of Civilizations**

The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is frozen for one reason: the opposing attitudes of the conflicting sides. Both sides are in zero-sum game. If the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is recognized, Nagorno Karabakh will have to give up its "de-facto" independence and Armenia will have to give up the territorial pretensions. If the "de facto" independence of Nagorno Karabakh transforms into "de jure" independence, then Azerbaijan will have lost a great part of its territories and its territorial integrity will be destroyed. For this reason, the attitudes of the co-chairmen of the OSCE other than Russia are unclear. In other words, the Western states always have to balance the steps they take towards one side with another step towards the other side. The states that are not the co-chairmen of the OSCE always evaluate the problem from the framework of the Minsk Group of the OSCE and they want to have mutual sincere relations with both states. However, while other Western co-chairmen—the USA and France—demand that the conflict be resolved in a peaceful manner, they blatantly react to the decisions of the UN Security Council. For them, the priority is reconciliation between the conflicting parties. American specialist in Southern Caucasus conflicts Tomas Ambrosio has expressed the attitude of the USA about the conflict clearly: "If an agreement cannot be reached between the parties, the attitude of the USA will not change. When other international and local problems are taken into consideration, the Nagorno Karabakh conflict does not have a lot of importance". Ambrosio also made remarks about the future of the peace negotiations:

Even though some meetings materialize behind the close doors, from the outside they look different. During these meetings, the parties make their own suggestions, and in case there is no reconciliation, they look as if they will fire the war again. Then the parties return to their own countries and accuse the other party and express sorrow over the fact that they could not reach the consequent phase on the resolution of the conflict. There is no doubt that the current heads of states of the Minsk Group countries and their successors will face the same issues and problems. The successors of their successors will be in the same situation. To be more specific, the current situation, or at least the peace negotiations that are going on, is better than the parties

<sup>26</sup>Robert Smigielski, "Prospects for Nagorno-Karabakh Settlement Following the Russia-Georgia Conflict", *Polish Institute of International Affairs*, No:10 (10), February 16, 2009, p. 19-20.





to open fire to one another. In my opinion, the parties and mediators will continue with this diplomatic tradition.<sup>27</sup>

The approach of the European states including France as one of the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group to the situation Azerbaijan is in has taken the shape of a clash between Western-Turkish civilizations rather than only an Armenia-Azerbaijan clash. For this reason, it would be more correct to review the issue from a clash of Western-Turkish civilizations in the framework of the global “Armenian issue” rather than a local framework.

If this issue is to be evaluated from the perspective of the clash of civilizations, the policies of the West towards Turkey and even Azerbaijan and the attitude and the double standards that the Minsk Group of the OSCE adopts are the result of a clash of civilizations. These are the prevailing views among the scientific circles of Azerbaijan.

There is no doubt that in recent years a much-debated question is that most wars and conflicts result from a clash of civilizations. Although there are those who think otherwise. According to the prevailing opinion in Azerbaijan, the current position of the Western countries on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and their double standards policy is completely a result of the clash of civilizations.

After famous American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington’s book “*Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*” was published, his remarks on how “the central and most dangerous dimension of the emerging global politics would be conflict between groups from differing civilizations”<sup>28</sup> influenced and even frightened people. Huntington’s remarks are perceived in a far more different meaning than the original intention and even criticized by some analysts. It is an undeniable fact that the concept “clash of civilizations” is terrifying. Still, it would also be unjust to deny the term altogether. Today, inter-civilizational relations have an important place in global politics. Leaving aside others, we can certainly hold that there is a clash between the Western civilization and Islam-Turkish civilization. And Azerbaijan is a part of Islamic and Turkic civilization.

There is an antipathy to the Islamic and Turkic civilizations in the Western World. It is an irrefutable reality. Samuel P. Huntington asserts that relations between different civilizations will never be friendly and they will generally be cold and hostile to one another. He divides the clash between civilizations in two categories, namely 1) local or micro level; 2) global or macro level and indicates that the first one refers to the clash between groups belonging to different civilizations and asserts that this is common especially between Muslims and non-Muslims; while in global and macro level refers to the clash between large states of different civilizations. The role that clashes between large states of different civilizations on a global and macro level have on micro level clashes between neighboring states belonging to different civilizations is an undisputable truth. It is possible to observe this role on Armenia-Azerbaijan clash as well. Huntington also indicated that “As long as Islam remains as Islam (which is what is going to be) and the West remains as West (Christian) the basic clash between these two civilizations will continue in the future just like it did for the last fourteen centuries”.<sup>29</sup> By that he also sent signals that meant the problem between Armenia and Azerbaijan, who belong to different civilizations, will continue.

<sup>27</sup>Emin Şihaliyev, “The Armenian Question in the Context of the Clash of Civilizations and Geopolitical Interests, Its Impact on Armenia-Azerbaijani Relations and Vision of the Near Future”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No: 27, 2013, p. 105.

<sup>28</sup>Samuel P.Huntington, *Medeniyetler Çatışması ve Dünya Düzeninin Yeniden Kurulması*, Okuyanus Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Huntington, p. 306, 312-313.



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Although the prolongation of the conflict between Armenia-Azerbaijan stems from the Caucasian policy of Russia, it is in a complete accordance with the interests of the West. The Western states evaluate the Armenian issue from a national, religious and psychological point of view and indirectly support the Armenia.

### 3) Possibility of Use of Force by Azerbaijan

Although a truce was reached between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1994 about Armenian occupation of twenty percent of Azerbaijani territories, since then there is a vague situation as “neither war nor peace” between the two states. Armenian political scientist Artem Vartanyan analyzed the vague and complicated relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia defined the conflict as “a problem that burns without flames but rather smouldering” and he indicated that the problem would still not be solved for a long time. However Vartanyan suggests that Karabakh should be given under the Russian mandate first for 20 years or a longer period and a referendum should be held in the region afterwards for the final solution of the matter.<sup>30</sup> In other words, Vartanyan finds it more realistic to leave the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict to Russia’s monopoly. Without any doubt, it actually reflects Armenia’s foreign policy. On the other hand, Azerbaijan supports that the problem should be taken out of Russia’s monopoly.

While Samir Hamitov, an Azerbaijani political scientist, defined the problem as a “labyrinth”,<sup>31</sup> another Azerbaijani foreign policy specialist thought of the problem as the “Palestine syndrome”<sup>32</sup> These are evaluations that we find very true and right. As a matter of fact, while the labyrinth has an entrance, it is very difficult to find the exit and the paths within it are very complex. The status of the entrance and the exit become equal as long as the right path is not found. Therefore, there is no other way than wandering within the labyrinth until the exit is found. The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is just like a labyrinth.

If the development process of the peace negotiations since the 1990s and the 20<sup>th</sup> century is examined, it will be seen that whenever Azerbaijan begins to seek alternative resolutions for the conflict as a result of the uncertainty of the resolution process, either Armenia or the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group of the OSCE try to gain back Azerbaijan’s trust by offering new suggestions. At the consequent phase of the negotiations, when the Armenian side pulls away, all of the process goes back to the same uncertainty. Since 1994, the year a truce was reached, the same uncertainty has continued. It is highly possible that the problem will continue in line with this scenario. The fact that the Minsk Group of the OSCE was not able to make any progress, the resolution process has had a never-ending uncertainty and turned into a “Palestine Syndrome” or “Kashmir Syndrome” causes anxieties such as the problem might continue for a long time or a sudden war may break out. How would a possible war affect Azerbaijan’s future? It is not possible to guess the result of the war before it even started. Armenia’s alliance with Russia hence the balance of power against Turkey and Azerbaijan in the region drives Azerbaijan to be more careful about a possible military move.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Артем Вартамян. “Проблема урегулирования конфликта в Нагорном Карабахе и роль международных организаций”, Москва, 2011, тема диссертации и автореферата по ВАК 23.00.04, <http://www.dissercat.com/content/problema-uregulirovaniya-konflikta-v-nagornom-karabakhe-i-rol-mezhdunarodnykh-organizatsii> (Date Accessed: September 30, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Hamidov, p. 156.

<sup>32</sup> Zaur Şiriyev, “Azerbaycan’ın Karabağ Politikası ve Stratejik Vizyonu”, *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Cilt: 6, Sayı: 12, İstanbul, 2011, p. 112.

<sup>33</sup> Gayane Novikova, “Implications of the Russian-Georgian War in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Limited Maneuverability” *Journal of Conflict Transformation: Caucasus Edition*, August 15, 2010. <http://caucasusedition.net/analysis/implications-of-the-russian-georgian-war-in-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-limited-maneuverability/> (Date Accessed: September 30, 2016).



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According to some analysts, for Azerbaijan to be able to start a military move, the country should first ensure Russia's impartiality. For this purpose, Russia should be given political, military, or economic compromises, it should be recognized as a party in energy transport and production, it should be provided a military base within the Azerbaijani territories and Azerbaijan should be a member to the Collective Security Treaty Organization.<sup>34</sup>

If it is taken into consideration that Armenia, occupying twenty percent of the Azerbaijani territories is a member of this organization, it is not possible for Azerbaijan to be a member of it under any circumstances. By joining this organization, Armenia intended to protect itself from Turkey and Azerbaijan. So, by joining the same organization, from whom will Azerbaijan protect itself? From Armenia or Russia? Moreover, Russia's stance on the Karabakh matter did not change even though Azerbaijan joined the CIS, rented the Gabele Radar Base to Russia, and cooperated with Russia in the field of energy. In other words, no compromise that Azerbaijan will give to Russia will make Russia change its attitude towards the problem.

Some analysts believe that Azerbaijan does not have the ability to materialize an extensive military operation against the occupation of its territories.<sup>35</sup> As a matter of fact, with its developing economy and military power, Azerbaijan has an incomparable superiority against Armenia. The Azerbaijani army has the power to dismiss the Armenian forces from its occupied territories. If this conflict was only an Azerbaijani-Armenian one, then Azerbaijan could have pursued it. Here, it is enough to remind that Russia illegally provided Armenia weaponry worth 1 billion dollars and Armenia extended the period of Russian military deployment on its territories until 2044 with an agreement signed in 2010. The most important article of the new agreement is that the military bases of Russia would protect the security of Armenia. If Azerbaijan attempts to retrieve its occupied lands from Armenia by using its legal rights, it will confront Russia's military intervention.

It is not realistic to assume that Azerbaijan would receive military and political assistance from foreign states. Azerbaijan's trust in the West has already been weakened with the indecisiveness of the Minsk Group of the OSCE and the double-standard approach of some states. Azerbaijan saw Russia's power and the best example to the West's untrustworthy friendship in the Russia-Georgia war the last time. The real purpose of the attack was for Russia to be able to demonstrate that it could still play hard. The Russian military had collapsed in 1990s and Russia had to renew the image of its army. It also intended to prove to former Soviet states that the alliance with America and the guarantees it would provide had no value. It was a small attack against a small state, but it was an attack against a state that was highly close to the USA. The unresponsiveness of the USA in the operation and the disregard of Europe surprised both the region and Eastern Europe. The message that the USA sent was limited to diplomatic notes and it proved that the USA was too far and Russia was too close and as long as the USA kept its soldiers in the Middle East, its attitude would be the same. Russia took this decision assuming that the real interests of the USA were in the Middle East rather the Caucasus region. George Friedman, the author of countless articles on national security, geopolitics, and intelligence and the founder of STRATFOR, the world's leading intelligence company, believes that it is senseless that the USA makes so many promises to Georgia. Friedman believes that Georgia would not provide the USA a lot of advantages. In

<sup>34</sup>Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, Krzysztof Strachota, "Nagorno-Karabakh-Conflict Unfreezing" *OSW Commentray, Center for Eastern Studies*, Issue 65, October 10, 2011. p. 6, [http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary\\_65.pdf](http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary_65.pdf) (Date Accessed: September 30, 2016).

<sup>35</sup>C. W. Blandy, Azerbaijan: Is War Over Nagorny Karabakh a Realistic Option? Advanced Research and Assessment Group. *Caucasus Series* 08/17, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, May 2008, p. 7.



other words, he believes that the US strategy in Georgia should not be followed any more. This is a strategy that remains from the Americans' understanding that such positions are without any risks and expenses. In a period when risks and expenses rise, the US should manage its expenses more carefully and it should accept that Georgia is more of a loss rather than a gain.<sup>36</sup>

Georgia's dependence on Russia may create a domino effect on Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is in the position of being a key supplier for the southern corridor, hence the energy diversity of Europe. This fact indirectly limits Russia's political influence on European matters. Therefore, if Russia takes more courage with the regression of the US and especially with its successful move to control Georgia, it might use its widened freedom of movement to intimidate Azerbaijan. Under such conditions, Azerbaijan will not have the tendency to challenge a reanimated Russia.<sup>37</sup> Azerbaijan already lost its confidence in the West, which made promises to Georgia that it could not keep. Azerbaijan knows that it does not have any support, and in the event that it enters into a war with Russia would influence its future with serious conditions. On the other hand, in the event that Azerbaijan starts military operations to protect its territorial integrity, it might have serious problems with integration with Western states and international institutions working for the democratization of the world. This is because the resolution of the conflict with war is not accepted by any international institutions of which Azerbaijan is a member.

Otherwise, it might result in freezing or cancellation of Azerbaijan's membership in these institutions. However, if Armenia and other states leave no choice to Azerbaijan, a war can be preferred despite everything. The resolution of the conflict in the legal framework is limited. In such a situation, the power factor gains momentum. However, this requires a long time. To retrieve its occupied territories, Azerbaijan should wait for the appropriate strategic conditions. Otherwise, to start a war without preparations can cause a serious chaos in the country. If Azerbaijan could not declare an absolute victory over Armenia, if the war lasts longer than planned and the casualties increase, there would be disapproval in the country. Foreign interventions would increase the disapproval and in the end, there would be an atmosphere of confusion and chaos. In this case, Azerbaijan could face ethnic problems as in the beginning of 1990s and the independence of the country could be under serious threat. For this reason, Azerbaijan should first complete its military education, be completely ready for a long-lasting war, be able to resist long-lasting economic and political sanctions and wait for the appropriate strategic conditions. When would such strategic conditions come along? Answering this question is pretty difficult.

In our opinion, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict will continue as a truce for a long period. There will always be uncertainty as to when the problem would be solved and Azerbaijan will start seeking alternative solutions again. Armenia and the Minsk Group of the OSCE co-chairmen will make new propositions and in the consequent phase, Armenia will pull away again. Then the situation will turn into uncertainty once again. Armenian and Azerbaijani heads of states or foreign ministers will have talks on different dimensions, and before every talk, new remarks will be made as to how hopeful they are and how high their expectations are, but in the end no results will have been reached again. Therefore, the truce will continue. Under these conditions, it might be concluded that the time is on Armenia's side. Armenia foresees that the occupation will be permanent within this process. There is no doubt that time gave the Armenians the opportunity to gain more power on territories they occupied. Armenia increased its military power with weaponry it received from Russia and other states and it

<sup>36</sup>George Friedman, *Gelecek 100 Yıl*, Istanbul, 2011, p. 169-170, 182.

<sup>37</sup>Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Amerika ve Küresel Güç Buhranı, Stratejik Vizyon*, Istanbul, 2012, p. 111.



turned into a militaristic state. However, no matter how much Armenia developed its military power, it is in an economically- backwards state. Even though Armenia keeps Azerbaijani territories under occupation, it has not had the chance to own the territories it occupied for reasons such as economic recession, demographic decrease, and recognizing of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan by other states even though they do not pronounce that Armenia is an occupying force. Armenia turned into the slave of the territories that it kept under the occupation. More precisely, Armenia got weaker, economically backwards and dependent while it intended to enlarge, grow and gain strength.

In conclusion, it is seen that the time is not on Armenia's side. Even though this state is keeping the Armenian territories under occupation, it cannot be considered as a winner as the occupation drove the country into economic and demographic recession and the double standards policy also influenced it. The most obvious proof of this is the fact that Armenia still has not been able to internalize the territories it is occupying and over time it turned into the slave of those. As a result of this, Armenia left itself outside of the integration process and the energy projects. Azerbaijan, however, developed economically despite the occupation and became the economic leader of the region. It is possible to assume that the conflict will continue in line with the "long term truce" scenario. It cannot be said that Azerbaijan is completely comes out of this problem as a winner, but at least when compared to Armenia, time is on Azerbaijan's side and it is increasing its means of economic pressure.

While Azerbaijan supports the peaceful resolution of the conflict, it indicated that it would not make any compromises on its territorial integrity and it would consort to the military means as the last option if necessary. Especially the fact that the Military Doctrine of Azerbaijan canalizes the defense spending to the use of the army's tactical and strategic capacity and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict was deemed as the primal national subject created reactions among the international community. Although Armenia considered the increase in Azerbaijan's military spending as a political maneuver, when Azerbaijan adopted the Military Doctrine on 8 June 2010 proved that Azerbaijan is not bluffing. In the Military Doctrine, it is stated that if military intervention is inevitable in line with geopolitical realities for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, such an intervention will be carried out. It is also stated in the Doctrine that international problems are not supported in ways that are against the international law and in line with the rights that the international law provides Azerbaijan, military force will be resorted to save Nagorno-Karabakh and 7 regions around it from Armenian occupation and this issue has been repeated continuously in the document.<sup>38</sup>

### Conclusion

Both sides are in zero-sum game. If the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is recognized, Nagorno Karabakh will have to give up its "de-facto" independence and Armenia will have to give up territorial pretensions. If the "de facto" independence of Nagorno Karabakh transforms into "de jure" independence, then Azerbaijan will have lost a great part of its territories and its territorial integrity will be destroyed. For this reason, the attitudes of the co-chairmen of the OSCE other than Russia are unclear. In other words, the Western states always have to balance the steps they take towards one side with another step towards the other side. The states that are not the co-chairmen of OSCE always evaluate the problem from the framework of the Minsk Group of the OSCE and they want to have mutual sincere relations with both states. However, while other Western co-chairmen—the USA and France—demand that the conflict be resolved in a peaceful manner, they blatantly react to the decisions of the UN Security

<sup>38</sup>For further information see: Azərbaycan Respublikasının Herbi Doktrinası, Azərbaycan Respublikasının Milli Meclisi, 08 Haziran 2010. <http://meclis.gov.az/?az/law/183#comment>. (Date Accessed: December 23, 2010).





Council. For them, the priority is reconciliation between the conflicting parties. Although the prolongation of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan stems from the Caucasian policy of Russia, it is in a complete accordance with the interests of the West. The Western States evaluate the Armenian issue from a geopolitical (i national, religious, and psychological) point of view and indirectly support Armenia. One of the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group, Russia, approaches the problem completely within the framework of its own interests. Russia is both undertaking the mediator role between the conflicting parties and arming Armenia. As mentioned, Russia's share in Armenia's weapon export is as much as 96%. This figure proves the role Russia played from the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict until today. Russia's move is unacceptable considering its mediating role. However, Russia clearly declared that the key to the conflict is in its hands by intervening in the conflict. It is not right to evaluate the situation only as an "Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict". If this was really an "Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict", both sides would have resolved the issue itself either peacefully or with a war. Judging from these evaluations, it can be concluded that it is not completely up to the states of Armenia and Azerbaijan to determine the "War and Peace" issue. In our opinion, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict will continue as a truce for a long period.

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