



Faculty of Legal Sciences

International Studies Program

**ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN IN
THE NAGORNO KARABAKH REGION
DURING THE PERIOD 2020-2022**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Bachelor in
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DEDICATION

This graduation thesis is dedicated to:

Economist Nathaly Enríquez, who inspires me, teaches me, and makes me a better person every day.

I hold deep admiration, respect, and love for you from the bottom of my heart. I always wish for your happiness, no matter what it entails.

Mrs. Clara Eudomilia Valle Arrobo, my beloved grandmother, may she rest in peace. She still accompanies me in every moment, and it brings me great joy to have her with me in this work.

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore, analyze, and understand the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh region during the 2020-2022 period. Consequently, a historical analysis of the context of Nagorno-Karabakh during the Soviet Union era is conducted. Second, the study investigates the characteristics and evolution of Nagorno-Karabakh following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Third, it seeks to comprehend the dynamics between Armenia and Azerbaijan during the 2020-2022 period. Finally, conclusions are drawn regarding the persistence of the conflict and the unresolved nature of the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN IN THE NAGORNO KARABAKH REGION DURING THE PERIOD 2020-2022

INTRODUCTION

The present thesis aims to investigate, analyze, and understand the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno Karabakh region during the period 2020-2022. This research is significant because it allows for understanding different ways of perceiving reality and, consequently, diverse methods for conflict resolution. Moreover, such studies are essential as they enable South American regions and developing countries to analyze and learn from practical cases of solutions to various dynamics occurring in the modern world. This knowledge is valuable as it helps identify similar traits, characteristics, and patterns in disputes between nations, potentially avoiding replication of similar situations or, alternatively, identifying and solving them by broadening options with different perspectives on existence in the planet.

According to Yamskov (1991), the Transcaucasian zone, where the current confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan occurs, was considered one of the most conflict-prone regions of the Soviet Union due to ethnic clashes that caused looting, deaths, and refugees. Therefore, the habitat of each human group becomes indispensable for developing ideas and beliefs and serves as an ecosystem where people coexist and create policies and norms in line with their idiosyncrasies. Consequently, the organization forms vary because environmental conditions differ, prompting each group to establish diverse strategies for survival.

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan arises in a context marked by significant historical, cultural, and ethnic differences among the peoples of these countries. Despite these distinctions, they were once part of a common government structure within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Although the dispute is not recent, over the years, and with the world's globalization, differences between Armenians and Azerbaijanis concerning the Nagorno Karabakh region have not been resolved.

During the Soviet era, Nagorno Karabakh had the peculiarity of being an autonomous oblast within the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, with a predominantly Armenian population (Fraser, 1990). According to Yamskov (1991), Nagorno Karabakh had self-governance and a degree of control over its policies but lacked territorial status. However, it is essential to note that the population of Nagorno Karabakh mainly comprised Armenians coexisting within the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, which enjoyed territorial recognition. Furthermore, Armenia, also recognized as a Soviet Socialist Republic, supported the right to self-determination, implicitly backing its Armenian counterparts within Azerbaijani territory.

This complex dynamic had already strained relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, the ideological and governance bond they shared would eventually break. As Yamskov (1991) points out, sharing the same ideology or opposing common enemy favors relations between ethnic groups. Therefore, after the Soviet Union's dissolution and the disintegration of the bond that tied the peoples of Nagorno Karabakh, two factions emerged: Armenians and Azerbaijanis, who would dispute this region. Czachor (2017) mentions that this conflict has a unique outcome, with the gain of one actor necessarily implying the loss of the other, making it challenging to find an alternative resolution.

In the international context, Azerbaijan has employed strategies of pressure through its ally Turkey, using blockades across various domains, relying on treaties and international law, and declaring threats of attack for violations thereof. On the other hand, Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia, prioritizing their interests, act as allies since both opt for deterring their enemy in favor of defending their right to self-determination and sovereignty (Czachor, 2017). Also, it is essential to mention Czachor's (2017) observation that Russia plays a secondary and indirect role as it seeks to satisfy its interests through its alliance with Armenia, maintaining influence over the region and the domestic and foreign policies of both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In summary, the Nagorno Karabakh area features ethnic, cultural, and ideological differences between Armenians and Azerbaijanis that have persisted over time, even though they shared a common government during the Soviet era. However, despite achieving independence, Armenia and Azerbaijan have not resolved a territorial dispute driven by opposing purposes and interests among their peoples. This has led to

continued confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the secondary involvement of actors such as Russia, pursuing their interests as global political actors.

Consequently, this thesis seeks to understand, analyze, and comprehend the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno Karabakh region. First, it aims to provide a historical analysis of Nagorno Karabakh during the Soviet period. Second, it examines the characteristics and evolution of Nagorno Karabakh after the Soviet Union's dissolution. Third, it delves into the dynamics between Armenia and Azerbaijan from 2020 to 2022. Finally, it presents conclusions on the conflict's persistence and the unresolved issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

CHAPTER 1

1. Historical Background: Nagorno Karabakh during the Soviet Union

In this chapter, the history and evolution of the conflict in the Nagorno Karabakh region are addressed. The focus is on the period during which the area was under the communist regime of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). According to Sánchez Sánchez (1996), the Soviet state referenced ended in December 1991, marked by the replacement of the tricolor flag of white, blue, and red with the traditional red flag used since the 1917 Revolution.

To comprehend the dynamics of the Nagorno Karabakh region during the Soviet era, this section outlines the most significant characteristics of Nagorno Karabakh and provides a brief historical context of the area prior to the Soviet era in the first subsection. The second subsection narrates the key events and developments throughout the period 1917-1991, emphasizing the Soviet Union's governance. Finally, the individual stances of Armenia and Azerbaijan within the framework of the Soviet government they belonged to are discussed.

This chapter is crucial because it facilitates an understanding of the generalities, main characteristics, and history of Nagorno Karabakh, a conflict-ridden area forming the subject of this thesis. Additionally, it examines the positions of the key actors involved: the Soviet Union, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. This set of information will be instrumental in contextualizing the historical conflict that this territory has experienced, leading to the period under study, 2020-2022.

1.1 Origin, characteristics and historical overview of Nagorno Karabakh

This chapter begins with a description of Nagorno Karabakh, addressing its main geographical, demographic, and economic characteristics. This will allow a better understanding of the study area, its inhabitants, and its resources. From there, it will become clear why Nagorno Karabakh is of significant importance to both its residents, neighboring countries, and the international community.

According to Tabakian (2021), the territory of Nagorno Karabakh, also known as Upper Karabakh or Artsakh, is a strategic geographical area that connects the Middle

East with Eurasia. Over time, this has led to clashes of civilizations, resulting in a mixture of religions, cultures, and traditions. As per Baddley (1908, cited in Martínez-Cantullera Guerrero, 2021), this zone is considered one of the areas with the highest concentration of cultures, races, and tribes worldwide.

Nagorno Karabakh is defined as a mountainous region located southeast of the Caucasus Mountain range. It spans approximately 4,400 square kilometers and is home to around 150,000 inhabitants, predominantly Armenians who practice Christianity, with a minority of Azerbaijani Turks who follow Islam (Piernas López, 2021).

This territory lies in the central Caucasus, also known as the Transcaucasian zone, which has been a site of conflicts and disputes throughout human history, involving different empires and civilizations. Initially, the area was part of the Armenian Kingdom, specifically the ancient province of Artsakh, characterized by its mountainous terrain. However, the arrival of Turkish tribes like the Seljuks in the 11th century led to a significant increase in the Turkmen population. This is considered one of the primary motivations behind Azerbaijan's claim over the conflict zone (Martínez-Cantullera Guerrero, 2021).

As noted by Yavuz & Gunter (2022), the dispute over Nagorno Karabakh represents a struggle for a small yet strategically vital territory in the Caucasus region. For Joya Ibarra (2011), the Caucasus serves as a corridor between the Black and Caspian Seas, facilitating the transportation of key resources like oil and gas. This indirectly involves neighboring countries such as Russia, Turkey, and Iran.

Furthermore, the region's highly mountainous terrain contributes to its ethnolinguistic diversity. For China, it serves as a critical belt connecting the New Silk Road. Nagorno Karabakh features a temperate cold climate, frequent strong winds, harsh winters, and brief summers. The area comprises three sections: the Syunik province in the west with its vast forested plateau; Lower Karabakh and the southern banks of the Kura River in the east; and the central region dividing Upper and Lower Karabakh, noted for its high mountains (Reyes, 2021).

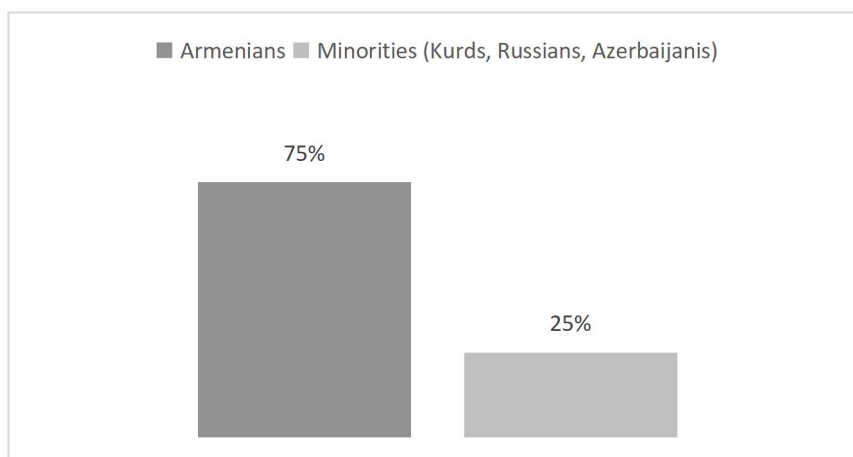
Figure 1 Nagorno Karabakh zone since 1994



Source: Reyes, 2021.

According to Farfán Inga & Santos Vintimilla (2022), this region holds significant geographical and political importance, as it is inhabited predominantly by a population of Armenian origin, despite being located within Azerbaijani territory, characterized by a population that practices Islam. Among the main ethnic groups are:

Figure 2 Main ethnic groups in Nagorno Karabakh



Source: Farfán Inga & Santos Vintimilla, 2022.

As can be observed, the majority of ethnic groups are Armenians, comprising approximately 75% of the population, while the remaining 25% consists of Kurds, Russians, and Azerbaijanis. Despite officially being located within Azerbaijani territory,

this demographic composition may constitute one of the main reasons for the ongoing conflicts between these two nations (Karlinsky & Torrisi, 2023).

On an economic level, the region's primary sustenance comes from mining activities, as deposits of gold, copper, and other high-value stones have been found in the area. Additionally, the region has hydroelectric dams that supply this resource to Armenia. However, due to the ongoing conflicts between the two nations, the region has suffered significant economic weakening, to the point of receiving subsidies from Armenia. Although in recent years it has shown an increase in its finances, these are primarily derived from such subsidies (Bruno, 2023).

1.2 Soviet Union Stance on Nagorno Karabakh

For the Upper Karabakh region, the following centuries were characterized by changes in the administration of the area. Until the 14th century, the regime alternated between Arabs, Mongols, Turks, and Persians. Although the population of Karabakh throughout this period remained mostly Armenians, it was not until the 14th century that Armenian leadership emerged, and the Persian Empire granted them autonomy. This agreement was in effect for four centuries, during which an Armenian elite was formed among a small number of families, whose confrontations eventually ended the government and autonomy of Nagorno Karabakh, and once again the Azeris took control through the Khanate regime, led by Turkish Muslim families (Cornell, 1999).

According to Makili-Aliyev (2007), Nagorno Karabakh, along with other provinces in the northeastern part of Armenia, shifted from Persian to Russian control following the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813. Subsequently, in 1840, through provisions of the prevailing regimes of Russian imperialism, Karabakh was aligned with the Caspian district of the Caucasus. Following this, in 1867, Karabakh became part of the Elizavetpol district. Finally, during the rest of the 19th century and early 20th century, there were no significant changes in the Karabakh area.

Then, in 1905, the first major confrontation between Armenians and Azeris occurred in the city of Baku on the Caspian Sea. On one side, the Azeris, with a historical rural background, and on the other, the Armenians, who were urbanized, professed different religions and cultures. These two factors influenced the Armenians, who were Christians and favored by the Christian Russian tsarist regime. The discord

soon spread beyond Baku, and community violence led to thousands of deaths among Armenians and Azeris (Fraser, 1990).

During World War I (1914-1918), Armenia and Azerbaijan briefly achieved independence. However, the multiculturalism and ethnicity of the Transcaucasian region did not allow for the creation of borders where populations shared the same characteristics. The center of the conflict shifted from Baku to distant provinces and communities, including Nagorno Karabakh, where Armenians comprised the vast majority, with more than 90% of the population being Armenian immigrants from Turkey and Iran (Fraser, 1990).

The disintegration of the Russian Empire following the October Revolution of 1917, coupled with the "national policy" doctrine of Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin, which consisted of reducing citizens' freedom to hold meetings, express themselves, or associate to suppress political opponents and advance the revolutionary process, were determining factors for the dispute over the Nagorno Karabakh region. Due to this doctrine, those leaving Russia were recognized with the right to self-determination. However, no process was established to leave Russia. Subsequently, between 1918 and 1920, the legislation of Nagorno Karabakh was implemented by Armenian assemblies (the majority of its population). On July 26, the independence of Nagorno Karabakh was declared, a National Council was established, and a government was created to administer the region (Isaeva, 2022).

The population clearly preferred to be part of Armenia due to their context; therefore, initially in 1920, the new Soviet authorities decided to place the Nagorno Karabakh area under Armenian administration. However, in recent times, the Russian Federation government endorsed claims over Azerbaijan, placing the region under Azerbaijani administration in 2021. While in 1923, it became an autonomous oblast (province) of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic (Williams, 2009).

Tensions and disputes have been present since 1923, when the Soviet regime created the autonomous province of Nagorno Karabakh within Azerbaijani territory. During the Soviet government, Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh made several movements to change the region's status. Khrushchev, chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, rejected the request to transfer the Karabakh area within

Armenian territory, signed by 2,500 Armenians from Karabakh Özkan (2008). As Ashur et al. (2021) point out, nationalist groups attempting to change the existing dynamics faced opposition from authorities who sought to maintain the status quo (state of affairs at that time), by opposing the changes demanded by others. Dignitaries in the autonomous province of Nagorno Karabakh attempted to suppress these movements with small concessions (satisfying the masses) while discrediting the leaders (fomenting division). Similarly, the Azeri national movement was formed after a year in response to the constant mobilizations of Armenians, and by 1898 it had reached a similar size and high level of organization as its Armenian counterpart.

According to Martínez Tomé (2021), the Nagorno Karabakh conflict began three years before the dissolution of the Soviet Union when this autonomous region declared its independence from Azerbaijan to integrate with Armenia. Actions for the unification of Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia were taken in 1987 with the signing of a petition by around 75,000 Armenians sent directly to Mikhail Gorbachev. Such actions motivated the Armenian members of the Nagorno Karabakh Parliament to vote in favor of Karabakh's integration with Armenia during the session of February 20, 1988.

Glasnost, commonly translated as transparency, was strongly promoted as a component of Gorbachev's project for the reconstruction of the USSR, known as Perestroika, which emphasized improving the broken economy and inefficient government through openness (Gibbs, 1999). This policy of openness and transparency contributed to Armenia resuming its campaign with greater vigor.

1.3 Armenia and Azerbaijan's Perspectives on Nagorno Karabakh

1.3.1. Armenia's Perspective

According to Setién (2020), Armenia's stance leans on the belief that the disputed region has belonged to it since the 9th century BC, later becoming (189 BC) the tenth province of the Kingdom of Armenia. This contrasts with those supporting Azerbaijan, who argue that the Caucasian Albanians were the first inhabitants of the area, long before the Armenians.

Priego Moreno (2016) observes that Armenia has adopted a stance of escalating the conflict, referring to it as a preventive war. Surrounding areas of the disputed region,

which already belong to Armenia, are considered liberated lands and renamed with Armenian references instead of Azerbaijani ones, with Nagorno Karabakh being renamed Artsakh.

The tension between these two countries lies in the fact that, to date, no resolution has been achieved to end the decades-long conflict over Nagorno Karabakh. Since 2018, through a peaceful revolution, Nikol Pashinyan became Armenia's Prime Minister, facing various challenges, including the COVID-19 crisis, which had significant economic repercussions. Consequently, the public's expectations for these new representatives have diminished (Botta, 2020).

However, Castro Torres (2020) highlights that Pashinyan took a position encouraging negotiations between the involved parties, which was rejected by Azerbaijani authorities. Additionally, he criticized the positive relations maintained by Kocharian (Armenia's minister) with Russia's president Vladimir Putin. This led Russia to channel efforts to balance power in the region to prevent conflicts from escalating further. Domestically, during the conflicts in 2020, Armenians expressed dissatisfaction with Pashinyan's foreign policy due to his closer alignment with western nations.

On the other hand, Alesso (2019) points out that Armenia does not recognize Nagorno Karabakh as an independent nation, which could indicate an effort to avoid international reprisals or further fragmenting ongoing negotiations. Nevertheless, for both the Armenian state and its civil society, integrating Nagorno Karabakh into Armenia holds critical significance, even taking precedence over economic matters.

Regarding foreign policy, Pashinyan has been adjusting Armenia's approach to the Nagorno Karabakh region. For instance, several parameters within Armenia's Security Strategy have been altered, emphasizing a more offensive military doctrine. Additionally, efforts have been made to shift Russia's stance—a nation that has shown little interest in resolving the conflict (Priego, 2016). This recent National Security Strategy aims to address the weakening of alliances formed within the conflict zone, pressing member nations of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), including Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan, to adhere to the principles for which the alliance was created and enhance its effectiveness in various operations (Botta, 2020).

1.3.2. Azerbaijan's Perspective

In the case of Azerbaijan, currently, it has taken a stance of alliance with Russia due to diminished support from Western countries. However, Russian government-controlled media have shown a pro-Armenian approach, while continuing their criticisms of the Azerbaijani prime minister (Castro Torres, 2020).

In the same vein, Setién (2020) notes that Azerbaijan considers the Nagorno-Karabakh region as part of its nation and aims to detach any form of interference or legislation previously imposed by Armenia illegally. For this purpose, it references the principle of territorial integrity, such as the Helsinki Final Act or Article 2.4 of the United Nations Charter, which essentially states that states belonging to this organization are obligated to respect the territorial integrity of each nation, prohibiting attacks on their border areas or, much less, the occupation of foreign territory.

Additionally, Júnior & Xavier (2018) point out that Azerbaijan's position leans entirely towards the annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh at any cost due to its strong military support, stemming from the resources generated by its oil exports. With this annexation, they aim to reintegrate refugees and establish a solid gas and oil transportation system to European nations, thereby reducing dependence on suppliers like Iran and Russia.

In conclusion, the dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region dates back to the time when the Soviet Union still existed and continues to the present day, maintaining constant tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The latter nation maintains that the contested region belongs to them, arguing the unconstitutionality of any separatist actions, while Armenia supports the separatist groups in Nagorno-Karabakh, focusing on both the culture and history that make it considered part of Armenia. The next chapter discusses what happened after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, after 1991. It provides information on how borders were established, under what form of government the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan were established, and what the international community's stance was regarding the changes taking place in Nagorno-Karabakh.

CHAPTER 2

2. NAGORNO KARABAKH POST-SOVIET UNION DISOLUTION

In August 1991, activities against Gorbachev, the president of the Soviet Union, recognized as one of the most relevant powers of the 20th century, began. After four months, the disintegration of the Soviet Union occurred. Since that event, several regions became independent, distancing themselves from the policies and economic interference originating from Moscow. While the process occurred in a short time, it was a complex one, involving various nations, among which Georgia stands out as it was a region with significant independence movements, thus becoming the first officially independent nation from the Soviet Union (López-Medel Bascones, 2011)

It can be mentioned that several key factors contributed to the disintegration of the USSR following the coup against Gorbachev, among which the political and nationalist aspirations driven by the president stand out, sparking the desire of certain sectors to have their own nationalist aspirations and create an identity. Additionally, in 1990, a law was passed stating that if more than two-thirds of voters in a referendum chose to separate from the USSR, the republic could separate or gain greater autonomy. Furthermore, several republics, especially those in Central Asia, agreed to support the continuation of the USSR from a renewed perspective, seeking a higher level of decentralization, as by that time, the USSR was facing a severe political and economic crisis, which contributed to its weakening and disintegration (López-Medel Bascones, 2011).

After this separatist event, Nagorno-Karabakh was left with multiple conflicts, as, upon declaring independence, the neighboring nations of Armenia and Azerbaijan began having conflicts over the conquest of this region, particularly from 1988 to 1994. Despite various mechanisms to reach agreements, to this day, there is no solution to establish clear boundaries in the region (Pesce & O'Shee, 2014).

2.1. Territorial Division Post-Soviet Union Disolution

At the end of the 1980s, the Soviet Union faced a series of difficulties that prevented it from maintaining control over all of its territory under this system, leading

to the independence of various regions. After the dissolution of the USSR, one of the most significant ongoing issues remains the dispute over different territories as well as conflicts between various ethnic groups. According to Glezer et al. (1991), the main causes are the ones described in Table 1:

Table 1 Main causes for desintegration of the Soviet Union

Causes	Description
Delimitations	Constant changes in geographical boundaries, leading to modifications in the status of the territories in conflict.
Territorial unity status	There were various processes for both reunification and the abolition of autonomies.
Lack of autonomy	Several ethnic groups lack autonomy or have it in foreign territories.
Ethnic heterogeneity	National autonomies formations.
National-political boundaries	This has caused division not only at the ethnic level, but also economically, culturally, confessionally, and historically.
Exclusions	Several peoples have been excluded from their original territories.

Source: Glezer et al., 1991.

Due to these causes, the USSR initially divided into 15 independent nations, with Russia being considered its successor. However, much of these republics remain under Moscow's influence, and only a few Baltic nations have managed to join the European Union and NATO (Otálora Sechague, 2019).

Although separatist movements initially began with a peaceful approach, over time, since the dissolution, various armed conflicts have been witnessed in several independent nations. While there were high expectations for these nations to become successful, to date, they face several political, social, and economic difficulties, which have impacted the quality of life for their inhabitants (But'ko et al., 2019).

In this way, it can be said that only three nations have remained stable since the dissolution of the USSR: the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), which joined the European Union in 2004. These nations have managed to withstand pressures from

both Russia and Poland and Hungary, countries that make up the communist bloc in Eastern Europe. Similarly, nations such as Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine have managed to form relatively stable democracies, in contrast to countries like Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, where authoritarianism is evident. Among these countries, Russia, considered the successor of the USSR, has a similar connotation due to the constant modification of its constitution, which favors the extension of the president's time in power and his ability to be re-elected (But'ko et al., 2019).

However, since Vladimir Putin came to power, Russia has renewed its influence both regionally and globally, taking advantage of the rise in hydrocarbon prices it exports. In recent years, several experts agree that the borders between the former Soviet Union member nations are constantly changing, sometimes even blurring. This is in the view of several western sectors that have labeled these conflict zones as post-soviet spaces, which could be seen as an inadequate perspective of the region (López Jiménez, 2023).

In the same way, the interest from the West in the region has been decreasing, which has allowed Russian influence to expand, especially in the South Caucasus, where the nations of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia are located. The latter two are the ones that have participated in several armed conflicts over the dispute of Nagorno-Karabakh.

2.2. Position of Nagorno Karabakh Inhabitants

According to official figures, the population of Nagorno-Karabakh was over 148,000 inhabitants as of 2020 and has been under international conflict since the dissolution of the Soviet Union to the present day. Initially, evidence shows that by 1988, Armenians lived in this area but requested to be relocated to Armenia. During this period, the instability of the USSR was already apparent, and tensions led to armed conflicts lasting until 1994, when Armenian military forces controlled the area. As a result, approximately one million inhabitants were displaced, leaving Azerbaijan (Atayants, 2022).

Since the beginning of the USSR's separation, the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh, of Armenian descent, sought to make the region part of the Republic of

Armenia. In response, Azerbaijan deployed military forces to attack the separatist groups, which led to armed conflicts. In 1991, following the independence of both nations from the USSR, a war broke out between them, resulting in over a million refugees and nearly 30,000 deaths. This conflict was characterized by the aim to eliminate all ethnic traces of the opposing country, meaning the Armenian armed forces attacked the Azeri population, while Azerbaijanis attacked the Armenian ethnic group, resulting in thousands of deaths (Piernas López, 2021).

This predominantly Armenian population has a well-established sense of identity and, as part of their values, has fostered self-determination among its inhabitants to continue with their independence processes. Despite facing significant obstacles and international interference, economic blockades, and other challenges, its population has managed to proclaim itself an independent nation with a functional state, economy, institutions, and more, although it is not recognized by other countries (Hakobyan, 2022).

Moreover, Nagorno Karabakh inhabitants hold a strong conviction toward their heritage, culture, roots, religion, language, and traditions that have been formed over the years by their ancestors, and they desire these to continue. Nagorno-Karabakh is home to several historical buildings, such as fortresses, temples, monasteries, and churches, which constitute the material religious heritage of its people, and they wish to preserve them despite facing insecurity, conflicts, uncertainty, and constant threats (Paronyan et al., 2022).

Among the historical sites most feared by Armenians to be destroyed is the Medieval Dadivank Monastery, which consists of several churches built near Kalbajar, some of which were constructed over the remains of previous buildings (Mkrtichyan, 2009).

In 2020, the population of Nagorno-Karabakh entered another armed conflict that lasted six weeks, resulting in over 5,000 deaths and the displacement of thousands more, while COVID-19 outbreaks were also occurring, leading to a severe humanitarian crisis in the region (Kazaryan et al., 2021). Thus, in less than a month, about 150,000 inhabitants had to flee to Armenia, while those who chose to stay had to hide in various basements built in the area (Shoib et al., 2022).

In recent years, and due to the ongoing armed conflicts, the population has been running out of resources, and food shortages are evident. However, the population considers this area as the Republic of Artsakh, which continues to have a higher presence of Armenians but is recognized internationally as an official part of Azerbaijan. Since late 2022, this region has been blocked by the Azerbaijani government, creating the risk of a genocide in the conflict zone (Magee, 2023).

Although the Azerbaijani government has recently proposed guarantees for the rights of the Armenian population settled in Nagorno-Karabakh, almost the entire population is considering leaving the area while awaiting policies in favor of their people, as well as an end to the conflicts between both nations. As a result, it is evident that the inhabitants of the region do not have separatist tendencies but are determined to inhabit the spaces where generations have settled (Romero López, 2021).

2.3. Armenia and Azerbaijan's Dispute in the International field

The dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan dates back to their separation from the USSR and their proclamation as independent nations, motivated by the desire to annex the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which has a predominantly Armenian population. In 1988, the Armenian inhabitants of the area, with the support of the Armenian state, began campaigns against the Azerbaijani ethnic group, harshly criticizing the policies developed by Baku regarding the economic and cultural context of Nagorno-Karabakh. On February 20th 1988, Azerbaijan was requested to cease its republic status so the region could be annexed to Armenia. However, two days later, Azerbaijan counterattacked with rallies and protests in Sumgait and Baku (Shiriyev & Davies, 2013).

One of the strategies employed by Armenia in 1986 was to request Moscow's integration of Nagorno-Karabakh, with the petition of over 80,000 residents of the area. However, this request was rejected. As a result, armed groups from Azerbaijan attacked the disputed area, with members of the KGB being involved in the violent events. These incidents led to the emergence of the Karabakh Committee, and Gorbachev proposed economic development measures for the sector, which were not a solution to the conflict, but were made to buy time (Migdalovitz, 2001)

In this way, neither side accepted the measures proposed by Moscow, and the representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh decided to declare themselves as an independent nation, intending to integrate into Armenia, which was not accepted by Moscow. It is evident that, despite being established as independent nations, both still have strong conditioning by Moscow (Croissant, 1998).

In this context, it is important to mention that in 1992, the creation of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was promoted to facilitate negotiations for resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The group was co-chaired by Russia, France, and the United States, with efforts focused on promoting peaceful dialogue between the conflicting parties, making proposals, and organizing meetings to bring positions closer. Despite these efforts, the conflict has resurfaced several times since (OSCE, 2020).

While there are internal factors within both nations, external factors related to the geopolitical interests in the region stand out because Nagorno-Karabakh is located in a strategically important area for both regional countries and the major world powers (Mozaffari & Barry, 2022).

Over the past few years, Armenia has experienced significant weakening, losing almost 60% of the territory it controlled to Azerbaijan since the independence movements of 1991. This decline is primarily due to the technological advancements provided by Russia and Turkey, with which Armenia struggles to compete (Babayeva-Shukurova, 2022). Meanwhile, Azerbaijan has been bolstering its military strength, largely funded by revenues from oil exports and strategic alliances with Israel, Turkey, and Russia. This has enabled Azerbaijan to acquire a variety of modern weaponry, including ballistic missiles, drones, Smerch systems, aircraft, and helicopters (Shafiyev, 2022).

As a result, Azerbaijan ranks 52nd in terms of military resources, while Armenia ranks 44 places lower, in 96th place, which represents a clear disadvantage between both nations. Therefore, Armenia adopts a more defensive approach, especially regarding the airspace, as it has about a dozen pieces of air equipment, which limits its ability to carry out attacks, while Azerbaijan has a solid aerial armament, including drones from Israel (Rauf, 2023).

In the same way, Baldeón González (2021) indicates that both Turkey and Russia have been part of this confrontation, contributing military, economic, and political resources, as these two nations cooperate on defense, nuclear energy, gas energy, and trade. In 2016, the Four-Day War occurred, where Azerbaijan attacked various areas along the Line of Control, managing to regain part of the lost territory, leading to modifications in the line. However, with the use of diplomatic resources by Russia as a negotiator, hostilities ended, but no resolution of the conflict itself occurred, increasing the risk of future crises.

Despite much of the international community calling for a ceasefire, Turkey supported Azerbaijan due to its significant geopolitical interest in having Nagorno-Karabakh as part of its strategic ally, reaffirming the internationalization of the conflict. In September 2020, incidents occurred in different areas of the new Line of Contact, where both nations blamed each other for initiating the attacks, leading to martial law being declared by both governments (Adalian, 1995). However, at Putin's initiative, in November 2020, an agreement was reached where Azerbaijan regained areas lost during the initial conflicts in the early 1990s, as well as the enclave areas. This trilateral agreement, signed by Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia, redefined the territory in favor of Azerbaijan, which many experts consider a victory for the Azerbaijani ethnic group (Nejad, 1995).

Consequently, it is evident that Russia is committed to intervening or mediating between the two nations in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, to ensure stability, at least partially, even deploying part of its military arsenal near the conflict zone (Čurčija & Pavič, 2022). Russia has shown interest in providing assistance and cooperation since 1997, thanks to the agreement signed between both sides, which established defense support in military or intervention situations, as well as the modernization of an air defense system. However, in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Russia has not intervened according to the established agreements. Similarly, Russia is the nation that supplies arms to Armenia and has a permanent influence on Armenia's military doctrine (Simão, 2012).

On the other hand, it is evident that in recent years, Armenia has been weakened, as although it controls the so-called security belt, it has faced difficulties in obtaining

energy resources, while its financial system prevents it from having enough autonomy to establish relations with other nations (Rumyansev, 2019). Russia is aware of these weaknesses, which is why it has become a guarantor to reduce the risk of new conflicts. In this regard, it is worth noting Putin's position on Armenia and Azerbaijan, whom he considers strategic partners for Russia, with the aim of maintaining influence in the South Caucasus region (Çakmak & Cüneyt Özşahin, 2023).

All this international interest stems from the strategic location of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, both in terms of energy and military importance. Many nations, either directly or indirectly, seek to influence and dominate the sector. In terms of energy, the conflict zone holds significant value because energy transport systems have advantages when passing through it. However, for Western countries, the interest in Nagorno-Karabakh has diminished, as the members of the Minsk Group (Russia, the United States, and France) have taken a mediating position without achieving any substantial progress (Öztiğ, 2023).

Recently, Iran has also shown interest in Nagorno-Karabakh due to agreements it is making with Azerbaijan and Russia on international cooperation in communications, energy, security, and economy. Thus, they have developed the North-South International Transport Corridor (INSTC), a network that connects Iran, Russia, and the Middle East via Azerbaijan, making it a key area for negotiations between these nations (Mustaqim, 2021).

However, Iran currently maintains energy relations with Armenia since the latter needs an alternative energy supply to the gas it previously received from Russia. Therefore, Iran can be considered a nation inclined towards Armenia, as demonstrated during the energy blockade imposed by both Azerbaijan and Turkey, where Iran supported Armenia with energy resources. This support also reflects the strained relations between Tehran and Baku, primarily due to Azerbaijan's pro-Western and Kemalist model, the nearly 20 million Azerbaijanis living in northern Iran, and the conflict of interests between the two nations in the Caspian Sea region, where several oil fields are located (Mustaqim, 2021).

Based on this review of the literature, the state of the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region has been demonstrated, as well as the perspective of each of the countries involved in the conflict, where, in addition to economic, political, and

geographical importance, an ethnic connotation has been identified in the dispute over this territory. Although the Nagorno-Karabakh region has faced conflicts for centuries, the 20th century saw an upsurge of problems in the 1980s, and despite the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Soviet influence is still strongly evident. Throughout this time, thousands of civilians have been killed, and many people have been displaced from their locations (Shafiyev, 2022).

This conflict has had negative impacts on the region, causing divisions in the international community, especially among nations with interests, mainly because the region is considered a route for hydrocarbon transport (Gahramanova, 2007).

CHAPTER 3

3. Analysis of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict (2020-2022)

This chapter presents an analysis of the conflict that occurred in the Nagorno Karabakh region during the 2020–2022 period. At the beginning of this period, tensions reignited between Armenia and Azerbaijan. According to Palacios Cuéllar (2024), the conflict began on September 27, 2020, when Azerbaijani troops attacked the disputed zone, which was under Armenian occupation. In response, Armenia mobilized its military resources to the area.

After six weeks of intense fighting, both armies were exhausted and had suffered numerous deaths. On November 8, 2020, Azerbaijani forces managed to capture Shusha, a strategic location that allowed them to dominate Stepanakert, the capital city of Nagorno Karabakh. A day later, with Russian involvement, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan signed a ceasefire agreement, stating that: "Azerbaijan took control of parts of Nagorno Karabakh, including its surroundings and strategic positions such as Shusha" (Palacios Cuéllar, 2024, p. 2).

According to Moreno Mercado et al. (2022), this series of armed conflicts resulted from a prior diplomatic crisis that began in July 2020, during which several attacks occurred approximately 185 miles from Nagorno Karabakh. However, the ceasefire date was November 10, 2020. In a televised announcement, Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin, representing the Minsk Group, declared the end of the armed conflict.

Based on official reports provided by the countries involved, the clashes resulted in 143 civilian casualties, 2,783 Azerbaijani soldiers, and 2,425 Armenian soldiers. In this context, there was weak or nearly nonexistent involvement from the United States and the European Union. Conversely, nations such as Iran, Turkey, and Russia contributed diplomatically to peace negotiations (Moreno Mercado et al., 2022).

3.1. Escalation and evolution (2020-2022)

According to the analysis by Apará Abumohor (2023), the initial events leading to the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War took place during the clashes between July 12

and 16, 2020, in the Tovuz district of Azerbaijan and the Tavush province of Armenia. Although these areas lie outside the officially recognized conflict zone, these confrontations and are not considered the formal start of the war. Furthermore, the zone which is located less than 20 kilometers from the South Caucasus Pipeline, has critical importance because it transports natural gas from Azerbaijan near the Caspian Sea to Georgia, where it connects to the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline, ultimately delivering the resource to Turkey and linking with the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline in Italy.

The hostilities in July 2020 became a catalyst for public demand in Azerbaijan, prompting citizens to pressure their government to take action toward reclaiming lost territories. Subsequently, in August 2020, Azerbaijani and Turkish military forces conducted joint exercises, financed by Turkey with approximately \$120 million in military equipment to Azerbaijan (Apara Abumohor, 2023).

Ortega and Calabró (2021) emphasize that one of the primary drivers of the conflict is the strategic control of hydrocarbon trade. Azerbaijan's role as a significant energy supplier supports nations such as Israel, Eastern European countries, and Turkey. The key regional pipelines can be seen in Table 2:

Table 2 Major pipelines in the region

Pipeline	Transport
Baku – Tbilisi - Ceyhan	Desde Asia central a Turquía y Georgia.
Baku - Supsa	Desde el mar Caspio hasta el mar Negro.
South Caucasus Pipeline	Conecta a Baku, Tbilisi y Erzurum.

Source: Ortega & Calabró, 2021.

One significant point to highlight is that these pipelines bypass Armenia, resulting in the loss of royalties for the country and a looming fuel shortage. Motivated by these commercial blockades, Armenia's 2020 National Security Strategy asserts that Azerbaijani leadership hinders the peace process. This has prevented a resolution regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh region, as Armenia accuses Azerbaijan of lacking

commitment, adopting an expansionist stance, distorting history, and even promoting anti-Armenian policies. These accusations are substantiated by military exercises near the contact line, troop movements, construction of military-purpose structures, incursions, ceasefire violations, among other actions (Ortega & Calabró, 2021).

Another important aspect to note is that during the hostilities, although combat aircraft were not employed, Azerbaijan utilized HAROP drones from Israel and BAYRAKTAR TB12 drones from Turkey. These drones demonstrated significant offensive capabilities. Meanwhile, Armenia relied on Russian-made drones, which were primarily defensive in nature, focusing on neutralizing enemy drones (Pérez Arreieu & Allende, 2021).

Table 3 highlights the main events that occurred during the conflict, according to Bossio (2021):

Table 3 Main events during the conflict

Date	Event
May 21	The Prime Minister of Armenia attends the inauguration of the new leader of the Republic of Artsakh.
July 12-16	Clashes occur in Tavush, a border province of Armenia.
July 29 – August 10	Clashes occur in Tavush, a border province of Armenia.
September 27	Azerbaijan launches attacks on Armenia's air defenses, including bombings. Martial law is declared.
October 3	Armenia experiences significant losses in military resources, damage to bridges in Artsakh, supply shortages, and communication disruptions. The Azerbaijani president announces the liberation of five cities.
October 5	The Azerbaijani president declares the liberation of three additional cities.

October 7	Reports emerge of desertions and shortages within Armenian forces, which continue attacking Azerbaijani areas.
October 10	Azerbaijani forces liberate Jabrayil, a location housing Armenia's first line of defense.
October 13 - 15	The city of Hadrut is liberated.
October 18	Russia announces a humanitarian ceasefire.
October 23	Azerbaijan secures the Aras River valley and areas bordering Iran.
October 26	The United States announces a humanitarian ceasefire.
October 29	Azerbaijani forces attack the Lachin Corridor, located about 20 km from Shusha.
November 4	Shusha becomes an active war zone.
November 6	The Azerbaijani president declares victory in Shusha. Attacks continue in the east and north of the city.
November 9	A peace agreement is signed by the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia.
November 10	A ceasefire is implemented.
November 15	Armenian forces withdraw from the Kalbajar District.
November 20	Armenian forces withdraw from the Agdam District.

December 1	Armenian forces withdraw from the Lachin District.

Source: Bossio, 2021.

From this chronological overview, it is noteworthy that on November 9, 2020, facing imminent military defeat and following the capture of Shusha, Armenia agreed to sign a peace agreement mediated by Russia. This agreement, known as the Moscow Declaration, outlined the following key points:

- Cessation of hostilities: Both parties agreed to an immediate cessation of all military operations as of 00:00 on November 10, 2020 (Galstyan, 2021).
- **Deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces:** Russia deployed approximately 2,000 peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin Corridor to ensure compliance with the ceasefire and the security of communication routes between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh (Stronski, 2020)
- Return of territories: Armenia agreed to return the districts of Agdam, Kalbajar, and Lachin to Azerbaijan, resulting in the loss of much of the territory controlled by Armenian forces since 1994 (Cornell, 2021).

Focusing on the agreement regarding the return of territories, it is evident that the locations captured by the Azerbaijani army correspond to the territories lost during the 1994 conflict, as detailed in Figure 3, in addition to an area in the southern part of Nagorno-Karabakh, as shown in Figure 4.

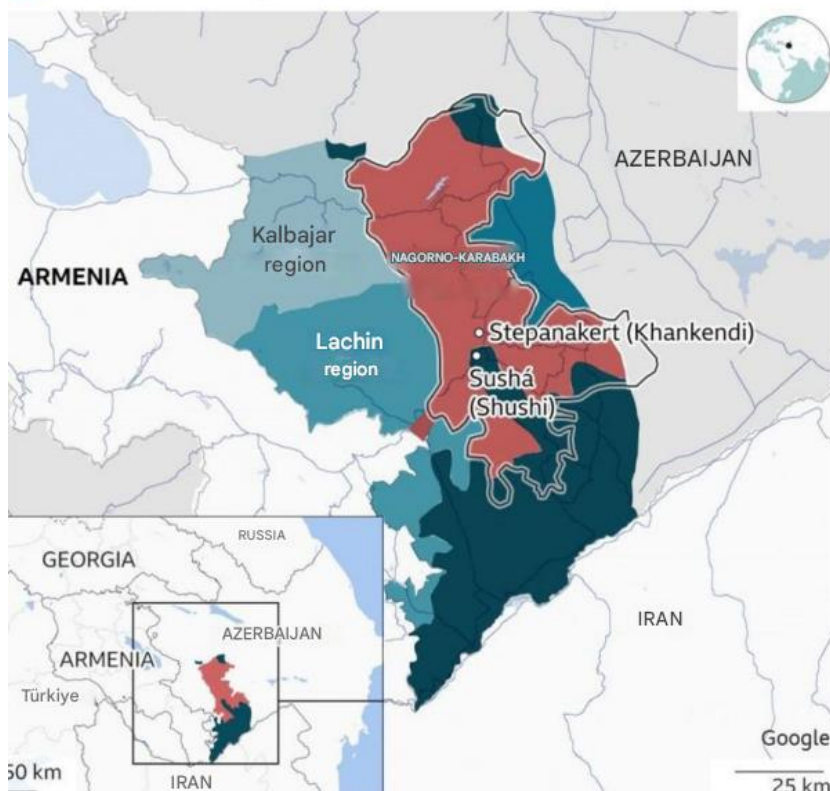
Figure 3 Nagorno Karabakh map before the resumption of armed conflict in september.



Source: (Setián, 2020)

Figure 4 Peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia

Peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan



Source: Bossio, 2021.

The signing of the agreement generated mixed reactions internationally. While Russia acted as the primary mediator, Turkey celebrated the agreement as a victory for Azerbaijan and an example of Ankara's growing power and influence in the region (Stronski, 2021).

The United States and the European Union supported the ceasefire but expressed concerns about the absence of a mechanism for long-term conflict resolution and the increasing influence of Russia and Turkey in the South Caucasus (Broers, 2021).

Throughout 2021, multiple violations of the ceasefire were reported, particularly along the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Syunik and Gegharkunik regions. These incidents included exchanges of gunfire, Azerbaijani incursions into Armenian territory, and the occupation of strategic positions in disputed areas (Welt, 2022).

Azerbaijan justified these actions by claiming they were adjusting borders based on Soviet-era maps, while Armenia denounced them as acts of aggression and violations of the peace agreement (Cornell, 2021). Romero López (2021) highlights that these confrontations were triggered on May 12, 2021, when Azerbaijani forces crossed into Armenian territory in the Gegharkunik and Syunik regions, despite calls from France, the United States, and the European Parliament for the withdrawal of Azerbaijani troops, the occupation continued until July. Consequently, In August, armed conflicts erupted along the Nakhchivan-Armenia and Gegharkunik-Kalbajar borders.

Between July 7 and 15, 2021, further clashes occurred in Shusha, Nakhchivan, Gadabay, and Tovuz. On July 22, the Azerbaijani president declared that Syunik, an Armenian region, was part of Azerbaijan, justifying their military presence. The following day, an Azerbaijani soldier was reportedly killed by an Armenian sniper, and five days later, five Armenian soldiers were killed in clashes in Gegharkunik and Kalbajar (Center for Preventive Action, 2024).

In November 2021, tensions escalated in the Syunik region when Azerbaijani forces attempted to advance toward the highway connecting Armenia and Iran, a vital corridor for Armenia's economy. This confrontation resulted in casualties on both sides and further heightened regional tensions (Stronski, 2021).

In 2022, additional clashes between the two nations underscored the failure of the 2020 peace agreement. In January, three Armenian soldiers and one Azerbaijani soldier were killed. Two months later, women and children were evacuated from the Farukh region after Azerbaijani forces invaded the area. In April, peace talks were held between representatives of the two countries with the participation of European Council President Charles Michel (de Waal, 2021).

At the beginning of August 2022, armed clashes broke out again in the northern conflict zone, prompting the international community, led by the European Union, to call for a ceasefire. However, the conflict intensified in September, particularly in Lachin, Kalbajar, and Dashkasan, resulting in the deaths of 71 Azerbaijani and 105 Armenian soldiers. On September 15, a ceasefire was announced following an agreement between the two nations. Subsequently, in October, the European Political Community Summit was held in Prague, where the deployment of a European committee along the Armenian border was agreed upon to aid in the definitive delimitation of the two countries (Crisis Group, 2023).

3.2. Russia's Influence on the Conflict

According to Pérez-Arreieu & Allende (2021), countries such as Israel, Turkey, and Russia have direct interests in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Russia supports Armenia with military equipment, whereas Azerbaijan, with the backing of Israel and Turkey, utilized drones to carry out effective attacks, resulting in a significant number of Armenian casualties.

Milosevich-Juaristi (2023) notes in their article that Russia is regarded as the primary arms supplier to both nations, while the United States and Turkey exclusively support Azerbaijan. Additionally, Russia maintains a military base on Armenian territory.

Since 2016, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Iran have held multiple summits to cooperate on communications, energy, security, and economic matters. From these meetings emerged the program for the establishment of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), aimed at connecting Iran, Russia, and the Middle East through Azerbaijan, thus enhancing Azerbaijan's economic and political leverage over Iran (Baldeón González, 2021).

Russia considers both nations in conflict as strategic partners, maintaining cordial relations with each. In Armenia, Russia holds significant influence, operating a military base since 1996, currently staffed with around 3,000 troops. Several agreements between the two nations, such as the 1997 “Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance” treaty, allowed for Russian defense against external aggression. In 2015, a joint air defense system was established, enhancing the protection of Armenian airspace. In 2016, a joint military force committee was formed. However, Russia refrains from engaging militarily in defense of Nagorno-Karabakh, as it does not recognize the region's independence (Baldeón González, 2021).

According to Peña-Ramos (2018), Armenia views Russia as a strategic partner due to its limited capacity to protect its borders. Russian troops monitor critical borders, particularly with Iran and Turkey. Additionally, Russia ensures Armenia’s continued purchase of Russian oil and gas, generating annual sales of approximately €350 million. Russia has also shown interest in constructing various projects related to natural gas, electricity generation, and gas transportation in Armenia.

Azerbaijan maintains relationships with Russia while also fostering ties with the United States, Turkey, Iran, and the European Union. However, Russia perceives Azerbaijan’s alignment with NATO negatively, given its historical context and its closer ties to the West. These dynamics have resulted in fluctuating relations between the two nations. Until 2009, Russia had over 9,000 soldiers stationed at the Gabala radar military base in Azerbaijan (German, 2012).

Russia’s policy concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict primarily revolves around functioning as a mediator under the Minsk Group's directives while avoiding direct involvement in military conflicts. Thus, Russia seeks to "maintain a delicate balance between the mutually exclusive positions of Armenia and Azerbaijan" (Baldeón González, 2021, p. 124).

Peña-Ramos (2018) argues that Russia's influence in the conflict stems from its geostrategic interests in the South Caucasus, which it pursues militarily, economically, and politically. Russia’s global influence is significantly bolstered by its energy sector, which has grown since 2 000. Energy trade accounts for 50% of Russia's net income, enabling it to wield energy resources as a tool to alter power dynamics in neighboring

regions, ensuring dominance in the European market and dependency among former Soviet states (p. 228).

Given this scenario, Russia cannot sever its ties with Azerbaijan, especially considering its importance in the energy sector, as many resources exported by Azerbaijan transit through Russian territory. Simultaneously, Russia exerts pressure on Azerbaijan to limit its relations with Turkey, emphasizing that a favorable resolution regarding Nagorno-Karabakh is only possible if Azerbaijan respects Russia's geostrategic interests (Modebadze, 2021).

Russian influence in the conflict is significant due to the region's hydrocarbon reserves. According to Abushov (2019), Azerbaijan has an estimated reserve of 35 trillion cubic feet of gas and 7 billion barrels of oil. Moreover, a pipeline network connects the Caspian Sea through Russia to the Black Sea, prompting Russia to prioritize the maintenance and expansion of similar infrastructures.

In summary, Russian influence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a complex process that has grown over the years. One defining aspect of this influence is its military presence, which has contributed to relative stability but is also perceived by some as a means to maintain control and prevent Armenia and Azerbaijan from reaching a peace agreement.

As 2022 progressed, Russia, the primary guarantor of the peace agreement, faced challenges in maintaining stability in the region, particularly due to its involvement in other global conflicts, such as the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which significantly diverted its resources and attention (Galstyan, 2021).

3.3. International Intervention in the conflict

According to Bossio (2021), there is significant evidence suggesting that prior to the 2020 conflict, the Azerbaijani army received support from Turkish military personnel in Baku, notably including specialists in unmanned aerial vehicles and pilots. Additionally, F-16 fighter jets from Turkey were observed flying over Armenian territory, with accusations that they were not only conducting reconnaissance but also responsible for downing an Armenian SU-25 subsonic attack aircraft. At the same time, there is also consideration of the participation of Syrian troops, sponsored by Turkey through private companies.

This is confirmed by Milosevich-Juaristi (2023), who indicates that Turkey has been supporting Azerbaijan since the 1980s due to their ethnic similarities, as well as their commercial and cultural relations. Before the 2020 conflict, Turkey supplied weapons, including technological warfare equipment, drones, and various other weapons, particularly the TB-2 drones. Politically, Turkey has also supported Azerbaijan by urging the Azerbaijani people to reclaim the occupied territories.

According to Asbridge (2023), Turkey is considered the first country to recognize Azerbaijan as a nation after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Alesso (2019) suggests that the relationship between both nations is based on three key pillars: military strength, hydrocarbon resources, and ethnic/cultural affinity. In the case of military strength, Turkey provides Azerbaijan with military armament and conducts training exercises with NATO's approval. Regarding hydrocarbon resources, the two countries have collaborated on projects such as the Baku-Erzurum gas pipeline and the BTC oil pipeline, and they are planning the development of a railway network intended to connect the two nations along with the Eurasian bridge and Georgia. Finally, in terms of cultural affinity, Azerbaijan's government bases its political and social growth on the Turkish model.

Israel has also played a role in the conflict, supporting Azerbaijan with satellite technology, missiles, and drones that were employed during the fighting. The agreements made in previous years between the two countries amount to \$5 billion in 2017, surpassing \$1.6 billion in 2012. This agreement is a result of Azerbaijan being Israel's main energy supplier (Bossio, 2021).

Milosevich-Juaristi (2022) points out that several nations have been investing in these two post-Soviet republics, including Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, the United States, and the European Union, due to various interests, notably the hydrocarbons provided by the region. The following table outlines the investment values for each country:

Table 4 Investments towards Armenia and Azerbaijan during 2016 - 2020

US\$ million		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Armenia	Russia	1,595	1,374	1,735	1978	1,553
	China	3	3	3	3	3
	Türkiye	0	0	0	0	0
	Iran	70	71	75	80	78
	USA	262	250	227	218	207
	EU-27	1,052	1,110	1,186	1,400	1,262
Azerbaijan	Russia	621	800	953	977	1,318
	China	189	176	177	187	195
	Türkiye	5,179	5,797	5,925	6,059	5,788
	Iran	2,263	2,523	2,581	2,552	2,588
	USA	606	679	669	465	515
	EU-27	5,366	5,786	5,725	6,011	6,181

Source: Milosevich-Juaristi, 2022.

Another nation with interests in the conflict is Iran, which, despite declaring its neutrality, has shown direct support for Armenia. Iran has even hosted around 19 million Azerbaijani citizens, nearly double the population living in Azerbaijan. Additionally, Iran is highly concerned about Azerbaijan's plan to construct a corridor connecting the country to the Nakhchivan Sea, which would, in turn, cut off Iran's access to Yerevan (Milosevich-Juaristi, 2023).

Given these considerations, the complexity of international intervention in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict becomes evident, as it has led to various implications and interests from neighboring nations, all of which are invested in the stability and resolution of the conflict. After Russia, significant interest is also shown by Turkey, Israel, Iran, the European Union, and the United States, with many of these nations investing substantial amounts of money in the region. Specifically, the United States and the European Union expressed concerns over the escalation of the conflict, but their ability to influence the situation was limited due to geographical distance and the lack of direct strategic interests in the region. Nevertheless, both actors continued to support mediation efforts and humanitarian work in the post-conflict period (Broers, 2021).

Finally, the current challenges surrounding this conflict can be summarized in the following points:

- Security in Nagorno Karabakh: The presence of Russian peacekeeping forces in Nagorno Karabakh has temporarily stabilized the situation, but the lack of an

agreement on the final status of the region suggests that tensions could flare up again at any time (Welt, 2022).

- **Armenia-Azerbaijan Relations:** Although the 2020 conflict has ended, relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan remain tense. Issues such as prisoners of war, violations of the ceasefire, and regional militarization continue to be points of friction that could lead to new confrontations (Galstyan, 2021).
- **Geopolitical Implications:** The conflict has reaffirmed Russia and Turkey's roles as key actors in the Caucasus, while underscoring the limited ability of the West to influence the region. In this context, the South Caucasus will remain a contested zone between these powers, with significant implications for both regional and global security (Cornell, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

Through the analysis of the history and tensions surrounding the Nagorno Karabakh region, this thesis aims not only to understand the origins of the conflict but also the reasons why it has been so difficult to achieve peace between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The conclusions are presented as a journey through the key points addressed in this academic work, offering a perspective that encourages reflection and understanding of one of the ongoing conflicts today, such as the case of the Nagorno Karabakh area.

In Chapter One, which discusses the historical context, the roots of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict are explored. This territory's history is marked by centuries of coexistence and confrontations between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Under Soviet rule, this region was managed in a way that exacerbated ethnic differences rather than resolving them. Soviet policies, often ambiguous and contradictory, fostered an environment of distrust and competition between the two peoples. By not clearly defining the sovereignty of Nagorno Karabakh, the Soviet Union left behind a legacy of unresolved conflicts, which, after its dissolution, transformed into an open war. Additionally, the chapter addresses the positions of both countries: Azerbaijan, which claims the region as its own and considers any separatist movement unconstitutional, and Armenia, which supports the separatists, basing its claim on the Armenian history

and culture of the region. In summary, this chapter shows how history and politics intertwined to seed a conflict that persists to this day.

In Chapter Two, which analyzes the region after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it is highlighted that the Nagorno Karabakh conflict intensified dramatically. The lack of a clear territorial agreement created a power vacuum that quickly filled with violence and war. The inhabitants of Nagorno Karabakh, caught between two nations with contradictory claims, have lived in a constant state of uncertainty and tension. This chapter emphasizes how the national aspirations of Armenia and Azerbaijan have clashed with the identity and desires of the local population, further complicating any attempt at peaceful resolution. Despite the efforts of the international community, it has not been able to mediate an effective and lasting solution, leaving the inhabitants of the region in a painful and prolonged limbo.

Finally, in Chapter Three, which analyzes the conflict between 2020 and 2022, a significant escalation in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is evidenced, with devastating consequences for the region and its inhabitants. The resumption of the war in 2020 demonstrated how fragile any ceasefire is when the heart of the conflict is not addressed. Russia, with its historical influence and strategic interest in the region, played an ambiguous role, sometimes acting as a mediator and other times as a party with an interest that complicated negotiations. International intervention has been insufficient, and the global community, distracted by other conflicts, has paid little attention to the urgent needs of Nagorno Karabakh. This chapter reflects how geopolitical dynamics and the interests of major powers have deepened the conflict, making it even harder to find a lasting solution.

Throughout this paper, the essential characteristics that shape the Nagorno Karabakh conflict have been identified. We have seen how history, politics, identity, and geopolitical interests intertwine to create a dispute that seems endless. However, this analysis also shows the importance of broadening our vision and perception of global conflicts. Although the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict does not occupy a prominent place on the Western agenda, its study offers valuable lessons about the complexity of international relations and the importance of a critical and humanitarian approach to conflict resolution.

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict is a reminder that peaceful solutions require not only political will but also empathy, understanding, and a genuine effort to recognize and respect differences. This paper aims to contribute to a greater understanding of these issues, promoting critical thinking that can inspire new ideas and approaches to conflict resolution worldwide. It is essential that we continue researching and reflecting on these topics so that we can build a future where differences become a source of mutual enrichment rather than division and conflict.

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