

THE 44-DAY KARABAKH WAR

Conclusions and Ramifications





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BEYNÖLXALQ MÜNASİBƏTLƏRİN TƏHLİLİ MƏRKƏZİ

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1. Introduction

The 44-Day War that occurred between September 27 and November 10, 2020, fundamentally altered the regional security architecture in the South Caucasus region. The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict dragged on for three decades without any success on the part of the international mediators in delivering any tangible solution.

The negotiation process, under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group, reached a dead end when the so-called “revolutionary government” in Armenia, led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, embarked on a litany of political and military provocations against Azerbaijan and abrogated the previously reached agreements and principles established during the decades of the negotiation process. The brewing tensions and a hostile buildup that accompanied Pashinyan’s tenure finally boiled over into a large-scale military counteroffensive by Azerbaijan, which has gone down in history as the 44-Day War.

Having restored its territorial integrity, Azerbaijan has played a central part in ushering in a new era in the South Caucasus: an era of opportunity for peace and development. However, the implications of the 44-Day War surely go beyond the South Caucasus, and the lessons learned are relevant for the entire international community.

This report aims to provide a critical discussion of and reach conclusions regarding the ramifications of the 44-Day War for the region and beyond. In doing so, the report will focus on the chronology of the war; its impact on Armenia–diaspora relations; the economic implications of the war for the broader region; as well as its implications for international relations.

2. The 44-Day War and an End to the Armenia–Azerbaijan Conflict

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was a major threat to security and stability in the South Caucasus. This conflict has led to human suffering and population displacement. Despite the United Nations’ four resolutions on the conflict in 1993 (822, 853, 874, and 884), which called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces from Azerbaijani territories, Armenia continued its occupation, thereby violating a core principle of international law.

The inability of the international community to facilitate a solution to the conflict created a deadlock in the peace process. The diplomatic talks mediated by the Co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group (France, Russia and the United States) since mid-1990s had produced several “mechanisms” to resolve the conflict, including the “Madrid Principles” initiated in 2007 and updated in 2009.¹ These principles envisaged the withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from the occupied territories adjacent to the Nagorno-Karabakh region with special

¹ “Statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries”, *OSCE Website*, 10 July 2009, <https://www.osce.org/mg/51152>.

modalities for Lachin and Kelbajar districts, and the subsequent establishment of interim international security arrangements for the region until a vote on status was conducted.²

The escalations in Karabakh continued to cause, either directly or indirectly, massive loss of human lives on both sides. Azerbaijan has always supported a peaceful resolution of the conflict and, after the change of government in Armenia in 2018, there was hope for a peace deal. However, the new Armenian government missed the opportunity to de-escalate the conflict and support a peaceful resolution. The tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan became even worse when the Armenian prime minister called into question the Madrid Principles in early 2020. Having done so, Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan disrupted the peace talks by publicly raising doubts about the format for negotiations.³

The series of provocations, especially the July 2020 cross-border clashes in the direction of Tovuz district of Azerbaijan, damaged all peace efforts in the region. Tovuz district is a strategic region through which important transport and energy routes connect Azerbaijan to global markets. For instance, the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, the South Caucasus natural gas pipeline (S.C.P.) and the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars (B.T.K.) railway pass through Tovuz district. As a result of cross-border clashes, 61 individual houses and farmlands were destroyed.⁴

Moreover, this period was also fraught with purposeful provocations by Armenia. This country intensified its reconnaissance and sabotage activities along the front line and, on 23 August, Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Defense reported the capture of First Lieutenant Gurgin Alberyanyan, the commander of the Armenian sabotage group.⁵ During this time, Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Defense also reported destroying several Armenian tactical unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) that attempted to carry out flights over the positions of the units of the Azerbaijani Army.

The provocations on the frontline were also accompanied by political provocations, nationalistic statements, and the cultural revanchism that the current leadership of Armenia has opted for as its foreign policy course vis-a-vis the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict.

Moreover, what added more fuel to the fire were the news reports containing information on Russia’s military shipments to Armenia. It was reported that nine flights in total were performed from the Russian Federation to Armenia amidst the July clashes and also after the fighting ceased. The Azerbaijani side expressed its dissatisfaction with these developments.⁶

2 “Nagorno-Karabakh: Risking War,” *International Crisis Group, Europe Report No. 187*, 14 November 2007. For more information, see also International Crisis Group, “Armenia and Azerbaijan: A Season of Risks,” *Europe Briefing No. 71*, 26 September 2013, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/armenia/armenia-and-azerbaijan-season-risks>.

3 Mkrtchyan, A., “Пашинян подтвердил отказ Армении от «Мадридских принципов»,” *Azattyun TV*, 17 February 2020, rus.azattyun.am/a/30439828.html.

4 “Damage Caused by Armenia’s Shelling to Villages of Tovuz and Civilians Being Evaluated,” *APA News Agency*, 23 July 2020, <https://apa.az/en/xeber/finance-news/Damage-caused-by-Armenia%27s-shelling-to-villages-of-Tovuz-and-civilians-being-evaluated-coloredPHOTOcolor-326409>.

5 “The Commander of the Sabotage-Reconnaissance Group of the Armed Forces of Armenia Taken Prisoner,” *Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, 13 August 2020, <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/the-commander-of-the-sabotage-reconnaissance-group-of-the-armed-forces-of-armenia-taken-prisoner-31949.html>.

6 Esmira Jafarova, “Russian Military Shipments to Armenia: A Dangerous Escalation?,” *Euractiv*, 31 August 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/azerbaijan/opinion/russian-military-shipments-to-armenia-a-dangerous-escalation/>.

Since the July clashes, Azerbaijan has issued warnings that it expects provocations by Armenia at any time along the border. Despite the transient respite over the past couple of months, the situation has nevertheless remained tense, with sporadic violations of the ceasefire. As a result, on 22 September Azerbaijan reported the killing of another serviceman by the Armenian Armed Forces.⁷

During his address at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, President Ilham Aliyev called for the preparation of an updated timetable for the withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from the occupied Azerbaijani territories. He also noted that “the UN Security Council resolutions are not time-specific. These resolutions are valid until they are implemented. Misinterpretation of UN Security Council resolutions is unacceptable.”⁸

Subsequently, Armenian army committed a large-scale military provocation against Azerbaijan on September 27, 2020. This escalation was the biggest and most serious one since the 1990s. On the same day, Azerbaijan’s army launched a full-scale military counteroffensive to ensure the safety of the civilian population.

It is worth noting that Armenian army mainly used Russian weapons, such as the BM-30 Smerch, “Tochka-U” tactical missile system, and a Scud missile. Along with its Russian-made weapons, Azerbaijan actively used modern Turkish and Israeli weapons and UAVs. The Armenian armed forces suffered heavy losses, both in manpower and weapons.

Defeated along the entire front, the Armenian army launched missile attacks on Azerbaijani cities and critical infrastructure. On October 4, Azerbaijan’s Mingachevir city was subject to an Armenian missile attack. Armenia targeted Mingachevir’s electricity plant and water reservoir. The Azerbaijani air defense system managed to intercept the rocket, which prevented a huge ecological disaster. During the war, Armenian forces also attacked Ganja and Barda cities using Tochka-U and BM-30 Smerch missiles. As a result of the bloody attacks, many civilians were killed and injured.⁹ It should be noted that Ganja city is located 100 kilometers away from the then front line.

There were also the reports of Armenian army using Iskander missiles against Azerbaijan during the 44-Day War. The Russian-made Iskander-E tactical ballistic missile (TBM) system, with a maximum range of 280 kilometers, was obtained by Armenia, and those missiles were shown at the country’s military parade in September 2016.¹⁰ The acquisition of such a system by Armenia threatened all strategic infrastructure in Azerbaijan. The Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA) detected remains of a missile used against Shusha city. It should be especially highlighted that that missile’s remains, with an 9M723 index code,

7 Ibid.

8 “Ilham Aliyev Delivered a Speech at General Debates of 75th Session of United Nations General Assembly in a Video Format”, *Official Website of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, 24 September 2020, <https://en.president.az/articles/40937>.

9 Ruslan Rehimov, “Armenian Attack Kills 12 Civilians in Ganja, Azerbaijan”, *Anadolu Agency*, 17 October 2020, www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/armenian-attack-kills-12-civilians-in-ganja-azerbaijan/2009288

10 Leonid Nersisyan, “Армения получила от России «Искандер»: Азербайджан может забыть про Карабах” (“Armenia Received Iskander From Russia: Azerbaijan Can Forget About Karabakh”), *Regnum*, 17 September 2016, regnum.ru/news/polit/2180732.html.

belong to the Iskander-M type.¹¹ This missile, with a maximum range of 500 km, is exclusively for Russian military use. If Russia sold Iskander-M missiles to Armenia instead of Iskander-E, then official Moscow would have violated the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies. In addition, Russian officials have always claimed that Iskander-M would not be exported to other states.

The war ended on November 10, 2020, when Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia signed the Trilateral Declaration. Under this deal, 1,960 armed troops, 90 armored vehicles, and 380 motor vehicles and special equipment units have been deployed to the Karabakh region. Moreover, a “Joint Russian–Turkish Center for Monitoring the Ceasefire” was opened in the Agdam region to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire.¹² The involvement of Turkey in the peace process is very important for a durable peace in the region, and the trilateral declaration became an important document that ended military operations. According to the November 10 Trilateral Declaration, Armenia pledged to return Agdam, Kalbajar, and Lachin districts to Azerbaijani control, while Azerbaijan guaranteed the security of the Lachin Corridor, to be used as a humanitarian connection between Armenia and Armenians living in Karabakh.

Azerbaijan has launched a large-scale program for the restoration of the liberated territories and development of all infrastructure in the region, and many international companies are taking part in this process. The country has already signed contracts with Turkish and Italian companies, and these are working on the reconstruction of all necessary highways, railroads, and other infrastructure that are key elements in full economic integration. However, there are still challenges and difficulties in implementing all clauses of the November 10 Trilateral Declaration, including articles 4 and 9, which are important with regard to security and economic cooperation perspectives.

Article 9 of the November 10, 2020, agreement clearly states that all communications in the region will be unblocked, including between Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan region. The exact wording of Article 9 is:

All economic and transport links in the region shall be restored. The Republic of Armenia guarantees the safety of transport links between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic in order to organize an unimpeded movement of citizens, vehicles, goods in both directions.

It is worth noting that the Zangezur region (Armenians call “Syunik”) is very important in terms of regional economic integration and, according to Article 9 of the November 10 Trilateral declaration, as discussed above, all economic and transport links in the region must

11 “Remains of “Iskander” Missiles, Used by Armenia against Azerbaijan, Being Demonstrated”, *APA News Agency*, 2 April 2021, apa.az/en/xeber/azerbaijan-army-azerbaijani-armed-forces/Remains-of-Iskander-missiles-used-by-Armenia-against-Azerbaijan-being-demonstrated-345870.

12 “Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of The Russian Federation”, *Website of the President of the Russian Federation*, 10 November 2020, en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384.

be restored and the Russian border guards, who are protecting the Armenian-Iranian border will guarantee the safety of transport links between Azerbaijan's western regions and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan.¹³ This means that Azerbaijan will be able to restore the old transport route to its enclave via the Zangezur Corridor, which was closed for decades. The Zangezur Corridor will develop economic integration and boost the economic development of the regional countries.

In the meantime, there were positive signals when Azerbaijan released several Armenian detainees captured as a result of anti-terror operations in Karabakh. Those Armenian soldiers violated the terms of the November deal and continued to fight against the Azerbaijani army. For instance, on May 27, the Azerbaijani side arrested six more Armenian soldiers, who tried to cross the border in the Kalbajar region to mine Azerbaijani army's supply routes. As part of humanitarian aid to Armenians living in Karabakh, Azerbaijan also permitted Armenians to visit the Khudavang Monastery in the Kalbajar region of Azerbaijan, and, last but not least, allowed the transportation of Russian natural gas to Armenia via Azerbaijan. All these acts show that Azerbaijan is not interested in border escalation and is prepared to solve all disagreements through negotiation.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have to show goodwill to achieve sustainable peace in the region. Unfortunately, during the years of occupation Armenia littered Azerbaijani territories with landmines and therefore Karabakh could currently be considered among the regions with the gravest mine contamination problems in the world. It is an uphill battle to do effective demining work without accurate minefield maps. Mine contamination in the Karabakh region is significantly affecting the reconstruction process and causing civilian deaths.

Unfortunately, despite the demining efforts in the region, civilians continue to be injured and die in mine explosions. For instance, on June 4, 2021, three people, including two journalists, were killed and four wounded in another anti-tank mine explosion in the Kalbajar region.¹⁴ This tragedy shows that mine clearance is the most serious problem in the Karabakh region, as landmines pose a major threat to human life. Complete mine clearance from the liberated territories is a significant factor for the resettlement of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons (IDP) in those regions. The scale of the mine-contaminated areas in the liberated regions is large: therefore, it will be very difficult to remove widespread antipersonnel and anti-tank mines without maps. Initially, the Armenian side denied the existence of landmine maps and refused to hand over any such maps.

A positive development on this issue was seen when Azerbaijan handed over 15 Armenian detainees in exchange for maps of minefields in the Agdam region. Armenia handed over maps of nearly 97,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines.¹⁵ This became possible through

13 "Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation", *Website of the President of the Russian Federation*, 10 November 2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384>.

14 "Azerbaijani Journalists, Official Killed in Landmine Explosion", *AlJazeera*, 4 June 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/4/azerbaijani-journalists-official-killed-in-kalbajar-blast>.

15 Burak Dağ, "Azerbaijan Releases 15 Armenian Detainees in Exchange for Maps of Mines", *Anadolu Agency*, 13 June 2021, www.aa.com.tr/en/world/azerbaijan-releases-15-armenian-detainees-in-exchange-for-maps-of-mines/2271849.

the mediation efforts of the United States, European Union, OSCE and Georgia. Another deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan happened in July, 2021, when Armenia handed over maps of 92,000 mines in Fuzuli and Zangilan regions and, in turn, Azerbaijan returned a further 15 Armenian detainees.¹⁶ The exchange of minefield maps and Armenian detainees happened thanks to the initiative of the Russian Federation. These developments show that constructive engagement of regional and non-regional powers is very important for cooperation and security. However, lately, it became clear that the accuracy of the minefield maps recently provided by Armenia to Azerbaijan is only some 25 percent.¹⁷

It is clear that demining efforts in the liberated areas are highly important for Azerbaijan to develop infrastructure and start the resettlement plan. Anti-personnel landmines continue to pose a major threat to human life in the liberated territories. Complete clearance of mines from the liberated territories is crucial for sustainable development and the region's revival. It is exactly this process that will affect the settlement of Azerbaijani IDPs and the region's economic integration process. In order to improve demining performance and enhance the safety of demining personnel, Azerbaijan is using modern mine clearance techniques and technologies. Turkish and U.K. counter-explosive experts are training Azerbaijani colleagues to eliminate the threat of mine explosions.

Another outstanding challenge is the border dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Perhaps, only delimitation of the state border is essential for durable peace. Even today, seven villages of Gazakh district and one village of Sadarak district of Nakhchivan AR remain under Armenian occupation that began in the 1990s. This ongoing dispute shows the importance of border demarcation between the two countries. Moreover, repeated border provocations and shelling of Azerbaijani territories in Nakhchvan, liberated Kalbajar, and Shusha further dampen the prospects for peace. All signatories of the November 10 Trilateral Declaration should be equally invested in the implementation of the existing commitments. The international community should also support the cooperation initiatives and demonstrate a commitment to a lasting peace in the South Caucasus.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have to demonstrate a mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. For this purpose, Azerbaijan wants a peace agreement with Armenia. Armenia must understand that the peaceful coexistence of Azerbaijani and Armenian people in the Karabakh region is a priority of the Azerbaijani government. Embracing propaganda against Azerbaijan and preventing the commencement of demarcation and delimitation will only damage the peace process. In the end, the long-term solution to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border dispute is the mutual recognition of territorial integrity and support to this issue by the whole international community.

16 Mushvig Mehdiyev, "Azerbaijan Receives Maps of 92,000 Armenian Mines in Karabakh Region", *Caspian News*, 5 July 2021, caspiannews.com/news-detail/azerbaijan-receives-maps-of-92000-armenian-mines-in-karabakh-region-2021-7-5-0/

17 "President Ilham Aliyev Was Interviewed By CNN Turk TV Channel", *APA News Agency*, 14 August 2021, apa.az/en/xeber/official-news/president-ilham-aliyev-was-interviewed-by-cnn-turk-tv-channel-full-text-355814.

3. The Impact of the War on Armenia–Diaspora Relations

The signing of the trilateral statement on the cessation of fire and all military activities between Armenia and Azerbaijan has shaken the confidence of the Armenian people in their leadership, including among the members of the country's diaspora. Diasporic organizations, which strongly supported the new government of Armenia led by Nikol Pashinyan, reversed their positions in one day. One by one, representatives of those organizations made statements lambasting Nikol Pashinyan's failed policy and calling on him to resign.

Dissemination of unfounded rumors about the government's waste of money collected by the "Hayastan Foundation" during the war further aggravated the mistrust towards the ruling party.¹⁸ Snap parliamentary elections, announced by the Prime Minister in March 2021, have been the subject of controversy both inside and outside the country for several months. All the way up to the elections, diaspora members living in different parts of the world called on Armenian citizens not to vote for Nikol Pashinyan and his team. Moreover, diaspora members constantly called on the governments of the states in which they reside to take action and recognize the Armenian regime in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

Following the signing of the trilateral statement, four members of the Armenian Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives—Frank Pallone, Jackie Speier, Gus Bilirakis, and Adam Schiff—appealed to the U.S. government to react to Turkey's "destabilizing policy" in the Middle East and South Caucasus. A few days later, caucus representatives called on Donald Trump's administration to restore the activity of the OSCE Minsk Group in the region. Additionally, Senate Representative Robert Menendez claimed the treaty would cause long-term chaos in the area.

As a result of the appeals of Armenians in the Netherlands, the House of Representatives of the Dutch Parliament (*Tweede Kamer*) adopted three proposals calling for sanctions against Turkey and Azerbaijan and two proposals regarding the trilateral statement of the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia.

The Senate and the National Assembly of the French Republic recognized the regime established by Armenians in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan with majorities of 305 votes to 1 and 188 votes against 3, respectively, and criticized the "aggressive policies" of Azerbaijan and Turkey.¹⁹

The Belgian Parliament also expressed its readiness to adopt a resolution criticizing the "military aggression" committed by Azerbaijan against Armenians living in the territories of Azerbaijan subject to the military occupation of Armenia "with the support of the Turkish

18 Robert Kocharian, «Из-за действий правительства, серьезно страдает репутация Фонда «Айастан»» ("The Reputation of the Hayastan Foundation is Seriously Affected by The Government's Actions"), *Erkramas*, 16 March 2021, yerkramas.org/article/180809/iz-za-dejstvij-pravitelstva-serezno-stradaet-reputaciya-fonda-%C2%ABajastan%C2%BB.

19 "France's National Assembly Recognizes Artsakh", *Asbarez*, 3 December 2021, <https://asbarez.com/frances-national-assembly-recognizes-artsakh/>.

authorities.” The document also accused Azerbaijan of “causing damage to the civilian population [and] the use of cassette and phosphorus bombs.” In addition, the resolution calls for the withdrawal of the Azerbaijani and Turkish military forces from the territories of Azerbaijan subjected to the military occupation of Armenia. At the same time, the preamble states that Armenians have “the right to self-determination in that territory.” Although the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Belgian Federal Parliament adopted the resolution, the Belgian Parliament reaffirmed that Karabakh is an integral part of the Republic of Azerbaijan.²⁰

In addition, several U.S. states, the Legislative Council of South Australia, and the councils of cities in which the Armenian diaspora constitutes a majority decided to recognize the occupier’s regime. Nevertheless, these decisions did not have any significant force.

As mentioned above, the signing of the statement caused a sharp deterioration in the relationship between the Armenian government and the representatives of diasporic organizations. The Union of Armenians in Russia and the “Dashnaktsutyun” Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) were among the first organizations that criticized the government and called on the ruling party to resign. Immediately after the signing of the agreement, the Union of Armenians held a virtual meeting with 50 heads of its regional offices, led by chairman A. Abrahamyan; as a result, on November 11, the organization issued a statement on behalf of the chairman, accusing Prime Minister Pashinyan of “incompetence and inability to govern the country.”

The heads of the regional branches of the organization considered it necessary to actively participate in the political processes in Armenia. This issue was discussed during a video conference held in April 2021. During the meeting chaired by Ara Abrahamyan, the sides discussed issues related to Armenia’s internal political situation, particularly the snap parliamentary elections. “We must immediately and jointly bring Armenia out of the abyss in which it is currently located. We need to make every effort to overcome one of the most difficult periods in the history of our state,” stated Ara Abrahamyan, addressing the participants in the meeting. The heads of the regional branches of the Union expressed their active support to the chairman regarding his decision to participate in the elections.²¹

Representatives of the radical ARF Dashnaktsutyun party abroad, which previously supported representatives of the present regime, have also opposed the current government of Armenia. Party members blamed the government for the current situation and expressed support for the ARF in Armenia. Representatives of the party also criticized the “anti-national policy of the government serving the Azerbaijani–Turkish interests.” In April 2021, the representation

20 “Belgian Federal Parliament Demands from Azerbaijan Withdrawal of Troops from Artsakh”, *ArmInfo*, 18 December 2021, https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=59429&lang=3&__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=pmd_t_2WhNOln71VcXDwqNKTw8JSJ5JeKMeoj8kidOJ6NBQ-1630915644-0-gqNtZGzNAjucnBszQe9

21 «В Союзе армян России состоялось собрание общественности под председательством Ара Абрамяна» (“A Public Meeting was Held at the Union of Armenians of Russia Under the Chairmanship of Ara Abrahamyan”), *Union of Armenians of Russia, SAR*, 10 November 2020, sarinfo.org/news/novosti-sar/v-soyuze-armyan-rossii-sostoyalos-sobranie-obschestvennosti-pod-predsdatelstvom-ara-abramyana.html.

of the party in Yerevan, sensing an opportunity, announced that it would take part in the snap parliamentary elections to be held on June 20, 2021.

Another 15 diaspora organizations, including the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), made similar appeals for Nikol Pashinyan's resignation. Representatives of the AGBU called on the Prime Minister to resign of his own free will, noting that the new government should not be related to either the current authorities or past ones.²² Regardless of this, right after the elections, representatives of the AGBU congratulated the Prime Minister on his victory, expressing hope that this event will be the first step towards "national healing" as well as "fruitful cooperation between Armenia and the Diaspora."

Diaspora representatives also accused the government of embezzling money collected by the "Hayastan" Foundation during the war. According to various sources and accounts disseminated by the media, representatives of the authorities appropriated almost the entire amount allocated by the foundation, although no evidence of this was found. Representatives of the foundation were also among the accused.

Nikol Pashinyan's visit to Moscow in January 2021 and his meeting with Ilham Aliyev and Vladimir Putin received sharp criticism from representatives of the Armenian diaspora. Before the meeting, Ara Abramyan, the chairman of the Armenian Union in Russia, sent an open letter to the prime minister of Armenia noting that the Armenian nation expected Nikol Pashinyan to resign instead of signing new documents and accusing him of abusing the trust of the people. Additionally, representatives of Armenian organizations held a meeting in a building belonging to the Armenian Union in Russia and urged their compatriots to express their disapproval by signing a petition, prepared by the organization's representatives, in front of the embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Russia. According to the text of the petition, diaspora representatives called on Pashinyan to disclose the contents of "all oral and written agreements" with the Azerbaijani side, to abandon the signing of any further documents, and to suspend the execution of the trilateral agreement dating back to November 10, 2020, to prevent the deepening of the crisis.

Members of the Armenian diaspora also criticized the Armenian president, Armen Sarkissian, and the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, Zareh Sinanyan. Despite his statement about getting information regarding the trilateral statement from the media and his absence during the negotiation process, Armen Sarkissian was condemned by the diaspora. During his visit to Moscow, the president held a meeting with some diaspora representatives, which only exacerbated the accusations. Sarkissian was also accused of treason and maintained a neutral position on condemning the former President of Armenia, Robert Kocharian.²³

During the election campaign, Alex Galitsky, Communications Director of the Armenian

22 «Структуры Диаспоры также требуют отставки Пашиняна» ('Diaspora Structures also Demand Pashinyan's Resignation'), *Erkramas*, 25 November 2020, yerkramas.org/article/176989/struktury-diaspory-takzhe-trebuyut-otstavki-pashinyana.

23 «Ты тоже предатель: московские армяне ответили Армену Саркисяну» ('You are also a traitor: Moscow Armenians answered Armen Sarkisyan'), *Erkramas*, 28 November 2020, yerkramas.org/article/177134/ty-tozhe-predatel-moskovskie-armyane-otvetili-armenu-sarkisyanu.

National Committee of America—Western Region, the most prominent Armenian organization in the United States, which actively communicates with the majority of congressmen and senators, oddly enough on his Twitter account supported the candidacy of the pro-Russian Robert Kocharyan, calling Nikol Pashinyan a “demagogue-populist.” After a while, however, the tweet was deleted.²⁴

The High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, Zareh Sinanyan, was accused of ineffective policy even before the 44-Day War. The problem occurred when Zareh Sinanyan made a statement about Armenia’s unwillingness to repatriate diaspora members. Hence, the signing of the trilateral agreement by the ruling party impacted on him as well. In a recent statement, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation accused Zareh Sinanyan of supporting Nikol Pashinyan’s “destructive policy.” During his visit to the USA in May, the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs was supposed to meet with diaspora members and discuss Armenian relations with the diaspora. But, according to information disseminated in the media, most of the diaspora representatives refused to even meet with Sinanyan, accusing him of stealing the money collected by the “Hayastan” Foundation.²⁵

The Armenian National Committee (A.N.C. International) also leveled accusations against the Minister of Foreign Affairs. During a Q&A meeting of the Republic of Armenia with government representatives held in the National Assembly in February, the newly appointed Foreign Minister, Ara Ayvazyan, stated that, as a result of the settlement of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict, the border between Turkey and Armenia should be opened. This statement by the Foreign Minister provoked a sharp reaction from the Armenian diaspora.

A.N.C. International issued a statement in which it accused the government of establishing relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan and refusing to guarantee the security of the former regime created by the Armenians living in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Additionally, according to the representatives of the Armenian diaspora, the Armenian government does not see any obstacles, except for the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict, to establishing cooperation with Turkey, thus hinting at the issue of the alleged “Armenian genocide.” This statement testifies that representatives of the diaspora are not only disinclined to establish peace in the region but are actively working against it.²⁶

The heavy defeat of Armenia in the 44-Day War and the signing of the trilateral statement, which effectively meant the surrender of Armenia, impacted the relations between the government and the diaspora. While some diaspora members blamed Pashinyan and his populist foreign policy for the defeat, others blamed Armenia’s former corrupt political leadership for the current situation. The prospect of opening regional communications and transport links with Azerbaijan and Turkey was received by the diaspora with hostility. We

24 Contreras, R. L., “Apparently @algalitsky of @ANCA_DC has deleted his tweet supporting pro-Russian Kocharyan. But I have the screenshot. Enjoy!”, Twitter, 14 May 2021, twitter.com/sdrlc/status/1392988628729569281?s=1005.

25 “Армяне США не стали встречаться с Заре Синяняном” (“US Armenians did not Meet with Zareh Sinanyan”), *Erkrarmas*, 11 May 2021, <https://yerkramas.org/article/182384/armyane-ssha-ne-stali-vstrechatsya-s-zare-sinanyanom>.

26 “ANC International Criticizes Foreign Minister for Remarks on Turkey”, *Armenian Revolutionary Federation*, 12 February 2021, www.arfd.am/eng/news/7917/.

should also pay attention to the fact that the representatives of the Armenian Diaspora did not learn any lessons from the results of the war, continuing to actively hinder the establishment of peace in the region and the opening of transport corridors.

The main reason behind all the accusations directed at the Prime Minister is the fear of the diaspora that the government will establish diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey. From the statement of the Armenian Committee, it became clear that the representatives of the diaspora perceive any step of the government towards opening the borders with Turkey or Azerbaijan as a loss.

By supporting the "Armenia bloc" headed by Robert Kocharian during the elections, diaspora organizations have shown their unwillingness to establish peace in the region. The results of the elections indicate the desire of the citizens of Armenia to live in peace and tranquility and show that the idea of revenge is not very popular within the country. Diaspora representatives, on the contrary, will continue to demand revenge since they consider themselves an independent political element. It should be noted that this position of the Armenian diaspora can have negative consequences, including creating obstacles to the establishment of peace in the region.

The inability of some countries populated by influential Armenian lobbies openly to declare support for Armenia during the 44-Day War and the inference that the diaspora does not have as much influence as expected became a source of even greater dissatisfaction, although it was not openly expressed.

4. Economic Implications

As a result of the war, Azerbaijan restored its territorial integrity. However, the Armenian occupation after the Karabakh war in the early 1990s (1988–94) negatively affected regional cooperation and development. Because of the occupation, Azerbaijan lost control of 20% of its territories and this led to deterioration of the economic and political relations between the regional countries and with the outside powers that had interests in the region. After the occupation, Azerbaijan and Turkey suspended political relations and closed their borders with Armenia.

Along with political implications, the 44-Day War also has significant economic implications for the region as the implementation of the 9th section of the November declaration will lead to the restoration of the traditional roads that were closed during the Armenian occupation and will accelerate the development of regional economic relations and cooperation.

For understanding the importance of the economic implications of the 44-Day War, it is worth looking at the economic problems that were created because of the Armenia–

Azerbaijan conflict; especially as the new economic situation after the 44-Day War has created opportunities to solve most of the existing regional cooperation problems. During the Armenian occupation, the economies of the regional countries and economic relations among them had been substantially affected. As the borders of Azerbaijan and Turkey with Armenia were closed, economic relations of Armenia with those countries were halted.

Despite the fact that, after the fall of the Soviet Union, post-Soviet countries had opportunities to independently develop their economic relations with other countries, Armenia chose a detrimental path. Because of its nationalistic and illegal territorial claims, it lost the opportunity to access the large market of Turkey and the energy and infrastructure projects initiated by Azerbaijan and its international partners; thereby increasing its dependence on Russia and Iran, which themselves had limited economic impact on the regional development either due to the lack of relationship (e.g. Russia and Georgia) or international sanctions (Iran). Armenia also lost opportunities to use reliable land routes for transportation of cargoes to its main trade partners. Even after becoming a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, which Armenia expected to become its main economic development driver, its policy of occupation prevented it from building sustainable economic relations with the members of the Union as it did not have reliable land connections with those countries. All the economic barriers created because of the occupation have isolated Armenia and significantly affected its economic and social development. As a result, Armenia has faced severe outward migration, unemployment, and financial problems during the past 30 years.

For Azerbaijan, the Armenian occupation resulted in the loss of 20% of its territories, which played an important role in its economic development and output. The establishments in the occupied territories that were closed because of the occupation had provided about 24% of grain revenues, 41% of liquor production, 46% of potato farming, 18% of the meat production, and 34% of the milk production of the economy of Azerbaijan during the Soviet period.²⁷ The substantial reduction of production in different economic sectors led to a 60% reduction in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Azerbaijan. The GDP reduction in the agricultural sector was about 43% and in the industrial one, about 60%.²⁸

As the occupied territories have the vast natural resources, Armenia illegally exploited these resources with the participation of Armenian and foreign companies during the occupation. The illegal regime ruthlessly exploited minerals, non-ferrous and ferrous metals, mineral waters, freshwater resources, and forestlands, and systematically destroyed the flora and fauna. According to official data, 163 deposits of different types of minerals were located in the previously occupied territories. During the occupation, illegal and intense mining activities mostly targeted the gold, silver, copper, molybdenum, and mercury deposits of Karabakh. Financial resources earned from the illegal activities served to provide financial security for the illegal regime that existed in the previously occupied territories. During the

27 Abilov, S. and Isayev, I., "The Consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh War for Azerbaijan and the Undeniable Reality of Khojaly Massacre: A View From Azerbaijan", *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, 45 (2016), 291-303, available at marszalek.com.pl/yearbook/docs/45/pps2016022.pdf.

28 "Azerbaijan: Recent Economic Developments", *International Monetary Fund (IMF) Country Report No. 95/119*, 19 December 1995, www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2016/12/30/Azerbaijan-Recent-Economic-Developments-624.

illegal exploitation of the natural resources no measures were taken to prevent the discharge of toxic waste into local reservoirs and rivers. This, in turn, led to the destruction of mineral and other deposits, the poisoning and degradation of large areas of land, and a sharp decrease in the quality of drinking-water sources.

Alongside Armenian companies, foreign companies from Russia, France, the USA, Great Britain, Germany, and the Netherlands also embarked on illegal activities in the internationally recognized, but previously occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The companies that participated in the exploitation of the natural resources of the Karabakh include Vallex Group, Base Metals, GeoProMining, GoldStar, Aurubis AG, Caterpillar, FLSmidth & Co., Tashir Group, and others.²⁹

Along with the mentioned economic problems, Azerbaijan lost its direct land connection with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (AR), which is part of Azerbaijan. As a result, the Nakhchivan AR became a landlocked exclave, which led to a humanitarian and economic crisis in the territory. In order to implement the transportation of goods and citizens to Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan had to use air transportation or land routes through Iran. Because of the occupation in the early 1990s, Azerbaijan also lost the chance to have a reliable land connection with Turkey, which subsequently became one of its main economic and trade partners. Thus, Azerbaijan had to reach Turkey through the territories of Georgia and Iran, which increased distances and prolonged travel times for cargos and passengers.

For Russia, despite some political opportunities, the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict became the main barrier in getting land access to Armenia, one of its main partners in the region. This became a serious problem for Russia after its political relations with Georgia worsened, which led to the closure of the only railway that previously connected Russia to Armenia through Abkhazia. After the closure of that railway, the Upper Lars Highway became the only land route for transportation of cargos between Russia and Armenia. However, this highway was also subject to regular closures because of political problems or weather conditions. Thus, the closure of regional transport routes because of the conflict has negatively affected the economic relations between Russia and Armenia.

Turkey was also affected by the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict as it became one of the barriers to developing and using the transportation routes in an eastward direction. Turkey's land connection with Azerbaijan through the Nakhchivan AR, where its only international border (17 km) with Azerbaijan is located, was interrupted because it must get through the Zangezur region, the territory of Armenia. Because of the border closure, Turkey was unable to use this route to connect with Azerbaijan, one of its main economic partners. Instead, it had to use highways through Georgia, thus extending the distance and increasing the travel time. The closure of borders with Armenia also created additional problems for Turkey in getting easy access to the energy resources of Azerbaijan, and this led to the establishment of the oil and gas pipelines through the territory of Georgia.

²⁹ “Exploitation of Natural Resources on the Territories of Azerbaijan Occupied by Armenia should be on the Agenda of the World Community”, *AzerTac*, 24 July 2020, azertag.az/en/xeber/Exploitation_of_natural_resources_on_the_territories_of_Azerbaijan_occupied_by_Armenia_should_be_on_the_agenda_of_the_world_community_VIDEO-1545511.

Despite the existence of the problems created by the conflict and discussed above, it is also worth mentioning that, during the period of Armenian occupation, regional countries were able to jointly develop important international transport and energy projects without the participation of Armenia, for example, the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan and South Caucasus pipelines, and the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railroad. By jointly implementing these projects, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey became the main players in international transport projects such as the Middle Corridor and the North–South International Transport Corridor. This, in turn, strengthened the position of the South Caucasus in the international economic relations system. However, the aggressive policy of Armenia towards its neighbors has prevented the future development of economic relations and enlargement of the transportation network in the region.

Now, as the conflict has ended and Azerbaijan has restored its territorial integrity, the new geopolitical and geo-economic situation has created opportunities to eliminate all the existing economic barriers and bring regional integration to its full capacity in the South Caucasus. As envisioned in the Trilateral Declaration, all of the economic and transport links in the region will be restored. From an economic point of view, the most important element of the declaration is the restoration of the transport connection between the Nakhchivan AR and the main territory of Azerbaijan through the Zangezur Corridor, as this envisages considerable transportation advantages. The restoration of all economic relations and establishment of the Zangezur Corridor create chances for the regional countries to eliminate the economic problems and transport barriers discussed in the previous sections.

The newly established Zangezur Corridor will release the Nakhchivan AR from the economic blockade. Restoration of the direct link between Nakhchivan and the main part of Azerbaijan will shorten travel times and decrease transportation costs by creating new economic development opportunities for both Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan. By liberating the occupied territories, Azerbaijan also regained control over the abundant natural resources in Karabakh that were illegally exploited by the Armenian occupiers. After the restoration of Karabakh, Azerbaijan will be able to establish a sustainable and modern economy there that will contribute to the economic development of Azerbaijan in coming years.

Using the new Zangezur Corridor, Turkey will be able to get direct access to Azerbaijan without using the territories of Georgia and Iran for transit. If we compare the new land road between Azerbaijan and Turkey that will pass through the new corridor to the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, which goes through the territory of Georgia, the new road will be about 340 km shorter.³⁰ Thus, the shorter transportation distance and lower transportation costs will boost bilateral trade between Azerbaijan and Turkey. The new corridor will also positively affect the tourism relations between two countries as it will offer more reliable and comfortable movement of visitors. From a broad perspective, the new corridor will provide an alternative and shorter route for Turkey to be connected with the Turkic world in Central Asia. Therefore,

³⁰ Bayramova, A., “Regional nəqliyyat-kommunikasiya sisteminin yeni qovşağı - Naxçıvan MR” (“New Junction of the Regional Transport and Communication System – Nakhchivan AR”, *Milli.az*, 14 November 2020, news.milli.az/economy/897251.html).

the liberation of the territories of Azerbaijan and restoration of communications will open new development perspectives among the Turkic countries.

Turkey also plans to build a new railway to Nakhchivan in order to expand cargo transportation and the capacity of the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railroad. The new, 230-km-long railroad will start from Turkey’s Kars city and continue to the Nakhchivan AR.³¹ From there, the line could be connected to railway lines that continue to Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; and, through the Zangezur Corridor, it will be connected to the railway network of Azerbaijan. The connection of the Kars–Nakhchivan railway to the Zangezur Corridor will also enhance trade relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Russia will also significantly benefit from the opening up of communications in the South Caucasus. For Russia, the Zangezur Corridor creates an alternative land route to the countries of the region. Using the railways of Azerbaijan, Russian trains could easily reach the Nakhchivan AR through the new corridor and then be directed to lines that go to Turkey, Iran, and Armenia. Using the Zangezur corridor, Russia will also obtain an alternative pathway to the markets of the Middle East and, using the new corridor and other routes that will be restored in the South Caucasus, Russia will get direct access to Armenia. All the mentioned advantages of the restoration of communications will positively affect the economic relations of the Russia with Turkey, Iran, Armenia, and the countries of Middle East.

From the economic perspective of Armenia, the restoration of all roads and the establishment of the Zangezur Corridor offer considerable advantages if it abandons its aggressive policies against its neighbors and, in preference, returns to peaceful policies and cooperation. By using the Zangezur Corridor and other traditional routes, Armenia could end its economic isolation and join the regional transport projects. Restoration of communications will also solve one of the main economic problems of Armenia, which is the absence of a land connection with the markets of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Therefore, Armenia will get a chance to boost trade relations with the EAEU, including Russia. The new situation also creates an opportunity for Armenia to develop its economic relations with Iran. Because of the conflict, Armenia lost access to the railway that used to connect it to Iran through the territory of Azerbaijan, and attempts to build an alternative railway to Iran through the territory of Armenia have failed. Now, restoration of this railway will positively affect the bilateral relations between Armenia and Iran.

All the mentioned factors show that the 44-Day War and the end of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict have important economic implications for the South Caucasus and its neighborhood. The restoration of communications links and economic relations between the regional countries that were suspended because of the conflict is going to change the geo-economic map of the region that was formed during the last 30 years. The expansion of the transport network in the region will open new opportunities for the regional countries to develop trade relations with their neighbors and other countries. This, in turn, will strengthen the

31 “Railway To Nakhchivan From Kars”, *Rayhaber*, 14 November 2020, <https://en.rayhaber.com/2020/11/karstan-nahcivana-demiryolu-yapilacak/>.

position of the countries of the South Caucasus within the international economic system and in international west–east and north–south transportation corridors. The establishment of durable peace in the region will also positively affect the business environment there by enabling the regional countries to attract more investment. Therefore, the 44-Day War solved the main regional problem in South Caucasus, which was the prevention of the use of the full capacity available through regional cooperation, along with the formation of a sustainable environment in terms of security. Simultaneously, all the mentioned economic developments in the post-conflict period will prevent the formation of new, harmful nationalistic conflicts.

5. Implications for International Relations

The 44-Day War caused substantial changes to the geopolitics of the South Caucasus, thereby upending the conventional balance of power in the region and creating new opportunities and challenges for regional peace and security. The war has also had reverberations in other dimensions, including the region’s economy, transportation, communication, intraregional integration, and so on. The immediate and potential consequences of the war for the region have been widely studied by local and foreign observers. Its implications for wider international relations have, however, been understudied, even though, for a number of reasons, these merit closer attention, as this war has the potential to resonate through the future conduct of interstate relations as well as, in similar cases, intrastate challenges.

This section does not attempt to provide an extensive and in-depth analysis of the implications of the 44-Day War for international relations. It is, rather, an attempt to encourage future research on this question and, to that end, provides a brief overview of the developments in question. It argues that the failure of the internationally mediated negotiations and, subsequently, the outbreak of the war marked another failure of the international legal order established in the wake of the World War II and of the multilateral handling of international challenges. The military operations, including the use of modern technologies such as combat drones, have affected perceptions of modern warfare and made many states reconsider their defensive strategies. This new situation and Azerbaijan’s military success, regardless of substantial pressure from some great powers, have emboldened smaller states of the wider region in their confrontations with bigger states.

5.1. Reaffirmation of a Machiavellian Vision of International Politics

The realist skepticism about international law and its embedded conviction that the stronger do what they want while the weak suffer what they must successfully passed another test in the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict. Numerous internationally adopted documents, including the supposedly binding resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the resolutions of the UN General Assembly, European Parliament, European Court of Human Rights, and so on, were consistently disregarded by the Republic of Armenia. In

total opposition to the demands of these documents, Armenia flagrantly kept 20 percent of Azerbaijani territories under occupation for up to 30 years and flagrantly abused the peace negotiations mediated by the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In contrast, Azerbaijan was intensively invested in these negotiations and hoped for a peaceful breakthrough. Both the Azerbaijani government and its society struggled for many years to draw the attention of the international community to the violated rights of more than 700,000 Azerbaijanis who were forcibly expelled from the Karabakh region by the armed forces of Armenia. Every year, series of new documents were adopted by international organizations calling for the de-occupation of these territories; every year, a long list of states reaffirmed their support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Even states such as France, which, during and after the 44-Day War, took a clear anti-Azerbaijani position, were among those declaring support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity prior to the war. All this had absolutely no impact on the process. Armenia continued to slowly annex the occupied territories by building new roads from Armenia into the Karabakh region, reinforcing military fortifications, and drawing in more investment from the Armenian diaspora.

Such disregard of international law and the peace negotiations by the Republic of Armenia derived from a number of sources. First, by being a full-fledged member of the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and enjoying substantial military support from its major ally, Russia, Armenia, and its leaders, were confident that Azerbaijan would never dare to militarily counter Armenia because of its fear of a potential Russian backlash. Second, the absence of international pressure on Armenia to abide by international law, including the UNSC resolutions, was a critical reason why Yerevan felt itself to have *carte blanche* against Azerbaijan. To the detriment of the international legal order in general, and peace and security in the South Caucasus in particular, the international community never demonstrated a similar determination against the illegal activities of Armenia as they did, for instance, against Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait. Thus, Armenian leaders hoped that the status quo established after the Karabakh war in the early 1990s would remain unchanged for many decades to come—and meanwhile they would make the occupation irreversible.

In the years preceding the 44-Day War, Armenia had therefore left no chance for the negotiations to deliver any breakthrough. Declaring the occupied Karabakh region as part of Armenia by notoriously declaring "Karabakh is Armenia, period," Armenia's Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, nullified all the international efforts for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Being a novice in foreign policy, Pashinyan failed to play the subtle political games of his predecessors, who had "successfully" feigned negotiations without disclosing their true purpose of eventual annexation. In parallel to this, Pashinyan's Defense Minister, Davit Tonoyan, declaring his intention to occupy further Azerbaijani territories in case of a military escalation in his doctrine "new war for new territories," further exacerbated the atmosphere and put another nail in the coffin of the peace process.

Azerbaijan had never held any naivety concerning the modus operandi of international relations. Its government was prudent enough not to put all its eggs in one basket. Along with actively operating in international organizations, the Azerbaijani government allocated a significant part of its budget to the modernization of its military forces. For example, according to the latest data released by the Stockholm-based International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Baku imported \$3.274 billion worth of weaponry between 2011 and 2020, while Armenia imported a \$398 million value in the same period. This magnitude of military buildup was possible thanks to the wealth Azerbaijan obtained from its rich oil and gas resources, but also serves as a testimony to Baku's caution about the true nature of peace negotiations with Yerevan.

The breakout of the 44-Day War came on the heels of the failure of peace efforts including the internationally mediated negotiations over long years. Against this backdrop, Azerbaijan resolutely responded to the provocation of the Armenian Armed Forces and, on September 27, 2020, launched its victorious counteroffensive operations. The war put an end to the conflict and de-occupied the Azerbaijani territories that Armenia had illegally held under its control since the early 1990s. This was an outcome for which Azerbaijan pursued a diplomatic struggle for long years within the frame of the international institutions. While the war signified the triumph of justice on the one hand, the military resolution of the conflict marked, unfortunately, another debacle for the international legal order, on the other.

Azerbaijan, standing on the self-defense clauses (Article 51) of the UN Charter, had never ruled out a military solution to its conflict with Armenia. The international community has, quite to the contrary, consistently insisted on the necessity of the exclusion of this last resort from the agenda and sought to convince the sides to work for a negotiated outcome. The United States, Russia, and France were the leading (co-chair) members in the international mission (i.e., the OSCE Minsk Group) founded in the 1990s to coordinate a peaceful resolution of the conflict. This situation made the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict also a test for the multilateral handling of international challenges. The representatives of the three co-chair countries paid countless visits to the conflicting countries, organized high-level meetings, offered a variety of settlement formulas, but achieved little to nothing in this process. Their failure was not derived only from local factors, but also from their reluctance to pressure the occupying state to abide by international law and withdraw its forces from the internationally recognized territories of its neighbor. This was also affected by the co-chair countries' often-conflicting geopolitical interests concerning the region.

In fact, compared with the other territorial conflicts in the post-Soviet space, the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict had more chance of reaching a solution via international mediation. Those other conflicts in the neighborhood, such as in Crimea, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, have considerable geopolitical origins that drive them into deadlock that is unlikely to be broken in the near future. Unlike them, the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict had no geopolitical origins and was therefore a chance for the West and Russia to test their cooperation capabilities in

the peaceful resolution of the region's territorial conflicts. This would create a very promising precedent for the future of international relations and for the future of conflict-affected regions of the world. This chance was, unfortunately, missed. Big states refused to abandon their parochial interests and geopolitical agendas and pursue a common cause of justice and international law. By paying no heed to the voices of up to a million Azerbaijani victims of Armenia's illegal occupation and, instead, preferring the status quo established after the Karabakh War in the early 1990s, the great powers sent a rather disturbing message regarding international peace efforts. Unfortunately, despite the horrifying wars of the twentieth century and recent history, the international community has yet to resolutely enforce international law and conventions against the encroachments of those states that feel powerful enough to contravene them.

5.2. A Wake-up Call for Military Strategists across the Globe and an Inspiration for Small States

The 44-Day War, though only lasting six weeks, was one of the largest conflicts of the post-Soviet region in terms of losses. According to official reports, up to seven thousand combatants and over a hundred civilians, on both sides, lost their lives during the hostilities, whereas unofficial statistics put the number of losses at over ten thousand. The losses that the war inflicted in such a relatively short period are comparable to those of the Ukraine–Russia war (up to 14,000 fatalities between April 6, 2014, and February 15, 2020), and the intensity of the hostilities is unparalleled in the post-Soviet period of the region. Nevertheless, according to many military experts, the war would have killed many more people if it were not fought using the latest military technologies.

This aspect of the war—the use of state-of-the-art military equipment, including UAVs, most commonly known as “drones,” particularly by the Azerbaijani side—rapidly drew the attention of military experts and strategists from around the world. Many observers noted this as the first war in history in which the main military goals were achieved by means of drones and characterized this as a long-expected revolution in military strategy. This was a revolution in terms of the use of the high-tech products of our time against the conventional arms of an earlier period.

The war also revealed the advantages of UAVs over traditional aviation. One observer rightfully noted that, “While it is well known that unmanned combat and reconnaissance aerial vehicles are many times cheaper than traditional aviation, this was the first war where aviation was consistently replaced with UAVs. Apart from the cost of a military jet, there is the matter of training pilots; even Turkey has only a few dozen trained pilots who can man F-16 jets.”³²

This is the reason why most states drew conclusions from this war and reconsidered their

32 Iskandaryan, A., “The Second Karabakh War, or the First post-post-Soviet War”, *Institute for Security Policy Working Paper*, 2020, available at www.institutfuersicherheit.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ISP-Working-Paper-Alexander-ISKANDARYAN-The-Second-Karabakh-War-or-the-First-Post-Post-Soviet-War.pdf (Accessed: 1 September 2021).

defensive strategies. For example, a group of American military experts identified several lessons the United States can learn from the 44-Day War. They note that, although the military capabilities of the USA and its near-peer competitors are vastly different from those of Azerbaijan or Armenia, and therefore America's major rivals such as Russia and China would not be expected to fight in the same way as the small republics of the South Caucasus, nevertheless small actors can achieve tactical air superiority in limited circumstances thanks to UAVs. The potential impact of the new technologies on the military strategies of state actors and their implications for the United States' defense policies are also highlighted:

State actors that lack the air capability and capacity of peer competitors will similarly look to identify weak points where [unmanned aircraft systems] U.A.S. can be applied to gain asymmetric advantage. Russia and China can be expected to augment manned systems with [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] I.S.R. missions and targeting support while also engaging in manned-unmanned teaming. While the U.S. military may not face Russian or Chinese forces in direct conflict, proxies around the world should be expected to employ their systems and [tactics, techniques, and procedures] TTPs at a similar level of capability.³³

Based on these observations, the authors warn American leaders against any disregard of the lessons of the Armenia–Azerbaijani war. The following, from their conclusion, is worth quoting:

The United States military needs to heed the warning of Nagorno-Karabakh in order to effectively prepare for the battlefield of the future. However, the [Department of Defense] DoD must not simply look at tactical lessons learned from this conflict. The Department must also consider the wider strategic implications it suggests such as the likelihood for other frozen conflicts to heat up amid the clear benefits this low cost, low risk capability can provide to countries looking to change their fate.³⁴

The military tactics and strategies employed by Azerbaijan in the war, and the potential of combat drones verified therein, were not, however, read as a challenge by everyone. For smaller states stuck in hostilities with major powers, these represent a great opportunity for more assertive defense policies. A lot of experts curiously analyzed how Azerbaijan's military victory over Armenia, a Russian ally within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), would impact the defensive strategies of other post-Soviet states. The fact that Azerbaijan's armament with Turkish and Israeli UAVs provided the country with a huge advantage over Armenia's Soviet/Russian weaponry raised hopes in the neighboring region for a potential military revolution. Many countries in the region, including Ukraine, Poland, and Latvia, expressed interest in the acquisition of Turkish combat drones.

33 Thomas, N., Jamison, M, Gomber, K., and Walton, D., "What the United States Military Can Learn from the Nagorno-Karabakh War", *Small Wars Journal*, 4 April 2021 available at smallwarsjournal.com/jml/art/what-united-states-military-can-learn-nagorno-karabakh-war (Accessed: September 1, 2021).

34 Ibid.

This situation in the military field would, on the one hand, enable smaller states to build more effective defense lines against more powerful adversaries. This would empower them against the military pressure of the threatening states and enable them to pursue more confident and independent foreign policies. On the other hand, the armament of smaller states with modern technologies and the revision of their defensive strategies in accordance with the new realities has the potential to dramatically increase the cost of aggression against them and, thus, discourage larger powers from the use of military force as easily as before.

6. Concluding Remarks

This report has shed light on the conclusions and ramifications of the 44-Day War through covering it from different angles. The war itself was conditioned by many factors, the inability of the international mediators to facilitate a solution to the conflict and exert pressure on Armenia and the latter's increasingly disruptive behavior being among the main reasons. The report has covered the 44-Day War, its impact on Armenia–diaspora relations, the economic implications of the war for the broader region, and its implications for international relations.

Having restored its territorial integrity, Azerbaijan rewrote the post-Soviet history of occupation and neglect of international rules and norms. Moreover, the war also demonstrated that the failure of diplomatic initiatives and negotiations warranted the use of force and a military solution to the conflict. The widespread myth that “there could be no military solution to the conflict” was shattered altogether. This slogan was repeated throughout the peace process mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs, and unfortunately this played into Armenia's hands as it maintained its occupation of Azerbaijani territories and enjoyed impunity due to the lack of international pressure over its violation of international law.

Azerbaijan, however, never excluded the possibility of a military solution if peace efforts failed altogether. President Ilham Aliyev reiterated many times, in numerous interviews with the world's media during the 44 days of conflict, that the inability of the international community to pressure Armenia to de-occupy Azerbaijani lands and the absence, across three decades, of a tangible solution through peaceful means to this persistent conflict and the increasingly militaristic posture of Armenia's Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, warranted this military solution.

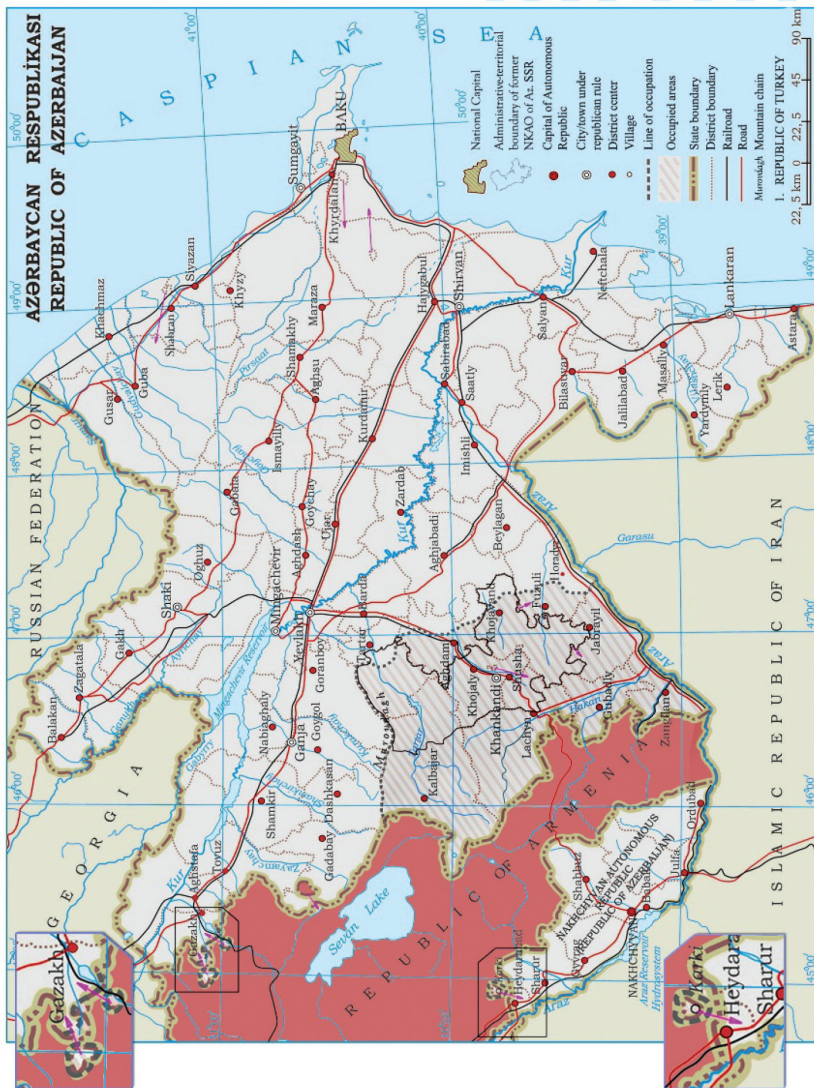
From an international perspective, this paper has identified three major implications of the 44-Day War for international relations. First, it laments that the failure of the peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan prior to the war, and the reluctance of the international community to pressure Armenia to abide by international law, represented another case for the reaffirmation of a Machiavellian vision of international relations. The disregard of international law by Armenian leaders, and the impunity granted to them by the

lack of an international backlash, was a blow not only to the peace process between the two South Caucasian republics but also to the international legal order and trust in this.

The second implication of the war was of a more military nature. The rapid transformation of well-nigh all aspects of our lives over recent decades thanks to the technological revolutions proves not to have bypassed the military field. The 44-Day War, which was largely won by Azerbaijan thanks to its state-of-the-art weaponry, was a verification of this revolution. Although this revolution is read by some states as a challenge, there is a group of states that view it as an opportunity.

This, which the paper presented as the third implication of the latest Karabakh war, has the potential to empower smaller states more assertively to defend their national interests in confrontation with greater powers. Not only will this new situation improve the defensive capabilities of small states, but it will also amplify the costs for big states to militarily confront them and increasingly encourage them toward negotiated solutions.

RESULTS OF ARMENIAN AGGRESSION



The occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Former Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast - NKAO(1923-1991)

Territory: 4.388 sq. km
 Population (1989): 189.085
 - Armenians: 145.450 (76,9%)
 - Azerbaijanis: 40.688 (21,5%)
 - Russians: 1922 (1%)
 - Others: 1025 (0,5%)
 Adm.territorial div.: Mardakert, Askeran, Shusha, Martuni, Hadrut districts

SHUSHA district

Territory: 290 sq. km
 Population (1989): 20.579
 - Azerbaijanis: 19.036 (92,5%)
 - Armenians: 1.377 (6,7%)
 Date of occupation: May 8, 1992

THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN OUTSIDE FORMER NKAO

	area (in sq.km)	popul. at the time of occup.	current popul.	
Lachyn	1.840	51.594	70.900	
Kalbatjar	02.04.1993	3.050	57.756	83.200
Aghdam	23.07.1993	1.150	132.170	180.600
Fuzuli	23.08.1993	1.390	88.729	118.900
Jabravil	23.08.1993	1.050	48.349	72.700
Gubadly	31.08.1993	800	28.111	30.700
Zangilan	29.10.1993	710	31.330	40.500

GAZAKH district*

Baghanis Avrym 24.03.1990
 Kheyrymly 08.03.1992
 Ashaghy Askipara 12.03.1992
 Barkhudarly** 27.04.1992
 Sofulu** 27.04.1992
 Gyzylhajly 11.05.1992
 Yuhary Askipara** 08.06.1992

*the population of the occupied territories of GAZAKH dist. was purely Azerbaijani.
 **enclave villages.



the population of the occupied territories of GAZAKH dist. was purely Azerbaijani.
 **enclave villages.

DESTRUCTION and DAMAGE

Ind. and agricultural enterprises	6.000
Motorways	800 km
Bridges	160
Water pipelines	2.300 km
Gas pipelines	2.000 km
Electricity lines	15.000 km
Forests	280.000 ha
Sowing area	1.000 000 ha
Irrigation sys.	1.200 km
The total damage is estimated up to 60 billion \$ US	

Refugees from Armenia	250.000
IDPs from the occupied territories	686.586
TOTAL:	936.586
Settlers illegally transferred to the occupied territories	396.000
Former NKAO	350
Lachyn	13.000
Kelbejar	700
Zangilan	520
Jabravil	280
Total:	23.000

Settlements	890
Houses	150.000
Public buildings	7.000
Schools	693
Kindergardens	855
Healthcare facilities	695
Libraries	927
Temples	44
Mosques	9
Historical places and museums	464
Museum exhibits	40.000

SADARAK dist., NAKHCHIVYAN AR

date of occup. 15.01.1990
 population (1989) 333
 ethnic comp. 100% aze

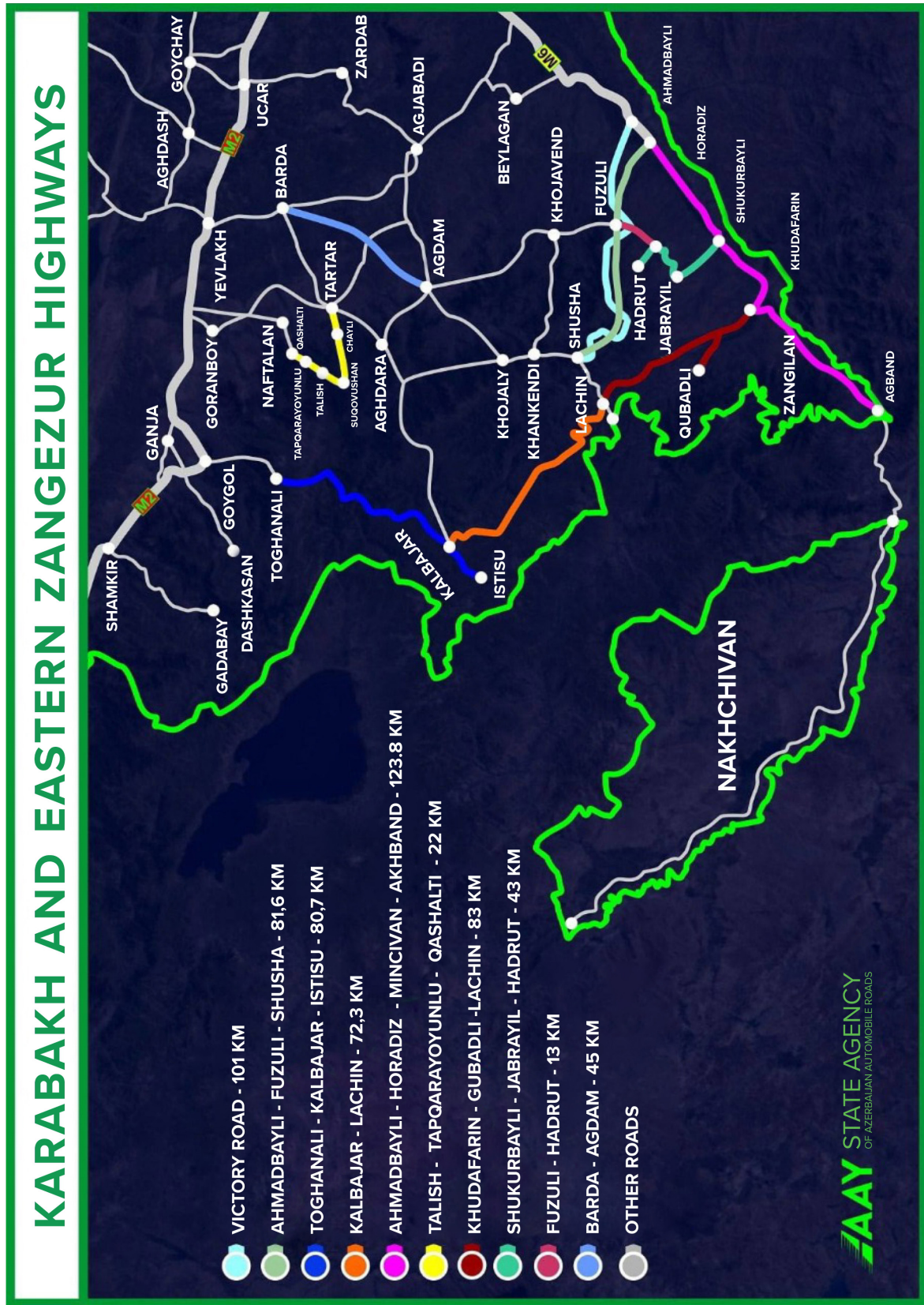
Karki enc.village



Victims of aggression
 killed: 20.000
 disabled: 50.000
 missing : 4.866

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Map 3





THE 44-DAY KARABAKH WAR: Conclusions and Ramifications

BAKU-2021

**THE 44-DAY
KARABAKH
WAR**

**Conclusions and
Ramifications**