

# Specialized Committee

MetroWest Model United Nations 2020

## Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict





- I. Letter from the Chair**
- II. Overview**
- III. Background**
- IV. Current Situation**
- V. Bloc Positions**

## Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Specialized Committee about the Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis! My name is Eliza Kalenjian and I am excited to be your chair for the first annual METMUN conference. I am currently a sophomore at Ashland High School and have over two years of Model UN experience. This year we will be discussing the Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis affecting the Caucasus Region. Our background guide is prepared with the purpose of providing a general idea of this issue and its significance. Although we did try to include a variety of perspectives, at the end of the day, each country will have its own unique stance on the given topic. As delegates, this is your chance to critically examine international issues, practice thinking on the spot with surprise crisis, and to collaborate with your peers to devise realistic strategies that will result in peace in the region. Throughout the duration of this conference, you will have the opportunity to showcase your ability to and present your thoughts within the context and structure of Model UN. I am pleased to see that you have taken initiative to lead discussions on this complex issue and look forward to hearing your innovative solutions. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email before the conference. Lastly, please remember that position papers should be emailed to me by 2/2/2020 at 11:59pm if you wish to be considered for an award. I cannot wait to meet you all in February!

Warm Regards,

Eliza Kalenjian

Chair of the Specialized Committee about the Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis

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## Overview of the Topic:

The territorial conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan began in 1988, when Nagorno-Karabakh passed a resolution to become a part of Armenia besides being legally under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan. However, the roots of the conflict date back to the 1920's, when Stalin was carving up the map of the Soviet Union. The Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region Oblast (NKAO) was placed under the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, despite its 94% ethnic Armenian population. While the Soviet Union was strong, the tensions within the area were controlled by Moscow, but as the USSR began its collapse, order within the region began to dissolve.

Following Nagorno-Karabkh's declaration in 1988, violence broke out in the area. The violence was fueled not just by the territorial dispute, but also by the centuries of tension between the ethnic groups. Armenia, being the only Christian nation in the general region besides Georgia, has very strained relations with its neighbors, most notably with Turkey. The Armenian Genocide of 1915 is an unhealed wound for many in the country, causing a strong sense of nationalism among the people. Azerbaijan's close relations with Turkey only further the aggression between the ethnic groups. The conflict after 1988 resulted in ethnic Armenians gaining control, and in 1991, they declared Nagorno-Karabakh an independent state, beginning the official war.

Throughout the war, Azerbaijani and Armenian military forces came head to head in a series of violent massacres. Areas surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh were occupied by Armenian troops leading to 750,000 Azeris and 300,000 Armenians misplaced, as well as 20,000 - 30,000 killed. At the end of the war, the region remained under Armenian control and in 1994, a Russian supervised ceasefire was installed, leaving the conflict unresolved. The Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) created the Minsk Group, co-chaired by France, Russia, and the United States, to help negotiate the crisis.



## Background:

### **Diplomacy in the Lead Up to the CeaseFire:**

#### *Zheleznovodsk Declaration:*

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh had gone on for four years before any serious international efforts to end the conflict began. The first of these diplomatic meetings to bring about a framework to peace was convened in the Russian town of Zheleznovodsk in September of 1991 under the mediation of the presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan. From this meeting, a declaration signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation outlined a road map to establishing a cease fire through the creation of an observer group of Russian and Kazakh representatives. This group would oversee the return of people whom had been displaced from their homes during the conflict as well as the immediate release of hostages and the normalization of railway, air traffic, and communication systems. The authorities of Azerbaijan and Armenia also agreed to approve delegations to begin bilateral negotiations which would put forth proposals for a conflict settlement within a month of the issuing of the communique. Despite this effort to bring the parties to the conflict together, the fighting in Karabakh destabilized the proposed peace plan after a helicopter crashed killing twenty-two in late November.



### *Tehran Communique:*

Eight months after the negotiations in Zheleznovodsk, a second meeting between the heads of Armenia and Azerbaijan were held with the Islamic Republic of Iran mediating the talks in May of 1992. The communique noted of a temporary cease-fire proposal that facilitated the opening of all communication roads for economic needs and further emphasized that all questions regarding bilateral relations between the two countries should be solved via meetings and consultations. While the good work outlined in the communique would point towards successful progress in ending the conflict, Armenian offenses into Lachin province continued eleven days after the release of the communique. The fighting only intensified further in 1993 as Armenian forces captured Kelbajar Region which resulted in the United Nations Security Council to pass Resolution 822, calling for an end to all hostilities and the immediate withdrawal of Armenian forces from the Kelbajar in April. Despite the UNSC Resolution, Armenian forces continued to make gains in the offenses into Azerbaijan resulting in the capture of Martakert, Aghdam, Fizuli, Jebrail and Kubatly by the end of August. In July, the UN had issued a second condemnation of the Armenian occupation of Aghdam with the passing of UNSC Resolution 853, calling yet again for the immediate withdrawal of Armenian forces from the province.

### *The CSCE's "Adjusted Timetable of Urgent Steps":*

As the international community was focused on the intensifying situation within the Caucasus, highlighted by the Security Council resolutions calling for an immediate end to all hostilities, the Committee for Security and Cooperation in Europe (later to be renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) had been developing a step-by-step approach consisting of a mutually responsive series of measures aimed at implementing the goals of UNSC Resolutions 822 and 853 as soon as possible. This came to be known as the "Adjusted Timetable of Urgent Steps to Implement Security Council Resolutions 822 and 853" and would act as the framework for OSCE conflict resolution in the future Prague Process of 2004 and Madrid Principles of 2007. The plan is highlighted by six key areas including withdrawal of troops from the districts of Kubatly, Aghdam, Fizuli, Jebrail and Martakert; the



restoration of all communications and transportation; the establishment of a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire under the monitoring of the CSCE; the opening of the Minsk Conference to establish a lasting peace; the exchanging of hostages and prisoners of war; and unimpeded access of international humanitarian relief to the conflict-affected areas of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. This peace plan was very comprehensive and resulted in UNSC Resolution 874 on 14 October 1993 which called on all parties to accept the timetable and respect the August ceasefire which held throughout the month of September until it was interrupted on 24 October, ten days after UNSC Res. 874 passed when Armenian forces yet again made offensives into Azerbaijani territory, capturing Horadiz and later capturing Zengelan on 29 October. The violations of the three previous Security Council resolutions led to the passing of UNSC Resolution 884 on 12 November, condemning the ceasefire violations and calling on the government of Armenia to use its influence to ensure that the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians comply with the terms of a cease-fire and for Armenian forces to withdrawal from the Zangelan region. Gains by Azerbaijan in recapturing parts of Kelbajar would continue into the beginning of 1994 until another round of meetings were held in May 1994 in Kyrgyzstan.

*The Bishkek Protocol and the Achievement of a Cease Fire:*

In the midst of peak fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan over control of Nagorno-Karabakh, the meeting under the parliamentary session of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Bishkek on 5 May 1994 would be a landmark meeting in the history of the conflict. All parties to the conflict were able to take the progress made during past negotiations and summits and formulate them into a plan that worked in conjunction with the Minsk Group's plan of conflict resolution. The protocol which came from the meetings in Kyrgyzstan included the need for wide-ranging autonomy for Nagorno-Karabakh while maintaining sovereignty of Azerbaijan; implementation of measures to guarantee the security of Nagorno-Karabakh via peacekeeping operations carried out by a third party; the withdrawal of Armenian forces from occupied territories in Azerbaijan; special status given to the Lachin Corridor which links Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia as well as similar measure for Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan; and securing the return of refugees on both sides of the conflict to their homes. The terms of



this proposed ceasefire would formally come into effect on 12 May 1994, but Armenian forces would continue to hold control over the seven disputed territories. The situation in Nagorno-Karabakh has remained at this stalemated cease-fire with periodic skirmishes along the ceasefire line and despite the principles proposed by the Minsk Group's Prague Process and Madrid Principles. Both methods of bringing a complete end to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh focus on the legal status of the republic, the right of IDPs to safely return back to their homes in the Armenian controlled portions of the disputed territories and the return of control of those territories back to the republic of Azerbaijan.

#### ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH AUTONOMOUS OBLAST IN 1989





## Current Situation

The current status of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations have remained fairly static since the implementation of the ceasefire in 1994. While full scale inter-state war has not seen a resurgence, many outside observers to the conflict fear that the fragility of the peace is at a serious risk. In November 2014, the level of hostilities between the two states became ever more evident as Azerbaijani forces successfully shot down an Armenian helicopter. Daily cross-border fire by snipers on each side has become a daily occurrence, yet the number of casualties has remained relatively low compared to other large conflicts such as Syria and Iraq. Despite the low level priority of the conflict in the eyes of the international community, which currently is grappling with several wars within the Middle East, the potential for the Karabakh conflict to deteriorate into a much larger scale war between Armenia and Azerbaijan would only further destabilize the region. The risk of continued war between Armenia and Azerbaijan is further evident by the increase in nationalist rhetoric by President Aliev of Azerbaijan and President Sarkissian of Armenia, both of whom have pushed to further increase the level of expenditures on defense. This arms race becomes incredibly dangerous to the maintained peace in Nagorno-Karabakh because it runs the real risk of a so-called “war by accident” given the continued fire fights along the Line of Contact. The increased threat of international terrorist networks across the globe also poses a significant danger to the Karabakh conflict. During the peak of the war with Armenia and Azerbaijan, reports that Azerbaijani forces had received a large contingent of Afghan mujahideen fighters supporting their efforts as well as Kurdish PKK militants using the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and other parts of Armenia to train fighters and aid Armenian forces in the conflict. This history of short-term alliances between these factions not only run the risk of seeing an extension of the Islamic State affiliated groups establishing themselves in the region as it has in other parts of the globe, such as in Nigeria, Sinai Province and parts of Chechnya, but further runs the risk of bringing larger powers into the conflict such as Turkey as it combats the Kurdish PKK. The importance of maintaining peace in the South Caucasus is paramount to continued global peace efforts, especially seeing as the work done by the OSCE’s Minsk Group in mediating a cease fire to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh has since been applied to the



situation in Eastern Ukraine. As fragile as that conflict is with its incredibly shaky cease-fire in place, a collapse in peace in the Nagorno-Karabakh could send a demoralizing message to those following the plan in Ukraine and lead to a further destabilization of the security environment. As it was when the cease-fire was put in place, the claims of the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis have been the same; Armenians seek to see that Nagorno-Karabakh's right to self determination be respected and implemented, yet they fall short of calling for reunification or annexation of the province into Greater Armenia. Azerbaijani negotiators have for the most part shown a growing openness to moving forward with allowing the independence of Karabakh, but seeing the continued occupation of the seven Azeri provinces outside of Nagorno-Karabakh and continued border clashes along the Line of Contact as a barrier to peace and a sticking point for increasingly nationalistic rhetoric which calls for further increases in defense spending.

As of now, the Minsk Group has been unsuccessful in creating any notable solutions to the conflict. Ceasefire violations are alarming common as there are no international peacekeepers in the area and the two military forces are placed on a line of contact with no communication with each other. In April of 2016, the most violent violation took place, leaving to over 300 casualties. Afterwards, a meeting between the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, and Armenian's president, Serzh Sarkissian, led by Valdimir Putin took place in St. Petersburg. The result was an increase in the number of OSCE observers in the region, but little progress has been achieved since.

Nagorno-Karabakh's de-facto independent status has not been recognized internationally, including by Armenia. However, Armenia is its financer and military supplier. The region hopes to use the surrounding occupied nations are trading bate with Azerbaijan to achieve independent status.



## Bloc Positions:

### *Armenia:*

The Armenian claim is an ancient one which looks back at the historical significance of the nation and the Nagorno-Karabakh or “Artsakh” enclave. Karabakh is the last Armenian frontier dividing the region between East and West, Christianity and Islam. After the 1915 Armenian Genocide and Treaty of Sevres, Armenia held a sliver of territory within what nationalist historians consider Greater Armenia, which would stretch from the Trebezoid on the Black Sea coast to Baku along the Caspian Sea. While Armenia initially was not in the conflict when Karabakh first seceded from Azerbaijan, the disintegration of the Soviet Union gave the nation extensive Russian weaponry left over by the Soviets which gave Armenians great benefits in their campaign. Today, Armenia’s alliance with Russia is still quite strong with Armenia accepting a security guarantee from Russia that allowed for a military base and 4,000 to 5,000 Russian troops within the nation. This large ally to the north is part of the reason Armenia has felt confident pushing for increased defense spending. Russia provides significant aid to the country in the realm of hydroelectric and nuclear energy; however, proposed increases in the electricity price by the Russian firm brought Armenians out to the streets of Yerevan in protest of the hikes. Regarding the current state of peace talks, Armenia sees that the only avenue to successful peace is to allow for Nagorno-Karabakh to decide its own status. Some large impediments to reaching this deal have been objections by the government in Stepanakert, the Nagorno-Karabakh capital, who see that any solution must include the inclusion of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic at the table.

### *Azerbaijan:*

Azerbaijan’s claim to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict centers around the legitimate grievances held around the loss of the seven de jure territories outside of the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave. Even at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Azerbaijani delegation emphasized its use of Article 51 which allows for a State to use self-defense to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the polity. The numerous reports by NGOs of atrocities committed by various Popular Front militias in



Karabakh, notably the Armenian Nationalist Movement and Dashnaktsutyun, were essential in Armenian successes in the conflict. Domestic unrest and factionalism within the leadership in Baku also lead to unsuccessful and successful coup d'etats and hindered Azerbaijan's ability to implement strategic movement of forces. Aside from the shortcomings during the conflict, Azerbaijan holds a bit of leverage over European observers through its large oil supply along the Caspian Sea. The oil pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkey through Georgia successfully isolated Armenia from profits it may have gained from a pipeline through the nation. As far as peace talks go, Azerbaijan centers on the need for Armenia to withdrawal its forces from Kelbajar, Lachin, Aghdam, Fizuli, Zengelan, Kubatly and Jebrail. Both the Azerbaijani and the Armenian delegation have come very close to reaching a solution on the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, but achieving this goal hinges on a withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azerbaijan. As both states continue to ramp up defense spending and Azerbaijan continues to foster closer ties with Turkey, a historical enemy of Armenia, efforts towards achieving all these goals will become increasingly important for the delegates of the Security Council.

*Turkey:*

Turkey's influence over the conflict has had major effects on the regions military status. Having had a historically violent and tense relationship with Armenia, Turkey is one of Azerbaijan's main allies and suppliers. The country's insisted denial of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and President Erdoğan's increased conservative rule, has lead to even more tension in the region. Turkey and Azerbaijan have both placed a trade embargo on Armenia, resulting in a damaging economic impact. Although Turkey refuses to improve its relationship with Armenia so long as the conflict is not resolved, it has not committed any military actions on behalf of Azerbaijan. This is due to Russia's heavy military influence in the region. As an enthusiastic proponent of Azerbaijan's stance, Turkey has a major influence over the resolution of the crisis.



### *China:*

Chinese interests have been fairly minor in the Caucasus up until the beginning of the 21st century when it began increasing its role in regional energy projects and enhancing trade and communication with countries in the Caucasus. In 1999, Armenia received eight Chinese Typhoon multiple rocket systems from a private Chinese company which shocked Azerbaijan, but this did not hinder the development of bilateral ties between Baku and Beijing in 2005. Also, China's goal to recreate the Silk Road trade network makes Armenia a crucial ally for them in the region, as they are one of the few Christian nations in that area of the world. China holds the capacity to be a real player in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but as of now, remains only an observer.

### *The Majority of European Union Members:*

The involvement of Europe in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Caucasus have been mostly economic, primarily focusing on developing the EastWest corridor's transportation and communication infrastructure as well as building energy ties with Azerbaijan. Britain, Germany, France and Italy have expressed support for territorial integrity while backing peace negotiations on the various ethnic secessionist conflicts in the region; a number of these countries are participating members in the OSCE Minsk Group. Recently, the UN has cited various human rights violations within Azerbaijan which has strained the country's relations with Europe. However, the European Union does not favor Armenia's close ties with Russia as well.

Luckily the comparative trust between the EU and Russia has helped advance a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; however, with deteriorating relations over the Ukrainian civil war could draw some divisions between efforts to resort peace.

### *Iran:*

Iran has played a relatively balanced role in the conflict seeing as it has taken on the role of hosting and facilitating the exodus of refugees across the River Araxes. While other Islamic nations like Turkey have tilted towards supporting the Azeri cause, Iran has at times given its support to Christian



Armenia. Iran also has expressed anger at the presence of US companies in the Caspian Sea region to secure energy exports , and has also expressed dismay at the friendly relations between Azerbaijan and Israel. The high populations of ethnic Azeris stokes fear in Iran that secessionist sentiments in the north could lead to further tensions.

#### *The Islamic World:*

The Islamic World has been divided in its assessment of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On the one hand, the Organization of the Islamic Conference was the first international body to openly condemn Armenia for aggression in the conflict, calling for the immediate and unconditional liberation of the occupied Azeri territories. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf States have given assistance to Azeri refugees as well as partnered with Azerbaijan in the realms of energy, trade and investment. However, some Muslim countries such as Lebanon and Syria have developed strong ties with Armenia given the large Armenian communities in their countries from the Armenian diaspora. While Islamic countries have not played a direct role in the peace process, they are important factors due to their capabilities of providing large sums of humanitarian aid, weapons and money to various hard line Islamic groups in the region.

#### *Russia:*

The Russian Federation has found itself in an interesting position geopolitically in regards to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russia had initially supplied weapons to both sides of the conflict, primarily due to the corrupt local commanders whom sought private profits from selling weapons after the fall of the USSR. Many analysts have said that Russia has a stake in fueling both sides of the conflict in order to keep the newly independent Armenia and Azerbaijan weakened and within Russia's influence; however, many Azerbaijanis see Russia's actions as disproportionately favoring Armenia which would make sense due to the historical ties Armenia and Russia share. Azerbaijan's linguistic and cultural connections to Turkey, a NATO member, also put Russia in a position to advance greater ties with Armenia throughout the conflict. Russian-Armenian ties are evident throughout the framework of the



Collective Security Treaty of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Russia holds two military bases within Armenia, owns 90% of its energy facilities, and cooperates militarily with the country. At the moment, Russia has played a more balanced role in Nagorno-Karabakh due to improved relations with Baku under Vladimir Putin who visited Azerbaijan in 2001 and has declared that Moscow would recognize any peace deal agreed upon by both sides of the conflict.

*The United States:*

Vast energy reserves within the Caspian Sea and the region's geostrategic importance in the fight against international terrorism has kept Washington's interest in the Caucasus. The powerful Armenian lobby within the USA helped push the US Congress to pass Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act of 1992 which barred the United States government from lending assistance to Azerbaijan. Despite this brief setback in US-Azeri relations, the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline following the 1994 agreement with Western energy companies and Baku signaled a major victory for the US as they saw the move as integrated Georgia and Azerbaijan towards the West. Washington has played a key role in the peace process in Nagorno-Karabakh, notably sponsoring a series of meetings between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan such as the 2002 Key West talks which saw a deal come nearly within reach even though neither side was willing to compromise on the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh's status. The fact that both the United States and Russia are co-chairs within the OSCE Minsk Group has drawn harsh criticism from Azerbaijan whom see the group as ineffective due to the competing interests of the two nations; however, the co-chairs of the group are but only facilitators of the negotiations, not the negotiators.



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