

# Technology Played Decisive Role in Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict of 2020

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**Abstract:** Armenia and Azerbaijan are two republics in the mountainous Caucasus region situated between Asia and Europe and both were part of erstwhile Soviet republic. Azerbaijan and Armenia were declared sovereignty in September 1989 and August 1990 respectively and both gained independence from Soviet in 1991. Nagorno-Karabakh is locally known as Artsakh with a small territory of 1,700 square miles (4,400 square km) located in southwestern Azerbaijan and populated by ethnic Armenians with the backing of Armenian govt. The place had been bone of contention between two warring nations since 1988. Both the nations were steadfast in their claims over disputed territory. Since 1994, Nagorno-Karabakh was occupied and ruled by ethnic Armenians but the region was officially under Azerbaijan as per international law. Armenia is Christian dominated nation but Azerbaijan has been populated by Muslim community. Azerbaijan received support of neighbor Turkey and launched drone attack at military outfit of opponent. Armenia, with traditional tanker and ground battle troops were no match for sophisticated high-tech weapons of adversary. Russia remained neutral in this gruesome conflict. Battle ended in favour of Azerbaijan and Armenia surrendered with its wounds to nurse. There seemed no sign of lasting peace between two nations and strained relationship would linger in foreseeable future.

**Keywords:** Age-old rivalry, Cultural disharmony, Death and despondence, Disputed territory, Drone attack, Evacuation, Fierce battle, High-tech weapon.

## 1. Introduction

The relationship between two Caucasian nations were unfriendly and tense much before they disintegrated from soviet Russia. The Caucasus is strategically significant mountainous terrain located in south-east of Europe equally appealing and contested by Christian and Muslim for encroachment and occupation of the territory. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan were part of Soviet Union since 1920. The apple of discord was the disputed territory Nagorno-Karabakh and seven districts located around it. Nagorno-Karabakh is a mountainous terrain which had long been populated by Christian Armenian settlers and Muslim Turks and remained epicenter of fierce conflict between two belligerent nations. During Soviet supremacy prior to disintegration of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, both Armenia and Azerbaijan were the constituent republics of the Soviet Union till 1991. Nagorno-Karabakh was autonomous region within the periphery of republic of Azerbaijan during

soviet hegemony. Both the nations received independence since collapse of soviet regime. Bitter fight continued since 1988 between two combative nations. Substantial Azerbaijani and Armenian masses had to depart their respective territories in late 1980s due to ethnic violence and unsettled claims over Nagorno-Karabakh. Soviet made a mistake when they handed the territory to Azerbaijan despite it was inhabited by ethnic Armenian. The contentious enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh was internationally recognized as Azerbaijan territory in 1994. Full-fledged military operation ensued when ethnic Armenians intruded into Azerbaijan territory and drove out Azerbaijanis in great number in early 1990s. Misery of the people was indescribable as about one million people were expelled from their settlements and approximately 30,000 lost their lives in longstanding warfare. The declaration of independence for Nagorno-Karabakh in 1992 did not receive any recognition from international community. Russia intervened in early 1990s to sign truce between two arch rivals marking end of war but there was no permanent solution through sign of peace deal. Deadlock prevailed between two enemy republics since ceasefire declared in 1994. Ethnic cleansing, violence and massacre continued in which both sides bore the burn but displacement was more for Azerbaijanis.

## 2. Case Presentation

When most of the world was rattled with spread of dreadful coronavirus and lockdown as well as social restrictions decelerated economic and business activities to great extent, two Caucasian states locked horns in fierce battle in 2020. The bitter animosity came out in open and brought two belligerent nations in direct confrontation. Armenian forces equipped with tanks and armored vehicles dumbfounded by Azerbaijan sophisticated warfare strategy. Turkey heavily supported Azerbaijan in gesture of Muslim brotherhood. Russia maintained military bases in Armenia but it kept diplomatic ties with both the nations. Russia didn't intervene in 2020 war and took side of none of them. Azerbaijan was equipped with drones and roving armaments. It made substantial investment in drones and received them from Russia, Turkey, and Israel. It went ahead to procure kamikaze armed attack drones to stay updated with modern weaponry. Armenia failed to perceive that those

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tanks and armored vehicles are rudimentary and inadequate to serve the purpose in the age of ballistic missile and drone strike. Drones provided accurate information to use Azeri artillery effectively. Azerbaijan made consistent drone strikes at Armenian targets on regular basis. In single strike it damaged nearly seven Armenian tanks in a column. The relentless drone attack at targeted base annihilated Armenian defenses deeply rooted in disputed location for decades. The devastating conflict continued for six weeks between Armenia and Azerbaijan that rendered many displaced and exterminated about 5000 people. Hundreds of civilians were killed from both the sides and thousands were displaced owing to infernal fighting. Injured troops had to retreat and Armenian force was compelled to vacate most of the occupied territories.

### 3. Discussion

The days for battleground fights are over. The way warfare happened during world war I and II is a thing of past. In 21st century, warfare planning, strategy and execution are technology driven. Countries sticking to the old pattern of fighting would get outwitted and vanquished by sophisticated weaponry used by adversary. In warfare between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the former blundered sticking to armory of yesteryears. Azerbaijan made a smart move and used drone services to make targeted attack on opponent. NATO, USA, Russia, and Iran opposed intense fighting between two Caucasian nations over disagreement about Nagorno-Karabakh in late September, 2020. Turkey, on the contrary, provided continued support to Azerbaijan to show fraternal affinity. The disputed place got separated from Baku after 1990 war but it remained internationally acknowledged that Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan showed high fellow feelings for Azerbaijan counterpart. Turkey stood firm with Azerbaijan and sold arms sixfold higher in 2020. Turkey placed two F-16 fighter jets at Azeri city of Ganja. It also delivered state-of-the-art Bayraktar TB2 armed drones indigenously made in Turkey. It imparted training to Azeri military forces and encouraged friendly Azerbaijan006E to have military upper hand over relatively under-equipped Armenia. Turkey praised Azerbaijan blatantly in victory over its opponent neighbor much to the anguish of Western nations. The camaraderie of Turkey was to gain oil rich Azerbaijan's support for energy security and receive foreign investment from brotherly nation to fortify its beleaguered economy. At the end of military exercise worst in current century of Europe, Azerbaijan secured the access of Fizuli and Aghdam and other places remained under the authority of Armenia. Azerbaijan gained control of desolated region replete with ruin of heritage architecture, uprooted vineyard and rubble strewn village which used to bustle with market activity and pastoral liveliness. Armenians are reluctant to give up even after defeat and loss. There is conviction among bruised Armenian souls to keep the fight simmering and ensure independence of disputed territory although international consensus went in favour of Azerbaijan.

### 4. Conclusion

Armenia and Azerbaijan were not in good terms for elongated period of time. Both had their disturbed past to fuel the fire of animosity. The warfare of recent past on disputed territory highlighted communal disharmony, religious difference, geopolitical complexity and international political divergence. Technology played a decisive role in fighting between two Caucasian nation that started in July 2020. Support of Turkey to Islamic nation was more than rhetoric and moral support. Fighter drone was proved to be game changer in this warfare. In this bloody warfare thousands died and civilians from both the sides were badly injured. There was suspicion about involvement of Turkish military and Syrian mercenaries in favor of Azerbaijan. Russia refrained from taking side of any. The neutral position was to defend its own interest as it maintained economic tie and engaged in arm supply to both erstwhile constituent republics of unified Soviet Russia. Armenia being deprived of Russian support in recent fierce warfare that massacred hundreds of soldiers and dozens of civilians, commemorated gruesome details of genocide by imperialist Ottoman about a century ago. The gory details of Armenian genocide in 1915 and unforgettable carnage in the hand of Turks and Kurds haunt Armenians till date. Russia was at loggerheads with Turkey in the past for its concern over Syria and Libya. Russia being pro-Armenian maintained observer role in recent clash between two Balkan nations as it didn't want to disconnect relationship with Azerbaijan. The recent war of 2020 made it clear that more than strength and ferocity of troops, strategic application of technology can give victorious leeway to bellicose nation. The defeat of Armenia and win of Azerbaijan would not drop a curtain to their anxious relationship. Both the sides have credible facts and narratives to justify their respective claims over disputed site. Fault finding, blame game and continued hostility would not assure any lasting peace as both the sides inflicted damage to each other. It is true that old wounds bleed soon. If both the sides avoid warlike confrontation and agree to come to discussion table, some compromise solution might emerge. If combative nations consider the dispute as two-person-zero-sum game, reaching a resolution would be troublesome. Both the nations would have to come halfway and settle the dispute for sustainable peace, stability and better future of upcoming generation. There should be effort on the part of international peacekeeping body, neighboring nations to influence them towards peace and stability. Nonboring nations should understand that war between nations end up in erosion of financial and human resources, trade abeyance and investment gets jeopardized in disturbed political scenario and frazzled economic condition.

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