

Frozen Conflict: Nagorno-Karabakh

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Introduction

- In the early 1920s, the new Soviet rulers, as part of their divide-and-rule policy in the region, established the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, with an ethnic Armenian majority, within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan
- In February 1988, the local Soviet parliament for Karabakh voted to join Armenia, touching off an inter-ethnic explosion
- In 1991 the enclave declared independence
- During the dispute escalation, in which between 20,000 and 30,000 people are estimated to have lost their lives, Armenians gained control of the region and also pushed on to occupy Azerbaijani territory outside Karabakh, creating a buffer zone linking Karabakh and Armenia



Source: southcaucasus.blogspot.com

Brief Timeline of the Dispute Escalation

- Feb 1988: The local soviet of the NKAO appeals to the USSR Supreme Soviet to transfer the NKAO from the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR. Spontaneous support in Armenia; reports trigger in Sumqayit, north of Baku. Official reports put the death toll at about 30, but Armenians claim it was far higher.
- Sep 1988: Scattered violence leads to exodus of Azerbaijani population
- Jun-Nov 1989: Using tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh as stimulus, nationalist movements develop in Azerbaijan and Armenia
- Jan 1990: Soviet leadership declares state of emergency in Nagorno-Karabakh and along Armenian-Azerbaijani border. Soviet troops open fire on civilians in Baku, killing 130 people according to official statistics (Black January)
- Sep 1991: Nagorno-Karabakh parliament proclaims establishment of independent Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.
- Nov 1991: Azerbaijan's Supreme Soviet annuls the autonomous status NKAO; the region's parliament responds by holding a referendum in which Karabakh Armenians vote overwhelmingly in favor of secession from Azerbaijan

Warfare in Nagorno-Karabakh

- Jan 1992: Nagorno-Karabakh parliament declares the region's independence. Conflict escalates into full-fledged warfare following the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- Feb 1992-Apr 1994: intense fighting leads to destruction of villages, displacement of populations, and occupation of territory surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, creating land bridge to Armenia
- May 1994: A Russian-brokered ceasefire signed, leaving Karabakh as well as swathes of Azeri territory around the enclave in Armenian hands.



International Community: attempts to mediate

- Summer 1992: The CSCE (now OSCE) creates the 11-country Minsk Group with the aim to mediate a solution to the conflict
- Aug-Sep 1993: Russian envoy mediates a temporary cease-fire; Moscow arranges direct talks but Azerbaijan violates cease-fire
- May 1994: CIS organized talks, hosted by Kyrgyzstan, between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh representatives, the Bishkek Protocol is signed and a cease-fire begins on 12 May.
- Aug 1994: Moscow organizes another meeting for the Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Karabakh representatives, discussing so-called Major Political Agreement to resolve the conflict.
- May-Jun 1995: A new round of negotiations in Moscow in fails,
- Jan-Mar 1996: Talks in Moscow on security issues fail to make substantial progress.

International Community: attempts to mediate (continued)

- May-Aug 1997: The Minsk Group presents a new peace proposal but Nagorno-Karabakh rejects.
- Sep 1997: Minsk Group presents modified "step-by-step" peace proposal, again rejected by Nagorno-Karabakh
- Nov 1998: A Minsk Group "common state" proposal is rejected by Azerbaijan
- 2000: Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev meet at the UN Millennium Summit in New York, reaffirming the importance of the dialogue begun in 1999
- Apr-Jul 2001: Peace talks held in Key West, Florida; agreements fail to yield results
- May-Aug 2002: Armenian and Azerbaijani deputy foreign ministers meet in Prague
- Jul 2004: Minsk Group mediators announce they will not bring any new proposals for the conflicting sides, saying that Armenia and Azerbaijan bear the responsibility for reaching agreements and a settlement
- 2004-06: Informal ministerial level meetings yield no results

Recent developments

- Nov 2007: Basic principles for settlement presented to leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia at Madrid summit of OSCE
- Mar 2008: Worst fighting in recent years breaks out; Azerbaijan and Armenia accuse each other of starting the clashes, which leave several dead on each side
- Nov 2008: Armenia and Azerbaijan sign a joint agreement aimed at intensifying efforts to resolve the dispute over territory of Nagorno-Karabakh
- Nov 2009: Azerbaijani-Armenian talks on Nagorno-Karabakh end without achieving major breakthrough
- Jun 2011: Russian President Medvedev fails to achieve breakthrough
- June 2012: Armenian-Azerbaijani border clashes

The Gordian knot ?

“There are perfectly sensible plans for peace, but there have to be basic levels of trust,” de Waal said. “Now there’s a lack of both trust and interaction.”

Thomas de Waal

Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment

- The international mediation effort envisions a final settlement involving an exchange of land for peace. In earlier years, diplomats and politicians in Baku and Yerevan privately acknowledged that a settlement would involve Armenian withdrawal from lowland territories to the east and south of Karabakh, as well as Azerbaijani acceptance of an Armenian identity for Karabakh and a link with Armenia to the west
- However, both countries keep stepping up their aggressive rhetoric. Ilham Aliiev, Azerbaijan's president, warned of war in at least nine separate speeches in 2010, and has shown no sign of letting up in following years. His Armenian opponent, Serzh Sargysan, has strongly emphasized his country's readiness to repel any attacks. Regular military exercises in both countries suggest this is not just an empty bravado



Source: <http://www.dw.de/think-tank-report-urges-eu-to-reconsider-chosen-security-strategies/a-6115306>

Sources

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