

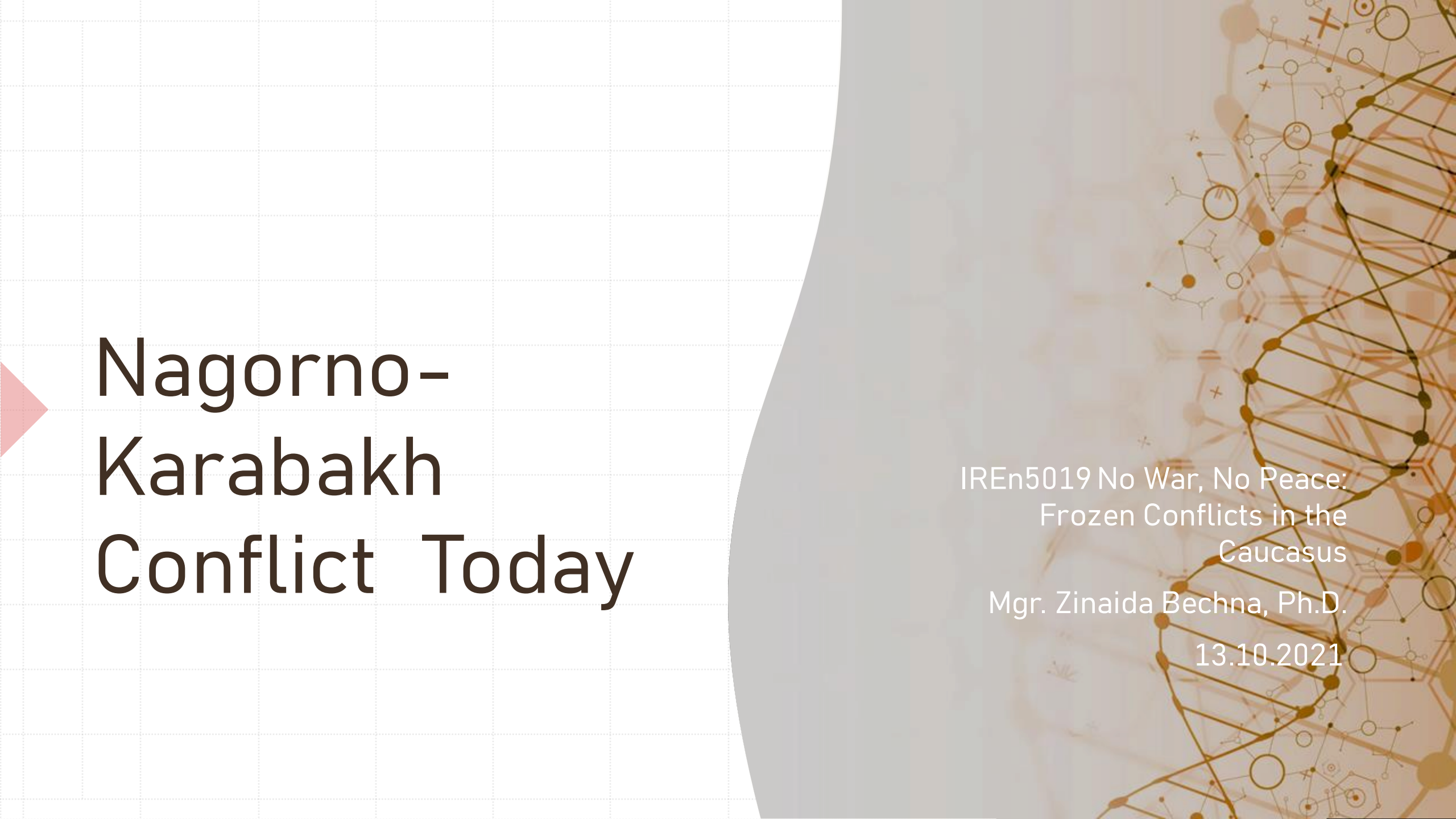


# Nagorno- Karabakh Conflict Today

IREn5019 No War, No Peace:  
Frozen Conflicts in the  
Caucasus

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# Structure

- Skirmishes 2014
- The four days war
- The road to the second Karabakh war
- The Second Karabakh war
- Peace deal
- Conclusion



July 2020 clashes

ARMENIA

Yerevan

TURKEY

Autonomous Republic  
of Nakhchivan (Azer.)

**'Nagorno-Karabakh Republic'** de facto government.

AZERBAIJAN

Former Nagorno-  
Karabakh  
Autonomous Oblast,  
1923-1991

Bakou

Ganja

Berd

Shahumian  
Claimed by NGR  
Controlled by Azer.

Stepanakert

Lachin  
Corridor



# Skirmishes 2014

- In the years preceding 2014 total fatalities averaged 20–30 (2012 was the worst year, with 34 fatalities reported), and in several years the number of non-combat-related deaths exceeded those resulting from enemy action.
- Three trends converged to alter this situation: **increasing military capabilities on both sides, changing military intent, and the marginalization of negotiations.**
- Both sides' military capabilities have substantially increased over recent years in terms of the scale, sophistication and range of their arsenals. As a proportion of GDP, Armenia and Azerbaijan have emerged as the biggest military spenders in the post-Soviet space bar Russia.
- Globally, both countries have featured in the top 10 militarized states since 2011; moreover, they are the only pair of states within the top 10 engaged in active conflict with each other.



# Skirmishes 2014

- July 30 – August 4 flash skirmishes
- -> 13 Azerbaijani soldiers were killed and five Armenians died (mod.gov.az, August 4).
- Azerbaijan accused Armenia of having “repeatedly violated the cease-fire regime by attacking positions of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan” (mfa.gov.az, August 3); Yerevan made a similar statement about the Azerbaijani forces.
- May 29 meeting – Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, Moscow stated that Armenia should be admitted to the future Eurasian Union only within its United Nations-recognized borders, i.e. not including Karabakh (armradio.am, June 5).
- The United States’ co-chair of the Minsk Group Ambassador James Warlick as well as the US ambassador to Azerbaijan Richard Morningstar gave statements emphasizing a route to conflict resolution via restoring Azerbaijani’s territorial integrity, in line with the Madrid Principles (carnegieendowment.org, May 7; apa.az, May 16).
- Diplomatic failure for Armenia: sacrificed its European integration ambitions to join the Russian-led Eurasian Union, in large part based on the assumption that Moscow would support it on the Karabakh issue.



# The four days war 2-5 April 2016

- Violence along the Line of Contact – after the Nuclear Summit in Washington D.C.
- Skirmishes since 2014 – signal of bigger violence.
- In the course of the fierce fighting, both sides used all types of weapons at their disposal (tanks, heavy artillery, rocket launchers, and to a limited extent air power), including the shelling of civilian targets.
- Armenian Deputy defence Minister David Tonoian: Armenian move from a “static defense” to more active deterrence mode as a respond to the 2014 August skirmishes.
- Shair Ramaldanov - a retired Azerbaijani colonel - “(the aim) of the April war was to prevent constant shelling of civilian settlements. The goal was to (protect) civilian settlements from Armenia’s positions, especially in the Lele Tepe and Talish direction.”
- Azerbaijan seized a sliver of territory.
- Several hundreds deaths



 territory controlled by Armenians

 front line





# The road to the second Karabakh war

- The Second Karabakh War or the six-week war forty-four days, lasting from 27 September to 10 November 2020, took the **lives of thousands** of Armenian and Azerbaijani soldiers, abruptly **changed the status quo** in the Karabakh conflict that had existed since the end of the First Karabakh conflict in 1994, and **reformatted the geopolitical configuration** of the South Caucasus.
- Emotions and **propaganda** still prevail in the information flows: media battles are becoming more heated. Data is fragmentary; even the exact number of casualties is not known. **Exchange of prisoners** of war is still ongoing. **Borders are being delineated**. Many details about the course of the warfare are unclear. It is too soon for conclusions.





# The road to the second Karabakh war

- Given the growing tensions between Russia and the West after the 2014 Ukraine crisis, the former Soviet space has been transformed into Russia – West battlefield.
- Azerbaijan rapprochement with Russia as a reliable tool to bring back Karabakh under Azerbaijani control. Since the 2000s Azerbaijani President Aliyev intensified its cooperation with Russia. This included large scale arms purchases (up to 5 billion USD)<sup>2</sup>, as well as the launch of economic projects, such as the North-South international transport corridor (connecting India with Northern Europe via Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia), the establishment of Russia- Iran – Azerbaijan energy corridor, etc.
- Russia itself was not against mediating a deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which could solidify its positions in both countries.



# Lavrov Plan

- In 2013 Russian "Lavrov plan" initiative: return to Azerbaijan of security zone - territories outside of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region - (5 regions Aghdam, Fizuli, Jebrail, Zangelan, and Kubatli had to be returned immediately and remaining two regions - Lachin and Kelbajar, had to be returned within a year while keeping a land corridor connecting Karabakh with Armenia), and the deployment of Russian peacekeepers along the new line of contact. Russian leadership had a clear vision that the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in Azerbaijan will significantly increase its influence over Baku while making Armenia even more dependent on Russia.
- Initially, both Armenia and Azerbaijan were cautious regarding this new plan. President Aliyev was reluctant to allow Russian troops back to Azerbaijan (last Russian soldiers left Azerbaijan in 2012 after the closure of the Russian radar station in Gabala), while Armenians sought to receive recognition of Artsakh's independence or unification with Armenia as a reward for returning 7 regions to Azerbaijan.



# Lavrov plan

- After the "Velvet revolution" of 2018 the new Armenian leadership rejected all options elaborated or discussed before the revolution, including Lavrov's plan. Meanwhile, some overt anti-Russian actions by Nikol Pashinyan's government have significantly deteriorated Armenia – Russia relations and changed the previous balance of power in the region.
- The Pashinyan's Civil Contract party and the parliamentary alliance "My Step" – the absence of Western support. Both domestic and foreign policy-making lacked strategic or institutional thinking. Conflict policy grew increasingly aggressive towards Azerbaijan, but also Turkey, aimed at continually satisfying the nationalist fervour of domestic social media audiences rather than pursuing specific foreign policy goals.
- Pashinyan, who benefited from Sargsyan's downfall and headed the post-revolutionary government, initially made several public calls for peace. However no compromise: "Karabakh is Armenia. Period!"
- 'Security vs. democracy' false dichotomy instrumentalized by Azerbaijani and Armenian autocrats to consolidate their power.



# The July escalation 2020

- Escalation along the northern edge of the Armenian and Azerbaijani border, no de-escalation efforts. The July clashes were disastrous for Azerbaijan, which incurred significant losses, including the death of a popular General, Polad Hashimov (Media.az 2020).
- The Armenian leadership declared victory. Pashinyan organized a ceremony in which military honours and awards were presented to servicemen who had participated in the escalation and declared, “It is obvious and unequivocal that the reforms [in the army] were successful as evidenced by the July defensive operation. In fact, we proved that Armenia can achieve a military advantage through intellectual work, tactical and strategic innovations, without having to engage in an exhaustive arms race” (PM RA 2020, 19). He continued, “The victorious July battles demonstrated Armenia’s ability to meet its own security challenges” ((PM RA 2020, par. 23).
- In Azerbaijan: the July escalation triggered acts of public disobedience, including storming and breaking into the parliament building. Thousands of young people gathered in the centre of Baku, demanding war.

# THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN



**July 12-13, 2020**  
Azerbaijani troops shelled the city of **Berd**<sup>1</sup> in the north of Armenia after accusing Yerevan of a shelling attack on the border village of **Dondar Gushchu**<sup>2</sup>.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been locked in a conflict over Azerbaijan's breakaway region of **Nagorno-Karabakh** since 1988.

Legend:  
■ Nagorno-Karabakh region  
■ Azerbaijani-controlled territory  
▨ Armenian-occupied territory

Source: Media reports



# The second Karabakh War

- The Second Karabakh War was fought by sides with **vastly different resources** and **technical capacities**. Nagorno-Karabakh used technologies and strategies dating back from the 1980s and 1990s; it employed tanks, lacked state-of-the-art dynamic defence and had almost no drones.
- Meanwhile, Azerbaijan, an oil-rich state, spend a quarter of a century preparing to fight a modern war. At a time of relatively high oil prices, Azerbaijan used its revenues from oil to buy modern weaponry. It also had Turkey's direct support in the planning of military operations and in arms supplies, including a virtually unlimited supply of high-precision Bayraktar TB2 combat drones carrying missiles and bombs.
- As a result, **Azerbaijan controlled the airspace over the war zone throughout the war**. In the first days of the fighting, it destroyed dozens of anti-aircraft guns that Karabakh inherited from the Soviet army at the time of the disintegration of the USSR; the exact number is unknown since some of the guns were dummies. A number of Karabakh's radars were also taken down in the first days, followed by parts of S300 surface-to-air missile systems and the launcher of a Tor missile system, also of Russian make. Drones continued to effectively destroy the military equipment of the Karabakh army, including tanks, armed personnel carriers and artillery



# The second Karabakh war

- This was in fact the first war in history where the main military goals were achieved by means of drones; as necessary, drone attacks were coordinated with fire from multiple rocket launchers. Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh were relying on their capacity for defence with artillery and missiles, a grave miscalculation in the modern conditions. Already in the previous major escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh in April 2016, there were clear signs of the potential role of drones in a modern war.
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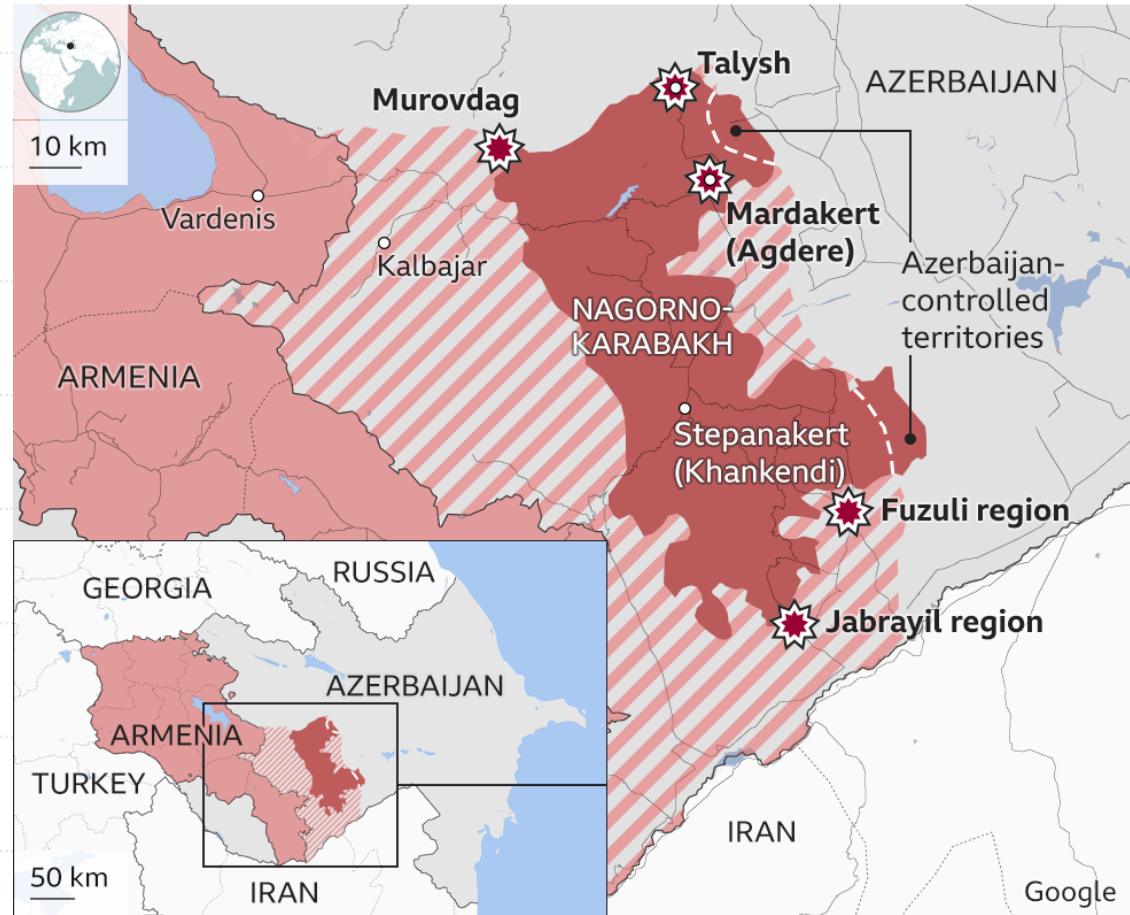
# The Second Karabakh War

- Armenia and Azerbaijan accused each other of starting deadly clashes that broke out on September 27, 2020.
- Azerbaijan said it was launching a "counter-offensive" in response to Armenian aggression.
- Several thousand people have died and shelling has killed civilians on both sides. Tens of thousands have fled their homes.

# The Second Karabakh War

## Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

-  Approximate areas of battles, 27- 28 September 2020
-  Armenian-controlled territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh



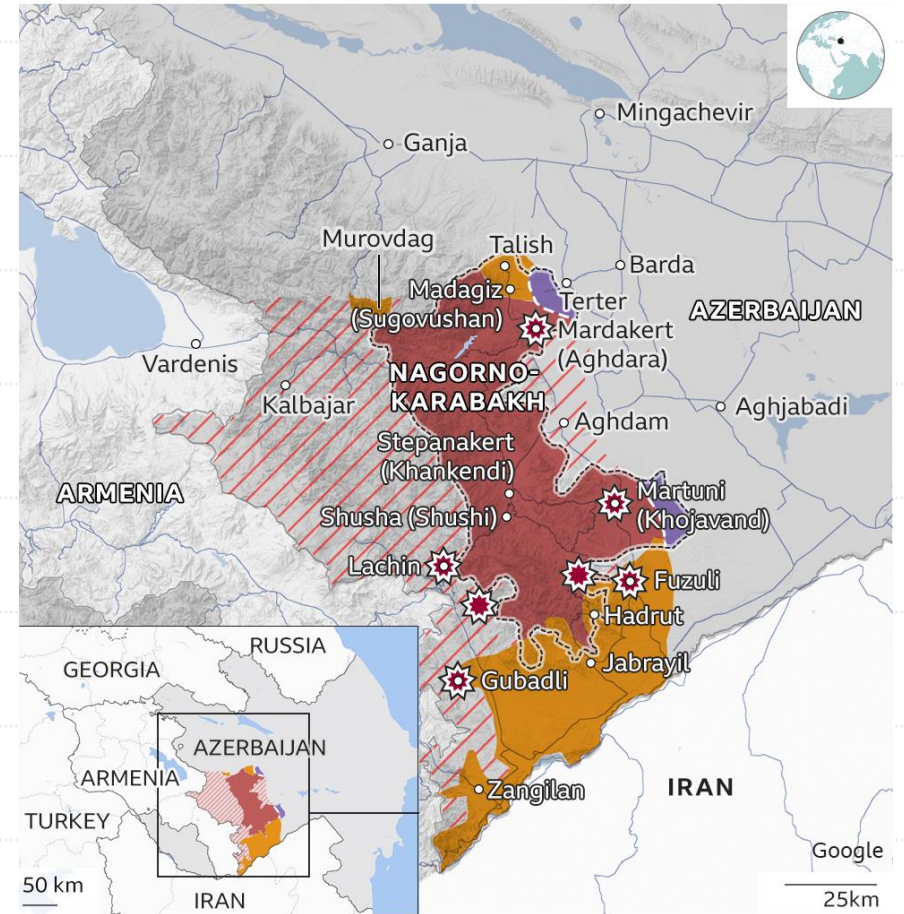
Source: BBC



# The second Karabakh war

## Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

- Areas regained by Azerbaijan since 27 September
- Armenian-controlled territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh
- Azerbaijan-controlled territories
- Approximate areas of ongoing fighting

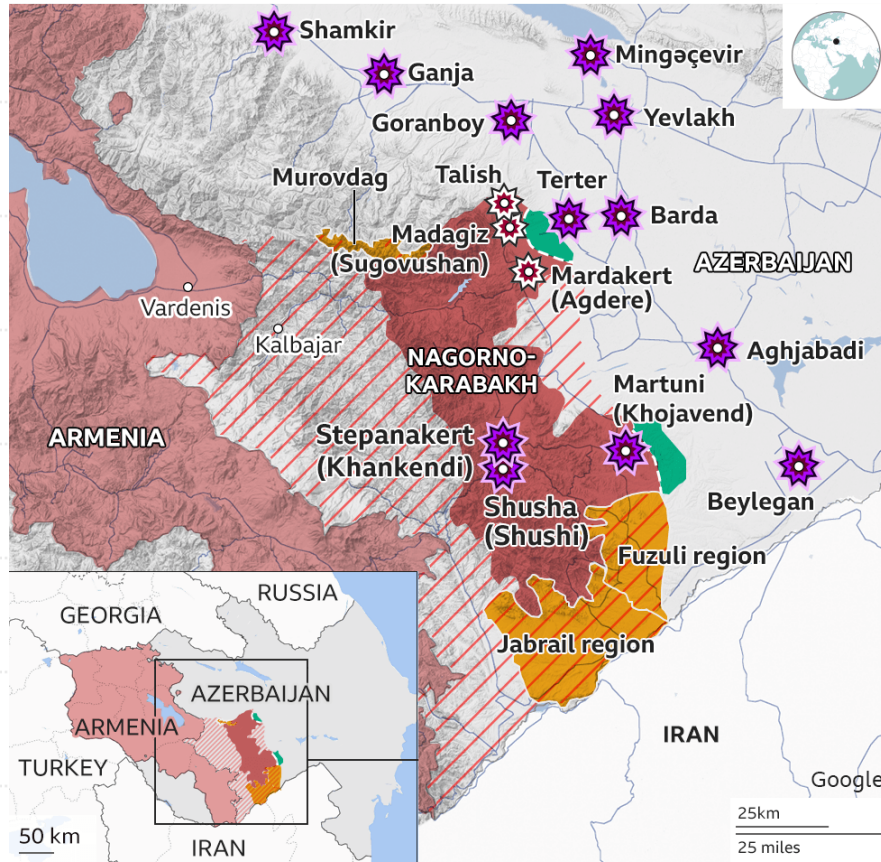


Source: BBC, 27 October 2020

BBC

## Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

-  Approximate areas of battles
-  Cities and towns that have experienced shelling
-  Areas of active combat
-  Azerbaijan-controlled territories
-  Armenian-controlled territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh



# The Second Karabakh War



# Termination of war

- On November 10, the agreement: Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia on the cessation of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh came into force. Along the line of contact of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Lachin corridor along the deploying peacekeepers Russia in the amount of 1 960 troops with small arms, 90 armored personnel carriers, 380 units of automobile and special equipment.
- On November 11, the defense ministers of Russia and Turkey signed a memorandum on the establishment of a joint center to control the observance of the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh. He will be located on the territory of Azerbaijan and will collect, generalize and verify information on the observance of the truce in Nagorno-Karabakh. The center will also consider complaints, questions or problems related to violations of agreements, the Russian Defense Ministry said ( <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/356532/>)



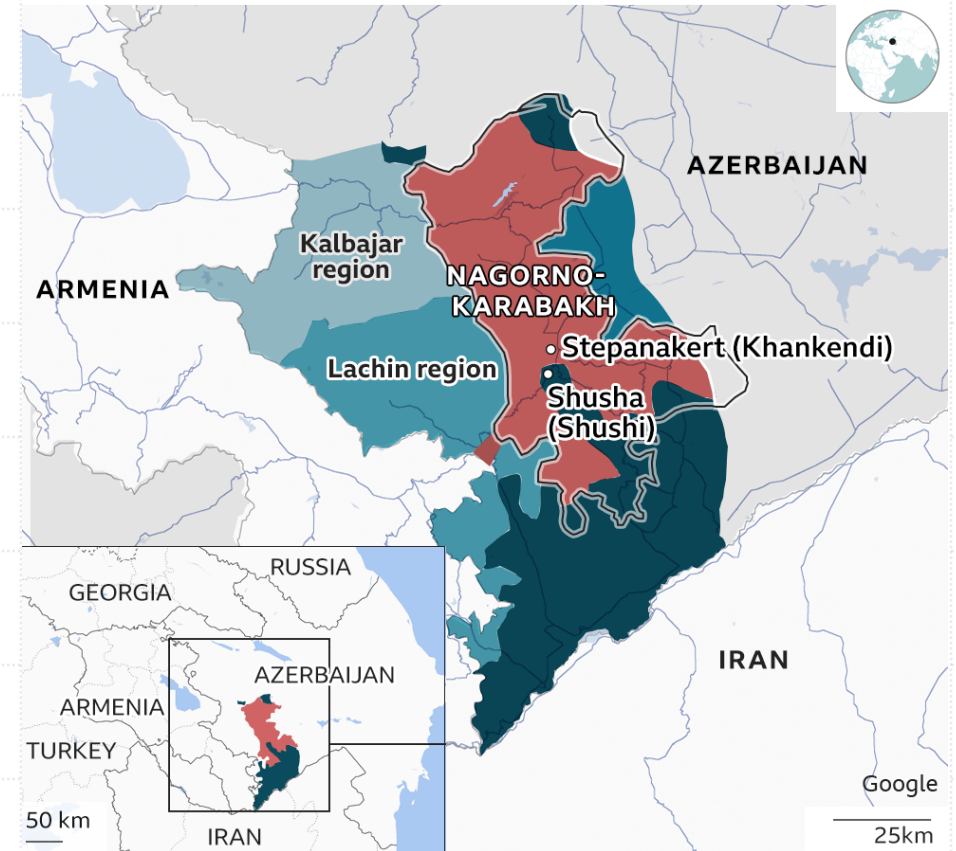
- Azerbaijan gains after war



# Peace deal

## Armenia-Azerbaijan peace deal

- Armenian forces to withdraw by 15 Nov
- Armenian forces to withdraw by 20 Nov
- Armenian forces to withdraw by 1 Dec
- Areas regained by Azerbaijan in the war
- Area of deployment for Russian peacekeepers



Source: BBC Research, 10 November 2020.

BBC



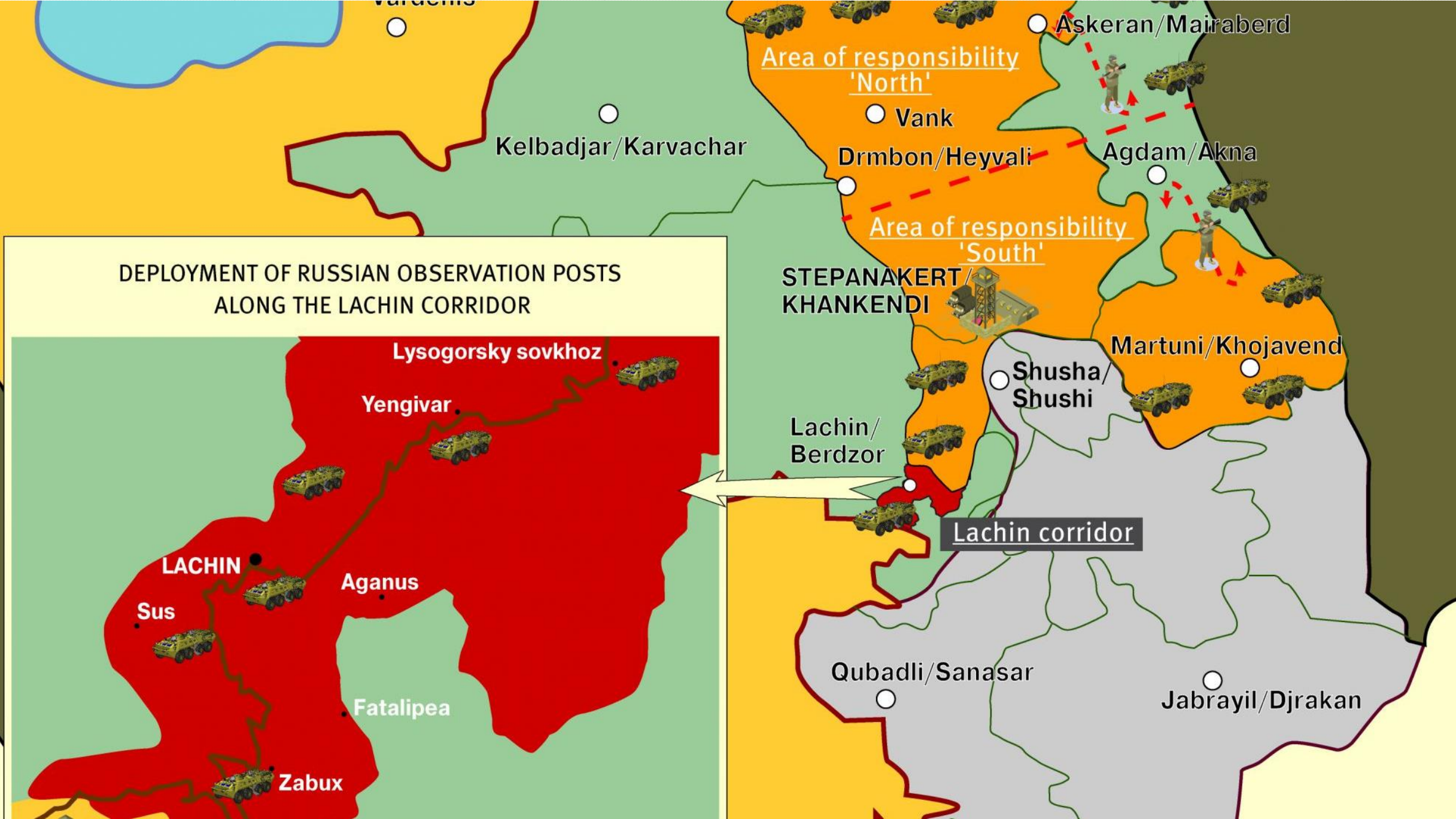


## **Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation**

- 1. A complete ceasefire and all hostilities in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are announced from 00:00 hours Moscow time on November 10, 2020. The Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, hereinafter referred to as the Parties, stop at their positions.
- 2. Aghdam region is returned to the Republic of Azerbaijan until November 20, 2020.
- 3. Along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor, a peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation is deployed in the amount of 1,960 servicemen with small arms, 90 armed personnel carriers, 380 units of automobile and special equipment.
- 4. The peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation is being deployed in parallel with the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces. The duration of the stay of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation is 5 years with automatic extension for the next 5-year periods, if none of the Parties declares 6 months before the expiration of the period of intention to terminate the application of this provision.

## Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation

- 5. In order to increase the effectiveness of control over the implementation of the agreements by the Parties to the conflict, a peacekeeping center is being deployed to control the ceasefire.
- 6. The Republic of Armenia will return the Kelbajar region to the Republic of Azerbaijan by November 15, 2020, and the Lachin region by December 1, 2020. The Lachin corridor (5 km wide), which will ensure the connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia and at the same time will not affect the city of Shusha, remains under the control of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation.
- By agreement of the Parties, a plan for the construction of a new route along the Lachin corridor will be determined in the next three years, providing communication between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, with the subsequent redeployment of the Russian peacekeeping contingent to protect this route.
- The Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees the safety of traffic along the Lachin corridor of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions.
- 7. Internally displaced persons and refugees return to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas under the control of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.
- 8. The exchange of prisoners of war, hostages and other detained persons and bodies of the dead is carried out.
- 9. All economic and transport links in the region are unblocked. The Republic of Armenia guarantees the safety of transport links between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic with the aim of organizing the unimpeded movement of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions. Control over transport communication is carried out by the bodies of the Border Guard Service of the FSB of Russ



DEPLOYMENT OF RUSSIAN OBSERVATION POSTS  
ALONG THE LACHIN CORRIDOR

Lysogorsky sovkhos

Yengivar

LACHIN

Sus

Aganus

Fatalipea

Zabux

Area of responsibility  
'North'

Vank

Drmbon/Heyvali

Askeran/Mairaberd

Agdam/Akna

Area of responsibility  
'South'

STEPANAKERT/  
KHANKENDI

Shusha/  
Shushi

Martuni/Khojavend

Lachin/  
Berdzor

Lachin corridor

Qubadli/Sanasar

Jabrayil/Djrakan

# Peace deal

- The return of 5 regions adjacent to N-K would be more profitable for Armenia, but the society was not ready in accordance to Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan.
- „This is a big setback for us, a big catastrophe, a big mourning for the lost lives (...) We fell, but we did not slide into the abyss, we made the decision to stop in time. Otherwise, our condition would be much worse. Lessons must be learned, this can help the future development of our country“ ([www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/356328/](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/356328/))





# Protests in Yerevan



- The Yerevanians, dissatisfied with the signing of a peace agreement with Azerbaijan, broke into the building of the Armenian government last night and demanded Nikol Pashinyan's resignation.
- The protesters also attacked the speaker of the Armenian parliament Ararat Mirzoyan and beat him.



# External factors

- Explosive mix for escalation of the conflict
- The pandemic
- The withdrawal of the U.S. as a balancing actor in the South Caucasus under the Trump presidency (the 2020 US election),
- the strained relations between the Russian leadership and Pashinyan
- Turkey support of Azerbaijani.



# Conclusions

- The decades of authoritarian rule by Kocharyan and Sargsyan in Armenia and the Aliyevs in Azerbaijan = compromise into a taboo = transformed the countries into two of the most militarized societies in the world,
- An image of the other as a **mortal enemy to be destroyed rather than coexisted with**, moving the region towards a new devastating war.
- Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War interpreted as a **success of Aliyev's authoritarian regime** have dramatically weakened position of peacebuilders and democratization not only in the South Caucasus, but in the larger post-Soviet space.
- Armenia and Azerbaijan continuing militarization and revanchist nationalisms – a new impetus. "The two conflicting societies continue to live in the past, in a world of romantic nationalism, where death for the homeland, conceptualized as a specific territory, is seen as the ultimate form of civic action. The war proved to be a popular and effective method of consolidating the ethnonational community. "
- Three decades of radicalization transformed into violence and militarization, existential threat to the population in the region.