

# The War of Armenia and Azerbaijan 2020 – Lessons Learned

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## Abstract

*The article identifies lessons learned from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the geostrategic context of international relations and politics and in elements influencing the future of warfare. Namely, Azerbaijan inflicted heavy losses on Armenian troops practically without the use of conventional aviation.*

*The Nagorno-Karabakh war is often viewed in an international context through the prism of distant conflict (far from eyes and far from the heart) or through a label of the frozen conflict. However, it is unlikely that this conflict, which caused an average of about 60 deaths a year between 1994 and 2020, leaves men indifferent, despite what the international community calls a frozen conflict, whose future depends directly on timely and accurate response of the international community.*

*It can be said that the view of the subject conflict is still frozen because it is something that has been happening for so many years, so it has become a part of everyday life that does not affect a person's mood.*

*Therefore, the prevailing opinion is that in this global world, interest must be expressed in every conflict because it will, in one way or another, affect states and populations, at least through the dimension of environmental pollution or arrival of refugees.*

## Keywords

*hybrid warfare, proxy, unmanned aerial vehicles, suicide drones, military instrument of power, cyber activities*

## Sažetak

*U članku su identificirane lekcije naučene iz sukoba u Gorskom Karabahu u geostrateškom kontekstu međunarodnih odnosa i politike te u elementima koji utječu na budućnost ratovanja. Naime, Azerbajdžan je nanio velike gubitke armenskim postrojbama, praktički bez uporabe konvencionalnog zrakoplovstva.*

*Rat u Gorskom Karabahu često se u međunarodnom kontekstu promatra kroz prizmu udaljenog sukoba (daleko od očiju i daleko od srca) ili kroz etiketu zamrznutog sukoba. No, malo je vjerojatno da ovaj sukob, koji je u razdoblju od 1994. do 2020. u prosjeku uzrokovao oko 60 smrtnih slučajeva godišnje, ostavlja ljude ravnodušnima, unatoč tome što ga međunarodna zajednica naziva zamrznutim sukobom, a čija budućnost izravno ovisi o pravodobnom i točnom odgovoru međunarodne zajednice.*

*Može se reći da je pogled na predmetni sukob još zamrznut jer je riječ o nečemu što se događa već mnogo godina, pa je postao dio svakodnevice koji ne utječe na raspoloženje osobe. Stoga prevladava mišljenje da u ovom globalnom svijetu, u svakom sukobu mora biti izražen interes jer će on na ovaj ili onaj način utjecati na države i stanovništvo, barem kroz dimenziju onečišćenja okoliša ili dolaska izbjeglica.*

## Ključne riječi

*hibridno ratovanje, posrednik, bespilotne letjelice, dronovi samoubojice, vojni instrument moći, kibernetičke aktivnosti*

## Introduction

It is not the first time in human history that technological advances have changed the character of the armed conflict and war. It is also not the first time in human history that someone has uttered that famous exclamation, "Wake up and smell the coffee".

In cases where new technology or the use of old technology in a new way changes the way of fighting, it is necessary to identify certain findings and, after analysis, to take appropriate measures in the concepts of using national instruments of power.

The synergy of national instruments of power (e.g., diplomacy, economics, and the military) yields appropriate effects to the extent that the other party does not accomplish the subject. Especially if we take into account the fact that in the modern way of using the army with cheap technology can destroy expensive technology and thus ensure victory on the battlefield (e.g., using a swarm of drones made on a 3D printer attacks military command posts or destroys expensive anti-aircraft Patriot type systems, by destroying their control system).

Regarding the expressed interest in the subject, the aim of this paper is to explore theoretical and practical knowledge about the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan and to systematically and scientifically elaborate them as follows:

1. explain the main causes of the start of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020.
2. show the course of the 2020 war compared to the 1991-1994 war.
3. through the set hypotheses to point out significant changes in modern warfare caused by the use of new technology, as well as indirect action of some actors who are important subjects of international relations.

In order to achieve the objectives in question, an appropriate study was conducted to support the method of analysis and synthesis, comparative method and method of description.

The hypotheses on which this paper is based were set up with intention of knowing whether the character of this war is such that it can be called a new generation of warfare. The fastest answer to some hypotheses can be offered if we take the 1991-1994 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan as an example.

**Hypothesis 1: Effective use of technological progress in conflict directs the final result (game changer)**

**Hypothesis 2: Indirect involvement of strong actors (“proxy conflicts”) has special significance in contemporary crises**

Accordingly, the (proxy) action of great powers in conflicts around the world will play an increasingly important role in the future of international relations.

This paper is structured in five chapters. The introductory part of the paper presents the goals and methods of research as well as hypotheses. Description of the actors is subject of the second chapter, which describes the essential characteristics of the main participants in the war with a possible indirect impact on the war. Important remarks in the phases of the struggle are described in the third chapter with emphasis on the impact of new technologies. The fourth chapter describes the role of modern technology as a factor in international relations in military operations. The fifth chapter includes the confirmation of the set hypotheses and their analysis and synthesis, lessons learned and conclusion.

### **Historical reasons for war**

On July 5, 1921, Joseph Stalin officially announced that Nagorno-Karabakh would remain under rule of the Soviet Federation and Azerbaijan, respectively. Accordingly, on July 7, 1923, Nagorno-Karabakh was granted the status of an autonomous region within Azerbaijan based in the city of Shusha. Later, the status of the capital was granted to Stepanakert. By joining Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan, Russians have neglected the historical, geographical, ethnic, cultural and linguistic ties of the population of this area with Armenia (Kumar, 2007). Namely, at the time of joining, Armenians made up 90 percent of the population in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Consequently, in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the question arises as to who its direct participants are. Armenia claims it is an internal conflict in Azerbaijan, in which it is not involved, and wants Baku to negotiate the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh with representatives of the region. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, does not want talks with Nagorno-Karabakh, as that would mean recognizing the region as an independent actor. In addition, official Baku claims that Armenia militarily, politically and financially supports Nagorno-Karabakh in the conflict. Thus, this conflict acquires the character of an interstate conflict (Kumar, 2007).

The asymmetric balance of power among the peoples of the region enabled Stalin to turn their hostile attitude towards Russians into conflicts between

the non-Russian peoples themselves, such as the Armenians and Azerbaijan. Stalin's policy was based on Russian alliance of one or more minorities in each of the Soviet republics, because security of the minorities was said to depend on Moscow (Kumar, 2007). Russia has therefore not resolved tensions between the Karabakh Armenians and Azerbaijan with a view to a lasting solution, but in its own interest, leaving the conflict open, sought to maintain control over the conflicting ethnic communities (Kumar, 2007). After the introduction of a policy of publicity and perestroika by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and the outbreak of the crisis in the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), the Karabakh Armenians tried to join Armenia. On June 12, 1988, the Nagorno-Karabakh Council unanimously voted to unilaterally secede from Baku, which was rejected by the Moscow Supreme Soviet on June 18 of that year. The persecution of the Azerbaijani population, which mostly took refuge in the cities of Sumgait and Baku, begins in Nagorno-Karabakh. At the same time, the emigration of Armenians from Baku followed (Kumar, 2007). Meanwhile, on December 11, 1991, there was an official disintegration of the USSR, which was also militarily involved in the conflict (first on the side of Azerbaijan and later on the side of Armenia). In this regard, it should be noted that from 1991 to 1994 armistice, there was talk of the war between these two independent states.

Thus, in the search for causes of the conflict and war, it can be said that Balkanization took place, defined as a division of the larger region or country into smaller ones, which could be hostile and do not cooperate with each other. In political terms, however, the involvement of external actors is present all the time, mostly by Russia and Turkey.

### *The road to war*

After nearly four years of conflict, a truce was reached on May 12, 1994 with Russian intervention. Due to bad economic situation in Armenia, which was aggravated by the Azerbaijani-Turkish blockade, according to the 1996 United Nations Development Program (UNDP), about 667,000 Armenians left their homeland. It is estimated that about 35,000 people were killed in fighting on both sides, and more than a million people were forced to flee

their homes. Among them were about 700,000 Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied Azerbaijani territory, and about 350,000 Armenians from Azerbaijan (Weisbrode 2001; Dudwick 1997). Furthermore, apart from the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Azerbaijan has lost another 14 percent of its territory.

Between 1994 and 2020, following a ceasefire (Bishkek Protocol), Armenia and Azerbaijan failed to sign a peace agreement. The Nagorno-Karabakh region, or the so-called Artsakh Republic, remained under Armenian control during that time. Occasional shelling continued for the next 26 years along the line of ending the conflict. The line was fortified militarily. The self-proclaimed Artsakh Republic (Nagorno-Karabakh) is recognized by only 3 internationally unrecognized countries: Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

As time went on, it became clear that the growing frustration of Azerbaijan was expressed not only by the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh but also by return of the seven occupied provinces lost in the 1994 war.

The Russian Federation does not approve of uprisings that threaten to overthrow autocratic regimes, so President Putin has faced unrest in Belarus since early August 2020. Following this, Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan's incumbent president, expected Vladimir Putin to be burdened with the dilemma of rescuing Lukashenko. He also believed that the velvet revolution would make Armenian leaders more lenient in accepting compromises. Furthermore, it seemed very likely that the COVID-19 pandemic in Armenia (which had more infected per capita than Spain) would intensify the usual post-revolutionary disappointment, but the government still managed to maintain confidence of the people (Baev, 2020).

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan is preparing for a new war and is investing much of its oil revenues in equipping its armed forces with modern weapons, including strike drones. On the other hand, Armenia is dependent on Russia for arms procurement and, based on previous experience, cannot count on expanding direct support in emergencies. The military balance has been severely upset in favour of Azerbaijan, but Armenian experts speculate that fortified defensive positions would withstand both artillery and tank

attacks. Turkey's strong support to Azerbaijan is also important. Turkey expressed full solidarity with Baku during the July 2020 hostilities, and has now taken this engagement to a new level. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan described Armenia as a major threat to peace in the region and called for complete withdrawal of the Armenian forces from Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey's support to Azerbaijan is not just rhetorical, so in August 2020, the two countries conducted joint military exercises. This was followed by news of Turkish drones, overflight of their fighters and arrival of the mercenaries from northern Syria who were placed under Turkish control (Baev, 2020).

At the same time, the world is dealing with a pandemic. Azerbaijan has also been hit by a corona virus crisis, protests in Belarus have been going on for two months, elections are held in the US, oil prices and profits have fallen and Azerbaijani President Aliyev is dealing with corruption allegations. Internal political situation is bad and the only option that can keep him in power is to divert the public to something else. In this case, to war. If all this is taken into account, then in the end, the question does not arise: Why would Azerbaijan start a war? The real question then is: Why not start a war?

Subsequently, on 12 September 2020, a military conflict took place in which 7 Azerbaijani officers were killed, including a major general and a brigadier. The situation was getting hotter, which was shown by appearance of Baku citizens on streets seeking mobilization. This was followed by Turkish-Azerbaijani military exercise which lasted from July 29 to September 10, 2020. The corresponding effect was achieved by arrival of the so-called Turkish or Syrian mercenaries, as part of the psychological operation. This was followed by mobilization of the reserves and material resources in Azerbaijan (although no general mobilization was carried out). At the end of September 2020, internet connections and access to social media were cut off. Then Armenian media were hacked, thus showing how the Armenian Prime Minister called on all residents of Nagorno-Karabakh to leave their homes.

## Description of the participants

**The Republic of Armenia** has a democratic system. Majority of the population are Catholics. It has illegally occupied territory belonging to Azerbaijan, so Armenians living there fear genocide if the territory is re-occupied by Azerbaijan. Armenia is a poor country; exhausted by the conflict as it spends \$ 634 million a year on military needs (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute – SIPRI).

Motivation is on the side of Armenians, who are bound by hatred towards Turks and Azeris, as well as by the fear of genocide, so it can be pointed out that the centre of gravity of Armenia is the will of the people.

**Nagorno-Karabakh (Republic of Artsakh)** with its capital Stepanakert covers an area of 4400 square kilometres in the north-eastern part of the Armenian Mountains, and this area is inhabited by about 160,000 people whose official language is Armenian. De facto, Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Armenia. De jure is part of Azerbaijan. About 75 percent of Armenians (145,000) and 25 percent of Azerbaijanis (40,688) lived in Nagorno-Karabakh before the conflict. The capital Stepanakert was predominantly inhabited by Armenians. On the other hand, Shusha, the capital of Karabakh, before it was taken over by the Soviet Union, was mostly inhabited by Azerbaijanis (Human Rights Watch – HRW 1994; Kumar, 2007).

**The Republic of Azerbaijan** is an autocratic state. Inhabitants are mostly of the Muslim faith. It is economically stronger than Armenia and wants to seize the opportunity to regain lost territory with the support of Turkey. Conflicts also serve to divert attention from internal problems and as a means of uniting the nation. The military budget is \$ 2.238 billion (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute – SIPRI). This country remains the largest exporter of oil in the Caucasus, and since 2007 it has been the most efficient exporter of gas. Frustration over the loss of 7 districts lost in 1994 is even greater than territorial aspiration for Nagorno-Karabakh. Unlike in 1994, Azerbaijan is now a consolidated state. The centre of gravity of Azerbaijan is a military and economic sustainability.



**The Russian Federation** is a traditional ally of Armenia, but also wants good relations with Azerbaijan. Russia is calling for peace, but at the same time it is using a military base in Armenia. It does not want a conflict with Turkey. In addition, Russia has appropriate economic interests expressed through the oil pipeline that connects Baku with Novorossiysk. Azerbaijan covers 60.1% of the needs for weapons imported from Russia (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute – SIPRI).

Role in the 1991-1994 war: Russia alternately supported both sides. However, conflicting interests between Russia, Iran and Turkey prevent these countries from helping Armenia and Azerbaijan to find a solution. Russia needs conflicts in the countries it uses as a buffer zone against countries close to the west (near abroad).

**The Republic of Turkey** is a protector of the Turkish people and wants to expand its influence in the territory of the former Ottoman Empire. It sees Azerbaijan as an extension of its influence. At the same time, President Erdoğan is taking advantage of the conflict to increase his support at home in the context of the idea of the neo-Ottoman politics. Turkey's mediating role in the 2020 war (mercenaries, training and weapons) is clearly important enough and Russia did not deter Azerbaijan from the war. Turkey is shifting its internal problems to external ones. Role in the 1991-1994 war: Turkey has been trying to intervene since 1991, but the last Soviet Defence Minister, Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, warned them that if they got involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, World War III would break out. At the time, Turkey's policy toward Nagorno-Karabakh was successfully influenced by the United States and France, where large Armenian minorities live.

**European Union** – Crisis situation in the EU, primarily caused by migrant crisis and COVID 19, is not proving to be a cohesive factor. The European Union also bases its energy policy on gas and oil resources from Azerbaijan, so Armenian threat to the BTC Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline actually poses a threat to the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline.

**The Islamic Republic of Iran** has a large Azerbaijani minority (24% according to The World Factbook), which is dissatisfied with its status.

Iranian authorities are also concerned about Israeli influence in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's eventual success could spur Azerbaijani separatist tendencies. It is therefore in Iran's interest to strike a balance between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

**The state of Israel** is expanding its influence on Iran's borders and it is an important arms supplier to Azerbaijan. It buys 40% of its oil (Lazaroff, 2021) and sells 26.6% of its weapons to Azerbaijan (SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Mar. 2020).

The United States of America (USA) has focused on the upcoming presidential election. In addition, their passivity in activities of the MINSK Group was strongly emphasized.

Role in the 1991-1994 war: Former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski stressed that the US goal in the region is not oil, but strategic control of the entire Caucasus and Central Asia, with the help of Turkey and Israel to undermine Russia and Iran influence, i.e., a region adapted to the USA (Cornell, 2001; Kumar, 2007).

**North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** - Turkey, as a member of NATO, acts indirectly and thus does not directly affect cohesion of the Alliance.

**CSTO** - Collective Security Treaty Organization (members Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). Russia has an obligation to defend Armenia within this organization.

**The UN Security Council** - did not pinpoint the aggressor, but only condemned the violence.

**The OSCE Minsk Group** - (members France, USA, Russia, Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia) plays a passive role, except for a slightly more pronounced individual role of Russia.

## Important notes in phases of the struggle

### *The 1991-1994 war*

At the beginning of the conflict, despite high motivation, the Karabakh Armenians could not withstand the well-armed Azerbaijani army which had about 300 tanks, 800 armoured vehicles, 300 pieces of artillery and missile systems and about 50 aircraft (Su-25 and MiG-25). Some of this equipment was confiscated from former Soviet arsenals after collapse of the Soviet Union (Kobal, 1997; Harris, 1999).

The Karabakh forces were better organized and trained, under a single central leadership, motivated and disciplined, well versed in the terrain, which gave them an added advantage. By 1994, the war had severely exhausted the Karabakh forces, so men between the ages of 44 and 50 were drafted into the army. However, although Azerbaijan received more than 280 Russian tanks, 842 armed vehicles and 380 weapons in November 1993, command was extremely weak, accompanied by increased desertion, with a sharp drop in morale and political divisions, which was influenced by political instability in the country and change of leadership (Kobal, 1997).

Between 1993 and 1994, the Nagorno-Karabakh government mobilized its forces and launched a counter-offensive, with the help of Russian troops. Karabakh forces captured the Azerbaijani base, the city of Shusha, which was a strategic and psychological blow to Azerbaijan. The capture of Shusha enabled Karabakh forces to occupy other Azerbaijani bases and the city of Lahin and open a corridor through the Azerbaijani territory between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. Thus, aid, especially important for strengthening the Karabakh air defence system, managed to arrive from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh (Kobal, 1997). It can be summarized how fighting was conducted on both sides using Russian weapons. Neither side had a distinct technological advantage. Morality and organization were on side of the Armenians, with advantage of good knowledge of the configuration of the terrain. Turkey did not take an active part in fighting, while Russia had a dual role in which neither side gained a clear advantage.

### *War from September 27 to November 10, 2020*

After summer planning with the help of Turkey, on September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan launched an offensive to reclaim the occupied territories. In the first days of the conflict, Azerbaijani forces successfully captured several small villages looking at critical lines of communication. With mobilization of the Armenian troops, the front stabilized and Azerbaijan began to suffer heavy losses, with anti-tank-guided weapons severely damaging their armoured units (Watling, 2021).

According to (Watling, 2021) at the same time, the Azerbaijani side launched an extensive campaign of deep attacks with combination of the Turkish unmanned aerial vehicles TB-2 (BAYRAKTAR TB-2 – Turkish-made unmanned combat aircraft) in search of targets which were then attacked by suicide drones Harpy and Harop (HARPY and HAROP – Israeli-made drone – wandering ammunition or suicide drone). They fired a LORA (Long-Range Artillery Weapon System) long-range ballistic missile (LORA) at a key bridge connecting Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh. Due to these attacks, Armenian forces were exhausted even before reaching the front line. Azerbaijani forces attacked air defence systems and command posts, armoured columns, artillery positions and infantry as they prepared to operate in areas far behind the front.

At the beginning of the third week of the conflict, Armenian forces were hit hard by these deep attacks. There was a lack of ammunition on the battlefield, reinforcements did not reach the position and the Armenians tried to counterattack against the incursions of Azerbaijan using large units from their hinterland. By November, Azerbaijani forces formed a bend around the south of Nagorno-Karabakh and were moving towards the Lachin Corridor (the primary line of communication between Armenia and the city of Stepanakert). On November 8, 2020, Azerbaijani forces captured Shusha, a strategically located city that paved the way for an attack on the region's capital (Watling, 2021).

The Azerbaijani downing of the Russian Mi-24 helicopter on November 9, 2020, which was carrying out the task of air security of the convoy of the

102nd Russian military base on the territory of Armenia, was an additional signal to Azerbaijan that it would be good to stop its activities.

According to (Watling, 2021), the Azerbaijani side, which also suffered heavy losses during the attack, began to face growing Russian unease and the possibility of increasing international pressure following the US election and pressure in the event of the Stepanakert attack and subsequent attacks on civilians. Therefore, it accepted the ceasefire negotiations provided by Russia and Turkey. Armenia, which lost more than 190 main battle tanks and a proportionate number of support vehicles, was aware that it could no longer fight and surrendered large parts of its territory. Azerbaijan failed to fully occupy Nagorno-Karabakh. Russian peacekeepers headed to the region on November 13, 2020.

What makes an obvious difference between the war in early 1990s and the 2020 war is an organized operation of the unmanned combat aircraft (UCAVs) which have proven to be the main weapons on the battlefield.

### **The role of modern technology in conducting military operations as a factor of international relations**

The use of modern technology in the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan showed that Azerbaijani forces used the Israeli LORA ballistic system. Such a system was used to destroy the bridge over the Akari River connecting Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh. Furthermore, in the war in question, the use of modern technology in a package of the so-called hybrid operations could also be observed. This is also one of the differences as compared to the 1991-1994 war. The content of the hybrid warfare itself is not new but the use of modern technology has grown to such a level that it can already replace conventional methods of warfare by measuring effects (e.g., long-range missile strike versus cyber-attack). It should also be mentioned that the perpetrator of such attacks may not be detected, as anything can be done below the threshold of war or the threshold of open conflict.

MINISTRSTVO ZA OBRAMBO  
INTERNO SLOVENSKA VOJSKA

## BREZPILOTNA BOJNA LETALA – „game changer“

**AZERBAJDŽAN** operira z neznanim številom letal **BAYRAKTAR TB2** turške proizvodnje. Ta letala so Turki uspešno uporabili v Libiji, Siriji in v bojih proti PKK. Sposoben je bil uničiti tudi napredno zračno obrambo, kar se je zgodilo v Siriji in nazadnje v Armeniji.

**BAYRAKTAR TB2**  
**tip: MALE (medium altitude long endurance)UCAV**  
 posadka: 3 operaterji na tleh  
 vzdržljivost: 27 h letenja  
 operativna višina: 5500 m  
 max hitrost: 220 km/h  
 oborožitev: lasersko vodeno strelivo na 4 nosilcih  
 cena: 5 milijonov USD

**IAI Harop** je samororiški dron Izraelske proizvodnje, ki ga Azerbajdžan uporablja za napade na cilje visoke vrednosti. V zraku lahko ostane do 6 ur, nosi pa 25 kg bojno glavo

POVELJSTVO SIL SV
Datum: 12. 11. 2020
13

Figure 1. Israeli HAROP<sup>1</sup>

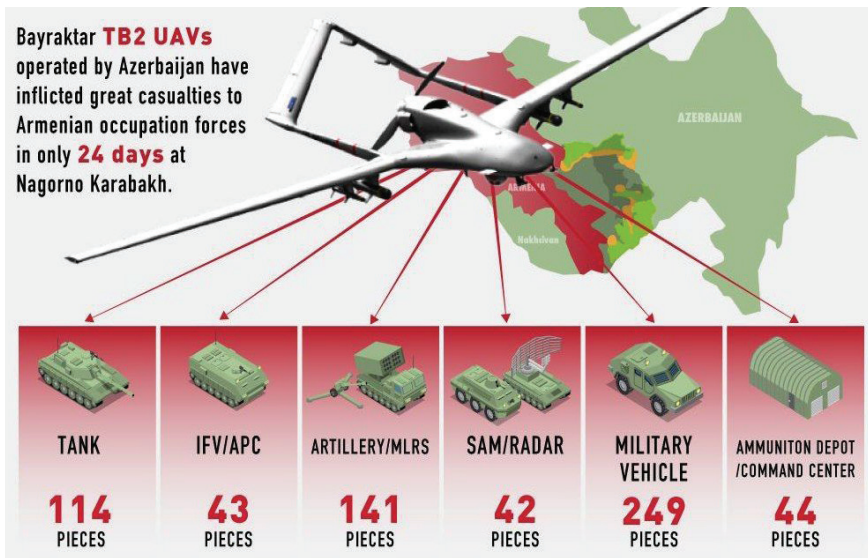


Figure 2. Bayraktar – the number of destroyed military targets in 24 days

1 <https://southfront.org/iais-harop-kamikaze-drone/>

However, the key thing that made a decisive turn on the battlefield (changed the rules of the game – game changer) and is the biggest difference between the 1991-1994 war and 2020 war are unmanned combat aircraft systems. In this case, unmanned combat systems, suicide or kamikaze (HAROP) or unmanned combat aircraft (Bayraktar TB2), in addition to combat operations, successfully conducted artillery fire guidance, provided intelligence and conducted reconnaissance (Figures 1 and 2).

The conflict demonstrated the impotence of ground forces without adequate air defences, even against slow-flying UCAVs (Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles) with guided missiles. It has been shown that the use of UCAV can also offer tactical aviation capabilities to smaller forces at a relatively low cost. Firing from the UCAV also significantly increased the effectiveness of artillery. In both Syria and Libya, Turkey's concept of using a large number of relatively cheap UCAVs against forces with limited air defences has proved valuable.

Today, the circle of UCAV users has expanded significantly, especially owing to Chinese and Turkish systems which are widely exported. In the future, we can expect such systems to be present on all battlefields, including low-intensity operations (ISIS has already used improvised UCAVs in Iraq and Syria).

The use of UCAV on the battlefield leads, more than obviously, in direction of the new generation of warfare. The procurement of these systems in other geographical areas, including the region of Southeast Europe, should also not be neglected. Thus, for example, Serbia became the first in the region to buy the Chinese CH-92A (CH-92A that is a reconnaissance and combat drone with similar technical characteristics as the Turkish Bayraktar TB-2) which may call into question the current balance of power in the region.

### **Confirmation of the hypothesis and their analysis and synthesis**

With the loss of the US unipolar leadership position and competition with China, the world has become a “chessboard” with more and more players pursuing real politics like Henry Kissinger. Multipolarity in itself does



not mean the cause of wars, but if importance of the individual countries becomes more pronounced, then there are more opportunities to highlight state conflicts (state on state).

### **Hypothesis 1: Effective use of the technological progress in conflict directs the final result (game changer)**

Perfect techniques and execution of precision long-range strikes used by Azerbaijan would not work so decisively against the great powers with modern systems of air defence and electronic warfare. However, the ability to achieve such a range of effects at such low cost highlights the vulnerability of many armed forces and shows that operational efficiency can now be achieved with smaller forces (Watling, 2021). Azerbaijani forces destroyed Armenians in depth. So, countermeasures on the line of defence were not sufficient. Most of the armed forces for this type of warfare are poorly trained with equipment that does not allow action throughout depths of the battlefield.

The 1994 war serves as a textbook example, where motivation and combat morale played a key role. In the war of 2020, that was simply not enough. Technological advantage (in this case still affordable compared to combat aircraft) that was demonstrated, especially through unmanned combat aircraft, ensured the victory of Azerbaijan. It is important to note that Turkey has provided quality training, participation of its mercenaries and enabled the procurement and equipping of the UCAV-Bayraktar, leading to a link with the second hypothesis. Based on the above, the first hypothesis is confirmed.

### **Hypothesis 2: Indirect involvement of strong actors (“proxy conflicts”) has special significance in contemporary crises**

According to (Baev, 2020), one can speak of Russia’s inefficiency in managing this crisis because of the fact that long-established international frameworks, such as the Minsk Group, have become completely useless. The US is not involved because China is not present in the Caucasus to attract attention in Washington. Finally, the United States tried to resolve this



conflict in April 2001, when President George W. Bush brought Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders to Key West, Florida, but failed to persuade them to reach an agreement. President Barack Obama examined the possibility of reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey in 2010 and also failed.

The European Union has made no attempt to make effective progress in resolving the conflict, and has included both countries in the Eastern Partnership initiative. The EU is so divided regarding the dispute with Turkey that it cannot approve a resolution on Belarus because Cyprus has refused to sign it unless a resolution on the Eastern Mediterranean crisis is adopted at the same time, which has proved impossible. This paralysis prompted the Turkish president to make a series of aggressive foreign policy moves (Baev, 2020).

Russia has become accustomed to playing the role of a mediator between Armenia (which is formally an ally) and Azerbaijan (which it is not) but has been surprised by this strong interference from Turkey. The irony of the situation is that until September 26, 2020, Putin was watching the first phase of the "Caucasus 2020" strategic exercises which was supposed to show Russia's military dominance in the region. Missiles from the Caspian fleet were clearly not sufficient to deter Azerbaijan from continuing the offensive and Armenia's military support to the air force would increase tensions with Turkey (which could resonate in Syria, where Russia is unprepared for a new outbreak of hostilities after years of combat operations). 2020).

Remote (frozen) conflicts in the world as well as other armed conflicts must be viewed through a prism of the policies of individual sovereign states, as well as of NATO, EU member states and their coalition partners. It can be said that almost everywhere there is a state with which a country has diplomatic or economic ties (today or in the future). In addition, when considering conflicts or post-conflict periods, cooperation of individual Member States with their partners within the UN, OSCE, NATO and the EU cannot be neglected or ruled out. Therefore, indirect (proxy) action of the great powers in conflicts around the world will play an increasingly important role in the future of international relations.

Turkey's involvement in Libya, Syria, Qatar, Palestine, Kashmir, EU blackmail of refugees, growing influence in the Western Balkans, North Africa, tensions with Greece, Cyprus, France, Israel and this time supporting Azerbaijan's war with Armenia indicate that Turkey has been moving in the direction of what is commonly said: A bridge to far or that it has gone too far.

The events of the war in question showed that high morale and will of the people were not enough to win, compared to a well-trained and technologically advanced opponent. Of course, Turkey's mediation operation, which this time plays a key role in Azerbaijan's victory, also contributed to that. In accordance with all of the above, the second hypothesis is confirmed.

By analysing the facts from the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the following lessons can be highlighted:

- in the world, limited conventional conflicts will continue to exist,
- mediators will be used in conflicts (proxy action),
- new technologies prevailing in the conflict will emerge,
- the inclusion of new domains (cyber) will require a different response or consideration of the warfare in several different domains (Multi-Domain Operations – MDO),
- morale and will are no longer crucial for victory.

New technology requires new concepts and new doctrines. In addition, the importance of population resilience should be pointed out, especially psychological activities, cyber activities, hacking, inciting false news, etc. This is confirmed by NATO doctrine of ground forces (Allied Joint Publication – AJP 3.2), emphasizing the battle with multiple domains, hybrid operations and the importance of monitoring technological development of weapons.

With the advent of modern technology and electromagnetic traces, the importance of electronic warfare and interference appears in a whole new dimension because it can be used to monitor troops, movements, positions of technical means and consequently for interference, destruction and masking (e.g., ground target sensor and indicator; GMTI – Ground moving target indicator), which detects more clearly and accurately the movement of troops in all weather conditions and parts of the day.

Thus, lessons learned should be applied to changes in combat, organization, preparation of troops, equipment and leadership, ensuring appropriate personnel, infrastructure and interoperability (DOTMLPFI method - doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership (and education), personnel, facilities, and interoperability). Therefore, each state within military instruments of power should consider complementing responses that pose a threat to the use of advanced weapons.

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is frozen again because Azerbaijan did not achieve victory completely. As a result of another passive international response, the outcome of this war has shown the world that the use of military instruments of power is something to be reckoned with in future wars.

In the modern world, passive role of the international public has been increasingly pronounced (Georgia 2008, Crimea 2014, Ukraine 2014), followed by the rise of autocratic leaders. There are more and more testimonies of the war for cognitive dominance, hybrid action, cyber-attack, indirect action of great powers, pronounced technological growth (artificial intelligence, 3D printers, robots ...) and territorially limited short-term wars.

It is believed that war is not something that can happen in the near future. However, on a cognitive level, it can be said that the world is already at war.

Therefore, a well-trained and motivated army in modern wars is not crucial for victory on the battlefield as long as the adversary uses new technology or old technology in a new way. In addition, the support of a strong political ally is also important.

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