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THE CASE FOR THE RECOGNITION OF NAGORNO-KHARABAKH

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THE CASE FOR THE RECOGNITION OF NAGORNO-KHARABAKH**Major Maciej Jonasz**

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THE CASE FOR THE RECOGNITION OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh¹ has existed for over a century, resulting in massacres and open warfare. Presently it is only held frozen by a tenuous cease-fire while repeated political negotiations have failed to end it. Given the stance of both participants, unless the international community forces a political solution it is likely to linger and may lead to war. The threat of that may push Armenia - the weaker of the two – into the orbit of states that will help it prevail. If these are states Canada finds itself at odds with, these will gain Armenia's political support, increasing Ottawa's isolation in case of a diplomatic or commercial dispute.

Historical Background

Nagorno-Karabakh is a mountainous region in Azerbaijan, as little as six kilometers from the Armenian border,² as indicated in Figure 1. While in the 20th century it was predominantly Armenian, with their population at 91% in 1939,³ 79% in 1979⁴ and 76% in 1989,⁵ its previous ethnic composition is unknown as pre-1939 statistics applied to the entire Karabakh region – not just its mountainous part.⁶ Although, in the 19th century it was noted that Armenians were the majority in Nagorno-Karabakh.⁷

¹ Mountainous Karabakh.

² Christoph Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars*, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 152.

³ Svante Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2001), 64.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars...*, 30.

⁶ Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers...*, 54.

⁷ Arsène Saparov, "Why Autonomy? The Making of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region 1918–1925," *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 2 (2012): 287



Figure 1. Nagorno-Karabakh

Source: The Economist, “A mountainous conflict.”

Despite its Armenian population, Nagorno-Karabakh became part of the Azeri-dominated Elizavetpol Governorate when that and the Armenian-dominated Erevan Governorate, shown in figures 2 and 3, were created by the Russians following their 19th century conquest.⁸ This was due to the ease of access from the eastern lowlands, as opposed to the difficult access across the Zanzegur Mountains which separated it from the Erevan Governorate.⁹

⁸ *Ibid.*, 286.

⁹ *Ibid.*: 287, 321.



Figure 2. Nagorno-Karabakh in the Elizavetpolskaya Governorate
Source: Geographical Description of the Russian Empire in the provinces and regions with geographical maps, 75; The Economist, “A mountainous conflict.”



Figure 3. Erevan Governorate

Source: Geographical Description of the Russian Empire in the provinces and regions with geographical maps, 81.

In the 19th century the Caucasus saw large demographic changes. These were caused by Muslim emigration and Armenian immigration, the latter often escaping Muslim persecution like the 1890 massacres in Turkey. This increased the proportion of Armenians across the region, and in Karabakh (both the mountainous and lowland parts) it went from 9% in 1823 to 53% in 1880.¹⁰ This led to ethnic tensions which erupted in 1905, leading to the destruction of villages, massacres of civilians and resulted in 3,100-10,000 dead.¹¹

¹⁰ Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers...*, 54.

¹¹ Saparov, "Why Autonomy? ...," 286; Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers...*, 56.

Following the Russian Empire's collapse, a newly-independent Azerbaijan, supported by Turkey¹² and Britain,¹³ tried to maintain control over Nagorno-Karabakh. A 1919 massacre in Kaibali-kend¹⁴ broke the Armenian resistance, and these agreed to become a semi-autonomous region of Azerbaijan.¹⁵ This autonomy was terminated in February 1920,¹⁶ leading to a rebellion and a three-day massacre of Armenians in Shusha.¹⁷ In 1920, Soviet forces seized the Caucasus, and in July 1921 decided that Nagorno-Karabakh will remain in Azerbaijan as an autonomous region.¹⁸ Calls for Nagorno-Karabakh secession continued and resulted in clashes in Stepanakert in 1963 where 18 Armenians were killed,¹⁹ a 1988 massacre of at least 26 Armenians in Sumgait²⁰ and a pogrom of Armenians in 1990 in Baku, that killed 60 and drove others out.²¹

Following independence from the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan terminated Nagorno-Karabakh's autonomy on 26 November 1991,²² and on 10 December 1991 Nagorno-Karabakh voted for independence itself.²³ Azeri attempts to secure the region were

¹² Saparov, "Why Autonomy? ...," 289.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 291.

¹⁸ Saparov, "Why Autonomy? ...," 312.

¹⁹ Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars...*, 154.

²⁰ David Rieff, "Case Study in Ethnic Strife," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no2 (March/April 1997); Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars...*, 156.

²¹ Bill Keller, "Upheaval in the East: Soviet Union; A Once-Docile Azerbaijani City Bridges Under the Kremlin's Grip," *The New York Times*, 18 February 1990.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1990/02/18/world/upheaval-east-soviet-union-once-docile-azerbaijani-city-bridles-under-kremlin-s.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>.

²² Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "Azərbaycan Respublikasının Dağlıq Qarabağ Muxtar Vilayətini ləğv etmək haqqında (On abolition of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region of the Republic of Azerbaijan)," No 279-XII, 26 November 1991.

²³ Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars...*, 168.

defeated by Armenian militias which cleared it and surrounding areas of Baku's forces and Azeri civilians²⁴ in a campaign that included a massacre of 484 in Khojali.²⁵ Fighting ended with a May 1994 cease-fire mediated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with a final tally of 18-30,000 dead and a million Azeris and Armenians displaced.²⁶ Despite the cease-fire, the conflict continues to simmer, with armed clashes,²⁷ the killing of an Armenian officer by an Azeri one during NATO training in Hungary²⁸ and threats of war by Azerbaijan.²⁹ Nagorno-Karabakh has declared itself an independent country – The Republic of Artsakh - albeit it is not recognized by any UN member states.³⁰

Political solutions for Nagorno-Karabakh

One political solution to the conflict is for Nagorno-Karabakh to remain in Azerbaijan but this is unlikely to be accepted by the Armenians who have opposed that since 1917. Reasons for this include the still-remembered massacres of 1905,³¹ the

²⁴ Bernard Cook, "Nagorno-Karabakh War," in *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 2011.

²⁵ Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars...*, 170.

²⁶ Cook, "Nagorno-Karabakh War,"...; Katya Cengel, "Dispatch From Armenia: The Not So Frozen War," *World Affairs* 176, no. 3 (Sep/Oct 2013): 58; Rieff, "Case Study in Ethnic Strife,"... .

²⁷ Lada Yevgrashina and Hasmik Mkrtchyan, "Azeris, Armenians spar after major Karabakh clash," *Reuters*, 5 March 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080307003917/http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L0572597.htm>.

²⁸ Gleb Bryanski, "OSCE says Azeri soldier pardon sets back peace process," *Reuters*, 3 September 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-azerbaijan-armenia-soldier/osce-says-azeri-soldier-pardon-sets-back-peace-process-idUSBRE8820LO20120903>.

²⁹ Ian Johnston, "President of Azerbaijan declares 'state of war' with Armenia on Twitter," *The Independent*, 7 August 2014, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/president-of-azerbaijan-declares-state-of-war-with-armenia-on-twitter-9655692.html>; BBC, "Azerbaijan threatens renewed war," last updated 14 May 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3706459.stm>.

³⁰ Opinio Juris, "Applying International Law to the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," last accessed 2 April 2020. <http://opiniojuris.org/2020/01/22/applying-international-law-to-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict/>

³¹ Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers...*, 47.

aforementioned acts of violence, and the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage, which included the total destruction of thousands of UNESCO-protected *khachkars* (carved stone stelae) near Nakhichevan,³² dozens of churches and thousands of tombstones.³³

Further, Azeri rule would likely result in a decline in the proportion of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenian population. This would happen due to a return of Azeri refugees, their higher total fertility rate (TFR)³⁴ and Baku's policies that encouraged Azeris migration into Armenian areas,³⁵ with the last two having contributed to a decrease in the proportion of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenians from 91% in 1939,³⁶ to 76% in 1989.³⁷ This could turn the latter into a minority, at which point they would be severely disadvantaged in case of renewed violence.

Even a promise of autonomy is unlikely to sway the Armenians given Azerbaijan's track record on the subject, as it had terminated such autonomy at the first opportunity – first in 1920³⁸ and then in 1991.³⁹ These actions suggest that autonomy could only be a

³² European Parliament, “European Parliament resolution on cultural heritage in Azerbaijan,” last updated 16 February 2006, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2006-0069+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

³³ Dale Berning Sawa, “Monumental loss: Azerbaijan and 'the worst cultural genocide of the 21st century,’” *The Guardian*, 1 March 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/mar/01/monumental-loss-azerbaijan-cultural-genocide-khachkars>; Jayson Casper, “Christians Defend Cultural Heritage in Muslim-Majority Countries,” *Christianity Today*, 21 October 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/november/azeris-armenians-clash-heritage-grave-khachkars.html>.

³⁴ United Nations, “World Population Prospects 2019,” last accessed 19 March 2020, <https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/DemographicProfiles/Line/51>.

³⁵ Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers...*, 64.

³⁶ Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers...*, 64.

³⁷ Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars...*, 30.

³⁸ Saparov, “Why Autonomy? ...,” 290..

³⁹ Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “Azərbaycan Respublikasının Dağlıq Qarabağ Muxtar Vilayətini ləğv etmək haqqında (On abolition of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region of the Republic of Azerbaijan),” No 279-XII, 26 November 1991.

ploy to obtain peace – like it was in 1920⁴⁰ – and will be ended once Baku is in a position of power.⁴¹ Recent examples of that include Adjara in Georgia and Gagauzia in Moldova where autonomy was erased once the central government was firmly in control.⁴²

The second solution to the conflict is the international recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh's secession – something that will likely end with it becoming a part of Armenia. This is strongly opposed by Azerbaijan which refuses to give away territory.⁴³ Further, it is eager to end its internally displaced persons crisis – which in 2016 still counted half-a-million people⁴⁴ of whom many have not integrated into their new environment.⁴⁵ Baku wants the Nagorno-Karabakh Azeris to have the right to return home⁴⁶ - something that is unlikely to happen as long as the region is under Armenian control as the latter fear that this would undermine their ethnic dominance and increase Azerbaijan's influence.⁴⁷

Non-political solutions for Nagorno-Karabakh

Given the repeated failure of negotiations to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, Azerbaijan may resort to the use of force to seize the disputed territory. Such a possibility is suggested by the threats of war made by its president in 2014,⁴⁸ the Azeri offensive

⁴⁰ Saparov, “Why Autonomy? ...,” 290..

⁴¹ Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers...* , 31.

⁴² Benjamin A.T. Graham, “Nagorno-Karabakh in Limbo,” *Middle East Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 59, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279962979_Nagorno-Karabakh_in_Limbo .

⁴³ Graham, “Nagorno-Karabakh in Limbo,”... : 58, 61.

⁴⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, “Global Report on Internal Displacement,” Norwegian Refugee Council, May 2017: 24

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 88

⁴⁶ Graham, “Nagorno-Karabakh in Limbo,”... : 58.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁸ Enjoli Liston, “Azerbaijan's president threatens war with Armenia via Twitter,” *The Guardian*, 7 August 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/azerbaijan-president-threatens-war-armenia-twitter>.

operations in 2016 and the steady increase in Baku's defense spending, which fell only when its economy was hit hard by the 2014 collapse in oil prices.⁴⁹ The following analysis will identify the potential results of such a conflict.

Terrain Analysis

Nagorno-Karabakh's mountainous nature is visible in the photographs in figures 4 and 5. It is well suited for defensive operations as the mountains reduce an attacker's numerical advantage by limiting the amount of combat power that can be brought into contact, separate forces advancing along valleys, preventing them from providing mutual support, and reduces armor's offensive capability by restricting its ability to maneuver. The defensive qualities of such terrain require an attacking force ratio higher than the generally accepted three-to-one.⁵⁰ Further, Nagorno-Karabakh's urban areas often fill the entire width of valleys, which means that they cannot be bypassed, forcing an attacker into urban battles that favor the defender and can be costly in terms of time and casualties.

⁴⁹ Macrotrends, "Azerbaijan Military Spending/Defense Budget 1992-2020," last accessed 2 April 2020, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/AZE/azerbaijan/military-spending-defense-budget>.

⁵⁰ Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-001, *Land Operations* (Ottawa: DND Canaa, 2008), 8-24.



Figure 4. Nagorno-Karabakh satellite photo
Source: Google Maps; The Economist, “A mountainous conflict.”



Figure 5. Nagorno-Karabakh terrain
Source: Opinio Juris, “Applying International Law to the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict.”

Adversary analysis – Armenia

The Armenian Army (including Nagorno-Karabakh forces) is primarily equipped with Soviet-era weapons as shown in Table 1. While effective, many of these are aged which affects serviceability rates and strains the sustainment system. Initially based on the Soviet model, the Army has adopted Western practices such as providing junior officers and NCOs with greater authority. Its personnel have operational experience from the fighting with Azerbaijan and deployments to Afghanistan, Kosovo and UN missions. 60% of the 65,000 troops are conscripts, backed by 200,000-strong reserves.⁵¹

Table 1 – Principal Armenian Weapons Systems.

Name	Type	Number in service
T-72	Main Battle Tank (MBT)	221
BMP-2	Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV)	?
BMP-1 IFV	IFV	123
BTR-80	Armored Personnel Carrier (APC)	114
BTR-70	APC	<92
TOS-1	220mm Thermobaric Multiple Rocket Launcher (MRL)	6
9A52-2 Smerch-M	122mm MRL	12
BM-21	122mm MRL	47
2S3 Akatsiya	152mm Self-Propelled Howitzer	28
D-30	122mm Howitzer	85
ZSU-23-4	Self-Propelled Anti-Aircraft Gun	54
S-300PT (SA-10 ‘Grumble’) / S-300PS (SA-10D ‘Grumble’)	Surface-To-Air Missile (SAM)	60
9K33 Osa (SA-8 ‘Gecko’)	Self-Propelled SAM	40
2K12M3 Kub (SA-6 ‘Gainful’)	Self-Propelled SAM	8

⁵¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, “Armenia – Army,” last updated 10 July 2019, <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/JWARA105-CIS#Equipment%20in%20service>.

Buk-M1-2 (SA-17 'Grizzly')	Self-Propelled SAM	?
2K11 Krug (SA-4 'Ganef')	SAM	54
Su-30SM	Fixed-Wing Aircraft: Attack/Fighter	4
Su-25	Fixed-Wing Aircraft: Attack	13
Mi-24P	Attack Helicopter	8
Mi-8	Transport Helicopter	10

Source: Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, "Armenia - Army"; Jane's World Air Forces, "Armenia – Air Force."

Armenia's air force has limited capability, given its few combat aircraft and helicopters. Due to the high cost of modern aircraft, there has been little progress in improving this situation so the Armenians rely on air-defense systems and Russian support. The latter includes fighter and air-defense assets stationed in-country as well as the integration of Yerevan's air defense network into the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) one.⁵² Albeit, the two countries' defense treaty does not extend to Nagorno-Karabakh⁵³ so these assets may be of limited help in any fighting over that region.

Armenia's military capability will be affected by demographics and the economy.⁵⁴ The country's population is 2.95 million, but due to a low TFR and emigration,⁵⁵ that number is expected to decrease as illustrated in figures 6 and 7. This will reduce the armed forces' recruiting pool and may result in the reduction of their size – or capability if lower-

⁵² Jane's World Air Forces, "Armenia – Air Force," last updated 10 January 2020, <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/JWAF#Equipment%20in%20service>.

⁵³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, "Armenia – Army," last updated 10 July 2019, <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/JWARA105-CIS#Equipment%20in%20service>.

⁵⁴ The following forecasts, as well as the subsequent ones for Azerbaijan, do not take into account the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁵⁵ World Bank, "Armenia," last accessed 19 March 2020, https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=ARM.

quality recruits are conscripted to make up for the shortfall. Armenia's economy, while small with a 2018 GDP of US\$12.43B, has good prospects with growth expected to remain above 5% until 2022.⁵⁶ This will allow for the maintenance or increase of the current levels of defense spending which will be critical for the replacement of Soviet-era weapons with modern ones.

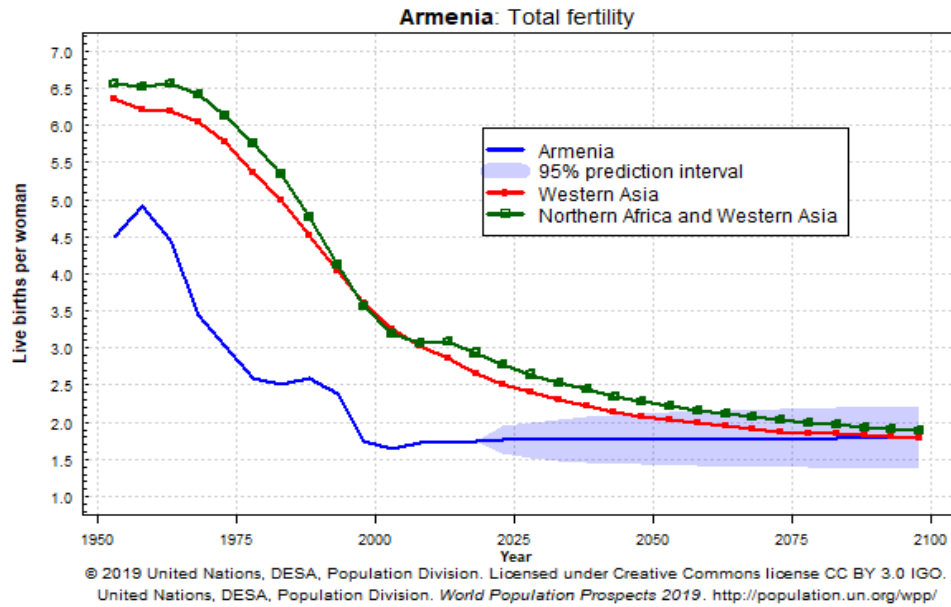


Figure 6. Armenian Fertility Rate

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Population Prospects 2019.”

⁵⁶ World Bank, “Armenia,” last accessed 19 March 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/armenia>.

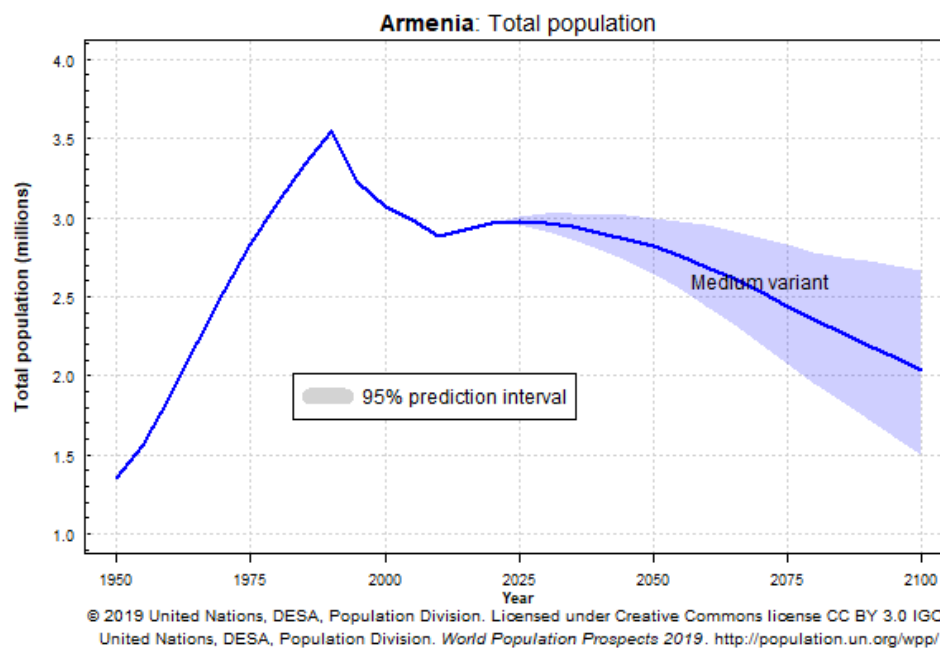


Figure 7. Armenian Population Forecast

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Population Prospects 2019”

Adversary analysis – Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's army is not assessed as high quality and this may have led to the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh despite its numerical superiority.⁵⁷ It is a conscript force 70,000 strong, backed by 300,000 reservists. Individual and collective training is “inconsistent,”⁵⁸ there is a lack of combined arms or inter-service training and the officer corps is corrupt and “highly politicized.”⁵⁹ Regardless, in 2016 it successfully executed a small-scale offensive operation which seized and held eight km² of territory.⁶⁰ Army personnel have operational experience from clashes with Armenia and from deployments to Afghanistan. While the army has a large amount of ex-Soviet equipment, extensive purchases of modern

⁵⁷ Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars...*, 179.

⁵⁸ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, “Azerbaijan - Army,”

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

weapons systems,⁶¹ shown in Table 2, have resulted in a significant increase in combat power.

Azerbaijan's Air Force is equipped with Soviet/Russian combat aircraft and its personnel is highly trained and capable. Although its fixed-wing fleet is small, it has numerous helicopters⁶² that can be used for ground support and airmobile operations. The latter is an extremely useful capability in mountainous terrain, as it allows for vertical envelopments. These can make otherwise hard-to-defeat positions untenable and aid in their penetration or lead to their abandonment, facilitating the advance of ground units.

Table 2 – Principal Azeri Weapons Systems.

Name	Type	Number in service
T-90	MBT	100
T-72	MBT	>500
T-55	MBT	133
BMP-3	IFV	119
BMP-2	IFV	?
BMP-1	IFV	172
BMD-1	IFV	<90
BTR-D	IFV	22
BTR-80A	IFV	70
Matador/Marauder	APC	90
BTR-70	APC	70
MT-LB	APC	200
9A52-4 Tornado	300mm MRL	30
TOS-1	220mm Thermobaric MRL	18
T-122 Sakarya	122mm MRL	18

⁶¹ *Ibid*

⁶² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, "Azerbaijan – Air Force," last updated 12 July 2019, <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/JWAF016-CIS>.

BM-21	122mm MRL	44
2S3 Akatsiya	152mm Self-Propelled Howitzer	16
2S1 Gvozdika	122mm Self-Propelled Howitzer	66
D-30	122mm Howitzer	165
ZSU-23-4	Self-Propelled Anti-Aircraft Gun	?
S-300 PMU-2 'Favorit' (SA-20 'Gargoyle')	Surface-To-Air Missile (SAM)	8
9K37M Buk-MB (SA-17 'Grizzly')	Self-Propelled SAM	18
S-75M Volkhov (SA-2 'Guideline')	SAM	16
MiG-29	Fixed-Wing Aircraft: Fighter	15
Su-25	Fixed-Wing Aircraft: Attack	18
Mi-35M/Mi-24G	Attack Helicopter	30
Mi-8/Mi-17-1V	Transport Helicopter	110

Source: Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, "Azerbaijan - Army"; Jane's World Air Forces, "Azerbaijan – Air Force".

Azerbaijan's military capability will be affected by demographics and the economy. Its population is 9.94 million and currently boasts a replacement TFR, but is expected to decline slightly. However, forecasts have a wide distribution and a significant drop in the TFR and population may happen as indicated in figures 8 and 9. Still, except in the most extreme case, Azerbaijan's armed forces will retain an extensive pool of recruits and this should have a minimal impact on their ability to fill the ranks.

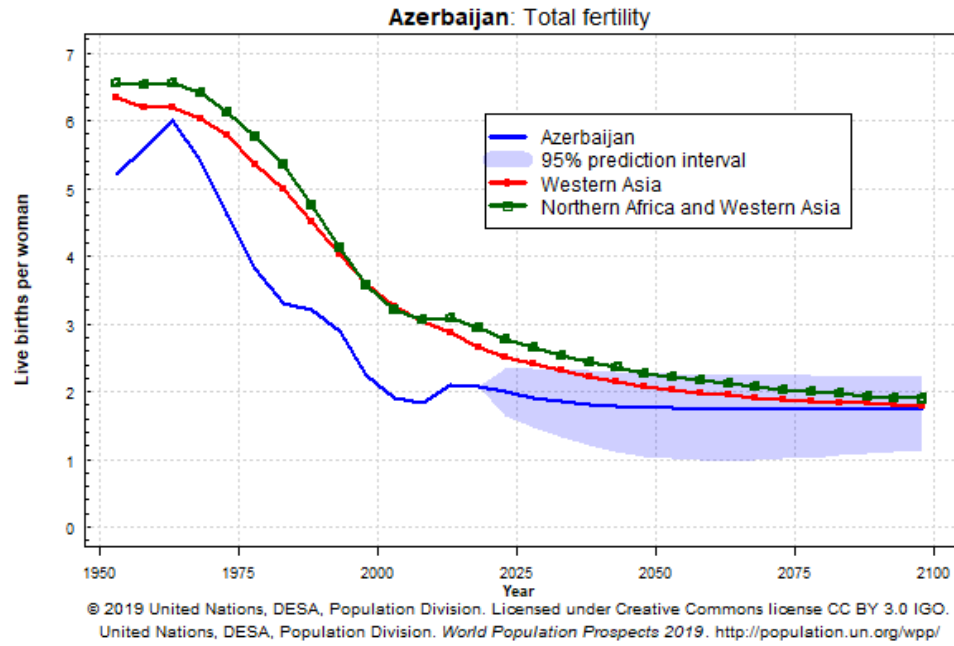


Figure 8. Azerbaijan Total Fertility Rate

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Population Prospects 2019.”

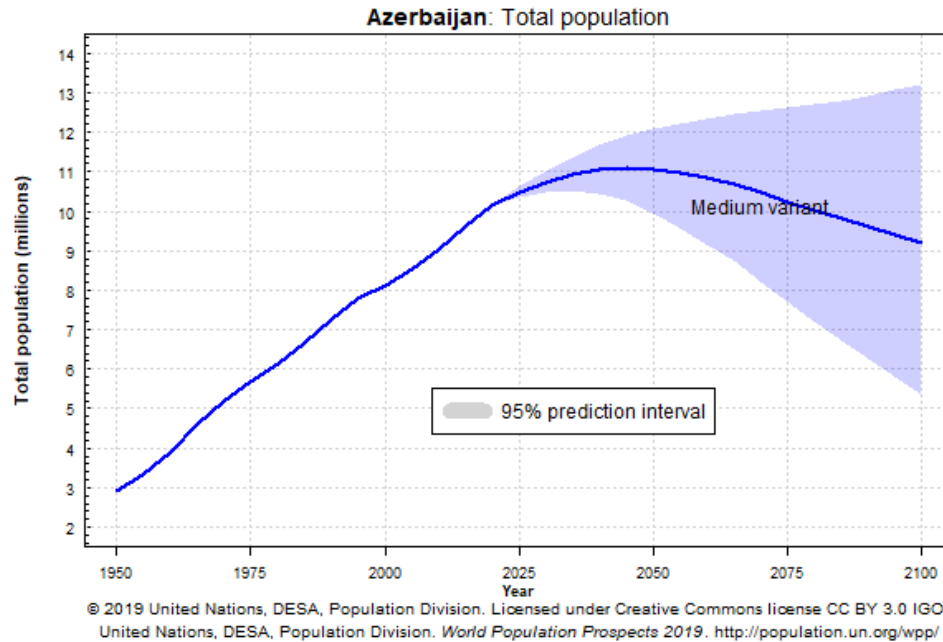


Figure 9. Azerbaijan Population Forecast

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Population Prospects 2019.”

Azerbaijan's 2018 GDP stood at US\$46.94B and is expected to grow at just above

2% annually in the short term.⁶³ However, the country's economy is heavily dependent on oil and gas exports which makes it very sensitive to fluctuations in the prices of those.⁶⁴ The effect these fluctuations can have on the Azeri GDP is illustrated in Figure 10 which shows it fall from US\$75B to US\$38B as oil prices collapsed from ~US\$100 to ~US\$40/barrel. The early-2020 collapse in oil prices⁶⁵ may have a similarly significant effect on Azerbaijan's GDP – even if softened by steps that had been taken towards economic diversification - impacting the country's ability to acquire expensive items like combat aircraft.

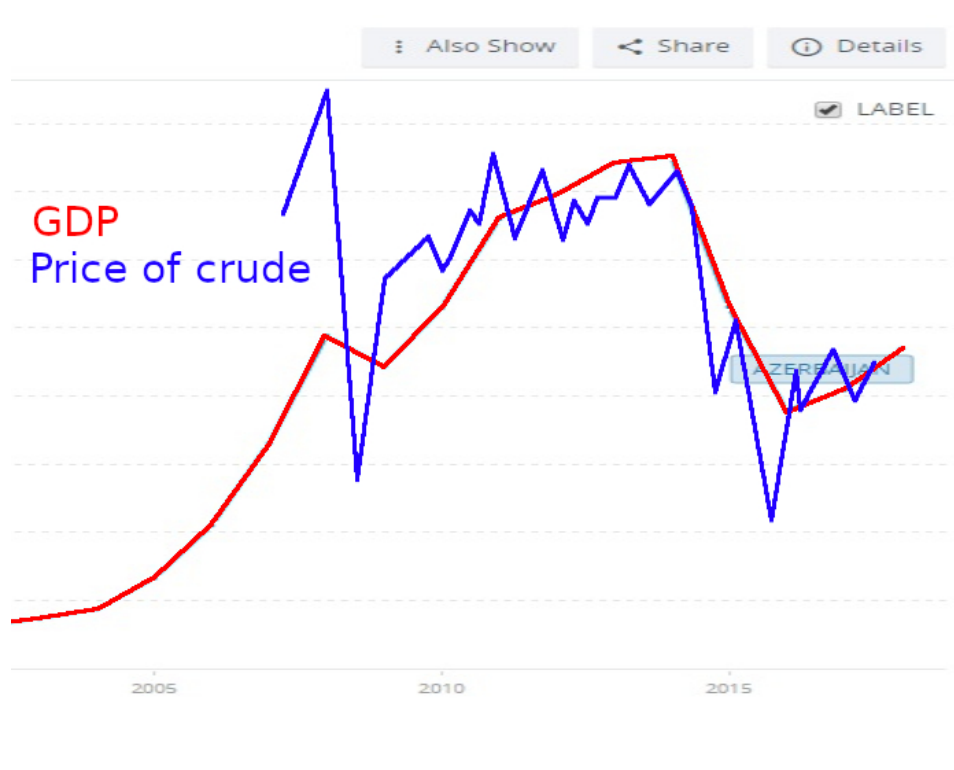


Figure 10. Azerbaijan GDP and the world crude oil price

⁶³ World Bank, "Armenia," last accessed 19 March 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/armenia>.

⁶⁴ Nick Snow, "Azerbaijan looks beyond energy successes for economic growth," *Oil&Gas Journal*, 30 April 2014, <https://www.ogj.com/general-interest/economics-markets/article/17272225/azerbaijan-looks-beyond-energy-successes-for-economic-growth>.

⁶⁵ Matt Egan, "Oil collapses by another 24% to \$20. It hasn't been this low since 2002," *CNN*, 18 March 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/18/business/crude-oil-prices-coronavirus/index.html>.

Source: World Bank, "Azerbaijan"; ResearchGate "Crude oil prices of 10 year daily historical chart."

Adversary Comparison

Azerbaijan Army's active service component is only slightly larger than the Armenian one, as illustrated in Table 3, while it has much larger reserves. However, given demographic trends, Azeri numerical superiority may increase. In addition, Azerbaijan has a numerical advantage in most heavy weapons systems categories, giving the country an overall numerical edge. This edge is exacerbated by the superiority of some Azeri weapons systems - in particular, that of their T-90 tanks. These have demonstrated themselves superior to all Soviet tank designs and their derivatives during the fighting in eastern Ukraine in 2014-15.⁶⁶ Further, Azerbaijan's many helicopters are a significant asset whose mobility can act as a force-multiplier – although this may be offset to a certain degree by Armenia's heavy investment in air-defense systems.

Table 3 – Adversary comparison.

	Armenia	Azerbaijan	ratio
Population (M, 2018)	2.95	9.94	1:3.4
GDP (US\$ B, 2018)	12.43	46.94	1:3.8
Army personnel (active)	65,000	70,000	1:1.1
Army personnel (reserve)	220,000	300,000	1:1.4
MBT	221	733	1:3.3
IFV	123	473	1:3.8
APC	206	360	1:1.7
MRL	75	119	1:1.6
Artillery	201	384	1:1.9

⁶⁶ Dr. Phillip A. Karber, “Lessons Learned' from the Russo-Ukrainian War,” The Potomac Foundation, 2015, 25-26.

SPAAG	54	?	
SAM (self-propelled and fixed) ⁶⁷	162	42	3.9:1
Aircraft, fixed-wing, fighter/multi-role.	4	15	1:3.8
Aircraft, fixed-wing, attack.	13	18	1:1.4
Aircraft, rotary-wing, attack.	8	30	1:3.8
Aircraft, rotary-wing, transport.	10	110	1:11

Source: Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, "Azerbaijan - Army"; Jane's World Air Forces, "Azerbaijan – Air Force"; Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, "Armenia - Army"; Jane's World Air Forces, Armenia – Air Force; World Bank, "Armenia,."; World Bank, "Azerbaijan";

However, a crucial factor that is not reflected in numbers is the quality of personnel and the Armenian Army is assessed to have an edge there.⁶⁸ Further, their troops – in particular those from Nagorno-Karabakh – will likely demonstrate greater determination than their opponents because they will be motivated by the knowledge that they are fighting for their homes and for their families. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, these two factors will play an especially important role as the terrain dictates that this will be primarily a light-infantry fight and in such it is the qualities of the individual soldier that play a greater role than equipment or numbers. This, and the defensive nature of the terrain, give the Armenians an overall edge. This is illustrated by previous results from the fighting during the post-Soviet era where the Armenians have emerged victorious despite being outnumbered,⁶⁹ and the loss ratio from clashes between 2003 and 2015 remained at

⁶⁷ Excluding man-portable SAMs.

⁶⁸ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, "Azerbaijan – Army,"... .

⁶⁹ Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars...*, 179.

1:2 in their favor. Although this ratio may have been lower during the heavy fighting in April 2016, the Azeris still suffered more than half of the killed (including the commander and key personnel of an Azeri special forces brigade).⁷⁰ In fact, the poor organization of Azeri forces and higher effectiveness of the Armenian ones had been noted even back during the fighting in 1905, resulting in higher casualties among the former.⁷¹

However, the quality of personnel can go only so far in the face of a numerical and technological superiority. Thus, as the Azeri edge in both increases, thanks to their better demographic situation and a larger GDP, Armenia's ability to hold Nagorno-Karabakh with force of arms will diminish. This may force Yerevan to look for foreign assistance and place it under the influence of countries that provide it – something that has already happened given the Russian military presence and defense treaty.⁷²

Canada's Options

Canada has two options with respect to the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. One is to recognize the region's secession based on the repeated demands made by its people while the other is to continue recognizing Azerbaijan's sovereignty over it. There are three reasons why Ottawa should go with the former.

First, as a member of the United Nations (UN), Canada should respect the principle of self-determination embodied in the UN Charter.⁷³ Ottawa has done this in the past, by

⁷⁰ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, "Azerbaijan – Army,"... .

⁷¹ Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers...* , 56.

⁷² Jane's World Air Forces, "Armenia – Air Force," last updated 10 January 2020, <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/JWAFA011-JWAF#Equipment%20in%20service>.

⁷³ United Nations, "Charter of the United Nations – Chapter 1," last accessed 24 March 2020, <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html>.

recognizing nations that had chosen to separate – including Azerbaijan itself which left the Soviet Union in 1991.⁷⁴ The legality of such a move is supported by the International Criminal Justice's ruling on Kosovo's declaration of independence – a country whose secession from Serbia was recognized by Canada⁷⁵ - by indicating that such declarations “could create a state.”⁷⁶

Second, independence is necessary to protect the human rights of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. As the examples cited earlier show, acts of violence against these under Azeri rule and the destruction of their heritage indicate that they would not be safe if returned to Baku's control. Further, Azerbaijan's policies aimed at changing regional demographics, its previous terminations of Nagorno-Karabakh's autonomy and the aforementioned examples from Georgia and Moldova show that even an autonomous status would not ensure the protection of Armenian's human rights.

Lastly, it is in Canada's interest to use the recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh to obtain influence in Yerevan – something that would be an example of employment of soft power, defined by Joseph Nye as “the ability to get what you want by the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuasion, and positive attraction.”⁷⁷ Such influence can help

⁷⁴ Government of Canada, “Canada – Azerbaijan Relations,” last accessed 24 March 2020, https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/turkey-turquie/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/canada_azerbaijan-azerbaidjan.aspx?lang=eng.

⁷⁵ Government of Canada, "Canada – Kosovo Relations," last accessed 2 April 2020, https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/croatia-croatic/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/canada_kosovo.aspx?lang=eng.

⁷⁶ Opinio Juris, “Applying International Law to the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict,” last accessed 2 April 2020. <http://opiniojuris.org/2020/01/22/applying-international-law-to-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict/>

⁷⁷ Joseph Nye, “Power and Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (April 2011): 14.

prevent a situation where, in its quest for outside assistance as the balance of power shifts against it, Armenia's government falls into the orbit of a state that Canada has a dispute with.

Such states can use soft or hard power – defined by Nye as “the ability to get the outcomes one wants through coercion and payment”⁷⁸ - to support Armenia in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and therefore gain influence with its government. In exchange, they could obtain Yerevan's support against Canada in the form of votes at the UN or other international bodies in commercial, diplomatic or even territorial disputes in the Arctic.

Effective employment of soft and hard power to obtain international support for its policies is demonstrated by China. Examples of this include building public infrastructure like hospitals⁷⁹ or the African Union headquarters,⁸⁰ conducting anti-piracy patrols and committing troops to peacekeeping operations.⁸¹ In return, China received support from Laos and Cambodia in its territorial disputes in the South China Sea,⁸² reduced the number of countries that recognize Taiwan from 24 in 2007⁸³ to 15 in 2017,⁸⁴ and received support

⁷⁸ Joseph Nye, "Power and Foreign Policy," ..., 16.

⁷⁹ Colette Braeckman, “Copper Colony in Congo,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, July 2008, <https://mondediplo.com/2008/07/05congo>.

⁸⁰ BBC, “African Union opens Chinese-funded HQ in Ethiopia,” 28 January 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-16770932>.

⁸¹ Antara Ghosal Singh, “China's soft power projection across the oceans,” *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 12, no. 1 (28 June 2016): 30-31.

⁸² Sarah Raine and Christian Le Miere, *Regional Disorder: The South China Sea Disputes*, 63; Nandini Krishnamoorthy, “Laos backs China over South China Sea dispute, rejects Hague ruling,” *International Business Times*, 15 July 2016, <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/laos-backs-china-over-south-china-sea-dispute-rejects-hague-ruling-1570737>.

⁸³ “Taiwan alarm at Costa Rica move.” *BBC News*, updated 7 June 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6729917.stm>.

⁸⁴ Melissa Clarke, “Kiribati cuts ties with Taiwan to switch to China, days after Solomon Islands,” *ABC/Reuters*, updated 20 September 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-20/kiribati-to-switch-diplomatic-ties-from-taiwan-to-china/11532192>.

for policies in its Xinjiang Province.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Lindsay Maizland, "China's Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang," Council on Foreign Relations, last updated 25 November 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/chinas-repression-uighurs-xinjiang>.

Conclusion

There are no indications that the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh will be resolved in a peaceful manner as Armenians are unwilling to submit to Azeri rule and the latter refuse to surrender territory. This suggests that a resolution through armed force may be attempted, and the advantage in this will gradually tip to Baku's side due to its increasing military strength. To prevent that, Yerevan may drift into the orbit of nations which, in exchange for their help, may obtain its support in disputes with Canada. To prevent this, Ottawa ought to build its influence with Yerevan by recognizing the right of self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, or risk finding itself alone as it had during the dispute with Saudi Arabia.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Steven Chase. "U.S. Refuses to back Canada in Saudi Arabia dispute." *The Globe and Mail*, updated 8 August 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-us-sidesteps-getting-involved-in-escalating-saudi-canada-dispute/>; Jessica Vomiero, "Arab states back Saudi Arabia in expelling Canadian ambassador over human rights dispute," *Global News*, 6 August 2018, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4372854/arab-states-back-saudi-arabia-canadian-dispute/>; Ashifa Kassam, "'We don't have a single friend': Canada's Saudi spat reveals country is alone," *The Guardian*, 11 August 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/11/canada-saudi-arabia-support-us>.

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