

The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: An Apparatus for Russia's National Interest Maximization

Abu Rushd Mohammad Saikh
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Abstract: The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict constitutes an ideal case study for addressing the difficulty of national interest in foreign policy formulation. Nagorno-Karabakh occupied by Armenia is recognized by the international community as a part of Azerbaijan. Unresolved for a few years, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has verified a true Gordian knot. This article examines the role of external actors, specifically role of Russia in this conflict. Russia is widely thought of to be the foremost relevant and anxious regional power. Russia's ambition to retain the Soviet era influence in its strategic backyards, the geopolitical importance of Nagorno-Karabakh and its relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan made itself a crucial regional actor in this conflict. Russia possesses authority to escalate and deescalate through military assistance and mediation. This article demonstrates that Russia utilizes the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to maximize its national interest in the south Caucasian region.

Key Words: Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, National Interest, Foreign Policy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Nagorno-Karabakh war of 2020 has drawn the attention and much speculation of a corona affected world. While the whole world was fighting against an invisible enemy--(SARS-CoV-2) virus—armies of Azerbaijan and Armenia were fighting against each other. The main parties to the Nagorno-Karabakh (also called higher Karabakh or mountainous Karabakh) conflict are Armenia and the Azerbaijani Republic. The Nagorno-Karabakh crisis began in 1988 even three years before the independence of the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijani Republic. For the last thirty years, this crisis has remained unresolved. Nevertheless, regional countries such as Russia, Turkey, Iran as well as non-regional countries i.e., the United States and Israel are deeply involved in this Caucasian conflict zone.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an outcome of overlapping territorial claims of Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. Historically this region was an integral part of Azerbaijan. However, the majority of the inhabitants were ethnically Armenians. After the Bolshevik revolution, both Armenia and Azerbaijan became parts of the Soviet Republic. The Soviet government created an autonomous Nagorno-Karabakh region during the 1920s (CFR, 1920). Disagreement and animosity between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh were kept under check and balance by the Soviet government. It is only during the last days of the USSR

when the rivalry turned into enmity between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Armenia and Azerbaijan engaged in a full-fledged war that ended in 1994 with Armenia being the victorious party. Armenia occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and also gained additional Azerbaijani territory. Russia brokered peace between these two conflicting parties. With some minor border clashes, the region was peaceful until 2016. A four days intense conflict emerged in 2016 and Russia again settled the issue as a negotiator (Jarosiewicz and Falkowski, 2016). The Nagorno-Karabakh war of 2020 is also ended in a peace deal by Russian mediation.

Hence, this article argues that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a tool for Russia to maximize its national interest in the region. The Caucasian region has been a sphere of influence for Moscow since the Soviet days. Although the Soviet Union considered the conflict as an internal issue, for Russia it is a matter of extending national influence outside its own territory. After the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia started developing a clear interest in instrumentalizing the conflict for political and economic gains. Although its policy remained chaotic in the first years of the Yeltsin era, Russia quickly commenced seeing the conflict as an opportunity to exert control over the region and as a lever against the two parties involved. This tendency continued under Putin, who has given even further prominence to the return-to-a-great-power-status rhetoric. Since his first presidential term, Russia has undoubtedly become more confident and assertive in its policy towards its 'near abroad' and respectively, the conflict (Daskalova, 2015).

This article utilizes "National Interest" as the conceptual framework to analyze Russia's role and interest in this crisis. Hans J Morgenthau defined National Interest as "The protection of physical, political and cultural identity against encroachments by other nation-states". For Morgenthau "National Interest" means survival of the state. "National Interest" is a conceptual framework to explain the underlying principle for the behavior of states and statesmen.

Rational of the Study

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a bilateral issue between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, neighbouring countries are also deeply engaged in this crisis. Russia as the regional power perceives this conflict as a tool to maximize its national interest in this region. Hence this article using

“National Interest” as a conceptual framework examines Russian behaviour in this regional conflict. This article concludes that Russia is maximizing its national interest by playing a mediator role in this conflict.

Objective of the Study

The basic purpose of this article is to investigate Russia’s national interest in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This article examines Russia’s relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as scrutinizes its mediatory role in this conflict. The specific objectives of this article are as follows:

- a. Identify the nature of foreign relations among Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- b. Russia’s national interest in the south Caucasian region.
- c. Russia’s puzzling mediatory role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Research Question

The central question this paper asks, “How does national interest guide Russia’s foreign policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?”. This study intends to understand the correlation between national interest of Russia and its policy formulation in the south Caucasian region.

Research Method

This article adopted explanatory qualitative technique as the research method. Where qualitative research is an unstructured, exploratory research methodology based on all secondary information. Data for this qualitative analysis were collected from secondary sources like, by consulting various relevant journals, studies conducted by various think tank and conflict tracking websites. Relevant books, reports and articles published in the various newspapers and websites have been consulted in order to present relationship status between Russia’s national interest and its policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Collected data and information were then processed and analysed to present the findings in a very logical and objective manner. A large share of the data has been collected from the internet and unjustified websites were carefully avoided in this regard.

National Interest as the Conceptual Framework

National interests are relatively straightforward for both classical and neo-realists, who still constitute many of the most influential theorists within the discipline of International Relations. National Interests are those that states seek to achieve in relation to each other. Charles Lichbach defines National interest as “the general, long term and continuing purpose which the state, the nation, and the government all see themselves as serving”. In the discourse of international politics, the concept of ‘the national interest’ is commonly employed in two separate, though related ways. It is used to shape political behavior by serving as a means of defending, opposing or proposing policy. It is also employed by students of international relations as an analytical tool for describing,

explaining and assessing the adequacy of a nation’s foreign policy. Underlying both usages are implied assumptions about what is best for a national community, in both domestic and foreign domains (Rosenau, 1964). National interests usually include: self-preservation, independence (sovereignty), economic well-being and military security. The idea of national interest has two factors. One is rationally required and, therefore, of necessity. The other is variable and decided by the situations. In a world made up of many nations competing and opposed to power, their survivals are their necessary and minimum conditions.

The concept of interest is indeed the substance of politics and is, therefore, perpetual and not influenced by time and place, the national state is a historical product and is nothing but the change. For Morgenthau, the ‘concept of interest is defined in terms of power’. It ‘imposes discipline upon the observer’ of international politics, and ‘infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible’ (Morgenthau) 1985, p. 5). National interests are permanent conditions which provide policy makers with a rational guide to their tasks: they are fixed, politically bipartisan and always transcend changes in government. The ‘national interest is not defined by a man or the partisanship of party but imposes itself as an objective datum upon all men applying their rational faculties to the conduct of foreign policy’ (Morgenthau, 1977, p. 9). Morgenthau argues that ‘interest is the perennial standard by which political action must be judged and directed’ because the ‘objectives of foreign policy must be defined in terms of the national interest’ (Morgenthau, 1985, pp. 9 & 528). Although he recognized that at any particular point in time, the interests of a nation should be informed by the ‘political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated’, defining interest in terms of power would largely overcome the problem of subjectivity (Morgenthau, 1985, pp. 8 & 5).

Kenneth Waltz encompasses a completely different conception of the national interest to Morgenthau. Like most policy, he regards the national interest as a product of the structure of the international system instead of one thing that is that the personal responsibility and management of political leaders. For Waltz, however, the national interest seems to operate like an automatic signal, commanding state leaders when and where to move. The difference here is: Morgenthau believes that state leaders are duty bound to conduct their foreign policies by reference to the guidelines laid down by the national interest, and they may be condemned for failing to do that. Waltz’s neorealist theory hypothesizes that they will always do that more or less automatically. Morgenthau thus sees states as organizations guided by leaders whose foreign policies are successful or unsuccessful, depending on the astuteness and wisdom of their decisions. Waltz sees states as structures that respond to the impersonal constraints and dictates of the international system. (Jackson & Sorensen, 2003, pp. 87–8)

Through the lens of national interest policymakers perceive the goals to be pursued by a state's policy. There is an irreducible core of national interest for any state at any given time. The importance is as such that if necessary, the state is ready to make war. The important character of national interest invariably has an emotional appeal to citizens. Thus, state action can be analysed through national interest. National interest also functions as a device through that the legitimacy of and political support for state action is generated. The 'national interest' thus has considerable power in that it helps to constitute as important and to legitimize the actions taken by states. (Weldes, 1996, p. 276). For instance, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics intervention in Yugoslavia, was regarded by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as necessary for the protection of its important interest. The U.S. intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan was regarded by the United States as necessary for the protection of its important interests.

Defining national interests in broad strategic terms, with the physical protection of the political community regarded as the primary goal of national politics, realists assume that nation-states are unitary actors in world politics. Realism assumed that all members of the community have a common interest in the territorial integrity and physical survival of the nation: that in international politics, the entire community speaks with one voice and has one identity. The strength of the modern realist approach is that it usually does not go beyond defining the national interest in terms of strategic power. This allows realism to explain the foreign policy in exogenous terms.

Russian Foreign Relations with Azerbaijan

Russia's relations with Azerbaijan have remained stable for the last three decades. Energy cooperation was the epicentre of the association between Baku and Moscow during this time. However, military cooperation was of a lesser dimension. The two countries managed to resolve controversial issues—demarcation of Caspian Sea, status of the Gabala station-- that were bone of contentions. Azerbaijan addressed Russian concern to the Chechen movement in Azerbaijan. Small groups of Chechens had fought in the ranks of the Azerbaijani army during the first Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, strengthening the bond between the Chechen and Azerbaijani peoples. Around 100 Chechens injured in Russian artillery attacks during the Second Russo-Chechnya War were treated in hospitals in Azerbaijan under a 1997 agreement between the Azerbaijani and Chechen health authorities. In July 2000, the well-known Chechen leader Shamil Basayev appeared publicly on a private television station in Baku. Chechnian schools and cultural centres in Azerbaijan were closed. Azerbaijan persecuted several suspected Chechen rebels, and the others were extradited to Russia. Moscow and Baku signed agreements to prevent terrorism and deepen cooperation to prevent the smuggling of weapons and narcotics across their border during the visit of Russian Interior Minister Vladimir Rushal to Azerbaijan on February 3 and 4, 2002.

The status of the Gabala radar station, another sensitive issue between Azerbaijan and Russia, was clarified on January 24, 2002, during the official visit of Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev to Moscow. The radar system was important for Russia because it could detect missile launches as far as the Indian Ocean. Besides, the radar surveillance area covered the entire Middle East and gave the Russian space forces the ability to track the military activities of the regional states. The agreement recognized that the Gabala radar station was owned by Azerbaijan, but that Russia was granted a ten-year lease for the facility.

In September 2002, Azerbaijan and Russia took an important step towards resolving the Caspian Sea. The two states agreed on an agreement to delimit the border between their nations. In October 2003, a trilateral agreement was signed between the three countries with the participation of Kazakhstan, which divides the northern sixty-four percent of the Caspian Sea into three unequal parts. On a median line principle, Kazakhstan is assigned twenty-seven percent, Russia nineteen percent, and Azerbaijan eighteen percent. Compared to the other two South Caucasian countries, Azerbaijan was less dependent on Russian energy supplies. Even so, from 2000 to December 2006, due to the severe weather conditions and lack of electricity in Baku and the other regions of the country, the Azerbaijani government ceaselessly purchased natural gas and electricity from Gazprom until the company announced that it would increase gas prices for Azerbaijan from 110 to 230 US in 2007 Dollars per 1,000 cubic meters. Gazprom would also reduce the volume of shipments exported to Azerbaijan from 4.5 billion cubic meters to 1.5 billion cubic meters.

The price hike was viewed as blackmail by the Azerbaijani government to force the country to cut gas supplies to Georgia, and Azerbaijani officials revealed they were not importing from Russia at all at the proposed price in 2007. Despite the dispute over the rise in gas prices, Russia has not lost interest in Azerbaijan. A Gazprom delegation visited Azerbaijan on June 2, 2008, and the company's CEO Alexei Miller, who met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, proposed to buy Azerbaijani gas at market prices with long-term contracts. This generous offer, if Azerbaijan accepts it, will definitely influence the completion of potential pipeline projects with Western support such as the Nabucco, Poseidon, or Transasia pipelines.

The military collaboration between Azerbaijan and Russia remained of restricted dimensions. Russian Security Council Secretary Vladimir Rushailo associated his Azerbaijani equivalent Ramiz Mekhtiev signed an accord on twenty Feb 2003, throughout the former visit to the port, that anticipated cooperation between their various agencies on the problems of crime, drug traffic, and an act of terrorism. On 27 Feb 2003 visiting Russian Defense Minister Sergei Lev Ivanov signed a cooperation agreement along with his Azeri counterpart that sealed the method for Azerbaijan to produce different countries with weapons and spare elements from Russia.

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Russia Foreign Relations with Armenia

Russia's backing for Armenia was vital to the survival of this state, as it had complicated relations with two of its neighbours, specifically, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Azerbaijan had closed its border gates with Armenia after the latter occupied almost twenty per cent of Azeri territory together with Nagorno-Karabakh in the early 1990s. Turkey in 1993, in solidarity with Azerbaijan, also sealed its border with Armenia. Although the Armenian leadership continually stated that Armenian-Turkish relations should not be based on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in addition to the continuation of the stalemate over Nagorno-Karabakh, the insistence of the Armenian government to seek international recognition of the so-called genocide prevented Turkey from reaching a rapprochement with Armenia.

In the military sphere, Russia continued to arm Armenia with heavy weapons, while Russia carried out a policy of seizing assets in strategic sectors of the Armenian state through the intelligent and skilful exploitation of that country's dependence on the Russian natural resources. It can be said that Russia's already preponderant status in the security establishment and economic structure of Armenia increased and deepened further because of the military cooperation agreements signed between the two states and Russia's takeover of state-owned companies of energy, telecommunications, and transportation of Armenia. Armenia's financial and mining sector in exchange for the latter's mounting debt relief. On September 14, 2001, at the time of Russian Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov's visit to Armenia, he and his counterpart Serzh Sargsyan signed two intergovernmental documents. The first agreement consisted of sending Russian military advisers and specialists to Armenia on a business trip, and the other document regulated the exchange of land and ensured favourable conditions for Russians serving on Russian bases in Armenia. Furthermore, with the second agreement, the 102nd Russian military base in Armenia received new territory.

On three Oct 2001, within the course of Russian Chief of staff Anatoly Kvashnin's visit to the capital of Armenia, a protocol was signed regarding the furnishing of the 102nd military base with Russian anti-aircraft systems and execution of joint air defence exercises. Two countries entered into two different military cooperation agreements on the joint usage of military

infrastructure and data exchange throughout Armenian Defence Minister Serzh Sargsyan's visit to Russia in Oct 2002. At the time of Armenian President Parliamentary Kocharian's 16-18 Jan 2003 visit to Russia, the 2 sides signed a military-technical cooperation agreement. During Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov's visit to the capital of Armenia on 11 November 2003, he and his Armenian interlocutor Serzh Sargsyan concurred on a military cooperation agreement with that the Russian military facilities at Gyumri were integrated into one base to keep with the Russian Defence Ministry necessities. The choreographer additionally apprised that Russia would still provide the Asian nation with instrumentation and military hardware. Russian capital additionally transferred a good deal of arms and military instrumentality from its bases in Batumi and Akhalkalaki in Georgia to Gyumri throughout the course of the evacuation of those military facilities.

Within the economic space, the Asian nation had to cede several of its strategic assets to Russia reciprocally for writing off its lingering debts when encountering cut-offs in gas provides. In 2002, Armenia's largest cement mill was handed over to the Russian gas company Itera in payment for the country's \$ ten million debt for past gas deliveries. On December 2002, the Armenian Parliament legal the Assets-For-Debt Deal that was signed on seventeen July 2002. In keeping with the agreement, nearly \$100 million of the outstanding Armenian debt to Russia would be eliminated by relinquishing the management of 5 state-run Armenian enterprises to Russia. These firms enclosed the Hrazdan thermal power station that created regarding forty p.c of power in the Asian nations; the Mars company those factory-made communication devices, and also the 3 analysis institutes that accustomed work for the Soviet vested interest. On five Gregorian calendar months, 2003, Russian trade Associate in Nursing Science Minister Ilya Klebanov and Armenian Minister of Defense Serzh Sargsyan united on an accord beneath that money management of the Medzamor atomic energy plant was passed to Russia's UES in exchange for paying off Armenia's \$40 million debt to Russian fuel suppliers. In August 2003, the Asian nation signed another agreement with UES to show over the Sevan-Razdansky hydropower plant for the aim of wiping out the debts owed for deliveries of fuel for the Armyanskaya nuclear station.

In 2005, the Armenian government gave its consent for the sale of Armenia's national installation by British Midland Resources Holding to Interenergo, a subsidiary of UES. In April 2006, the Armenian government reached a twenty-five-year gas agreement with Russia beneath that a joint Armenian-Russian firm, Arm Ros Gaz, took over the fifth unit of the Hrazdan thermal power station and unified it with the four recent blocks that were already controlled by UES beneath one management system. Arm Ros Gaz additionally confiscates the management of the Armenian portion of the Iran-Armenian gas pipeline. The deal came shortly when Gazprom's announcement that it might increase the worth of gas sold-out to the Asian nation from \$56 per thousand cubes

like meters to \$110 per thousand cubes like meters. With the new contract, the Asian nation accepted the new worth. However, winning a concession that there would not be any longer increase of the gas worth till one Jan 2009.

On fourteen November 2006, the Armenian Government Public Service Restrictive Commission gave its approval for the acquisition, by the Russian itinerant operator Vimpel Com, of the ninety p.c stake of the Armenian phone service (Armen Tel) that was owned by Greece's Hellenic Telecommunication Organization (OTE). Throughout President Kocharian's visit to the Russian capital in November 2006, Russia's Comstar Telesystems declared that it had obtained seventy-five per cent of the shares of Armenia's second-largest telecommunications cluster Callie and its subsidiary, the web service supplier, CorNet. Finally, Russian telecommunications operator MTS purchased Armenia's largest itinerant network, Viva Cell, from a Lebanese company in the Gregorian calendar month 2007.

Armavia Airlines, which belonged to Russia's Sibir Airlines, was granted the majority of the flights of Armenian Airlines when agreeing to assume \$25 million debt of the corporate. A thirty-year concession agreement was signed on thirteen Gregorian calendar month 2008 by Vladimir Yakunin, President of Russian Railways, and Andranik Manukyan, Armenian Minister of Transport and Communication, through that Russian South Caucasus Railways obtained the correct to manage Armenia's existing railway network. Russian Ingosstrakh Company purchased seventy-five p.c of the shares of Armenian insurance underwriter Efes in 2003. In March 2004, Vneshtorgbank, Russia's state-dominated bank, noninheritable a seventy p.c stake within the Armenian Savings Bank (Armsberbank).

On sixteen April 2004, Armenia's biggest chemical mill, Nairit that created butadiene rubber was sold-out to the Volgaburmash Company, based mostly within the Russian town of Samarra. In Gregorian calendar month 2007, one amongst Armenia's biggest mining considerations, the mountain peak gold recovery company, was purchased by Madneuli Resources, a mining conglomerate, controlled by Industrial Investors, a gaggle of Russian financiers headed by Sergei Generalov, a former Russian Energy Minister. A deal was tight throughout the visit of Russian Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov and also the head of the Russian Federal Atomic Agency (Rosatom), Sergei Kiriienko towards the Asian nation on a half-dozen Gregorian calendar month 2008, that foresaw the creation of a venture with Russian Atomredmetzoloto, a U mining subsidiary of Rosatom and also the Armenian government, to develop U reserves in Asian nation that were calculable at thirty, 000-60,000 tons.

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Maximization of Russia's National Interest

With Vladimir Putin's endeavor of the post of presidency in 2000, causation the economic interests of the Russian state at the side of the target of sustaining the military presence came

into prominence in Russian foreign political with relevancy to the South Caucasus. The advocator movement in Chechnya was accepted because of the major internal threat for Russia because it had the potential to trigger a sequence reaction at intervals the country that might ultimately result in its taking apart. The matter of Chechnya additionally became decisive in Russia's dealings with Georgia and Azerbaijan as the Russian capital exerted intense pressure on Baku and Tiflis to chop off their ties with the Chechen militants. Armenia, on the opposite hand, is continuing to be the foremost loyal ally of Russia within the region and conceded to the seizure of its strategic assets by Russian state conglomerates in exchange for inclusion beneath Moscow's security umbrella against Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Russia made a significant contribution to ending hostilities and negotiating a ceasefire in 1994, it is often accused of carving out the lion's share to keep the conflict on hold to extend its control over the region. Ascribing such a crucial role to Russia in obstructing the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, however, might be a simplified and exaggerated interpretation of the situation, as other factors have also prevented its resolution. In this context, it is important to understand that the fact that it is in the national interest of Russia is a priority as they have always called for a positive peace regarding the dispute. Understandably, Azerbaijan and Armenia, two main players in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict have conflicting priorities. But the secondary actors also have their priorities which sometimes influence regional policy more significantly.

Russian interference in Armenian-Azerbaijani affairs played a decisive role in the progression of the conflict. Russia is so influential in the region that it can escalate or diffuse the conflict at any time on its own interests. On the other hand, Armenia depends entirely on Russia for its security. The irrefutable reality is that Russia and Armenia need each other for their own interests (Boyajian, 2019). This situation is likely to continue until Armenia manages to reconsider its policies and strategic vision for conflict resolution. Analysts claim that Azerbaijan could have settled the Karabakh issue even in 1993 if Russia had not supported Armenian troops (Tchantouridze, 2008). To end the conflict before it became too insoluble, Baku had to convince Moscow to stop helping the Armenians militarily. This never happened due to the geopolitical importance of Armenia for the Kremlin, which acquired special significance, especially with Azerbaijan's ability to drive Russian troops from its territories in the early years. With the withdrawal by Tbilisi of the Russian military from Georgia (Kakachia, 2008), Armenia remained the only country in the South Caucasus where Russian troops were allowed to maintain a long-term legal presence. This alliance was strong enough because it was based on mutual benefits for Armenia and Russia. Armenia has traded its independence in foreign policy for its security. With Armenia being Russia's only strategically crucial ally in the Caucasus, the Kremlin has never denied military support to Armenia during the invasion of Azerbaijani lands.

The anomaly in all of this is that Russia acted as a mediator to make peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which implies that in this process. It had to be impartial and fair, in fact, Moscow has openly supported and helped Armenia. Russia's military presence in Armenia and its geostrategic interests in the region raise the question of its impartiality as a mediator. Moscow's pro-Armenian policy, while having the status of co-chairman of the Minsk group, led Baku to develop a deep mistrust of Russia and its mediation that particularly developed after it. It was revealed in 1997 that the Russian Defense Ministry had transferred around \$ 2 billion in military materiel to Armenia, which violated the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). Armenia has received Short Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBM) SCUD-B and Iskander-M (SS-26 Stone) from Russia, For Azerbaijani Republic, this not solely flyblown Russia's role as an intercessor within For the Azerbaijani Republic, this not solely flyblown Russia's role as an intercessor within the conflict. However, forged doubt on Armenia's claim to need a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Baku has perceived Armenia's continuous efforts to strengthen its military, and build up its arsenals by suggests that of Russia's support as a shot to cause a lot of credible threat to the Azerbaijani Republic.

Russia has long tried to impose the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians as a negotiating party (Yeni Musavat, 2014). Specialists have argued that a withdrawal of Russia's military and alternative support from Nagorno-Karabakh would modify the Azerbaijani Republic to simply restore order within the region during a method it needed, even once it had been militarily weaker (Ses Qezeti, 2015). The truth is that Russia's role within the region has been predominating, and Moscow's policy towards South Caucasus reflects its interests within the region. In fact, Russia is fascinated by keeping the complete region beneath its influence, and this entails keeping the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict unresolved. However, Russia's believability has recently been questioned by some Armenian analysts. It is being argued that Armenia has reconsidered its relations with Russia because of numerous reasons that arms sale to the Azerbaijani Republic occupies a special place (Galstyan, 2018).

Azerbaijan's arms purchase from Russia reached \$4.5 billion in 2018 (Tchantouridze, 2018). Russia's arms sale to each and the Azerbaijani Republic is probably going to impress a brand new wave of the military race between Armenia and the Azerbaijani Republic, wherever the gainer can be Russia itself (Abrahamyan, 2016). Commercialism weapons and military instrumentation to each Asian country and the Azerbaijani Republic permits Russia to create to form conditions within which it might be able to make a lot of profits from arms sales and exercise its influence within the region. In general, the Russian capital likes to demonstrate the previous Soviet republics by influencing their policies. The recent events in the peninsula and also the regions of Ukraine are sensible examples of Russia's antagonistic policies towards its neighbors (Askerov & Matyok, 2015). The Russian capital

has tested the reactions of the West in Ukraine, and it is aware that restoring its former sphere of influence is sort of doable. The Azerbaijani Republic is one among its targets primarily due to its energy potentials because of oil and fossil fuel reserves, and geopolitics importance. On the opposite hand, the West wants Azerbaijan's energy, and Russia might try and cut it off. Russian capital can continue exploitation the Karabakh card effectively to the current finish.

In this case, expecting non-partisanship from Russia within the Armenian and Azerbaijani conflict is unreasonable. Hence, Russia's mediating role within the Karabakh conflict could be a sham and tolerated by Baku because it sees no various. Baku reserves the right to object to Russia's double-dealing policies around the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, and also the April 2016 War was a visible sign of it. Moscow's approach towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an element of its broader approach towards the region. All the same, it is essential to notice that Russia has not had a coherent and clearly outlined policy either vis-à-vis the region or the conflict since the start. Instead of being uniform, its policy has evolved and shifted throughout the years. From this attitude, it might be tough to deny that the position of Russia and its policy towards the region matter, and counting on the direction they take, Russia will either be a part of} the matter or part of the answer to the conflict. What is vital, even so, is that but vital, it remains solely a locality that is to mention, a part of the matter or part of the answer instead of the matter or the answer itself. Russia's national interest will reach intent on the region. However, the key to the conflict resolution lies neither in its hands nor in these of the other relevant external actors. The key rests instead within the hands of Hayastan, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh itself and solely a real and consistent commitment on their facet will guarantee a resolution to the conflict.

The hilarious situation for the genuineness of the social process is that Russia claims to be a neutral actor within the Karabakh conflict. Despite the very fact that Azerbaijan is responsive to the Kremlin's interest-driven policies that hurt Azerbaijan, it pretends Russia to be its nonpareil friend. Russia's overwhelming power and irresistible ambitions force Azerbaijan's leadership into taking a position. If Azerbaijan resorted to force to free its lands and supply security to its voters, it might be straightforward to defend its policy as simple and ethical. Certainly, violent conflicts are often resolved through negotiations, and the Nagorno- Karabakh conflict is additionally tractably providing the establishment of mediation works properly, and any double standards square measure avoided within the social process. Afterward, the weather of trust and persuasion ought to get play yet. Today, neither will the mediators persuade each party regarding the effectiveness of the negotiation method, nor will the parties to the conflict assure one another regarding the utility of their approaches. Simply, trust does not exist around the Nagorno-Karabakh social process.

Russia's War in Ukraine

The most important country in the EU-Russia competition over influence in Eastern Europe is Ukraine. This is due to its strategic location, including as a transit country for Russian gas to Europe (80% of Gazprom's shipments for EU-Europe flow through Ukrainian pipelines); the presence of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Russia's policies are designed to tilt the balance towards the east. In terms of persuading Kiev to join the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan customs union, whose acceptance by Ukraine would be incompatible with the conclusion of an agreement with the EU to create a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), and some other proposals to deepen economic integration, it has been unsuccessful.

The armed conflict in Ukraine first erupted in early 2014 and quickly transitioned to a long stalemate, with regular shelling and skirmishes occurring along the front line that separates Russian- and Ukrainian-controlled border regions in the east. Since Russia launched a full-scale military invasion into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, fighting has caused over one hundred civilian casualties and pushed tens of thousands of Ukrainians to flee to neighboring countries—including Poland, a NATO country where U.S. troops are preparing to offer assistance.

In late February 2022, the United States warned that Russia intended to invade Ukraine, citing Russia's growing military presence at the Russia-Ukraine border. Russian President Vladimir Putin then ordered troops to Luhansk and Donetsk, separatist regions in Eastern Ukraine partly controlled by Russian-backed separatists, claiming the troops served a "peacekeeping" function. The United States responded by imposing sanctions on the Luhansk and Donetsk regions and the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline a few days later. On February 24, during a United Nations Security Council meeting to dissuade Russia from attacking Ukraine, Putin announced the beginning of a full-scale land, sea, and air invasion of Ukraine targeting Ukrainian military assets and cities across the country. Biden declared this attack "unprovoked and unjustified" and has since issued severe sanctions in coordination with European allies targeting four of Russia's largest banks, its oil and gas industry, and U.S. technology exports to the country. The United Nations, G7, EU, and other countries continue to condemn Russian actions and vow to respond.

II. CONCLUSION

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict transcends the bilateral tensions of Armenia and Azerbaijan. This conflict has drawn attention from regional and global players of international system. Each of the players following the logic of anarchy are engaged to maximize their national interest. However, it is Russia which has the greatest potential to manoeuvre this conflict matching with its own national interest. The south Caucasus is historically a Russian sphere of influence. Therefore, Russia controls the leverage to escalate and

deescalate the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at its will. Russian act of mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict highlights its desire to be the king maker of this region. However, Russian proximity towards Armenia is a source of suspicion for Azerbaijan. To comfort the later, Russia has been gearing up its state mechanism to solidify bilateral relations with Azerbaijan.

This article demonstrated that Russia's foreign policy regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is guided by cold blooded national interest. Russia is unwilling to retreat from the south caucas which it views as a strategic backyard. Russia's bilateral relations with Armenia and close ties Azerbaijan signifies that Russia is playing between these two countries. As long as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is unsolved Russia will be the most benefited party. Its military cooperation with Armenia and arms sells to Azerbaijan only reinforce its position in this region and thus maximize its overall national interest.

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