



University for Peace



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Thinking Peace: Central Europe to the Caucasus



When peace?



Two big, contrarian examples

- 1. Visegrad / Central Europe
 - Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia
- 2. South Caucasus
 - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia

Central Europe early 1990s: expectation of a return to 1930s?

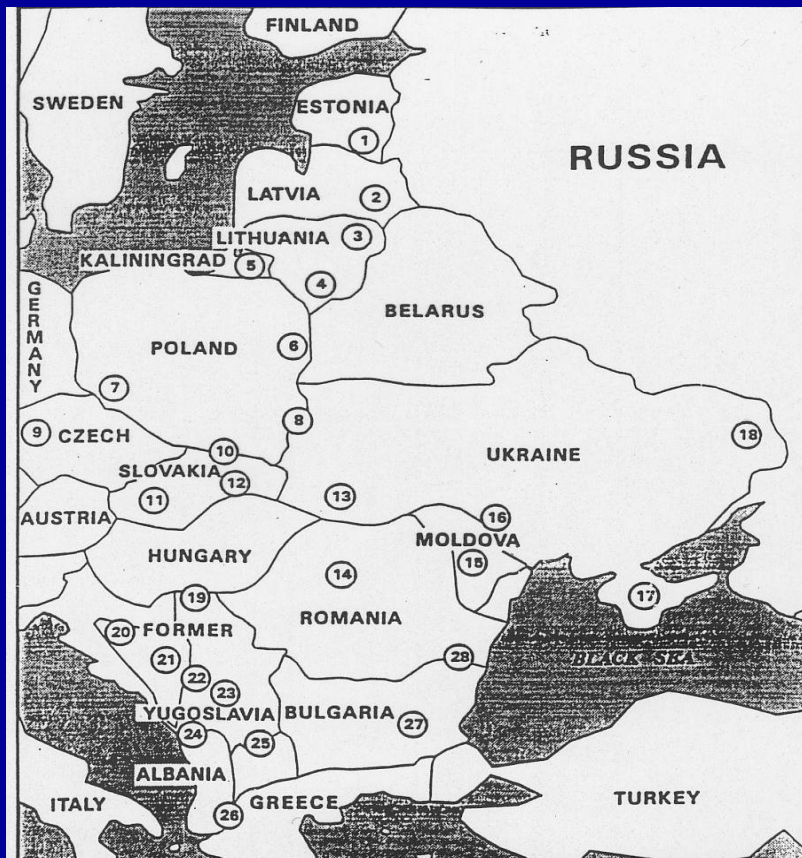
- interwar behaviour:
- Instead of cooperation, classical self-interest
 - Alliances, esp. with revisionist powers (Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy)
 - Attack one another –
 - weakened Czechoslovakia after Munich 1938 / annexation March 1939:
Poland and Hungary attack and occupy parts

Post-Cold War Hungarian revisionism ?

[map from [The Economist](#) – always check a map !]



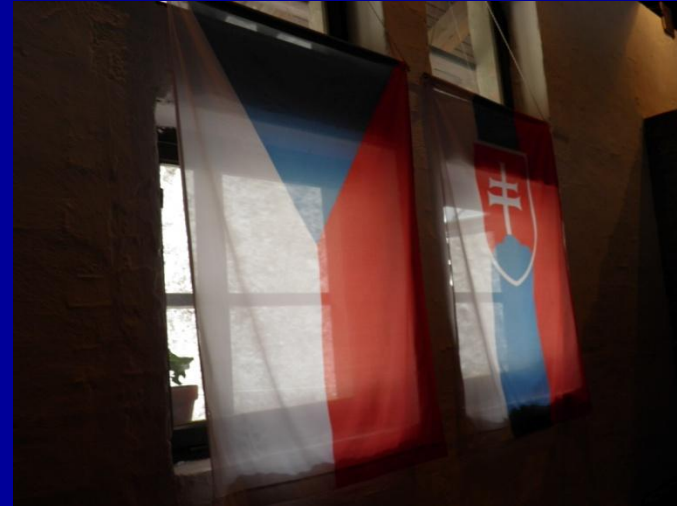
Post-communist CEE: ethnic flashpoints



- Expectation of tensions, conflict because of:
 - old border disputes / territorial claims
 - population transfers
 - historic “injustices”
 - Intermixed populations

Source: Dick, C.J., Dunn, J.F., and Lough, J.B.K., 'Potential Sources of Conflict in Post-communist Europe', *European Security* Vol.2, No.3 (Autumn 1993), pp.386-406.

Uses of History: Recreation of 1335 “summit”

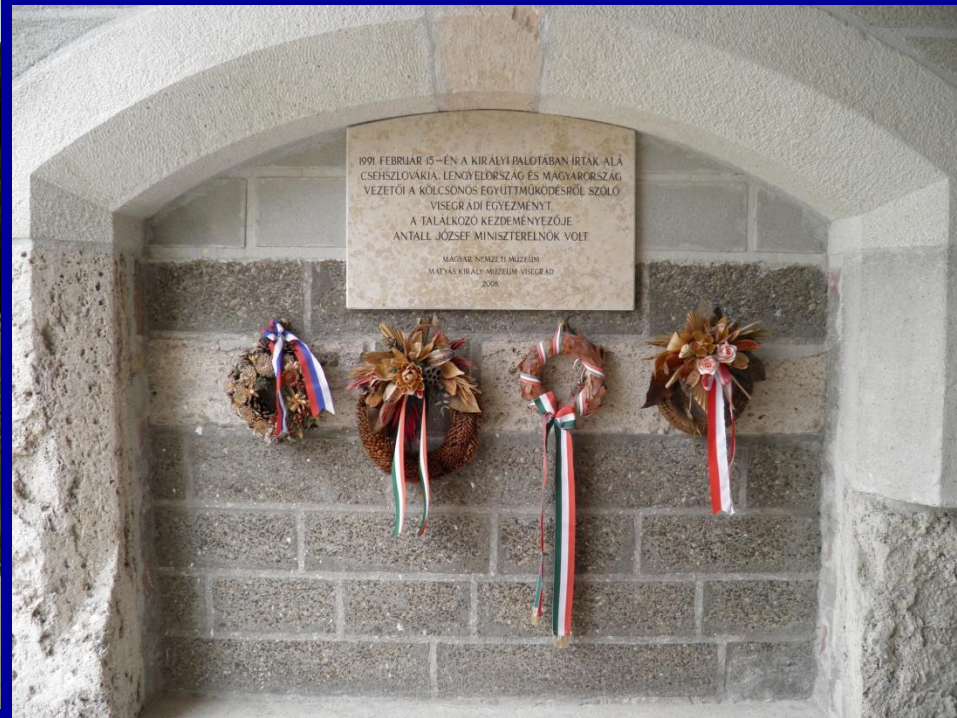


Visegrad Castle



This one from
Visegrad Group
website

The other castle . . .



Uses of history: same name, same century

- Visegrad – Hungary
- Visegrad – Bosnia-Hercegovina
- 1991: positive myth of 1335
- 1992: negative myth of 1389



Outcomes

- Visegrad's contribution to EU/NATO accession:
 - Martin Butora: Visegrad 'quickly found favour with the West, because it was a positive, sensible, stabilising, and constructive concept. Positive symbols are essential in politics and public diplomacy, and Visegrad quickly became just that'
 - Michael Žantovský: Visegrad 'a powerful negotiating tool' for gaining NATO membership; Visegrad's 'close and coordinated work . . . compelled American and Western European politicians to open the doors of the Atlantic alliance to us'
- Contribution to the reshaping of Europe ?

Visegrad's illiberal turn ?

- Dealing with 'migrant crisis'
 - [NB: not refugee]
- Combined Visegrad border police
- Common statements in and outside EU
 - Hungarian Presidency: Visegrad has 'responsible' policies
 - Short-term or long-term ?



Another story ?

The Caucasus: The What. North & South; & 'Greater Caucasus'

Geopolitical map of the Caucasus Region (2008)

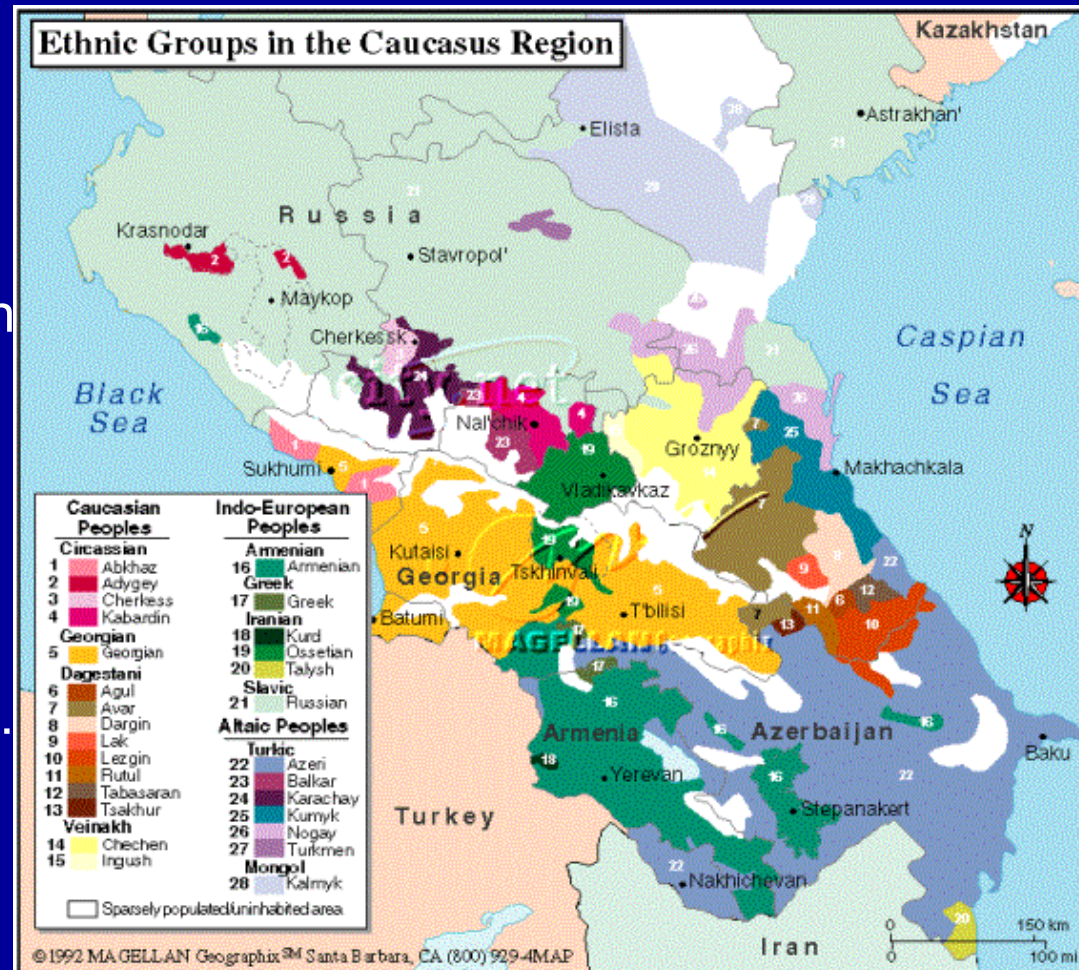


The Caucasus: The What. North & South; & 'Greater Caucasus'



ethno-linguistic/cultural diversity

- 3 major language groups:
 - Caucasian
 - Georgian [Kartvelian]
 - Cherkess, Chechen
 - Altaic-Turkic
 - Azeri, Balkars ...
 - Indo-European
 - Russian, Armenian...
- = 50 languages



Georgia – if unitary



Armenia-Azerbaijan

- Everyone lived together like one big family – Azerbaijanis, Russians, Armenians, Ukrainians we were all Soviet, everyone spoke Russian. ... We would all carry our tables into the courtyard and make one long table. This table would be covered in Georgian *khinkali*, Armenian *boraki* and *basturma*, Russian *bliny*, Tatar *echochmak*, Ukrainian *vareniki*, meat and chestnuts Azeri-style. We drank wine and Armenian cognac. And Azerbaijani cognac. We sang Armenian and Azerbaijani songs.
- Margarita K., Armenian refugee, in Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time*

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This rugged landscape ... has played host to over a century of animosity and ... every living generation of Armenians and Azerbaijanis has known violence, hardship and mutual hatred

- Gabriel Gavin, *Ashes of our Fathers*

2020 & 2023: What happened? Map: RFE/RL

2020 – Az use of force Reclaim part of K



2023 – disputed but:

- Az: arms and fighters getting into K (and Russian PKO not stopping them)
- Arm/K: blockade by Az, and on spurious grounds of “environmental protection”
- Regardless – shortages for K population
- Az: Sep 19 “anti-terror operation”
- K Arm population flees
- Az reintegrates all of K



Building the West's On-Ramp to China's Belt and Road: Opportunities in the South Caucasus

May 2022

By Rick Fawn and Jason Bruder

Abstract: China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is already changing infrastructure and production across much of the world. The three states of the South Caucasus and their counterparts in Central Asia need diverse connectivity to preserve their economic and political independence amid China's expanding influence. Despite some rhetoric and practical measures, the United States and the European Union (EU) continue to underestimate the BRI. This article identifies recent international and regional developments that converge to create a unique opportunity for the West and South Caucasus partners. They may develop integrated, long-term infrastructure of lasting mutual benefit. The convergence of events in and around the South Caucasus offers the place for the West to build an "On-Ramp" to the BRI. The South Caucasus provide a potential gateway into Asia's heart that is not dictated solely by the priorities of Chinese foreign or commercial policies, just as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline of a generation ago served a similar role.

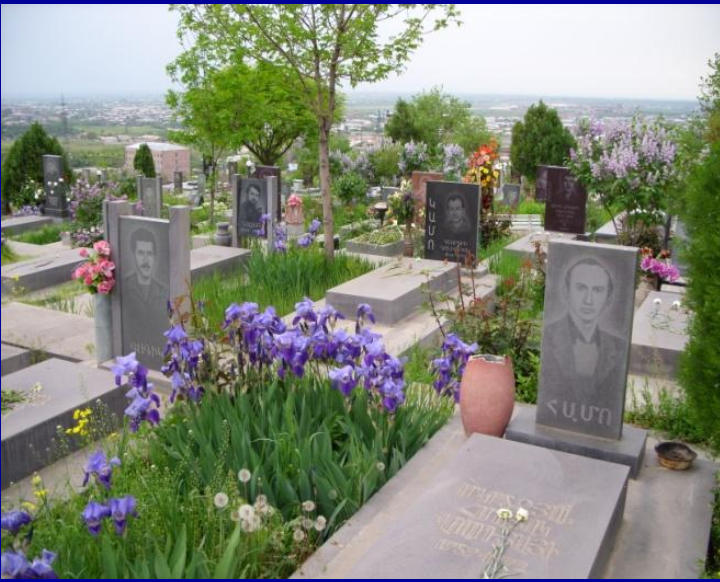
Launched in 2013, China's *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) already has profoundly challenged the West.¹ Despite increasingly loud calls for the United States, the European Union, and the West generally to devote attention to the long-term, transformative implications, the responses, and resourcing remain limited, and belated.² Responses are necessary, considering the global transformative effect the BRI—which is not simply a transportation network but a full-scale industrial and developmental system that will direct all those on its path to toward China. Beijing's geo-economics then constitute “war

Armenia / Azerbaijan / Karabakh, 8 August 2025



- Discussion / questions
- Thank you

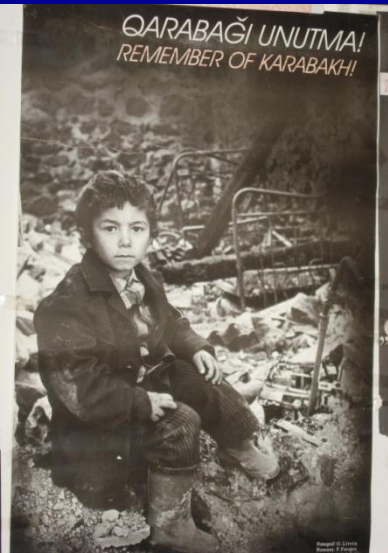
Armenian commitment to NK



Armenian Commitment to NK



Centrality of NK loss to Azerbaijan



Centrality of NK loss to Azerbaijan



before 'conflict', consider 'failed state'

- Multiple transitions – initially a risk all 3
Caucasus states = 'failed states'
- Democratising but not democratic; limited civic
identity
- Each (re)building national identity:
 - Reintegration and exclusivist projects

Failed even before conflict?

ARMENIA

- Poor Soviet republic
- 1988 earthquake – 1/3 of industrial capacity destroyed
- Collapse of domestic production
- Loss of utilities in early 1990s – cold/blackouts
- High rates of poverty by own measurements: 55% in mid-1990s; 50% in 1999
- Exodus because of diaspora connections, although also remittances; also to Russia
 - loss of able population

'Failing state' – Armenia

- CONFLICT-RELATED ECONOMY
- Influx of refugees from eastern Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan
- Trade blockade since 1993 because of NK war (Turkey/Azerbaijan)
- After August 2008, limited trade even with Russia as Georgia = transit
- defense spending (including human capital)
- 2023: K refugees
- CONFLICT-RELATED
- Support for Karabakh central plank; possible peace cost Ter-Petrosian presidency
- Armenian political leaders from Karabakh ['Karabakh Armenians;' Karabakh clan']
 - e.g. Armenian presidents Robert Kocharian, 1998-2008; Serzh Sarkisian, 2008-18;
- 2018 Velvet Revolution: upped democracy; tensions w Russia, Pashinyan not Karabakh and popular mandate; eco improves; anti-corruption

2. Azerbaijan: failed to failing, to ultramodern ?

High economic potential from Az hydrocarbons and as transit route for CA energy

enormous show projects and international reputation (Eurovision, first European Games)

But

Heavily distorted industrial development

Horrific environmental legacies



Azerbaijan: failed to super-success ?

- Early post-Soviet period:
- Political coups, although impact also from war
 - Pres. Ayaz Mutalibov removed March 1992 for not having fought well enough
 - Mutalibov attempted return to power, May 1992
 - Haidar Aliev barred from standing in 1992
 - Abulfaz Elchibey: fled to Nakhichevan in 1992
 - **Haidar Aliev seized power:**
 - » **1994 ceasefire**
 - » **'deal of century' for BTC**
 - Aliev succession: 2003: son Ilham – new stability / strength?
 - reclaiming Karabakh central feature of political life

Conflict and domestic political stability ?



- Son and father: Ilham and Heydar Aliyev

Azerbaijan: conflict as state failure

- Yes: now enormous energy revenue; prestige projects
- Built part of BTC pipeline close to NK conflict lines
- One of most buoyant economies – 9% growth
- **BUT:** War = loss of 14 % (officially 20 %) of 1991 territory
- IDP (re)integration: 800,000-1,000,000 people ?
 - high costs; social dislocation;
 - Reintegration / resettlement esp after 2023
- But now questions of economic development
 - Heavy military investment – at expense of society?
- NK remained limitation – distortions of foreign policy
 - Disaffected by US/West ; risking 'model' Muslim state

What is the war I ?

- Chronology CONTESTED
- Order; reaction; explanation

- 1988 – Karabakh Armenians protests for (re)unification of NKAO with Armenia
- 1989 – NK and Armenian SSR declare unification
- 1990: Violence in Sumgait – ‘Anti-Armenian Pogroms’
 - Armenian MFA: ‘it all started with Sumgait’
 - Armenian flight from Azerbaijan
 - Azerbaijanis: Armenian staging and provocation
- Soviet violent clamp-down – Azerbaijanis feel victims
 - ‘Black January’ 1990 – extensive memorials outside parliament

What is the war II ?

- Baku attempts political control / retain NK
 - State of emergency
 - Armenian political movement continued
- 30 April 1991 – Troops & OMON moved on Armenian villages OUTSIDE NK
- 2 Sept 1991 – USSR falling apart; NK declared independence from AzSSR
- Early 1992: increased fighting in NK, Azerbaijani casualties

What is the war III ?

- 1992 – key military successes for each:
 - Armenians: Lachin (strategic; and Az populated)
 - Azeris: late Aug almost 50% of NK
- 1993 – Armenian counter-offensive
- Early 1994 – Azeri counter-offensive
 - But heavy snow, overstretched lines left Azerbaijanis vulnerable
- Russian-brokered ceasefire May 1994 - lines stand to 2020 / 2023

The issues

- Engrained commitment
- Culture
- Historical claims
- Terror / trauma (& Turkey)
- historical wrong-doing
- Territory / national self-determination
- International legality
- The factor of time
 - Leave peace for later (!)

NK as cultural centre for both

- De Waal:
 - ‘For Armenians, Karabakh is the last out-post of their Christian civilization and a historic haven of Armenian princes and bishops before the eastern Turkic world begins’
 - ‘Historically, Armenia is diminished without this enclave’

Azerbaijani cultural claims

De Waal: 'Azerbaijanis talk of it [NK] as a cradle, nursery, or conservatoire, the birthplace of their musicians and poets'

Central Azerbaijani symbols of national identity from Karabakh

Karabakh horse

Karabakh carpets

Azerbaijani cultural claims

- Official Azerbaijani site:
 - ‘Karabakh culture is the mirror of Azerbaijani culture’
 - ‘Karabakh culture has been, and will be, a leading and integral part of Azerbaijani culture’



Whose history ?

- Arguments over each other's historical claims
- **Armenian:** Azeris not a nation; not in the region
- **Azerbaijani:** Armenia placed there (from Persian empire and as bulwark against Ottomans); also after WWII
- 'Azerbaijani scholars claim that ancient Christian monuments in Karabakh are Albanian, not Armenian' (S.Cornell, 2010)

'Albanians'

- No connection to Balkan Albanians
- Azerbaijani official & scholarly positions: early Christian sites belonged to 'Albanians', not Armenians



Whose history ?

Shireen T. Hunter:

“Both the Azeris and the Armenians believe that, for at least 3,000 years, the region [Nagorno-Karabakh] has been part of their respective countries,

and their scholars have done excellent work in support of each’s views”

Whose history (con'd)?

Shireen Hunter:

“The fact is, however, that the region...has had a checkered history and witnessed many changes in the makeup of its population and the identity of its political masters”

→ International peace activists insist on ‘third narrative’ – integrated, inclusive history

Absent: combined history

Karabakh:

Rare comment: Armenian analyst Phil Gamaghelyan:

‘Just as in the Armenian case, Nagorno-Karabakh has a special place in the Azerbaijani collective memory.

‘It is remembered as the birthplace of Azerbaijani identity, the center of Azerbaijani culture and the home to many Azerbaijani poets and musicians’

Source? ‘Shusha was a very religious town: 17 churches and 10 mosques were more than enough for 60,000 inhabitants’

Shusha / Shushi:



Reading the past: terror & trauma

- Armenians: Living terror & trauma of 1915 [100th anniversary]
- USSR / Russia ally on genocide
- Memorial built in Soviet period
- vs Armenian efforts worldwide to get 'genocide' recognition
- Hillary Clinton placed wreath 2010 (US Embassy press release: visit was private.)
- Russian President Medvedev visited Genocide memorial; planted tree; 2008



(AP / BBC, 2005)



Reading of Turkey & Azerbaijan

- Armenian reading:
 - little distinction
 - Azeris not a nation
 - All 'Turks'; 1915:
 - NK conflict as extension of WWI 'explicit reference to the genocide, especially regarding why, this time, they chose to fight and defend themselves' (Miller & Miller)



Azerbaijani-Turkish relations

heightened by closeness of Azerbaijan & Turkey

- 'Two states one people'
- post-Soviet re-celebration



Turkish support

- 1992 – threatened war against Armenia
 - Probably stopped by Russian threat
 - CIS commander: ‘third world war’
- 1993- blockade (still in effect)
- Attempts to mobilise other Turkic countries to support Azerbaijan
- Break through with Armenia 2009 ended after Azerbaijani calls of ‘betrayal’
 - Armenians: ‘Baku controls Ankara’

Historical wrong-doing: Where start with 'history'?

- Every 'event' preceded by another – if it not denied or reinterpreted
 - Ancient ?
 - Early imperial ?
 - Russian imperial ?
 - WWI / revolution / independence
 - Early Soviet ?
 - Late Soviet ? → tendency to 1988

Early Soviet

- 1923: Karabakh 'given' to Azerbaijan:
 - Armenian MFA 'everything was done so that Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast had no common border with Armenia'
 - Evidence that some of Azerbaijani (communist) leadership agreed NK to Armenia
- No popular input to arrangement

NK Claims in Soviet period

- Near-consistent Armenian demands that NK be under Armenian SSR
 - Even in Stalin's (nightmarish) 1930s Armenian leaders calling for constitutional changes
 - Armenian party leader killed; possibly because of this
- Through Soviet rule Karabakh atypically asked for reorganisation
 - e.g., Armenian SSR debates, petitions
- Glasnost – popular movements, including environmental
- Karabakh, environmental converged
- Unlike Baltic, not a move to leave USSR

Armenians in NK mistreated ?

- Think of (rightful) claims to independence:
 - Christopher Walker, 1988:
 - no higher education in K; K Armenians could not study in Armenia
 - ‘Water resources were being tapped for Azerbaijan's benefit, and not for the villagers of Karabagh.
 - Armenian broadcasts were not allowed to be relayed to Karabagh ...’

Population claims

- NKAO always majority Armenian (c. 73-75%); Armenian MFA: NK was 95% Armenia in 1917
- BUT some areas majority Azerbaijani
 - Lachin (+ strategic implication)
 - 1 province; 1 city – Shusha 98% Azeri in 1989
 - but 1920
- Rights of expelled - from when ?

International legality

Azerbaijan: territorial integrity (based on AzSSR)

- reaffirmed by 4 UNSCRs
- CoE
- OSCE

Armenia/NK: national self-determination

- contest 'legality'
- historical
- moral

Is time equal? (or was it, to 2023)?

- ‘Fact on the ground’ of NKR
- Increasing perception of internal and external legitimacy ?
- (Pro-)Armenians claims that ‘new generation’ has grown up outside Azerbaijan
 - justification for separation/independence
 - Baroness Cox: ‘you cannot expect them [NK Armenians] to live in Azerbaijan’

NKR as functioning 'state'?

- unrecognized – not (even) by Armenia
- reliance on Armenian / diaspora funds
- But presented itself as state
 - foreign representations
 - provides state services
 - significant military
 - sometimes party to conflict mediation

NKR representation: NKR map vs Council of Europe



NKR's view of its economy

From NKR sources (now inaccessible):

“10 Reasons to Invest in NKR

1. Well-Trained and Cheap Labor Force
2. Tax Benefits
3. No Export Duties
4. Extremely Low Operating and Living Costs
5. Strong FDI Growth
6. Satisfaction Among Investors
7. Favorable Geography and Climate for Agriculture
8. Social and Internal Political Stability
9. Financial Stability
10. Positive Impact on Armenia”

NKR as functioning 'state'?

- **presentation of 'strength' even offense:**
 - NKR Lt Gen Babayan in mid-1990s: military stalemate = defeat of Baku
 - 'If settle by war then we have already done that'
 - even attack Azerbaijan
 - '200,000-300,000' defenders; 'take Baku'

- From NKR's (former) US 'representation' website:



- Azerbaijan post-2020 / today:
"Armenian tanks to Baku ...
burned out and on flatbed trucks



NK – peace efforts

- Various early efforts at ceasefire/mediation, including Iran; Russian Federation/Kazakhstan/CIS
- January 1992: Prague meeting of the CSCE Council of Foreign Ministers. Azerbaijan and Armenia join CSCE; CSCE representative to conflict

Peace efforts: 'Minsk Group'

- Main negotiating format since 1992 (and is it dead now?):
 - 'Minsk Group' of OSCE – separate of later Minsk Agreements for Ukraine
 - Belarus delegate to CSCE offered his capital for meeting when fighting intensified
 - never met in Minsk; but documents used the name, which stuck
 - Technically a group ...

Peace efforts

- Russia alone negotiated 1994 ceasefire
- Some meetings held without even informing all 'Minsk Group' countries
- Format formalised at Budapest 1994 CSCE Summit, which also made CSCE into Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Peace efforts

- MG = larger group of countries, various countries join/leave
- But symbolic only
- And since 1997 MG = three co-chairs:
 - **United States**
 - **Russian Federation**
 - **France (NOT the EU)**

MG Co-chairs / OSCE PR

- Each country assigns senior diplomat
- Co-Chairs convene high-level meetings, including of A&A presidents and/or foreign ministers
- Co-Chair format can have meetings/issue statements by the three countries' FMs or even presidents
- 1995: the OSCE Chairman-in-Office appointed:
Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference; same person since 1996

NK - negotiations

- Questions of bias of Minsk Group ?
- All three co-chairs seen as interested parties – not neutral
 - US and Armenia ?
 - France and Armenia ?
 - Russia on both sides ?
- Lower-level negotiators (not serious?)
 - Increasingly highest level
- No incentivisation/enforcement of negotiations

Russian lead in mediation before (and after) 2020

- Post-2008 reaction?
- Multiple Russian-convened meetings (without France or US, but in agreement)
- Other efforts – US on margins of Newport NATO Summit, 2014



• Source: Kremlin.ru



So ... what proposed ?

International dilemma:

- Basic view: territorial integrity stands
 - 4 UN resolutions
 - e.g., UNSCR 874 (1993):
 - ‘Reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Azerbaijani Republic and of all other states in the region.
 - ‘Reaffirming also the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory’
 - OSCE – minus Armenia
 - Again: territorial integrity of Azerbaijan
- Kosovo/a is not a precedent for NK (or elsewhere)
- BUT: arguments over ‘national self-determination’
 - Armenian position: persistent reference to that right
 - again, dangers of (mis)use of history

Negotiations – before 2020

- Where are we ?
 - ‘Package’ first
 - ‘stages’ now
 - Basic Principles
 - Modified ‘Madrid Principles’, 2008
- Difficulty of knowing the specifics
 - Council of Europe Rapporteur:

‘Unfortunately, but understandably, the OSCE Minsk process has been confidential and limited to the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Therefore, very little information is available to the public in both countries’

Negotiations – before 2020

- Specifics of stages of Madrid:
 - liberation of 5 Azerbaijani districts from Armenian occupation, and some villages in Lachin
 - All communications restored
 - Donor conference
 - Peacekeepers
 - Return of displaced populations
 - full liberation of Lachin & Kelbajar
 - Determination of NK's status, but :
 - What status ?
 - How decided and guaranteed?
 - Referendum – who votes ?

Do all those (stalled) negotiations warrant ...

- The use of force ?
- If / when justifiable ? 2020 ?
- And then its uses ? 2023 ?