Temporary or Permanent Peace? Analysis of the Multi-lateral International Game behind the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict from a Realism Perspective

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Abstract. Territorial disputes have always been a sensitive focus in international politics. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan and Armenia broke out in large-scale wars in an underdeveloped area of only a few hundred thousand square kilometers, which lasted for almost a century. Thousands of soldiers and civilians died and thousands were displaced. In early September 2023, in the latest battle between the two countries, two soldiers were killed and one injured, which aroused widespread attention and concern from the international community. Against the background of tense situations, major powers such as the United States and Russia began to intervene in an attempt to calm the dispute. However, both sides still blamed each other and resolutely safeguarded their territories and rights. This crisis involves not only the people of the two countries but also the interests of neighboring countries. Both Turkey and Iran have important strategic interests in the region and have close historical and cultural ties with Azerbaijan and Armenia. The situation is changing, and what time is left for this game is only more complex dilemmas and people who are miserable. Based on the theory of international relations, this article attempts to analyze from a realist perspective why Azerbaijan and Armenia have been in a state of conflict for a long time. It also explains the occurrence and evolution of the conflict between the two countries and finally comments on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The study of this incident is conducive to a clearer understanding of the historical changes in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the far-reaching impact of the conflict between the two countries on regional and international relations.

Keywords: Territorial disputes, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, realism, great power games.

1. Introduction

The Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan are two mountainous countries in the Transcaucasian region. They were once vassal states of the Soviet republics. In the more than 20 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia and Azerbaijan have gradually declared themselves independent sovereign states. However, throughout the long history, the relations between the two countries have been in a state of tension and stalemate for a long time. Today, diplomacy between the two countries has not yet embarked on the path of normalization. Beginning with ethnic conflicts in the early years of independence between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 1918-1920, there have been more than 20 recorded wars between the two countries over the past few decades. The number of casualties caused by the war continues to increase, people's lives are miserable, and the surrounding areas have become the ruins of the war. As a result, the national strength of these two countries was also greatly consumed. As the war continues, the roles involved in this war become increasingly complex.[1]

Historically, the Soviet Union implemented an ethnic geopolitical strategy after occupying the Nagorno region. The Nagorno-Karabakh region is in a complex and important position (Figure 1 Location map of the Nagorno-Nagorno region) it plays a key role in the Eurasian landscape. First, historically and politically, the Soviet Union attributed it to Azerbaijan, which believed in Islam. But the reality is that almost everyone who lives here is Armenian, Christian, and speaks Armenian. Secondly, the region is located at the junction of Eurasia. It is not only an important passage on the east-west transportation corridor but also a key passage on the north-south corridor. Sandwiched
between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, it serves as a land fortress and waterway gateway. Therefore, this area is both a "hub" and a "must battleground for military strategists."

(Figure 1 Location map of the Nagorno-Nagorno region)


The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an issue that straddles Armenia and Azerbaijan and has not been properly handled for a long time in the past. The two countries broke out three large-scale wars in 1992, 2020 and 2023 respectively due to the ownership issue of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The two countries are currently at a temporary standstill. At the same time, factors such as rising nationalist sentiments in the two countries and fierce geopolitical competition between major powers in the region have made the conflicts between the two countries more complicated and persistent. Although the two countries went to war in 2023, the two countries finally reached a temporary peace agreement to end the war, and the Nagorno-Karabakh region also announced that it would cease to exist on January 1, 2024. However, it is difficult to predict whether the two countries will conflict again in the future. Relevant countries are expected to conduct the next round of negotiations in the first half of next year. More importantly, the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region has had a profound impact not only on the countries involved, but also on the Transcaucasus region and even international relations.

Since Armenia and Azerbaijan are not traditional big countries, the international community's attention is not strong enough. Although the United Nations and international law have mediated conflicts between the two countries in the past, conflicts continue to continue. Based on the theoretical approach of realism, this article will establish the factors that influenced the three large-scale conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Specifically, by sorting out the causes and circumstances of past conflicts, we found that the decision-making of the two countries was dynamic and analyzed the specific impacts of the conflict.

2. Theory and Argument

Realism is one of the three traditional theories explaining international relations. It emphasizes the self-help behavior of sovereign states, the anarchy of international relations, the importance of national power, and the pursuit of national interests. Realism emerged in the late 1930s and developed rapidly during World War II. From the end of World War II to the early 1980s, it occupied a dominant position in the Western international relations theoretical system. [2] Carri wrote in
"Twenty Years of Crisis": "The obvious and dangerous error in English-speaking international political thought from 1919 to 1939 was the almost complete disregard of the power factor. Whether in academia or among the people, almost all thoughts have this error. Through his criticism of idealism, Carri outlined the main ideas of realism, marking the rise of realism as the main school of international relations theory.

Carri laid the theoretical foundation of realism, while Morgenthau directly provided the theoretical system for realism. "He proposed the "Six Principles of Realism" based on traditional realist ideas such as the relationship between people is mainly conflict, the anarchy of international society, and the state's always pursuing power." [3] In the 1960s and 1970s, some international political theories could not meet the needs of reality, and neorealism was born. On the basis of adhering to classical realism and new concepts, neorealism revised the shortcomings of classical realism and paid attention to absorbing system models, structural analysis, game theory, and functionalism from scientific behaviorism.

In view of the conceptualization of realism in international relations, the following chapters will analyze and show the various reasons for the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia that lasted for several years, and try to summarize the changes in the interests of many countries involved from a realist perspective. Three main realist perspectives on the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute are briefly considered and adopted below.

2.1 Geopolitics

Geopolitics mainly explores the influence and limitations of geographical factors on a country's development and advocates that countries break through the limitations of geographical factors and continuously expand outward. The theory of geopolitics directly affected Germany's external expansion, which led to the outbreak of World War II. As a part of power resources, the country's geographical conditions greatly limit the country's effective development and territorial expansion. Strong countries have unique geographical advantages, while weak countries are constrained by geographical factors. In today's world environment of globalization and complex interdependence, the complementarity and particularity of geographical advantages are an effective thrust to promote regional economic integration. This also demonstrates the neorealist discussion of systems and cooperation.

2.2 The theory of balance of power

The balance of power theory mainly emphasizes the checks and balances of power, that is, the balance of power between the major forces. If one party's power is too strong, other forces will form an alliance to oppose the unlimited expansion of its power. The balance of power itself is a balance of power formed by the interaction between individuals and systems. It reflects the external manifestation of a country's expansion of power in pursuit of security. This is not only due to people's own selfish desires and unlimited desire for power, but also due to the constraints of the international system on unit countries.

2.3 Anarchy

Anarchy is the source of constant conflicts in today's world, and it is also one of the most difficult problems to solve. Since there is no centralized power, state power cannot be restrained, leading to the hegemonic monopoly of powerful countries. Traditional realism holds that one of the causes of power struggles is the absence of arbiters. Classical realism deduces national self-help, security dilemmas, power politics, and international conflicts from anarchy. Kenneth Waltz, a representative figure of neorealism, believes that the state of government, or the state without government, is linked to the occurrence of violence. [4] Anarchy means that the country must pursue maximum security, which leads to the pursuit of more power, this will inevitably bring about insecurity in other countries and eventually escalate into conflict or war. This makes the recurrence of conflicts, including wars, inevitable and makes war a normal feature of the state system. "[5] As a basic constant when
examining international issues, anarchy has become one of the most fundamental cores of realist theory.

3. Nagorno-Karabakh: Where to go?

Territorial disputes have always been a sensitive focus of international politics, and the long-running dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia, especially over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, has been going on for decades. This region, although internationally regarded as Azerbaijani territory, has in fact always been controlled by ethnic Armenians, a fact that is hotly disputed.[6]

In terms of time, Azerbaijan and Armenia have fought three large-scale wars over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. From 1988 to 1992, it was mass violence and massacres based on religious ethnic culture that set the stage for the first Nagorno-Karabakh War, which officially broke out in 1992. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Azerbaijan and Armenia on 25 December 1991, the nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict changed fundamentally - from an internal ethnic conflict to an international one. In 1992, a full-scale war between the two countries was on the verge of breaking out, with Armenia winning. A ceasefire was established in 1994 with the intervention of the Minsk Group. But this is not the end of the battle for Nagorno-Karabakh, but a new beginning. [7] There are still many differences between the two countries, and there have been many collisions and skirmishes along the border. Realism argues that one of the reasons for power struggles is that there is no arbiter. In the anarchic state of the international community, there are no restrictions of supranational governments, so international conflicts arise from changes in the distribution of power, that is, the imbalance and reconstruction of the balance of power lead to international conflicts. As anarchy continues in the international community, the root causes of international conflict will be difficult to eliminate, which allows conflicts, including wars, to continue to occur.

In fact, Armenia is just a chess piece, and the chess player behind it is fellow Orthodox Russia.[8] After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia still had considerable strength and refused to give up its rights and interests in Transcaucasia, so although Azerbaijan's population exceeded 10 million and its GDP was 80 billion, three times and four times that of Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh region had long been owned by Armenia. At the same time, with the decline of Russian influence in the Caucasus in the past decade, Armenia's rule in Nagorno-Karabakh is also in danger, and finally, with the support of Turkey, Azerbaijan launched a military operation to seize Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, which was a great success, and Russia personally ended the mediation, and barely managed to save a corridor about 5 kilometers wide for Armenia. And this is still not the end of the conflict between the two countries, with the ups and downs of the comprehensive national strength of Russia and Turkey, Nagorno-Karabakh is only a "grasping hand" for the competition between the two major powers in the Caucasus region. As long as the game between Russia and Turkey does not end, the Nagorno-Karabakh region will never be peaceful, and Azerbaijan and Armenia will not be able to truly achieve independence. From the perspective of realism, the external manifestation of the power expansion of the state due to the pursuit of security is not only because of the selfish desire of man himself and the infinite desire for power, but also because of the restraint of the international system on the unit state. So the state will tend to constantly co-opt the expansion of power in order to achieve its own purposes.

The final end of the second Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2020 will be in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which is half occupied by Azerbaijan. Although Russia sent peacekeeping troops to help Armenia keep the other half of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Armenia believes that it has lost half of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and there is dissatisfaction and resentment against Russia. At the same time, in the more than 30 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States actively wooed Armenia, prompting the Armenian political pro-American forces to begin to grow. Frequent friendly diplomatic forces with the United States have worsened relations between Armenia and Russia.
The third outbreak of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict occurred in early September 2023, when Azerbaijan launched a large-scale military offensive against the Nagorno-Karabakh region on September 19-20, 2023, in violation of the 2020 ceasefire agreement. Resulting in the death of two soldiers, one injured, triggered widespread concern and concern in the international community. In the context of the tense situation, major powers such as the United States and Russia began to intervene to try to calm the dispute, but the two sides still blamed each other and resolutely defended their territory rights and interests. This crisis involves not only the people of the two countries but also the interests of neighboring countries. Both Turkey and Iran have important strategic interests in the region and have close historical and cultural ties with Azerbaijan and Armenia. Turkey openly supports Azerbaijan with military aid and arms supplies, while Iran tends to support Armenia while trying to mediate and mediate between the two countries. On September 28, 2023, the leader of the Armenian separatist forces in Azerbaijan, Samir Shahram Nyan, declared the end of the "Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh" as of January 1, 2024, urging the local Armenians to comply with the conditions of return proposed by Azerbaijan. On October 23, the Russian Foreign Minister stated that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had been settled "on the whole," the main disputes had been resolved, both sides recognized that the Nagorno-Karabakh region belongs to Azerbaijan, and the relevant parties of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue are scheduled to hold the next round of talks in Turkey in the first half of next year. The dramatic outcome marks a temporary end to the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, a historical sore point between the two countries.


In the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, the intervention of major powers is an important factor affecting the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Although international organizations and regional powers have been actively involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement process since 1992, numerous mediation efforts have resulted in the signing of a ceasefire agreement only in a state of mutual distrust between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Since 1994, the Minsk Group has repeatedly proposed a peace agreement to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, the United Nations Security Council has also mediated the relationship between the two countries, and the leaders of the two countries have held several separate meetings, but any peace treaty can not be accepted by the parties, and the Nagorno-Karabakh region is still an "autonomous republic" not recognized by the international community. Although the intervention of the great powers has worked on the surface, the great powers have their own purposes and considerations. Participation did not work. Major countries have engaged and influenced the region in different ways, which has influenced the domestic and foreign policies of both countries to a certain extent, and thus the normalization of relations between the two countries. Hence the endless race for security.

Realists believe that geopolitical factors are also at play here, complicating the dispute. The South Caucasus region has an important strategic position. Azerbaijan, where the Nagorno-Karabakh region is located, is close to the Caspian Sea, rich in oil and gas resources, and is an important oil pipeline between the East and the West. All countries want to expand their influence there. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the settlement process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict gradually took on the color of the great power game.

4.1 Russia

Although Russia is the main mediator of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, it still considers maximizing its own interests under the cloak of so-called "justice." From the perspective of geopolitical strategy, Transcaucasia itself is the core part of Russia's great power strategy, and the competition of various forces inside and outside the region has seriously threatened Russia's position in the region. Meddling in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue can not only prevent the expansion of the power of the United States and Turkey in the region, but more importantly, it can safeguard Russia's
homeland security. The ultimate goal of Russia is to ensure that it is not threatened by other major powers, balance the power of major powers, enhance its geopolitical influence in the region, and dominate the situation in the region while building a security barrier and strategic buffer zone for itself. Second, mastering the rich oil and gas resources of the Caspian Sea and the South Caucasus region surrounding the Caspian Sea is central to Russia's economic strategy. The three South Caucasus countries are the main force of Russia's labor supply, and strengthening economic ties with the three South Caucasus countries can further promote the economic integration of post-Soviet space countries, which is in line with the purpose of Russia's foreign strategy.

But Russia's approach to mediation has changed in three stages. First, in the early days of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia gradually moved closer to the West and increased its support for Christian countries. After independence, Azerbaijan adopted a pro-Turkish approach and refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), leading Russia to despise Azerbaijan in both religious and political terms and support Armenia. Second, in terms of economy, Azerbaijan's oil export-oriented economy has developed significantly, while Russia is highly dependent on oil and gas resources in the Caspian Sea, and the trade relationship between the two is close.[10] In October 1993, former Politburo member Gelda Aliyev was elected President of Azerbaijan. "After he came to power, he adjusted the policy toward Russia, improved relations, eased contradictions, brought Azerbaijan back to the CIS, and Russian-Azerbaijani relations have since returned to normal."[11] Russia has also secured an important strategic rear in the Caucasus. Third, after entering the new century, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue has become an important lever for Russia to balance Azerbaijan and Armenia. [12] If it encourages the two countries to ease relations and completely solve the dispute, Russia will lose its influence on the strategic position in the South Caucasus. Therefore, Russia has adopted mediation means to restrain the "spillover" of the conflict, but does not want the two countries to completely solve the problem. However, after the outbreak of armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in April 2016, both countries questioned Russia's role as the primary international mediator, and many Azerbaijani and Armenian analysts believe that Russia's main aim is to expand its military presence in the conflict zone, with the intention of maintaining a long-term military presence in Nagorno-Karabakh to strengthen its voice in the region.

4.2 Turkey

Turkey is ostensibly neutral in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but in practice plays the role of a supporter of Azerbaijan. This has to do not only with their shared religious identity, but also with Turkey's own interests. Friendly diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan could balance Russia's traditional geopolitical influence in the region to the north, prevent Iranian aggression to the south, and guarantee the security of Turkey's eastern borders. Secondly, with the strength of Azerbaijan, Turkey can open the road to Central Asia, develop friendly relations with other Transcaucasian and Central Asian countries, and expand its sphere of influence.[9] From the economic point of view, Azerbaijan is an important energy source for Turkey. In recent years, Azerbaijan has surpassed Russia to become Turkey's largest natural gas supplier. [13] In 2019, the two countries also cooperated on the Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline project, further deepening the economic integration of the two countries.

For these reasons, Turkey fought the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia with great vigor and helped Azerbaijan recover its lost territory. "Throughout the conflict, Turkey has provided Azerbaijan with financial and material assistance and trained its army."[14] At the same time, after the ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan was reached in November 2020, Turkey also participated in the follow-up peacekeeping work in the region, jointly forming a joint force with Russia and setting up a center to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan. As a result, Turkey's influence in the region has greatly increased, further deepening the degree of involvement in the affairs of the Transcaucasian region, hitting Russia's traditional power in the region, and the Nagorno-Karabakh issue has become more complicated.
4.3 Iran

Iran shares borders with both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and in the early days actively supported Azerbaijan, "Turkey joined Iran in warning Armenians that it would not approve of any changes to the border." Ozar intercepted food and other supplies destined for Armenia through Turkey, which brought the Armenians to the brink of famine in the winter of 1992-1993."[13] Since the beginning of the new century, Iran has focused on its own economic development rather than religious factors, emphasizing the practicality of foreign policy, so in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, the declaration of support for Azerbaijan, while also establishing a strong economic cooperation with Armenia. In December 2016, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani stated that "in recent years Iran and Armenia have maintained active cooperation in order to maintain stability in the region." Only by maintaining close cooperation and coordination among countries can we effectively combat international terrorism and maintain regional peace and tranquility."[15]

Therefore, Iran pursues a balanced foreign policy between the two countries and always advocates a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. The purpose is to protect the security of northern Iran and prevent the infiltration of extremist forces.[9] At the same time, Iran also wants a foothold in the TranscaucAsia to prevent Turkey from expanding its influence in the region.

4.4 United States

The South Caucasus region is one of the key directions of the United States to contain Russia, and it is also a region that cannot be ignored in the game between the United States and Russia. The US intervention is primarily aimed at weakening Russia's political influence in the South Caucasus. At the same time, they covet the rich oil resources in the Caspian Sea region and develop economic cooperation with the region. The United States mainly used Armenian immigrants who settled in the United States to exert influence on the conflict. At the end of the 20th century, Armenian expatriates in the United States "supported" Armenia with high expenditure due to the depression caused by the war and economic blockade at that time, "resulting in Armenia becoming the third country receiving per capita aid from the United States."[7] At the same time, the United States is actively developing bilateral cooperation with Armenia and Azerbaijan. According to the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, since 2000, "the United States has invested $10 billion in Afghanistan, and there are 200 American-funded companies in Afghanistan." Us investment in Afghanistan is mainly in the energy sector. "In 2015, US-Afghanistan trade reached $1.2 billion, and the US is Afghanistan's fifth largest trading partner."[16] The United States actively intervenes in the affairs of the region, hoping to maintain the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in a chaotic but controllable range, provide a third solution for Armenia and Azerbaijan to negotiate around Russia, change their path dependence on Russia on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, promote Armenia and Azerbaijan to favor the United States and avoid Russia, and contain Russia's purpose of enhancing the right to speak in regional affairs.

Although on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the post-Soviet period, countries unilaterally favored one country out of religious and strategic interests, or used intermediate "mediation" to gain military and economic status, with the political multi-polarization and economic globalization, such "mediation" with seeking the greatest interests of Russia, the United States and regional powers could not fundamentally solve the problem. International organizations (the United Nations, the Minsk Group, the International Crisis Group, etc.) are trying to avoid a large-scale conflict, try to narrow the understanding gap between the leaders of the two countries, and keep the problem under control. [17] The international community calls on these international mediators to play their real role and strive to promote the easing and complete settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

In short, realists are positive about the "permanent logic of conflict in world politics." The representatives of realism, Morgenthau, Woertz, and Gilpin, all have similar arguments. In Woltz's case, for the state, anarchy is inescapable between heaven and earth. The state is like the hero of the
ancient Greek tragedy, no matter how hard he struggles, he cannot escape his fate. Anarchy defines the realm of state action. A nation chooses only how to help itself: alliances or alliances, whether distant or almost offensive, but it cannot choose not to help itself. As long as anarchy exists, war cannot be eradicated. Since the international community is in a state of anarchy, the primary goal of the sovereign states that constitute the international community is to pursue their own interests and maximize their power. However, the political and economic interests of countries do not coincide, which leads to inevitable conflicts of interest in the international community. This also explains why the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has persisted for so many years.

5. An Analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

British scholar Tracey German's The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia: "Security in the Caucasus" provides an international analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, showing that the lack of a peaceful resolution not only undermines the security of the immediate participants but also undermines the potential for regional cooperation, as well as economic development and stability, impeding important investments.[18]

5.1 Long-term armed conflict: citizens and losses

The Nagorno-Karabakh region claims a territory of 11,430 square kilometers. Most of the country is steep and mountainous, and the actual area is not very large. Its economic development mainly relies on tourism and external investment. The source of most venture capital comes from Armenia, Russia, the United States, France, Australia, Iran, and Armenians in the Middle East. Due to the ongoing international conflicts, spontaneous copper and gold mining in the Nagorno-Karabakh region has also been considered illegal by Azerbaijan in recent years, and it has vowed to hire an international auditing company to determine the losses suffered by Azerbaijan's state-owned or management company. The international situation is volatile, and relying solely on investment is really difficult for this region that is not internationally recognized. In addition, the United States has acted according to the prevailing situation, Russia's political situation is chaotic, and regional conflicts continue, which has dealt a huge blow to various industries in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.[19] Since the second Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2020, the country’s population has been forced to live in overcrowded bunkers due to Azerbaijani artillery and drone attacks in Nagorno-Karabakh, especially in the city of Stepanakert, and difficulty in testing and contact tracing, leading to an increase in COVID-19 cases.[20]

For the people, the people in the Nagorno-Karabakh region have been accepting racial exclusion for a long time. No matter which country takes the main offensive in the war, the people living in the Nagorno-Karabakh region will immediately become refugees. While Nagorno-Karabakh remained independent, Azerbaijan established a "border control" system for it. In fact, the logistics between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh are cut off, and the power and natural gas supply to the Nagorno-Karabakh region is greatly compressed and occasionally interrupted, forcing the logistics transportation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region to change to the Aghdam channel in Azerbaijan. In June 2023, Azerbaijani and Armenian soldiers exchanged fire in the Lachin Corridor. Azerbaijan began to completely prohibit all organizations and individuals from transporting food, basic necessities, and medicines to Nagorno-Karabakh, and only allowed Russian peacekeeping forces and the International Committee of the Red Cross to transport personnel out of Nagorno-Karabakh. On August 28, Afghanistan arrested many Armenian students from Nagorno-Karabakh, effectively cutting off the Lachin Corridor completely again. Relocating families and moving into refugee camps has become a daily routine for people in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Because of the economic downturn and the continuation of conflicts, GDP and living standards have dropped significantly. For education, ethnic conflicts and racial conflicts make it impossible for education to maintain objectivity. The continuous participation of different countries has caused uncertainty in the political situation. There are 7 political parties involved in decision-making in the parliament covering 11,430
square kilometers of land. The backwardness caused by a century of conflict is fatal in today's era. At this point, for the Nagorno-Karabakh region, it has chosen to cease existing, perhaps choosing to develop.

5.2 The trade-off of great powers

First of all, the region is rugged, covers a small area, the geographical location is not good. In the past, the concern of various countries was more related to the involvement in the conflict than to the appeal of the interests of Nagorno-Karabakh. Second, the United States has been in a wait-and-see attitude, not directly involved in the interests of the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the region is no longer its focus. As for Russia, since the beginning of the conflict, Russia has been sending peacekeeping troops stationed on the border between the two countries, as much as possible to prevent bloodshed, but also effectively prevent the armed involvement of many countries, including Turkey. In addition, Russia also took the initiative to initiate mediation meetings and successfully held the 3+3 meeting on October 23. After May 2022, as the Ukrainian crisis continues to escalate and Russia has no time to take care of related disputes, the resolution of the issues between the two countries can also reduce the number of Russian armed forces. At the international level, major powers will claim to respect territorial and sovereign integrity and will not actively interfere in other countries' internal affairs.

The Nagorno-Karabakh issue, originally an internal affair of one country, developed into a dispute between Asia and Afghanistan after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, due to the interference of many non-regional powers, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue has become international and complicated, involving the geopolitical interests of many major powers, and has become a dispute involving multiple actors and multiple mediation modes. Russia, Turkey, the United States, and other countries see the South Caucasus as part of their national strategy and have made the region a playing field for maximizing their interests. Great powers compete much more often in this "middle ground" than they cooperate. Therefore, the deep involvement of non-regional powers in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is also an important obstacle to the peace process of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Major powers outside the region should not interfere too much in the positions of Asia and Afghanistan in an attempt to guide the political attitudes of the two countries and avoid developing the region into a battlefield of great power games and launching proxy wars. Major powers outside the region should conduct reasonable coordination between them, play a pulling role, and actively create opportunities for peace negotiations between Asia and Afghanistan.

Samwell Shahram Nyan, the leader of the internationally unrecognized "Republic of Naka," signed a decree declaring that the "Republic of Naka" will cease to exist on January 1, 2024. The Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh will also become part of Azerbaijan on January 1, 2024. The end of the war not only brought peace to the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan but also brought a sense of calm and the possibility of cooperation to the Transcaucasian region. How long the calm in the region will last in the future is impossible to predict. However, it is undeniable that the end of the war will bring inspiration to the settlement of territorial disputes in other regions and contribute to world peace.

6. Summary

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the independent Armenia and Azerbaijan repeatedly broke out wars and conflicts over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. This paper analyzes the reasons for the long-term tension between the two countries through realism, and thus obtains the situation of the great power game behind the conflict between the two countries. The end of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, the cessation of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, was caused by internal causes in the two countries and in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, but external forces (great powers) also invisibly promoted this end. The time of international relations is not simply the cooperation and resentment between the countries concerned, but the game of great powers behind it. The end of the
latest war was marked by the declaration of the end of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the end of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh may be a calm period of the war between the two countries, whether there will be further conflicts in the future or maintain peaceful development, and whether the Nagorno-Karabakh region has the final destination is also worth more discussion.

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