NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (POST-CONFLICT CHALLENGES)

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was rooted in the policy of aggression aimed at expanding the territory of Armenia by force at the expense of the territory of Azerbaijan. The conflict started at the end of the 80s in the 20th century. Before starting to talk about the details of the conflicts, it would be better if we look at the historical background of the conflict.

**Historical background:** The historical facts show that the Karabakh region historically and legally has always belonged to Azerbaijan, an internationally known part of it. According to the agreement of Kurakchay signed between the Khan of Karabakh Ibrahim Khan and the representative of the Russian Emperor, General Pavel Tsitsianov, on May 14, 1805, the Karabakh Khanate (which is considered an Azerbaijan state) was brought under the Russian rule.

In the XIX century, the War between Iran and Russia was ended with two treaties: Gulustan (October 12, 1813) and Turkmanchay (February 10, 1828). According to the treaties, Azerbaijan's territories are divided between two countries. If we look at the article 15th of the Turkmenchay agreement, the resettlement of Armenians from Iran to North Azerbaijan was decided. The purpose of this action was to strengthen Russia's newly settled borders and weaken the local authorities' economic position.

According to official data, from 1828 to 1911, more than 1,000,000 Armenians from Iran and Ottoman Turkey were settled in the region of the South Caucasus, including in the Azerbaijani territories, which led to the beginning of land claims of Armenians against Azerbaijan.

In 1918, while the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was established, its territory was declared as follows, which includes the Karabakh region: "Azerbaijan that consists of Eastern and Southern Transcaucasia are a legally independent state.".

After the Soviet Invasion of the Caucasus, the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party decided that "Nagorno-Karabakh" was to be retained within the boundaries of Azerbaijan.

Throughout the governance of the Soviet Union, 150,000 Azerbaijan people were resettled from their historical homelands (current Armenia), and at the same time, by mid-1961, 200,000 Armenians immigrated to these lands.

After the election of pro-Armenian M.S.Gorbachyov as the president of the USSR, Armenia explicitly started its land claims against Azerbaijan.

At the end of 1987, Armenia overtly laid claim to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Armenia preceded those claims by instigating attacks on the Azerbaijanis in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and Armenia, resulting in civilian casualties and a flood of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons and refugees. Shortly after the assertion of its territorial claims, more than 250 000 Azerbaijanis were expelled from Armenia.

**The First Karabakh War:** At the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, the conflict turned into a military phase. The change followed the collapse of the USSR in late 1991 in the geopolitical situation in the post-Soviet area. Armenian declared an open and unfair war against Azerbaijan. Armenian military troops, violating the borders of Azerbaijan, entered Karabakh and conjointly with Armenian separatists of Upper Karabakh occupied Azerbaijan lands.

As a result of the First Karabakh War, almost 20% of Azerbaijan's territory was occupied. Twenty thousand Azerbaijanis fell victims to the War, 100 thousand people were wounded, and 50 thousand people developed a disability. The number of refugees and IDPs exceeds 1 million. According to official sources, 4,852 Azerbaijanis, including 323 women, 54 children, and 410 elderly persons, were taken as hostages.

The Khojaly Genocide is the darkest and much bloodiest part of the War. One hundred six women, 63 children, and 70 elderly persons, including 613 people, were slaughtered. 1275 residents were taken hostage by Armenians, and the fate of 150 of them remains unknown. The city was devastated. On this tragic night, 487 residents of Khojaly were injured, and 76 of them were children. Eight families were killed completely. Twenty-five children lost both parents, while 130 children lost one of their parents. Of slaughtered people, 56 were slaughtered with special cruelty.

UNO confirmed the occupation of Azerbaijan lands by Armenians and the conduction and unjust War against Azerbaijan and its territorial integrity. The UN Security Council ratified four resolutions (No 822, 853, 874, 884) on Armenia's withdrawal from Azerbaijan lands. However, these resolutions have never been fulfilled by Armenia.

OSCE Minsk Group was settled to resolve the conflict between the two countries, and in 1994 parties reached a ceasefire. However, for 30 years, the Minsk Group could not come up with a peaceful settlement between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

**The Second Karabakh War:** On September 27, 2020, in response to a gross violation of the ceasefire by the Armed Forces of Armenia on the same day, the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan launched counter-offensive operations to prevent Armenian provocations and declared martial law on the territory of the republic. On September 27 was announced partial mobilization in the country was.

As a result of the successful offensive operation of the Azerbaijan army, which began on September 27 in Karabakh, by November 9, 5 cities, four villages, and 286 villages were liberated from occupation with the rapid combat operations carried out within 44 days.

On November 10, the President of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of Armenia, and President of Russia signed a trilateral statement on the complete cessation of fire and all military operations in the conflict zone. After the cessation of military operations on November 10, the sovereign rights of Azerbaijan over other cities, settlements, and villages in the territory of Karabakh were recognized, and the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan was restored.

**Post-Conflict Challenges:** The government of Azerbaijan calls for a trilateral statement dated November 10, 2020, as an end to the conflict.

The conflict causes severe consequences for Azerbaijan:

• Ethnic cleansing

• Socio-economic consequences

• The exploitation of natural resources

• Collapsing of territories

• Environmental damage

Furthermore, the end of the conflict raises many issues and questions. The first of them is safety and security. The region was mined for 30 years by the Armenian army, and this is a severe threat to the life and safety of Azerbaijan's military and civilians.

In addition to the above mentions, another issue from the Trilateral Statement is that the Russian peacekeeper contingent was settled in the region to control the ceasefire in the next five years. The duration will be extended automatically if no parties declare against six months before due time.

Moreover, according to the essence of the Trilateral Statement, the peaceful coexistence of Azerbaijan, and Armenian residents (who have lived in Karabakh before) of the region within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, must and shall be ensured. However, the bloody signs of the first and second Karabakh War are still alive in people's minds; how they integrated each other and managed to live together is still an unsolved part of the post-conflict.

References:

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