

## CHANGING BALANCES IN SOUTH CAUCASUS AFTER 44 DAYS WAR, KEY AZERBAIJAN AND KEY ZENGEZUR\*

### 44 GÜN SAVAŞI SONRASI GÜNEY KAFKASYA'DA DEĞİŞEN DENGELER, KİLİT AZERBAIJAN VE ANAHTAR ZENGEZUR

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#### ABSTRACT

The 44-Day War was a groundbreaking war that radically changed the existing practices and balances in the South Caucasus. After the collapse of the USSR on December 26th, 1991, Armenia unjustly occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding areas of Lachin, Gubatli, Zangilan, Cebrayil, Fizuli, Agdam and Kelbajar with the support of Moscow. During these occupations, thousands of Azerbaijani Turkish women were brutally murdered, along with their children. As a result of this occupation by Armenia in violation of the rules of international law, Azerbaijan lost 20% of its territory. After that date, until the 44-Day War began, Armenia continued to violate the borders it had carried out unjustly and to make provocations that had the potential to start a total war. Finally, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, in his speech at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on September 25th, 2020, stated that a counter-attack would be launched within the boundaries of the right to self-defense. He also announced that this operation would be carried out in order to realize Azerbaijan's vision of ending Armenia's unjust occupation in the region. This honorable war, launched against a long-standing injustice, is the UN Security Council affirming that Armenia is an occupier and that the occupied territories belong to Azerbaijan, and at the same time calling on the Armenians to end the occupation; It is compatible with the four UN Decision "822, 853, 874, 884". The war started against the Armenian occupation elements on September 27th, 2020, ended with the absolute victory of Azerbaijan on November 10th, 2020. According to the basic principles of international law; attacks to change the borders by using force are not allowed under any circumstances, and the use of force to protect the attacked country and people is considered within the boundaries of the "right to self-defense". Hence the 44 Day War; Since it complies with the rules of International Law, the UN, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), it does not have a legal problem. The changing world after the Cold War and the 2008 global economic crisis; It has brought up the changing security perceptions and the ongoing global and regional conflicts, changing balances, new alliances and new potential regional power actors.

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Considering these developments that took place after the millennium, we can say that Azerbaijan is an important “*keyhole*” country, especially in the Caucasus region, and by looking at its geographical location that provides an opening from Europe to Asia, and the key to the lock is Zangezur. In this study, especially after the 44-Day War, the changing balances and opportunities in the South Caucasus will be examined. In this context, the importance of the Azerbaijan and Zangezur corridor, which we describe as the key country that was the absolute winner of the 44-Day War, will be discussed.

**Keywords:** International Relations, 44 Day War, South Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Zangezur

## ÖZET

44 Gün Savaşı, Güney Kafkasya’da bilinen mevcut teamülleri ve dengeleri kökten değiştiren ezber bozan bir savaş olmuştur. SSCB’nin 26 Aralık 1991 tarihinde dağılmasından sonra Ermenistan Dağlık Karabağ’ı ve civarındaki Laçın, Gubatlı, Zengilan, Cebrayıl, Fizuli, Ağdam ve Kelbecer’i Moskova’nın da desteğini alarak haksız olarak işgal etmiştir. Bu işgaller esnasında binlerce Azerbaycan Türkü kadın, çocuk denmeden acımasızca katledilmiştir. Ermenistan’ın uluslararası hukuk kurallarını ihlal ederek yapmış olduğu bu işgal neticesinde Azerbaycan topraklarının % 20’sini kaybetmişti. O tarihten sonra 44 Gün Savaşı başlayana kadar geçen sürede Ermenistan, yine haksız bir şekilde gerçekleştirmiş olduğu sınır ihlallerine ve topyekûn savaş çıkarma potansiyeline sahip provokasyonlar yapmaya devam etmiştir. Nihayet Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı İlham Aliyev, 25 Eylül 2020 tarihinde Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) Genel Kurulu’na seslenmiş olduğu bir konuşmada Azerbaycan’ın Ermenistan’ın bölgedeki haksız işgaline son verme vizyonunu hayata geçirmek ve toprak bütünlüğünü sağlamak için meşru müdafaa hakkı çerçevesinde bir karşı saldırı başlatılacağını açıklamıştır. Uzun süredir devam eden bir haksızlığa karşı başlatılan bu onursal savaş, BM Güvenlik Konseyinin Ermenistan’ın işgalci olduğunu ve işgal altındaki toprakların Azerbaycan’a ait olduğunu teyit eden, aynı zamanda Ermenilere işgali sonlandırma çağrısında bulunan; “822, 853, 874, 884” nolu dört karar ile uyumludur. 27 Eylül 2020 tarihinde Ermeni işgal unsurlarına karşı başlatılan savaş 10 Kasım 2020 tarihinde Azerbaycan’ın mutlak galibiyeti ile sonuçlanmıştır. Uluslararası hukukun temel ilkelerine göre; güç kullanarak sınırları değiştirmeye yönelik saldırılara hiçbir koşulda izin verilmemekte olup, saldırıya uğrayan ülkeyi ve halkı korumak için güç kullanımının “*meşru müdafaa hakkı*” çerçevesinde değerlendirilmektedir. Bu nedenle 44 Gün Savaşı; Uluslararası Hukuk Kurallarına, BM, Avrupa Konseyi ve Avrupa Güvenlik ve İşbirliği Teşkilatı (AGİT) teamüllerine uygun olduğundan hukuken bir sorun taşımamaktadır. Soğuk Savaş sonrası değişen dünya ve 2008 yılı küresel ekonomik krizi; değişen güvenlik algılarını ve halen günümüzde devam eden küresel ve bölgesel çatışmaları, değişen dengeler, yeni ittifaklar ve yeni potansiyel bölgesel güç aktörlerini gündeme getirmiştir. Milenyum sonrası gerçekleşen bu gelişmeler dikkate alındığında Azerbaycan’ın özellikle Kafkasya bölgesinde ve Avrupa’dan Asya’ya açılımı sağlayan coğrafi konumuna bakarak önemli bir kilit ülke olduğunu ve kilidin anahtarının da Zengezur olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Bu çalışmada özellikle 44 Gün Savaşı sonrası Güney Kafkasya’da değişen dengeler ve imkânlar incelenecektir. Bu kapsamda 44 Gün Savaşı’nın mutlak galibi olan kilit ülke olarak nitelediğimiz Azerbaycan ve Zengezur koridorunun önemi ele alınacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Uluslararası İlişkiler, 44 Gün Savaşı, Güney Kafkasya, Azerbaycan, Zengezur

## Introduction

### Introduction

The South Caucasus is in an important geographical position due to its geopolitical and geostrategic location. South Caucasus; The Middle East is a region of historically conflicting geopolitical interests between Europe and Asia, not only because of its location but also its energy resources. It can be said that this region is “*the mainstay of Eurasia*”.

All imperialist powers have aimed to own and control this region to make their spheres of influence permanent throughout history. The main argument they used to control this region was the Armenians (Şihaliyev, 2021, p. 77).

Nagorno-Karabakh can be considered as the most critical geographical region of the South Caucasus. For this reason, this strategic region has always been a location where conflicts are experienced. For this reason, the Nagorno-Karabakh problem still exists in the Caucasus and is a serious problem that dates back to ancient times and remains unsolved today. Looking at the historical course of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, the 1813 Treaty of Gulistan signed between Tsarist Russia and Iran can be seen. With this agreement, the foundations of demographic changes in the region were laid. Thus, the first step in the historical struggle between Tsarist Russia and Iran on the territory of Azerbaijan was taken on October 12, 1813, in the village of Gulistan of Karabakh, which divided the Azerbaijani lands into two (Bozkuş, 2020, p. 55). Thus, except for the Yerevan and Nakhchivan khanates, the north of the Aras River was left to Tsarist Russia, and the south was united with Iran. The 1828 Turkmenchay Treaty, which is another treaty signed between Russia and Iran later on, prepared an even more favorable ground for the implementation of Russia's policies in the region (Yeşilot, 2008, p.188).

With this treaty, Iran officially accepted Yerevan and Nakhchivan to be under Russian domination. This situation was accepted by the Ottoman Empire with the 1829 Treaty of Edirne. With this treaty, which caused the Azerbaijani Turkish population to be divided into two parts, this problem has survived to the present day and has continued to be on the agenda as a still active issue. After this process, Russia systematically started to settle the Armenian population in Iran, Ottoman and Russia, especially Revan, in these lands. This region, where the Turkish population was in the majority before the Armenian population was settled in the region, has been transformed into a region with the Armenian population in the majority as a result of the demographic policies of Russia (Yeşilot, agm., p.191). In this context, it can be said that the foundations of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem were laid with the treaties of Gulistan in 1813, Turkmenistan in 1828 and Edirne in 1829. As a result of the national policies implemented by Russia in this geography, which was historically under Ottoman and Iranian rule, the region entered a demographic change and transformation process. Due to the policies implemented by England and Russia in the region for their own interests at the beginning of the 19th century, a ball of problems has occurred in the South Caucasus until today (Özkul & Vermez, 2009, p. 141).

This demographic change took place entirely at the expense of the Turkish population in the region. The houses and lands of the Turks were confiscated. The majority of Turks whose homes were confiscated were either exterminated or forced to migrate and exiled. The extermination of the Muslim Turkish population or forcing them to emigrate provided a great opportunity for the Russians to populate this region with Armenians brought from different regions. As a grave result of these migration movements, the khanates of Yerevan and Nakhchivan, where some of the Armenians were settled, were transformed into a new state administrative unit called the "Armenian Province" in 1828. In the order of Nicholas I, dated March 21, 1828, there is the following statement: "The khanates of Yerevan and Nakhchivan, which were separated from Iran (from the Turkish Qajars) and joined to Russia, will henceforth be known as the "Armenian Province" within the unity of Russia" (Şihaliyev, agm, s. 78).

The striking factor here is that the edict of Tsar Nicholas I attached to the establishment of the administrative unit called "Armenian Province" was an average of one and a half months (21 March 1828) after the Treaty of Turkmenchay dated February 10, 1828. From this, it is understood that the main purpose of the Armenians' migration in a very short time was to establish a buffer zone for the Ottomans and Turkish Qajars. As a result, the foundation of the Armenian State to be established for the Armenians in the future was laid by Russia abolishing the Yerevan Khanate and creating an Armenian Province on its lands. On the other hand, for the first time in the XX century of the state named Armenia.

It should be especially noted that the great powers were established in accordance with their geopolitical interests at the beginning of the century. As a matter of fact, what Lord Curzon, one of the famous British diplomats, said, is very thought-provoking: *“The creation of a buffer state between Turkey and other Turkish peoples is inevitable. In order to eliminate the problem, it is essential to create a Christian community in the manifestation of the new Armenian State”* (Mustafayev, 2015, s. 95). Thus, with this project, known as the *“Caucasian Great Wall”* project, the establishment of the Dashnak Armenian state was ensured and Turkey’s geographical connections to the Turkish world were cut with an imperialist dagger of blood.

The emphasis by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on to the status of Nakhchivan in the Moscow agreement signed with Russia, which was signed on March 16, 1921, also carries a special value. Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, which Mustafa Kemal Atatürk described as the *“Turkish Gate”* and Kazım Karabekir Pasha as the *“Oriental Gate”*, has a special meaning and importance for our country, as it is the only land among the Turkic Republics that has a physical connection with Turkey. The distance between Nakhchivan city center and Turkey’s Iğdır city is 160 km, and there is a 17 km border between Turkey and Nakhchivan, which is connected by the Hope Bridge, which was opened on 28 May 1992 (Arslan, 2015, p. 3).

As a matter of fact, in the early 1990s, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Armenian troops attacked Nakhchivan with the weapons they obtained from Russia and tried to seize the region. With the Moscow and Kars Agreements signed in 1921, Turkey became the guarantor country of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Region under the protection of Azerbaijan. In 1992, with the attack of Armenian militia forces on Sederek, the administrative region of Nakhchivan, a foreign policy crisis emerged between Turkey and Armenia. Turkey intervened in the Nakhchivan conflict by using its guarantor status and stated that Turkey’s military intervention option was on the agenda within the scope of the guarantee and deterred Armenia from its aggressive intentions by massing troops on the border (Öztiğ, 2018, p. 414).

Again in the same period, Turkey’s siding with Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia has been a factor directly affecting Turkey-Armenia relations. Turkey reacted to Armenia’s occupation of the Azerbaijani Kalbajar region in 1993 by closing the border and cutting off trade links. Seeing the close diplomatic relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan as a national threat, Armenia followed a policy of rapprochement with Russia and Iran (Aras & Akpınar, 2011, s. 59).

When it comes to the Cold War period, this problem, which was at a stalemate in the region, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, started to come to the front with conflicts as mentioned above (Gökçe, 2011, p. 1112). Despite the fact that this process, which continued with the occupation of Azerbaijani lands by the Armenian administration, was evaluated within the scope of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan by many international institutions, especially the United Nations, Armenia continued its occupying position in the region. While many people lost their lives during the attacks of Armenia in the region, an average of one million people had to migrate from their lands (Bozkuş, agm, p. 57).

At this point, attacks have continued from time to time by Armenia in the region for thirty years. Undoubtedly, it is possible to say that these developments have an indirect, if not a direct, connection with international developments. Imperialist countries have intensified their efforts and policies to prevent a Turkish corridor opening towards Turkestan in the South Caucasus, as it was 200 years ago.

In the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, Azerbaijan has so far followed a policy in favor of solving the problem at the table, while Armenia has followed an aggressive attitude and continued to implement its expansionist policies. However, Azerbaijan’s definite stance towards the Tovuz attacks initiated by Armenia on September 27, 2020 and its response to the attacks made it clear that Azerbaijan decided to resolve the issue on the ground in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Bozkuş, agm, p. 58).

Finally, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, in a speech he addressed to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on September 25, 2020, stated that a counter-attack will be launched within the boundaries of the right of self-defense in order to realize the vision of Azerbaijan to end Armenia's unjust occupation in the region and to ensure its territorial integrity. explained. This honorable war launched against a long-standing injustice is the UN Security Council affirming that Armenia is an occupier and that the occupied territories belong to Azerbaijan, and at the same time calling on the Armenians to end the occupation; It complies with the four resolutions "822, 853, 874, 884". The war started against the Armenian occupation elements on September 27, 2020, ended with the absolute victory of Azerbaijan on November 10, 2020. According to the basic principles of international law; Attacks to change the borders by using force are not allowed under any circumstances, and the use of force to protect the attacked country and people is considered within the boundaries of the "right of self-defense". Hence the 44 Day War; Since it complies with the rules of International Law, the UN, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), it does not have a legal problem.

From the very beginning of the conflicts, Turkey has always declared to the international public that it stands with Azerbaijan in the solution of its problem, and this support has been drawn to different points by the countries of the region and global powers. While the conflicts continued, many countries, especially Russia, the USA, Iran, Germany and France, called for a ceasefire to the parties regarding the conflicts, but the conflicts were stopped at the end of 44 days, a mutual ceasefire was declared, and this process resulted in the decisive victory of Azerbaijan. Until recently, the solution of the Karabakh problem was considered as hopeless as the "Kashmir Problem" or the "Palestine Syndrome" (Şihaliyev, agm, p. 81). The 44-Day War proved the opposite of all these assessments by challenging all imperialist powers with ambitions in the South Caucasus, demonstrating the courage, determination and combativeness of the Azerbaijani people. It revealed the fact that absolute determination can be the solution to chronic problems.

### **A General Analysis of the 44-Day War**

After the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh, there were losers and winners in the South Caucasus. It is possible to say that among the losers, besides Armenia, France, Iran and the OSCE Minsk Group took the first place. As a matter of fact, according to a survey conducted in Armenia, the fact that Iran ranks third after Russia and France among the countries that are friends of Armenia is important in terms of showing that Iran stands by Armenia, although it is not a factor in the process. The misdirection of the people in this war, in which the Armenian army lost eighty percent, has created chaos in the country (Bozkuş, agm, p. 58).

During the Karabakh war, Russia gave an important message to both the West and Armenia. Although the Minsk Group seems to have been excluded after the war, it can be said that the Group has given signals that it will be included in the process with the statements it has made. In this regard, it is thought-provoking that the OSCE Minsk Group should be behind the process, especially for permanent peace in the region. On the other hand, the decision taken by the French Senate regarding the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Republic caused a serious reaction in Azerbaijan. With this step, France lost its neutrality within the OSCE Minsk Group. As a country co-chairman of the OSCE Minsk Group of France, this step cannot be ignored. First of all, it is quite thought-provoking that France took such a decision while even Armenia does not recognize the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. After Azerbaijan gave notes to France, a step back was taken from the French front. It is also useful to state that this step taken by France has no effect, although it has been noted that Karabakh is Azerbaijani territory with UN resolutions. This step, which was taken purely for the sake of "looking cute" to Armenia in this process, has no legal validity.

Although the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that they do not recognize the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, following the note given by Azerbaijan to the French ambassador, this decision taken by the French Senate is important. After this step, Azerbaijan also called for the expulsion of France from the OSCE Minsk Group (Şihaliyev, agm, p. 83).

As a matter of fact, the obvious support that France gave to Armenia during the 44-day war, as well as the aid campaigns launched after the end of the crisis, are the most important indicators of this. In addition, the fact that France ranked second after Russia among the countries that are friends of Armenia in a survey that took place in the country after the defeat of Armenia in recent days is of particular importance in terms of showing the extent of the relations between the two countries. While most of the respondents in Armenia described Russia as a friend country for Armenia, it was seen that France took the second place and Iran took the third place (Öztürk, 2020).

Although the view that the attack was provoked by Russia and France and that these states were in the background gained weight in line with the facts and analyzes revealed, it is also clear that the Pashinyan government started an attack on the basis of the “*new war and new lands*” thesis, taking into account and believing that it would definitely receive the support of the big states should not be ignored. Because Armenia, which sees itself as the implementer of the geopolitical interests of the great powers in the South Caucasus, hoped that it would always be supported no matter what (Eletek, 2021a).

It is time for Armenia to follow a new policy in the region. Instead of demanding land from its neighbors Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia, it should deal with its own internal issues and begin to pursue more peaceful collaborative policies to raise the comfort level of its people and to resolve economic problems (Kilner, 2020).

It is worth noting that with the ceasefire reached at the end of the conflicts that lasted for 44 days, there has been a serious change in the dynamics and balances in the region. At this point, after many years, re-establishing the land connection especially in Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan and Turkey should be considered as an important gain in terms of Turkey’s transportation to Turkistan and other places, especially the Caucasus. Therefore, the opening of this corridor will be an important geopolitical and geoeconomic gain, especially for the Turkish world (Şeker, 2021, p. 7).

21st Century Turkey Institute “*Russia-Turkestan Studies*” expert Sunbay Suyundikov evaluates the background of the Armenian attack on the Tovuz region as follows: known. “*Of course, it is impossible for Armenia to act alone in capturing these strategic regions. It has Russia and France behind it. The strength of the Russian economy is based on Russian gas and oil exports. If energy exports decrease, Russia’s economic power will decrease in a balanced way. It is against Russia that the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and TANAP energy projects are traded and that they are rivals and alternatives to Russian natural gas and oil. Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and South Caucasus natural gas pipeline, which is the beginning of TANAP, pass through the region where Tovuz is located. The only land route that connects Azerbaijan to Turkey via Georgia is also on this route. France, which has already become the center of the genocide allegations in Europe and always keeps this issue fresh on the agenda, most likely had a fueling effect in this attack on Tovuz. The actions of France and Russia, which openly support Khalifa Haftar in the Libyan crisis, against Turkey’s policy in Libya are also obvious. Last June 26, Putin and Macron discussed Libya, Syria and Ukraine issues. However, an international organization and international human rights organizations that do not react in response to the invading attacks of the Armenians do not give any reaction to the attacks on civilians*” (Suyundikov, 2021). In this statement, Suyundikov emphasized that especially the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and TANAP energy projects are against Russia and mentioned the importance of Tovuz due to its strategic geographical location that controls the energy transmission lines.

Armenia’s border violation and invading attitude on September 27, 2020 marked the beginning of the “*sudden war*”.

The desire to take back and liberate the occupied lands in Azerbaijan, both at the official level and among the people, has also ensured that the attacks of Armenia did not go unanswered. As a result, the Azerbaijani side seized strategic regions and dominant lands based on the law of self-defense and liberated a large part of the occupied lands. Turkey, Pakistan, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Ukraine, Israel and a few states have shown that they stand by Azerbaijan, although the dominant powers and international organizations have traditionally declared that the war should be stopped immediately and peace negotiations should be started (Tuncel, 2020).

In addition, Armenia tried to get support from the world public opinion by putting forward fake news that the Turkish Armed Forces also participated in the war and by bringing these lies to the agenda in the media tools of the countries that are self-interested. President Ilham Aliyev answered the question asked in the same program with consistent arguments, stating that Turkey is not one of the parties to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, that Ankara's role in the region aims to stabilize it, and pointed out that Ankara only gives moral support to Baku. In the same program, Mr. Aliyev said: *"I am of the opinion that Turkey's role in the region is aimed at stabilizing it. Turkey is our sister country, our ally. From the first hour when the world community learned that Armenia attacked Azerbaijan, the President of Turkey, at the level of other prominent figures, openly declared that he supported Azerbaijan in support of international law. We are grateful to the Turkish state and people for their solidarity and support. Turkey is not participating in this conflict in any other capacity, and all the rumors spread by the Armenian side that Turkey is participating as a party to the conflict are provocative, that is, fake news as it is currently accepted. There is no evidence that Turkey is involved in the conflict. And there is no such need"* (Rehimov, 2020).

It should be especially emphasized that the fate of this war was determined mostly by weapons. It is now known all over the world that Azerbaijan's military capacity is developed. The most important pillar of this is the modern and heavy weapons and equipment purchased from Turkey, Israel and Russia in return for the rich natural gas and oil reserves the country has. Azerbaijan has renewed the communication and satellite systems of the army in this process (Lyal, 2020).

As a result, Azerbaijan demonstrated its obvious superiority with the *"Iron Fist"* operation against Armenia, both on the military front and on the political and diplomatic front. Realizing that it was defeated by Azerbaijan both on the field and at the table, Armenia sought a solution by spreading fake news and drawing the third states into the war. Despite the ceasefire being declared many times, Armenia, which violated it, went further and fired missiles at Ganja, Mingachevir, Terter, Barda, Goranboy, Beylegan and other important cities of Azerbaijan, regardless of civilian casualties. This situation is the full manifestation and indicator of the Armenian state being an occupying state. However, there was no condemnation by the UN, the Council of Europe, the European Union countries, the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs Russia, France and the USA, for the aggressive action of Armenia targeting civilians in other important cities of Azerbaijan, far from Karabakh. Instead, expressions such as stopping the war, shutting up the arms, and starting negotiations immediately were included. Azerbaijan has shown with great determination and courage that it will not make any concessions and withdraw from its *"War of Independence"* by expressing that it is carrying out military operations in its own occupied territory and that it is the rightful party in this war. For nearly 30 years, the activities of international organizations, the OSCE Minsk Group, have not yielded any results. If international organizations and states were really uncomfortable with the war, if they felt sorry for this situation that caused human death, if they wanted justice to be served, they should have made sure that the occupying party, Armenia, withdrew from the occupied areas immediately, in accordance with the UN resolutions, and put pressure when necessary (Şihaliyev, agm, p. 85).

## Conclusion and Discussion

Azerbaijan has shown its unity, power and determination to take back its lands in this war. The 44-Day War proved that it is possible to solve a major problem in the region, which is seen as chronic. The 44-Day War disrupted the game of the dominant powers trying to be effective on the region. It can be concluded that a full solution to the “*Karabakh Problem*” is not in line with Russia’s interests. Because Moscow wants to keep the international activities and regional policies of both countries under its own control by taking advantage of the problem. A complete resolution of the problems and conflicts in the South Caucasus and permanent peace in the region do not necessarily coincide with the long-term interests of Russia’s regional security policy. In this context, although the 44-Day War resulted in the historical victory of Azerbaijan, it still continues in the political and diplomatic field. This is a geopolitical reality and Azerbaijan is determining its own strategy. Especially in such a period, Turkey’s attitude will be very decisive. In this context, it is considered that the strategic cooperation of Azerbaijan and Turkey will benefit the permanent peace in the region.

After the Second Karabakh War, which started on September 27, 2020 and lasted for 44 days, transportation and infrastructure works in the whole region, especially in Nagorno-Karabakh, were accelerated. In this context, the parties have come to the end of the work carried out to activate the line called “*Zengezur Corridor*”. Not only by Azerbaijan; Although the line, which can be used by Turkey, Russia, Armenia, Iran and Georgia, is the target of malicious statements from Yerevan from time to time, it is of great importance for the multilateral cooperation that can be achieved in the future.

With the implementation of the tripartite declaration signed between Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia after the 44-Day War, the region got out of the war environment and entered a period of economic revival thanks to the new transportation lines. The lack of a direct land connection between Nakhchivan and the western parts of Azerbaijan has always caused difficulties for the Baku administration. Article 9 of the ceasefire signed with the defeat of Armenia at the end of the war was about the transportation corridors to be established in the region. According to this article; “*Obstacles in the region’s economic and transportation connections will be removed. Armenia will provide transport communication between the regions in the west of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic in order to organize the movement of citizens, vehicles and freight vehicles in both directions*” (SDE, 2020).

Control of transport communications will also be provided by the Russian Border Security Service institutions. In case of agreement of the parties, networks of transport communications will be built between the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and the western regions of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan continues intensively the projects that it started rapidly in its own territory for the realization of the Zangezur corridor, where road and railway transportation will be made (TRT Haber, 2021).

As a matter of fact, Mr. Aliyev had an official meeting with the President of the European Council Charles Michel and the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan on May 22, 2022 in Brussels. As a result of this meeting, a joint decision was signed to establish a state commission on the determination of borders between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In Brussels, the preparation of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the normalization of relations between the two countries, the opening of transportation corridors and the determination of borders were discussed. This meeting is a very important step in opening the 43-kilometer Zangezur Corridor between Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan.

Agreed on the opening of the Zangezur Corridor with Armenia, including the construction of both railways and highways. Thus, the line, which primarily concerns five countries, will connect Azerbaijan and Turkey by land. In addition, it will pave the way for other countries in the region, especially Azerbaijan, to export goods to Europe at low cost (Rehimov, 2022)

Another issue that should not be ignored is the issue of transportation of Turkmen gas. A pipeline project through Iran was on the agenda for the transportation of Turkmen gas to Turkey.

This plan was later canceled for various reasons. If such a pipeline is built over the Nakhchivan Corridor to be opened, the arrival of Turkmen gas to Turkey can be ensured. Thus, the transportation of natural gas will be shortened and its cost will decrease. For this reason, the corridor will have a serious benefit for Turkey. In addition, with the opening of the Zangezur Corridor, a direct Turkey-Nakhchivan-Azerbaijan connection will be provided as an alternative to the Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan route in the region.

Indeed, the corridor is a critical success. Through the corridor, economic, commercial and cultural cooperation with the states in the region has been paved. This corridor also constitutes one of the key points of the Historical Silk Road. Due to its strategic and commercial importance, the corridor has a special importance in terms of reviving the Silk Road in history. This corridor could be a historical milestone for peace to be built in the region after a long period of conflict (Eletek, 2021b). In this new process developing in the South Caucasus, giving priority to energy and infrastructure works, especially railways, is of great importance for the countries of the region. In addition, in this process, the issue of opening the borders between Turkey and Armenia may come to the fore. Such a step will not only make a serious gain for the countries in the region, but it will also greatly strengthen Turkey's hand in the steps to be taken towards the region.

During the National Struggle, the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, said the following words to them while sending his delegation for an agreement that would determine the fate of the region: "*Nakhchivan is the Turkish gate. Take this matter into consideration and do your best.*" Thus, Atatürk's vision is understood more clearly 100 years later. The opening of the corridor to Nakhchivan is of major importance not only in terms of the formation of the corridor extending from Azerbaijan to Turkey, but also in terms of retaking the role of a bridge between the East and the West. Nakhchivan is the only piece of land that connects Turkey with the Turkish republics. This corridor will enable the integration of the Turkish world by opening direct access from Central Asia to Turkey via the Caspian. (İncekaya, 2020).

As a result, the 44-Day War cured the known and long-standing chronic diseases in the South Caucasus and created many potential opportunities for the countries of the region. The role of using these opportunities in a healthy way passes through the Zangezur Corridor, which is the key to this lock, from Azerbaijan, which is the key country.

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