

Military Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution: Negotiation Dynamics in the Second Karabakh War

Військова дипломатія та врегулювання конфліктів: динаміка переговорів у Другій Карабахській війні

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Purpose: to examine how Azerbaijan's military-political strategy shaped the international diplomatic landscape and contributed to the formulation of the eventual ceasefire agreement during the Second Karabakh War

Method: Qualitative research methods, such as Comparative Analysis, Synthesis and Case Studies.

Theoretical implications: Amid ongoing academic debates on conflict resolution and their eventual outcomes, the role and significance of negotiations have come to the forefront. Negotiations play a pivotal role in military conflicts, serving as instruments for de-escalation, conflict resolution, and post-war settlements. This paper examines the role of negotiations in one of the contemporary conflicts—the 44-day Second Karabakh War (2020) between Armenia and Azerbaijan—drawing on various negotiation theories. The study explores the mechanisms, challenges, and outcomes of negotiation processes in this war, with a particular focus on third-party mediation, diplomatic maneuvering, and the strategic use of dialogue in military diplomacy. The paper highlights the effectiveness of Azerbaijan's military-political strategy and how it influenced the international diplomatic landscape, ultimately shaping the final ceasefire agreement. By analyzing the interaction between battlefield realities and diplomatic efforts, this paper offers a novel perspective on conflict resolution and military diplomacy in the context of contemporary interstate wars. The research highlights the effectiveness of mediation efforts and explores their broader implications for conflict resolution. The findings make a valuable contribution to the academic discourse on defense diplomacy, offering insights into how negotiations influence wartime dynamics and shape post-conflict security environments.

Practical implications: The findings of this paper offer valuable insights for policymakers, defense strategists and diplomatic practitioners engaged in conflict resolution and post-war reconstruction.

Value: Using the Second Karabakh War as a modern case study, this paper makes a meaningful contribution to scholarly and policy-level discussions on conflict resolution, military diplomacy and negotiation strategies.

Paper type: theoretical.

Мета дослідження: дослідити, як військово-політична стратегія Азербайджану вплинула на міжнародний дипломатичний ландшафт та сприяла формуванню кінцевої угоди про припинення вогню під час Другої Карабахської війни.

Метод дослідження: якісні методи дослідження, зокрема порівняльний аналіз, синтез та кейс-стаді.

Теоретична цінність дослідження: У рамках сучасних академічних дискусій щодо врегулювання конфліктів і їхньої кінцевої динаміки роль і значущість переговорів виходять на передній план. Переговори відіграють ключову роль у військових конфліктах, будучи інструментами для деескалації, врегулювання конфліктів та післявоєнних домовленостей. Ця робота досліджує роль переговорів у одному з сучасних конфліктів — 44-денній Другій Карабахській війні (2020) між Вірменією та Азербайджаном — спираючись на різні теорії переговорів. У дослідженні аналізуються механізми, виклики та результати процесів переговорів у цій війні, з особливим акцентом на посередництво третьої сторони, дипломатичну маневреність та стратегічне використання діалогу в військовій дипломатії. У праці підкреслюється ефективність військово-політичної стратегії Азербайджану та її вплив на міжнародний дипломатичний ландшафт, що згодом сприяло формуванню остаточної угоди про припинення вогню. Аналізуючи взаємозв'язок між реаліями бойової обстановки та дипломатичними зусиллями, ця праця пропонує новий погляд на врегулювання конфліктів і військову дипломатію у контексті сучасних міждержавних війн. Дослідження підкреслює ефективність посередницьких зусиль і розглядає їхні ширші наслідки для врегулювання конфліктів. Результати становлять цінний внесок у академічний дискурс із питань оборонної дипломатії, пропонуючи погляди на те, як переговори впливають на динаміку війни та формують післяконфліктне безпекове середовище.

Практична цінність дослідження: Результати цього дослідження надають цінні рекомендації для політичних діячів, стратегів оборони й дипломатичних фахівців, задіяних у врегулюванні конфліктів і післявоєнній реконструкції.

Цінність дослідження: Аналізуючи Другу Карабахську війну як сучасний кейс-стаді, ця робота робить вагомий внесок у наукові та політичні дискусії щодо врегулювання конфліктів, військової дипломатії та стратегій переговорів

Тип статті: теоретичний.

Key words: military diplomacy, Second Karabakh War, negotiation, war, peace, threat.

Ключові слова: військова дипломатія, Друга Карабахська війна, переговори, війна, мир, загроза.

Introduction

Throughout history, prominent thinkers paid considerable attention to the prospects of establishing peaceful international relations through the reform of diplomatic methods. However, for a long time, the field of diplomacy remained largely isolated from philosophical discussions. It was only during the Vienna Congress that existing diplomatic institutions and practices were reassessed and regulated, leading to the emergence of modern diplomacy in 1815 under the socio-political influence of the French Revolution and its consequences. During the classical period of European imperialism, the institution of modern diplomacy spread worldwide without significant alterations. However, the realities of today have drastically transformed the environment in which diplomatic dialogue occurs, necessitating a reassessment of diplomacy's role in contemporary international relations. These developments suggest that, while predicting future events remains challenging, it is essential to continuously reevaluate the methods and role of diplomacy in global governance (Iskandarov et al., 2024).

As warfare becomes increasingly hybrid in nature, with both conventional and irregular tactics blending on the battlefield, diplomatic negotiations also become more complex. The study of military diplomacy, negotiation tactics, and third-party mediation has long been a foundational pillar of international relations and conflict resolution scholarship. The role and significance of negotiations in international relations have been explored in numerous academic studies. Professor Rojot's work (1991) connects negotiation theory with its practical applications, bridging the gap between academic research and practical "how-to" guides. Kissinger (1994) highlights the historical linkage between diplomatic success and military strength, arguing that diplomacy can only be effective when backed by credible military power. In this regard, Kissinger's theory suggests that military and diplomatic strategies should not be seen as separate but as interconnected components of a nation's broader foreign policy. Cottey and Forster (2004) argue that military diplomacy can be viewed as a set of strategies used to influence the behavior of other states and non-state actors during conflicts. By employing military diplomacy, states can exert pressure during peace negotiations, as well as signal resolve to adversaries.

Third-party mediation has been studied extensively in conflict resolution literature. Zartman (2008) presents negotiation as a process in international conflict, including the roles of third parties and the strategies involved. Bercovitch & Jackson (2009) offers a comprehensive theoretical overview of conflict resolution processes, negotiation theories and third-party mediation in international relations. Ramsbotham et al. (2011) discuss contemporary conflict resolution techniques, focusing on mediation and negotiation strategies in international and military conflicts. By integrating insights from psychology, politics, economics and organizational behavior, these researchers have introduced modern approaches to negotiation. Fisher & Ury (2011) stress the role of neutral third parties in facilitating communication between conflicting parties and helping to identify common ground. Shnirelman (2021) states that the role of third-party mediators in the war became more pronounced after Azerbaijan's military successes, which created a power imbalance that made negotiations more favorable to Azerbaijan.

The literature review reveals a growing body of research on conflict resolution, however, the application of military diplomacy and the impact of battlefield dynamics on diplomatic negotiations remain underexplored, particularly in the context of modern interstate wars such as the Second Karabakh War. While much of the existing literature has addressed the conflict through either a purely military or diplomatic lens, this paper integrates both perspectives to assess how military dynamics directly impacted the course and outcome of negotiations.

This paper reviews existing research on military diplomacy, negotiation theories and conflict mediation, focusing on their applicability to the "Karabakh conflict". The thesis hypothesizes that the successful resolution of the Second Karabakh War was significantly shaped by the interplay

between military power and diplomatic efforts. The paper's novelty lies in its exploration of how military strength and diplomatic negotiations intersect in the context of the Second Karabakh War, with particular emphasis on the role of third-party mediation. The central research question is: How did military power and diplomatic negotiations influence the outcome of the Second Karabakh War and what role did third-party mediation play in shaping the final peace agreement?

Results

The art of war termination: negotiation dynamics and diplomatic strategies

Major wars are often followed by more significant outcomes and transformations. Generally, ending a war proves to be more challenging than initiating it. For instance, by mid-1944, it was clear that Germany's defeat was imminent, yet it did not surrender until May 1945. The Korean War lasted three years, despite the fact that its outcome had been decided in the twelfth month. Similarly, although the failure of coalition forces in Afghanistan became apparent as early as 2006, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) remained active until 2014 (Guner et al., 2022).

Marat Atnashev and Arvid Bell note that between 1946 and 2005, 21% of all interstate wars ended with a military victory for one side, 30% concluded with a ceasefire agreement, and 16% resulted in a peace treaty, while in the remaining cases, neither a decisive victory nor negotiations were possible (Atnashev & Bell, 2024). It is easy to start a war, but extremely difficult to end one, as its initiation and conclusion are rarely under the control of the same individual. Anyone, even a coward, can spark a conflict, but it can only be ended with the consent of the victors (Iskandarov et al., 2024). Before war erupts, heads of state have critical information about their army's capabilities, while their opponents' intelligence agencies lack such insight. Sun Tzu emphasized the importance of thorough calculations, particularly at operational and strategic levels. These "calculations" are better understood as "estimates". If estimates show that a plan is unfeasible or too risky, the decision-maker should refrain from action until all risks are addressed, as failure to do so could jeopardize the forces and the nation. As the conflict progresses, this secret information becomes exposed, while specialized teams continuously analyze the opposing side's activities and political shifts (Iskandarov et al., 2022). The outcome of negotiations in conflicts is inextricably linked to these factors.

Effective negotiations can predict a country's resolve and readiness to defend its interests, thereby introducing the diplomatic deterrence factor that complements military power. Multilateral negotiations can issue unified statements or resolutions that demonstrate collective commitment to military security, deterring potential adversaries. Kissinger defined diplomacy as the continuation of relations between states in the absence of war. However, he did not claim that diplomacy was entirely separate from military affairs. As a historian, Kissinger observed that throughout history, nations' political influence has always been directly proportional to their military strength. According to him, diplomacy and military strategy must, therefore, support each other. Yet, just as diplomacy relies on military power for its effectiveness, it can also employ military means to serve its objectives. For instance, Kissinger justified the US bombing of Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, as a diplomatic signal to the Viet Cong leadership. Thus, the use of military force became a tool to strengthen the US negotiating position against North Vietnam (Berridge et al., 2001).

When analyzing negotiations, researchers often refer to the terms interaction and communication. These are closely related concepts, yet communication primarily concerns the exchange of information, whereas interaction mainly refers to the actions that parties take toward one another. The term interaction is widely used in the study of international relations and diplomacy to describe how actors engage with one another. However, this concept was initially developed and theorized in sociology and social psychology. Negotiations cannot take place without communication, and they may be seen as a subclass of social communication. However, interaction

goes beyond mere communication; it refers to interactive communication, where parties influence one another. Thus, international negotiations are, by nature, not merely about communication but rather an interactive communication process (Faizullaev, 2014).

Throughout history, numerous rounds of negotiations have taken place in military conflicts. However, only a few are regarded as truly successful due to their effectiveness in ending hostilities, establishing lasting peace, or achieving significant diplomatic breakthroughs. For instance, the Camp David Accords (1978), brokered by the US, led to the first peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, ending decades of hostility. The Dayton Agreement (1995) brought an end to the Bosnian War, establishing Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign state while ensuring power-sharing among its ethnic groups. Similarly, the Good Friday Agreement (1998), negotiated between the UK, Ireland and Northern Irish political parties, successfully ended the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland, known as The Troubles. As modern conflicts become more hybrid, blending information warfare, cyber tactics, and economic pressure, military diplomacy must evolve to address these complex and multifaceted challenges (Hasanov et al., 2019). The effective termination of a conflict requires the following key conditions (Foster & Brewer, 1976; Iskandarov et al., 2022):

- Strong political control to ensure coherent decision-making and strategic direction.
- Clearly defined and limited political objectives to provide a feasible framework for resolution.
- Force postures designed to constrain adversary activities, preventing escalation and prolongation of hostilities.
- War-fighting concepts and strategies that incentivize early termination, minimizing prolonged engagement.
- Technological superiority, enhancing operational effectiveness and deterrence capabilities.

The success or failure of any negotiation can be assessed based on the extent to which these conditions are fulfilled.

Various negotiation theories, including Distributive (Zero-Sum), Integrative (Win-Win), Ripeness, Game Theory and Strategic Bargaining, Principled Negotiation (Harvard Method), Mediation and Third-Party Involvement, Use of force as a coercion, offer valuable insights into how warring parties engage in dialogue, reach settlements, or fail to resolve disputes. The Second Karabakh War exemplified the application of these theories in practice. In the following paragraph, we will explore these negotiation frameworks within the context of the Second Karabakh War, analyzing how they shaped the conflict and its resolution.

Negotiations and mediation in the Second Karabakh War: challenges and outcomes

Negotiations during the Second Karabakh War played a crucial role in diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the conflict and seek a resolution. Despite the intensity of military engagements, third-party mediation—primarily led by the Minsk Group co-chairs (France, Russia, and the US) — remained a focal point. However, these efforts largely failed to yield substantive outcomes during the war. While emphasizing the professionalism of the Azerbaijani Army, President Ilham Aliyev also took significant strategic measures to neutralize both regional and global actors. In this context, the positions of regional powers during the 44-day war between Armenia and Azerbaijan were crucial. The neutrality of several countries, which had supplied Armenia with substantial weaponry, in their political statements, represented a diplomatic victory for Azerbaijan. Historical examples demonstrate that international powers may adopt varying approaches to conflicts of similar nature, as seen in Kosovo. Additionally, the fact that Armenia refrained from recognizing the so-called “independence” of “Nagorno-Karabakh” was a direct result of Azerbaijan’s successful policies. This stands in contrast to the failure of Saakashvili, who, despite receiving direct support from a global power like the US, was defeated in a war against another superpower. The stance taken by Russian

leadership at the outset of the Second Karabakh War further highlighted the success of President Aliyev's diplomatic efforts. By neutralizing the forces Armenia hoped would provide direct support, President Aliyev effectively shortened the duration of the war while achieving the objectives set at its commencement. This underscores the effectiveness of Azerbaijan's military-political strategy during the conflict (Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2021b).

As previously mentioned, a combination of several negotiation theories was applied during the Second Karabakh War, as the success of negotiations in conflicts depends on various factors. Jackson (2000), in analyzing international disputes and negotiation efforts from 1945 to 1995, categorizes the factors influencing negotiation outcomes into three groups: (1) the nature of the dispute, (2) the nature of the parties and their ongoing relationship and (3) conflict management characteristics, or process factors. From the first two categories, factors such as dispute intensity, complexity, underlying issues, the relative power of the parties, their alignment, and previous relations all affect the negotiation outcomes. In the third category, key process factors like timing, location, the initiator of negotiations, and the rank of the negotiators play a significant role in shaping the negotiation's success. To generalize these factors, we can primarily emphasize timing, power dynamics, the willingness of parties to compromise, the rank of the negotiators, and external mediation efforts, as seen in the case of the Second Karabakh War. These elements played a crucial role in shaping the negotiation process and determining the outcome of the war. No single theory can explain all wars, but a blend of these approaches provides a comprehensive understanding of war negotiations. Among the most prominent theories observed during the Second Karabakh War were Game theory (Maschler et al., 2013; Hayes, 2024), Use of force as a coercion and power-based negotiation (George, 1994) and finally Mediation and third-party involvement. In conclusion, by understanding the factors that influence negotiation outcomes and the relevant theories, it becomes easier to justify the role and significance of negotiations in the Second Karabakh War.

Game theory was primarily applied in the period leading up to the war, ultimately resulting in the failure of the status quo. Prior to the conflict, Armenia's strategy was to maintain the status quo and deter Azerbaijan through military presence and political backing from external actors, particularly Russia. In contrast, Azerbaijan pursued diplomatic alternatives while simultaneously signaling its readiness for military action. However, Armenia underestimated Azerbaijan's military capabilities and political resolve and remained unwilling to compromise on territorial issues, rendering negotiations ineffective. As a result, Azerbaijan resorted to the use of force, launching a counteroffensive operation in response to Armenian provocations. This response was justified by a series of Armenian sabotage attempts between 1994 and 2020, with the most significant ones occurring in April 2016 and July 2020. In April 2016, during Four-Day War, Azerbaijan launched a counteroffensive, but the operation was short-lived. The July 2020 clashes, however, marked a turning point, setting the stage for the full-scale war in September 2020. Azerbaijan gained experience in breaching Armenia's so-called "impregnable" fortifications in 2016. Armenia mistakenly perceived Azerbaijan's decision to halt operations as a sign of their own strong defense, which further led them to dismiss concerns about Azerbaijan's potential military operations. The period from 2016 to 2020 was characterized by diplomatic stagnation, aside from intermittent diplomatic efforts, occasional military escalations and the failure of international mediation to yield tangible results. Notably, no significant negotiations took place between the parties during this time. Finally, Azerbaijan's counteroffensive in September, 2020 fundamentally reshaped the negotiating table, rendering previous frameworks, including the OSCE Minsk Group's mediation, obsolete.

At the outset of the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan's strategy exemplified use of force as a coercion and power-based negotiation. The decisive use of force was instrumental in achieving strategic objectives, compelling Armenia to engage in negotiations. President Aliyev's famous declaration, *"No one can stop us"*, encapsulated the essence of this approach, reinforcing the notion that military leverage can shape diplomatic outcomes. The phrase aligns with Thomas Schelling's

deterrence theory (Schelling, 1960), which emphasizes how showcasing determination and military capability can shape an adversary's decision-making. For nearly four years after the April 2016 clashes, Armenia maintained a position of confidence, reinforced by Pashinyan's hardline stance, including his declaration that "Karabakh is Armenia", which effectively undermined the negotiation process. However, this strategy adopted by Azerbaijan ultimately led to the initiation of further negotiations.

Several rounds of negotiations took place during the Second Karabakh War, primarily mediated by international actors. The first round of negotiations occurred on October 10, 2020, resulting in a ceasefire agreement after ten hours of talks in Moscow, brokered by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov between the Armenian and Azerbaijani Ministers of Foreign Affairs. With regard to the rank of negotiators, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as a high-ranking figure, possesses greater authority to make binding commitments, which is a crucial factor in determining the success of negotiations, particularly in high-stakes diplomatic or military contexts. Regardless of the extent to which lower-ranking negotiators are delegated authority by their superiors, this is the reality that, they may not achieve the same level of success as high-ranking officials. There have been instances where Ministers of Foreign Affairs from opposing parties successfully brokered conflict resolution agreements. For example, the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship, signed by Ethiopian Foreign Minister Workneh Gebeyehu and Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh in 2018, brought an end to the two-decade-long conflict between their countries (Lyons, 2019).

This agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan mediated by Russia aimed to establish a humanitarian ceasefire. Notably, this negotiation took place at a critical juncture when the Armenian Army had lost control of previously occupied territories in the north and south and was in urgent need of time and resources. By that time, the Azerbaijani Army had already liberated the city of Jabrayil and secured control over the Hadrut settlement (Figure 1) (Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2021a).



Figure 1 – Approximate situation in the front on October 10

The ceasefire provided Armenia with an opportunity to regroup, mobilize resources, and attempt to regain lost positions. The ceasefire swiftly collapsed, culminating in an Armenian bombardment of Ganja city the following day, resulting in 10 civilian deaths and over 40 injuries. A second bombardment of Ganja occurred on October 17, causing 16 civilian fatalities and 55 injuries (AzerNews, 2022). On the same day Armenian forces launched counterattack in the direction of Khankendi–Fuzuli, which was swiftly repelled by the Azerbaijani Army. The aim was to retake the

lost territories around Fuzuli, force Azerbaijani soldiers along the Iranian border to surrender, and gain leverage in future negotiations.

The subsequent round of negotiations, mediated by the US on October 25, 2020, aimed to establish another ceasefire. Regarding the rank of negotiators, it remained the same as in the previous round, with top diplomats – the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from both parties – participating in talks brokered by the US Secretary of State. The frontline situation largely corresponded to the depiction in Figure 2 (Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2021a).



Figure 2 – Approximate situation in the front on October 25

However, despite these diplomatic efforts, hostilities persisted. The ceasefire, mediated by the US, had barely taken effect at 8:00 AM local time on the same day when Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defense reported that Armenian forces had shelled the territory of Aghdam, Terter and Aghjabadi regions (mod.gov.az, 2020). The battles continued at the same intensity.

The most decisive round of negotiations, brokered by Russia on November 10, 2020, resulted in the Trilateral Agreement, which formally ended the war and exemplifies the theory of mediation and third-party involvement in the Second Karabakh War. It was signed by the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and the President of Russia Vladimir Putin. This agreement mandated the withdrawal of Armenian forces from occupied Azerbaijani territories and the deployment of Russian peacekeepers. Figure 3 illustrates the situation on the ground prior to the signing of the agreement (Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2021a). While previous negotiations failed to secure a lasting resolution, the final trilateral agreement effectively terminated the conflict, underscoring the decisive role of power dynamics and regional diplomacy. The most remarkable aspect of these negotiations was that the rank of negotiators was at the level of heads of government. Consequently, as illustrated in Figure 3, the interplay of power dynamics, the high-level rank of the negotiators, and external mediation efforts by the most influential regional actor compelled Armenia to compromise, ultimately marking the end of the war.

Overall, the negotiations held during the Second Karabakh War once again demonstrated that diplomatic success is closely tied to military power and strategic superiority. Although international mediators played an important role in the conflict resolution process, the decisive factor in shaping the outcome was Azerbaijan's military and political determination.



Figure 3 – Approximate situation in the front on November 8

From the aforementioned points, it can be concluded that successful negotiations – whether in military diplomacy or other contexts – depend on a range of factors that shape the dynamics and outcomes of discussions. Effective negotiations require a clear understanding of each party’s objectives, acceptable compromises, and non-negotiable issues. Communication must be open, transparent, and grounded in mutual respect.

During the first negotiations on October 10, 2020, Azerbaijan’s primary objective was the restoration of its territorial integrity through the full reclamation of all occupied territories. A non-negotiable issue for Azerbaijan was the categorical rejection of any special status for Karabakh, insisting on full sovereignty over its internationally recognized lands. In contrast, Armenia’s objective was to maintain control over the occupied territories. Its non-negotiable issue was the preservation of its hold over the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh”, despite international law recognizing the region as part of Azerbaijan. For clarification, the occupied territories previously included the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region and seven surrounding districts. The term “so-called” is used because, following Azerbaijan’s restoration of its territorial integrity, the administrative entity of Nagorno-Karabakh no longer exists. Instead, the region has been integrated into Azerbaijan’s official administrative framework as the Karabakh Economic Region. Mutual compromises were challenging to achieve due to the fundamental differences in objectives between Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, if both sides had been willing to engage in realistic concessions, potential areas of compromise could have included: a phased withdrawal of Armenian forces, security guarantees for ethnic Armenians in Karabakh provided by Azerbaijan, and the acceptance of an internationally monitored peacekeeping force to oversee the transition and maintain stability.

The October 25, 2020, negotiations took place amid Azerbaijan’s significant territorial gains, fundamentally shifting the power dynamics between the two sides. Applying the core principles of successful negotiations — clear objectives, acceptable compromises, and non-negotiable issues — reveals the evolving nature of Armenia’s position as the conflict progressed. Azerbaijan’s objectives and non-negotiable issues remained unchanged from earlier negotiations. It remained committed to the full restoration of its territorial integrity and categorically rejected any special status for Karabakh. In contrast, Armenia’s objectives had been diminished due to mounting battlefield losses. By this stage, its primary goal was to secure a ceasefire to halt Azerbaijan’s military advances and retain control over at least parts of Karabakh. Similarly, its non-negotiable issue had softened, shifting from maintaining control over all occupied territories to merely preserving influence over Khankendi and key areas in Karabakh. Potential areas of compromise remained largely the same:

- Azerbaijan accepting a humanitarian ceasefire to facilitate the evacuation of civilians and the exchange of prisoners.
- Armenia agreeing to a phased withdrawal from occupied territories in exchange for security guarantees for ethnic Armenians.
- The introduction of international monitoring mechanisms to oversee ceasefire implementation.

However, trust was minimal, as previous ceasefire agreements had collapsed within hours of being declared. These negotiations underscored a crucial principle of military diplomacy: negotiations are shaped by battlefield realities. With Azerbaijan holding a strong military position, it had the leverage to dictate terms, while Armenia's weakened strategic position severely limited its options.

By the time of the November 10 negotiations, Azerbaijan's objectives were firmly rooted in the restoration of its territorial integrity. Having gained a decisive military advantage, the Azerbaijani leadership had one clear goal: the full reclamation of all territories occupied by Armenia, with an unequivocal rejection of any special status for Karabakh. This objective was non-negotiable, as Azerbaijan not only sought the return of its lands but also the reinforcement of its sovereignty over the entire region. The urgency of this goal was further underscored by Azerbaijan's significant territorial gains and its strong military position, which would have allowed for further advances had negotiations failed. In contrast, by November 2020, Armenia's position had shifted dramatically. With mounting military setbacks and substantial territorial losses, Armenia's primary objective had transitioned from securing full control over so-called "Nagorno-Karabakh" to negotiating a ceasefire that would preserve as much influence as possible over the Khankendi area and its surrounding regions. This marked a significant retreat from Armenia's previous stance but reflected the realities of the battlefield. Armenia's non-negotiable issue had also evolved, now centering on the protection of ethnic Armenians in the remaining territories of Karabakh. Unable to maintain full control, Armenia prioritized securing guarantees for the safety and rights of ethnic Armenians residing in the region, who ultimately chose to leave voluntarily following the restoration of Azerbaijan's full sovereignty. A day-by-day analysis of the entire 44-day War demonstrates that the security of ethnic Armenians was never compromised by Azerbaijan. Rather, the portrayal of such a threat was exaggerated by Armenia as a strategic tool to draw the attention of the international community.

Conclusion

The Second Karabakh War and the accompanying negotiation efforts exemplify the complex interplay between military power and diplomatic negotiation in resolving conflicts. As seen throughout the negotiations, particularly on October 10 and October 25, the success of diplomatic initiatives was heavily influenced by the evolving military realities on the ground. Azerbaijan's strategic superiority, coupled with its strong military position, allowed it to pursue its objectives with greater leverage, while Armenia's weakened standing limited its negotiating options. The negotiation process highlighted that effective diplomacy in the context of military conflict relies on clear understanding of objectives, acceptable compromises, and non-negotiable issues. For both Azerbaijan and Armenia, the fundamental differences in their respective goals created significant challenges for compromise. However, potential areas of negotiation — such as phased withdrawals, security guarantees, and international monitoring mechanisms — represented potential avenues for de-escalation, even if these were difficult to realize given the lack of trust and repeated violations of previous ceasefire agreements. Furthermore, the failure of early ceasefire attempts in October 2020 underscored the difficulty of achieving lasting ceasefire without a shift in the military balance. It was only with Russian mediation in November 2020, when the situation had decisively tilted in Azerbaijan's favor, that a comprehensive and enforceable ceasefire was reached. The Trilateral Agreement marked a turning point, ultimately ending the conflict and reaffirming the centrality of

military power in determining the outcome of negotiations. Ultimately, the Second Karabakh War serves as a contemporary example of how military success can translate into diplomatic achievements. While third-party mediators played a role in shaping discussions, the decisive factor was Azerbaijan's ability to establish favorable conditions through military and political means. This conflict highlights that in the realm of military diplomacy, negotiations are most effective when they reflect the realities of power and leverage, rather than abstract diplomatic ideals.

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