

The 2020 Homeland War: Historical Outcomes and Geopolitical Significance

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Abstract.

Relevance. The 2020 Homeland War of Azerbaijan marked a decisive turning point in the evolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and had a profound impact on the security architecture of the South Caucasus. The resolution of a protracted conflict through military means brought to the forefront critical issues related to the restoration of territorial integrity, the effectiveness of international mediation mechanisms, and the transformation of regional and extra-regional geopolitics. The events of 2020 also revealed significant changes in the nature of modern warfare and regional power relations.

Purpose. The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the historical outcomes of the 2020 Homeland War and to assess its geopolitical significance for the South Caucasus in the context of shifting regional balances of power and security arrangements.

Results. The study demonstrates that the war resulted in the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, a substantial reconfiguration of the regional balance of power, and the emergence of a new security architecture in the South Caucasus. It highlights the growing role of modern military technologies, particularly high-precision weapons and unmanned systems, as well as the increased influence of external actors on regional political and security dynamics.

Conclusions. The article concludes that the 2020 Homeland War was not merely the culmination of a specific phase of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but rather the beginning of a new stage in the political and geopolitical development of the South Caucasus. The findings indicate that the consequences of the war will have a long-term impact on regional stability, international relations, and approaches to conflict resolution.

Key words: Azerbaijan, geopolitics, South Caucasus, territorial integrity, the 2020 war

Вітчизняна війна 2020 року: історичні наслідки та геополітичне значення

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Анотація.

Актуальність. Вітчизняна війна Азербайджану 2020 року стала переломним етапом у розвитку нагірно-карабаського конфлікту та суттєво вплинула на систему безпеки Південного Кавказу. Завершення багаторічного протистояння шляхом збройного конфлікту актуалізувало питання відновлення територіальної цілісності держав, ефективності міжнародних механізмів врегулювання конфліктів, а також трансформації регіональної та позарегіональної геополітики. Події 2020 року зумовили перегляд усталених підходів до аналізу конфліктів у пострадянському просторі та продемонстрували зміну характеру сучасних воєн, у яких поєднуються військові, політичні та технологічні чинники.

Мета. Метою статті є комплексний аналіз історичних результатів Вітчизняної війни 2020 року та визначення її геополітичного значення для Південного Кавказу з урахуванням змін у балансі сил, системі регіональної безпеки та міжнародних відносинах.

Результати. У ході дослідження встановлено, що війна призвела до відновлення територіальної цілісності Азербайджану, суттєвої зміни співвідношення військово-політичних сил у регіоні та формування нової архітектури безпеки. Виявлено зростання ролі сучасних військових технологій, зокрема безпілотних систем і високоточної зброї, а також посилення впливу зовнішніх акторів на регіональні процеси. Показано, що результати війни сприяли трансформації форматів міжнародного посередництва та відкрили нові можливості для регіонального співробітництва.

Висновки. Зроблено висновок, що Вітчизняна війна 2020 року стала не лише завершенням одного з етапів карабаського конфлікту, але й початком нового етапу політичного та геостратегічного розвитку Південного Кавказу. Отримані результати свідчать про довгостроковий вплив війни на регіональну стабільність, міжнародні відносини та підходи до врегулювання конфліктів у сучасному світі.

Ключові слова: Азербайджан, геополітика, Південний Кавказ, територіальна цілісність, війна 2020 року

Introduction.

The 2020 Azerbaijani Patriotic War was one of the most significant events in the recent history of the South Caucasus, profoundly impacting regional political processes and security. The military conclusion of the decades-long conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh not only changed the status quo established after 1994 but also demonstrated the transformative nature of modern armed conflict, in which technological superiority, operational mobility, and strategic coordination play a decisive role (Cornell, 2020, 2021).

The relevance of this study stems from the fact that the 2020 war was not just another episode in the Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontation, but a turning point with consequences that extend far beyond bilateral relations. The results of the 44-day war led to the restoration of a significant portion of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, a shift in the balance of power in the South Caucasus, and the emergence of new geopolitical realities affecting the interests of regional and external actors, including Turkey, Russia, Iran, and Western states (Broers, 2021).

The scholarly significance of this topic stems from the need for a comprehensive understanding of the 2020 war as a historical and geopolitical phenomenon. While existing literature devotes considerable attention to the military aspects of the conflict and diplomatic efforts to achieve a ceasefire, less systematic analysis of the war's long-term consequences for regional security architecture and international law is provided (De Waal, 2021). This creates a need for an interdisciplinary approach combining historical analysis, political science interpretation, and elements of geopolitical forecasting.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the historical outcome of the 2020 Patriotic War and identify its geopolitical significance for the South Caucasus. To achieve this goal, the article sets the following objectives: examine the historical background of the conflict and the reasons for its escalation in 2020; analyze the military-political and territorial outcomes of the war; determine the conflict's impact on the regional balance of power and international relations; and assess the prospects for post-conflict development in the region.

The research's methodological framework is based on historical and political analysis, comparative methods, and elements of a geopolitical approach. The work draws on materials from international think tanks, scholarly publications by Western and regional researchers, and official documents from international organizations (International Crisis Group, 2020; United Nations, 2020). The use of these methods allows us to view the 2020 war not as an isolated event, but as part of a broader transformation of the post-Soviet space.

Thus, the study aims to form a holistic scientific view of the Patriotic War of 2020 as an event that determined new historical and geopolitical guidelines for the development of the South Caucasus at the beginning of the 21st century (Gurbanov, 2025).

Analysis of preliminary studies and publications. Contemporary scholarly literature on the Karabakh conflict and the 2020 Patriotic War of Azerbaijan is distinguished by its thematic and methodological diversity but can generally be divided into three main groups: studies by Western analysts, works by regional authors, and publications by the post-Soviet school of thought. Each of these groups offers its own interpretive frameworks, emphases, and explanatory models.

Western scholars traditionally examine the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the context of long-standing interstate rivalry and the challenges of post-Soviet peace settlement. For example, L. Broers analyzes the Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontation as a "structural rivalry," in which historical memory, identity, and security mutually reinforce the conflicting potential of the parties (Broers, 2021). A similar approach is characteristic of the works of T. de Waal, who emphasizes the incompleteness of the peace process after 1994 and points to the accumulated contradictions that made military escalation virtually inevitable (De Waal, 2021). These studies interpret the 2020 war as the result of a systemic crisis in the negotiation format, but the geopolitical consequences of the conflict often remain on the periphery of the analysis.

Analysts specializing in the South Caucasus and international security have made significant contributions to the study of the 2020 war. S. Cornell's work emphasizes that the results of the 44-day war marked a turning point for the entire region, as the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity altered the previous balance of power and called into question the effectiveness of previous conflict containment mechanisms (Cornell, 2021; Davtyan, 2023). Particular attention is paid to the role of external actors and the transformation of the regional security architecture.

Regional studies, including publications by Azerbaijani think tanks, focus primarily on the military-political aspects of the war and its implications for national security. A number of studies emphasize that the 2020 war has led to the emergence of new geopolitical realities, in which Azerbaijan emerges not only as the victorious party but also as an active participant in regional politics (Gurbanov, 2025). At the same time, the importance of strategic learning and escalation processes within the logic of the conflict is emphasized (Davtyan, 2023). These studies often focus on practical aspects and, to a lesser extent, address issues of international legal interpretation of the conflict's outcomes.

The post-Soviet school of thought, represented by research by Carnegie and other think tanks, tends to view the 2020 war through the prism of the transformation of the post-Soviet space and Russia's changing role in the region. Thus, S. Minasyan emphasizes the new format of external forces' regional presence and emphasizes that the war's outcome did not lead to a final settlement of the conflict but merely formalized a new configuration of forces (Minasian, 2021). Such interpretations are

important for understanding regional dynamics, but they often underestimate the significance of the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity as a key historical outcome of the war.

A special place in the literature is occupied by reports from international organizations and analytical bodies, such as the International Crisis Group and the UN, which focus on the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, ceasefires, and post-conflict stabilization (International Crisis Group, 2020; United Nations, 2020). These sources are highly factual but generally refrain from providing a deep geopolitical interpretation of the events.

A critical analysis of existing research reveals a number of research gaps. First, the academic literature lacks a comprehensive synthesis of the historical, military-political, and geopolitical consequences of the 2020 war, viewed as a unified process. Second, many studies either limit themselves to analyzing military actions or focus on the diplomatic dimension, failing to pay sufficient attention to long-term regional transformations. Third, the impact of the 2020 war on the principles of international law and the practice of post-conflict resolution has been insufficiently addressed.

The scientific novelty of this article lies in its attempt to overcome these limitations through a comprehensive analysis of the 2020 Patriotic War as a historical event and geopolitical turning point. Unlike existing studies, this work seeks to integrate historical, political, and geostrategic approaches, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the significance of the 2020 war for the formation of new realities in the South Caucasus and the regional security system as a whole.

Results.

Historical background and course of the Patriotic War of 2020.

The evolution of the Karabakh conflict since 1994 has been characterized by a stable but unstable status quo established after the ceasefire, which cemented the *de facto* division of territories in the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement. The negotiation process, carried out through international mediation, failed to resolve the core contradiction between the principles of territorial integrity and self-determination, contributing to the perpetuation of the conflict and periodic outbreaks of violence (De Waal, 2021). Over the following decades, the line of contact remained a zone of heightened militarization, with incidents of varying intensity gradually eroding the ceasefire.

In the post-Soviet period, the conflict underwent qualitative changes. Azerbaijan, consistently building its economic and military potential, began a systematic modernization of its armed forces, focused on increasing mobility, precision, and network-centric capabilities. At the same time, defense infrastructure on both sides of the line of contact was being strengthened, creating the conditions for a large-scale escalation while diplomatic impasse persisted (Broers, 2021). Thus, by the late 2010s,

the conflict entered a "deferred solution" phase, in which a military scenario was increasingly viewed as a realistic alternative to protracted negotiations.

The causes of the escalation in 2020 were complex and included both structural and situational factors. Long-term factors included the lack of progress toward a peaceful settlement and the parties' disillusionment with the effectiveness of existing negotiation mechanisms (International Crisis Group, 2020). A significant role was also played by the changing regional balance of power, driven by Azerbaijan's growing military potential and deepening strategic cooperation with key external partners. Local armed incidents and rising tensions in previous years served as additional catalysts, contributing to the accumulation of conflict potential.

The immediate escalation in September 2020 was the result of a combination of political, military, and psychological factors. The war began at a time when diplomatic channels had effectively lost trust between the parties, and a military solution was increasingly perceived as a way to change the status quo (Cornell, 2021; Davtyan, 2023). It is important to note that the outbreak of hostilities was accompanied by clearly articulated political goals aimed at restoring control over the occupied territories.

The course of military operations in 2020 was distinguished by a number of key features that signaled a new stage in the evolution of armed conflicts in the post-Soviet space. A key factor was the widespread integration of modern technologies, primarily unmanned aerial vehicles, reconnaissance assets, and precision-guided weapons, which provided Azerbaijan with a significant operational advantage (Davtyan, 2023). The use of these assets allowed for the effective suppression of air defense systems and the destruction of enemy defensive lines.

Military operations developed in stages and were characterized by high intensity and relatively short duration. Operations in the southern direction were particularly significant, creating the conditions for a breakthrough and subsequent advance into the interior. The combination of maneuverable ground operations with targeted strikes against military infrastructure contributed to a rapid shift in the operational situation in Azerbaijan's favor (Gurbanov, 2025). The information and psychological dimension of the conflict also became an important element of the strategy, enhancing the impact of military successes on the overall course of the confrontation.

Thus, the Patriotic War of 2020 was the result of the long-term evolution of the Karabakh conflict and the accumulation of unresolved contradictions since 1994. Its course demonstrated the transformative nature of modern warfare, in which technological superiority, strategic coordination, and a clear political objective play a decisive role.

The findings allow us to view the 2020 war as a historic turning point, predetermining the further development of

the conflict and the entire regional security system in the South Caucasus.

Military-political and territorial results of the war.

The military, political, and territorial outcomes of the 2020 Patriotic War were the key outcome of the long-running Karabakh conflict and defined a qualitatively new reality in the South Caucasus. The war's primary historical outcome was Azerbaijan's restoration of control over a significant portion of the previously occupied territories, marking the de facto restoration of the state's territorial integrity in accordance with recognized international legal principles (Cornell, 2021). This outcome has not only military-strategic but also fundamental political and legal significance, as it changed the basis of the negotiation process and eliminated the previous asymmetrical status quo.

The recapture of territories was accompanied by the emergence of new administrative, infrastructural, and demographic realities. Liberated areas became the subject of large-scale rehabilitation and reintegration programs, underscoring the transition from the military phase of the conflict to the post-conflict development stage. Academic literature emphasizes that the restoration of territorial control was the factor that cemented the war's outcome not only on the battlefield but also in the political dimension (Gurbanov, 2025). Thus, the territorial consequences of the 2020 war are irreversible and shape long-term parameters of regional stability.

Significant changes have also occurred in the balance of power in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan's victory led to a redistribution of military and political influence in the region, strengthening Baku's position as the leading regional actor. This shift in the balance of power affected not only the immediate parties to the conflict but also external actors, whose strategies and interests were forced to adapt to new realities (Broers, 2021). As a result, the regional security system has become more complex and multilayered, with deterrence and strategic calculation playing a greater role.

The military and political consequences of the war also manifested themselves in a transformation of approaches to security. The 2020 conflict demonstrated the limitations of traditional defensive concepts and the need to transition to more flexible and technologically advanced models of warfare. This circumstance has become a subject of active discussion in expert circles, where the war is viewed as an example of "asymmetric superiority" achieved through the integration of modern combat capabilities (Davtyan, 2023).

Modern military technologies and strategies played a particularly significant role in achieving military and territorial gains. The widespread use of unmanned aerial vehicles, high-precision strike weapons, and reconnaissance and control systems enabled Azerbaijan to achieve operational and tactical advantages in key areas. According to several researchers, the integrated

use of technology, combined with a clear strategic objective, was the determining factor in the success of the military campaign (Cornell, 2021; Davtyan, 2023). This circumstance allows us to consider the 2020 war as an important case study for analyzing the transformation of modern armed conflicts.

Thus, the military, political, and territorial consequences of the 2020 Patriotic War extend beyond a local conflict and have systemic significance for the entire South Caucasus. The restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, the shift in the regional balance of power, and the demonstration of the effectiveness of modern military technologies have created new security parameters and set the course for future political and strategic processes in the region.

Geopolitical implications for the South Caucasus.

The geopolitical consequences of the 2020 Patriotic War were systemic and led to a transformation of the regional security architecture in the South Caucasus. The end of the active phase of the conflict marked the end of a long-standing status quo in which the conflict remained frozen but potentially explosive. The new realities created by the war altered the logic of security in the region, shifting the emphasis from an uncertain balance to more clearly defined spheres of influence and responsibility (Cornell, 2021).

One of the key elements in the transformation of regional security has been the emergence of new mechanisms of control and deterrence. Given the shifting balance of power, previous models of maintaining stability have become ineffective, giving way to more pragmatic and institutionalized formats of interaction. In this context, researchers view the 2020 war as a transition point from the post-Soviet model of conflict management to a more complex system of regional governance, in which military, political, and diplomatic instruments are used in close coordination (De Waal, 2021).

External actors, whose involvement in regional processes became more pronounced and structured, played a significant role in shaping new geopolitical realities. Turkey significantly strengthened its position in the South Caucasus, becoming a key guarantor of security and a strategic partner for Azerbaijan. The deepening of Turkish-Azerbaijani cooperation after the war became a factor influencing the redistribution of power in the region and the revision of foreign policy strategies by other states (Kucera, 2021).

Russia, traditionally viewed as the leading actor in the South Caucasus, has also adapted its regional policy to the new conditions. The deployment of peacekeeping forces and participation in post-conflict resolution mechanisms have allowed Moscow to maintain significant influence on security processes while simultaneously facing the need to take into account the increased role of other players (Minasian, 2021). This has led to the emergence of a more multi-layered and competitive environment for regional interaction.

The role of Iran and Western states in the post-conflict period has become more indirect, but no less significant. Iran, considering its own geopolitical and economic interests, is seeking to adapt to the changed configuration of forces, maintaining a balance between regional actors. Western countries, in turn, have focused on humanitarian issues, reconstruction, and ensuring sustainable peace, while maintaining an interest in the region's energy and transport security (International Crisis Group, 2020).

A significant consequence of the 2020 war was the emergence of new formats of regional interaction focused on practical cooperation and reducing the potential for conflict. Academic research emphasizes that the post-conflict period offers opportunities for the development of transport and communications projects capable of linking the South Caucasus with the broader Eurasian space (Tol, 2021). These formats imply a shift from a logic of confrontation to pragmatic interaction based on mutual interests.

Thus, the geopolitical consequences of the 2020 Patriotic War have resulted in a profound transformation of the regional security architecture of the South Caucasus. The increased role of external actors, the shifting balance of power, and the emergence of new formats of interaction have created a complex but more structured system of regional relations, determining the region's long-term prospects for stability and development.

The Impact of the 2020 War on International Law and Post-Conflict Resolution.

The 2020 Patriotic War had a significant impact on the interpretation and practical application of international law, particularly the principle of territorial integrity of states. The conflict's results demonstrated that the prolonged existence of "frozen conflicts" does not invalidate the fundamental norms of international law, and that ignoring them in negotiations can lead to a violent revision of the status quo. Scholarly literature emphasizes that Azerbaijan's restoration of control over previously occupied territories was accomplished within recognized international borders, reinforcing the importance of the principle of territorial integrity as a fundamental element of international order (Cornell, 2021).

In the context of international practice, the 2020 war became an example of how a conflict that had been in a state of political and diplomatic stalemate for a long time was resolved through a combination of military force and subsequent political settlement. Several researchers point out that this case revealed the limitations of international mediation mechanisms, which for decades have failed to ensure the implementation of resolutions and principles of international law (De Waal, 2021). In this sense, the 2020 conflict has revived the debate about the relationship between diplomatic and military instruments in contemporary international relations.

Peacekeeping has become an important element of post-conflict resolution, designed to ensure a ceasefire and minimize the risk of renewed hostilities. The

deployment of peacekeeping forces and the establishment of monitoring mechanisms have contributed to the stabilization of the situation along the line of contact and the creation of conditions for the transition to reconstruction and humanitarian measures (International Crisis Group, 2020). Academic assessments emphasize that the effectiveness of peacekeeping mechanisms largely depends on their neutrality, mandate, and ability to adapt to changing political conditions.

Post-conflict stabilization mechanisms in the South Caucasus include not only military and diplomatic instruments but also economic, infrastructural, and social measures. Restoring transport links, demining liberated territories, and the return of displaced persons are seen as key elements of sustainable peace. Analysts note that without a comprehensive approach to post-conflict development, military outcomes cannot be transformed into long-term stability (Tol, 2021).

The prospects for long-term peace in the region are largely determined by the parties' ability to move from a logic of confrontation to institutionalized cooperation. In this context, the 2020 war can be seen as a starting point for the emergence of a new model of regional relations based on the recognition of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and mutual responsibility for security (Cornell, 2021; De Waal, 2021). At the same time, persistent contradictions and high levels of mistrust point to the need for continued international efforts to maintain dialogue and prevent escalation.

Thus, the impact of the 2020 war on international law and post-conflict resolution is manifested in the strengthening of the role of the principle of territorial integrity, the reconsideration of the effectiveness of existing peacekeeping mechanisms, and the development of new approaches to stabilizing post-conflict regions. The findings allow us to consider the Karabakh case as a significant precedent for the analysis of contemporary conflicts and their resolution practices in the context of a transforming international order.

Conclusions.

The conducted research allows us to view the 2020 Patriotic War of Azerbaijan as a watershed event of not only local but also broad regional and international significance. Unlike previous stages of the Karabakh conflict, the 2020 war ended not with the persistence of contradictions, but with their qualitative rethinking through a change in the military-political and territorial status quo. Azerbaijan's restoration of control over a significant portion of the previously occupied territories became a key historical outcome, enshrining the principle of territorial integrity as a fundamental norm of the regional order and establishing a new framework for further settlement.

The analysis shows that the 2020 war was the result of a prolonged crisis in the negotiation process and the accumulation of structural contradictions since 1994. The lack of progress in diplomatic resolution, the shifting

balance of power, and the transformation of the military capabilities of the parties led to the use of force as a tool for reconsidering the established reality. At the same time, the conflict demonstrated a fundamentally new nature of warfare, in which modern technology, the integration of reconnaissance and strike assets, and clearly defined political objectives played a decisive role.

The geopolitical implications of the war for the South Caucasus are particularly significant. The shifting balance of power, the strengthening of Azerbaijan's role as a regional actor, and the transformation of external actors' involvement have led to the formation of a more complex, yet more structured, security architecture. The 2020 war has accelerated the region's transition from a "frozen conflict" model to a model of managed post-conflict engagement, in which security, communications, and economic recovery are becoming a priority.

From an international legal perspective, the Karabakh case has revived the debate on the relationship between the principles of territorial integrity and the effectiveness of international mediation mechanisms. The war's results have demonstrated that prolonged disregard for fundamental norms of international law

within negotiating formats undermines their legitimacy and reduces the potential for a peaceful settlement. In this context, the 2020 war can be seen as a precedent highlighting the need for more realistic and effective approaches to resolving protracted conflicts.

The scientific novelty of this article lies in its comprehensive understanding of the Patriotic War of 2020 as a historical, military-political, and geopolitical phenomenon. Unlike existing studies, which focus primarily on military or diplomatic aspects, this work attempts to synthesize various analytical levels, allowing for a deeper understanding of the war's significance for the transformation of the regional order in the South Caucasus.

Future research could focus on analyzing post-conflict reintegration processes, the sustainability of new regional security mechanisms, and the impact of the 2020 war on the formation of long-term patterns of interaction in Eurasia. Thus, the 2020 Patriotic War appears not as a closed episode, but as the starting point of a new stage of regional development, the significance of which will determine the political dynamics of the South Caucasus in the coming decades.

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