



THE ROLE AND EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE 2020 NAGORNO KARABAKH WAR

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Abstract

The Nagorno-Karabakh concern was fueled in the 19th century and turned into a war as a territorial struggle between the Azerbaijani and Armenian States in the 20th century. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, with Armenia's occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Region, there has been a war that has been going on in Azerbaijan territory for years. Especially between 1905 and 1907, it was seen that Armenia had bloody clashes in different regions and thousands of civilians were killed in many villages of Azerbaijan. Villages were burned and people were slaughtered during the raids of Armenian gangs on Azerbaijani villages in the 1920s. Although the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, which was carried to an international dimension, reached a short-term solution from time to time with the mediation of many states, it could not prevent the continuation of the Nagorno-Karabakh War for years. The raid on Armenia's Khojaly village in 1992 is known as the most disastrous massacre of the Nagorno Karabakh War. In the first part, the past dimensions of the Nagorno-Karabakh War are discussed. In the second part, the factors that effected the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and how the war ended were included. In the third part, How the Nagorno-Karabakh War resonated on social media, how the States of Azerbaijan and Armenia used the social media platform and what results they obtained were mentioned.

Keywords: *Nagorno-Karabakh War, Azerbaijan, Armenia, social media*

Introduction

The Caucasus, one of the most important passages on the road to the Asian continent, has always been an indispensable territory for Russia. In the aftermath of the Cold War, Brzezinski, an American analyst, said that this region is key to the balance of power. The



region of the Caucasus has thus been one of the battlefields of major states, especially in terms of energy resources. (YILDIRIM, 2018:47).

Russia, which had been trying to land in the warm seas for years, became a powerful state for the 18th century until now, and Russia has made plans to conquer the Caucasus. Russia achieved this goal after the 19th century by cooperating with the Armenians in its occupied territories, placing Armenians on Azerbaijani territory. At this time, Russia effectively kept its dominance over the Caucasus, suppressing Muslim culture. Thanks to this policy from Russia, multiple Armenian gangs have been set up in the Caucasus region. These gangs caused many casualties in both Azerbaijan and the Ottoman Empire by their attacks. Russia also intended to change the ethnic structure by bringing non-Muslims from other regions to Caucasus region.

In its policy of occupation in the Caucasus region, most of the population was divided into Armenians. In 1905, the Armenian- Azeri Turks conflict increased its intensity. During these years, the Armenians conducted major attacks in Baku, which spread to Karabakh. The Armenians' attacks caused to kill thousands of Azeri Turks. (YILMAZ, 2013:82).

1. Problem of Karabakh from the Past to the Present

The Nagorno-Karabakh War became a major issue during and after the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan people were forced to emigrate because of the wars.

Russia's repressive policy on the Caucasus has further encouraged the Armenians.

After Azerbaijan and Armenia gained independence in 1991, Armenians expressed their demand to Russia for Nagorno-Karabakh to join their territory.

In 1992, thousands of people were killed in clashes between the two states. During

these years, Azerbaijan battled alongside its volunteer public against Armenia, which had no regular army. (TOĞRUL, 2006).



On 20 January 1992, Azerbaijan joined the Minsk Group, which was founded by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The purpose of this group is It was to end the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia and seek for a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh War (YILDIRIM, 2018:75).

However, in 1992, Hoxali, the region's most critical place, experienced a massacre that would remain a blemish in human history. Hundreds of Azerbaijanis were killed in the invasion because of the Armenian attacks.

The Hoxha massacre has also caused a great deal of repercussion in Turkey, and Turgut Ozal, President at this time, made a statement to the Financial Times about the imposition of sanctions against Armenia. As a result of the ceasefire signed in 1994 forced approximately 600,000 Azerbaijani citizens to leave the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Thus, Armenia moved a step closer to Karabakh with Russian support (KRAMER, 2021). Until now, the demands of Azerbaijan and the Armenia State in Nagorno-Karabakh have failed to yield results, and thus far have gained an international dimension as a Nagorno-Karabakh problem. In November 2008, although Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sarkisian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev signed a major commitment agreement about the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, since 2010, there have been started to experience intermittent conflicts.

By 2019, because of the change of the Armenian government, there was hope that the negotiations with Nagorno-Karabakh would resume, but the conflict reached an elevated level again in 2020 (ZEIDAN, 2020).

From an International Law standpoint: Territorial demand of Armenia It was not supported by any government, and they have delivered an opinion that Azerbaijan is right about the Nagorno Karabakh problem. Armenia did not pursue a hard policy with Turkey because of its Nagorno Karabakh problem with Azerbaijan, but occasionally gave requests for mediation (EKİCİ, 2017).

It was confirmed by the United Nations at the 2008 General Assembly that the region of Nagorno-Karabakh was part of Azerbaijani territory. The conflict in Nagorno-



Karabakh was assessed by permanent members of the United Nations Security Council as being within the territory of Azerbaijan (AZERTAG, 2020).

2. Turning Point of Nagorno-Karabakh: year 2020

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was not only done on the ground but also on social media. Students at the American University in Armenia have shared on social media by translating official statements of the State of Armenia into many languages. On 2 April 2016, a war was experienced between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which was named "4 Days War". During this war, the claim that ISIS militants took part in front line by Azerbaijan became the main conversation on the social media. The claim that an Armenian soldier was killed by cutting his head by an Azerbaijan soldier was intensely shared on social media refer to ISIS (TUNCCEL, 2016).

The year 2020 Nagorno- Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia marked a turning point. Thanks to the treaty was signed on 10 November 2020 and marks a crucial step towards ending Nagorno Karabakh war that had been sustained the nearly 30-year. Armenia's favorable position in the articles said in the Bishkek protocol 28 years ago, with the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh agreement, has been transformed in favor of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan, which particularly took control of the city of Shusha with this agreement, gained significant gains in this war (DILAVER, 2020).

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war began on September 27 when Azerbaijan attacked critical linked villages. In the first stages of the war, it was seen that Azerbaijan suffered more casualties. the course of the conflict has moved to the inland points of the region. The influence of the Azerbaijani army on key points, especially with the Bayraktar TB2 Drones, continued to cause serious losses to the Armenian army. After a long war, the Armenian forces suffered a



supply problem, which resulted in Azerbaijan gaining territory. Although the Azerbaijani State did not have a large Air Force, applied a fierce maneuver defense as a tactic of war. Azerbaijan targeted and destroyed forces in the rear of the Armenian forces in a tactic like the US doctrine of the "Battle of Airland" from 1982 to 1990 (WATLING & KAUSHAL, 2020).

In the days of the war, both states blamed each other for the beginning of the conflict, and they started their own mobilization. Armenia has declared that Turkey supported Azerbaijan with drones and fighter aircrafts, and even that a Turkish plane leaving from Ganja shot down an Armenian plane. During the war, Azerbaijan army caused heavy losses to Armenia. Armenia caused civilian casualties by launching occasionally missile attacks on settlements. Russian President Putin demanded that as soon as possible the fighting cease and both states come to the table (BBC, 2020).

When the war ended, Azerbaijan regained their own territory, which were occupied by Armenia for years. Considering the Karabakh conflict from 1990 to 2020, The state of Azerbaijan was found to be more resolute and stable. In 2020, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev called this war the "Patriotic War". Patriotic War was a war that bunched up all Azerbaijanis. On the other hand, because of the confrontational politics of the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan within the country, he could not receive the necessary support in the Karabakh War (ASLANLI, 2020).

On 10 November 2020, Ilham Aliyev and Nikol Pashinyan signed an agreement that Russian President Vladimir Putin attended in it. By articles of agreement, "Kazakh Rayon" was first returned to Azerbaijan. However, there has been controversies on the Kremlin's website about this article with some uncertainties. Second, it is not possible to find any conclusions about the regions of Hocalı, Hankendi, Ağdere and Hocavend. The agreement has a certain ambiguity about what the Armenian settlements will be (GÜLER, 2020).

Both states with Russian as mediator have reached an agreement and a secure line has been set up between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia via the Lachin corridor. This line is agreed to be secured by the State of Azerbaijan. It was also agreed to set up new links in the western part of Nakhichevan autonomous republic and Azerbaijan (KALFAYAN, 2020). Up to 2,000 Russian



troops are currently deployed. Although Russian troops stationed in Azerbaijan were sent to region for security reasons, this situation is considered in another perspective of view. This has been seen as an advantage for Russia, which is one step closer to Iranian territory (KRAMER, 2021). Lieutenant General Rustam Muradov has served in the Russian military on separate occasions since 1990, led several operations, notably the Syrian War, and was awarded the "Hero of Russia" by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Lieutenant General Rustem Muradov, who is One of Vladimir Putin's most trusted soldiers, has been appointed Commander of the Russian Peacekeeping Forces in the region (ACTAFABULA, 2021).

3. War of the Two States on social media

Social media tools are the most common platform that people use to get information nowadays. The power of social media has continued to increase day by day. Social media also supplies people to get information quickly and easily.

The increasing spread of social media use has made social media a part of people's lives. Social media use has made it even easier everything for person or people trying to create feelings. In thus way the false information and images are achieving a lot of people, and the spread of these information and images is happening very quickly via fake names and accounts. Feeling management is used quite common method to make people believe and make propaganda. Feeling management can be activated by using shapes, graphics, etc. on social media. Numbers being given by exaggerating on social media are the most impressive elements of creating feeling. Using wrong numbers and causing chaos on social media are techniques to create feeling, which is constantly used by people. It is one of the goals of cyber agents that the masses, together with false numerical information, are influenced their regular lives and live in constant unease. It's a long shot to restrict and detect the perception management of virtual agents working like a spy organization. This is the surplus of followers and the constant interaction in person accounts; increases the reliability of shares and subliminal messages (ERASLAN, 2018).



Social media users closely followed the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War. They watched the battle via instant sharing through various platforms. The actors of the war, Azerbaijan and Armenia, shared images of their operations and supplied instant information. It was difficult to get the right information transfer across because it was difficult for journalists to go to the front in operations. As a result of the investigation by BBC television in this war, Images of the Nagorno-Karabakh War have been identified as earlier war images. It has also been set up those images are quickly shared on social media platforms, with political hashtags and posts. Fake images included the Nagorno-Karabakh War missile and bombing videos. An image that the Iranian people viewed Karabakh War from the border during the is shared on Twitter. It was later revealed that this video was taken from an event in Russia in 2019. Also, in the Nagorno-Karabakh War, videos, which were taken from a war game called "Arma 3" have been shared on Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok and Youtube. This spread video on a television station in India, showing footage of Azerbaijan's drones falling.

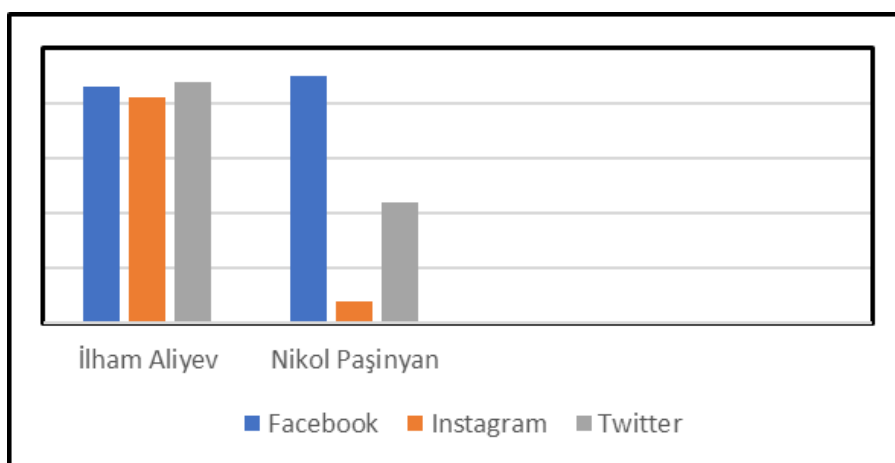
On social media platforms, many campaigns and activities have been organized to support Azerbaijan and the Armenian States. On Facebook, the word Armenia was searched 20 million times, and Azerbaijan 17 million times. Online wars also between the governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia mutually continued throughout the war. Armenia, via Facebook; with like nicknames "media warriors" and "cyber armies," have set up pages. On social media, Armenia wanted to continue by looking to support the war, which was going badly on the ground. There have been also several posts on the Azerbaijani side. It was seen that These posts have been seen not only on Facebook but also on Twitter sharing with different hashtags. These posts were quickly spread by fake users for feeling and propaganda purposes. Facebook has cut accounts linked to the Azerbaijani State. 7,906 pages, 589 Facebook accounts, and 447 Instagram accounts were removed by claiming to be unrealistic by Facebook (GILES & BHAT, 2020).

During the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War; Tagging on the social media platform has been shown to be mainly via politicians and government officials. Tags were also shared by being translated into other languages. Accounts owned by real users were intensely labeled by fake



accounts. It has been seen that Groups supporting Armenia have tagged posts with the earlier content and they tried to attract the attention of international forces through different discourse. Working in coordination with pro-Armenian celebrities, they used different information strongly among social media networks. These groups targeted Turkey and Azerbaijan by showing not just images of war, but also events outside the war as if these events were in the war. When the groups that support the State of Azerbaijan are compared to the groups that support Armenia; It has been seen that operational footage was shared rather than the content. However, groups supporting Azerbaijan have used social media networks in a narrower framework than Armenian groups. Another crucial point in the Karabakh War was that misstatements and different events on social media have been diverted in diverse ways from perceptions by including to the war. Accusing Turkey of sending foreign troops and applying a policy of isolation could be seen as an example.

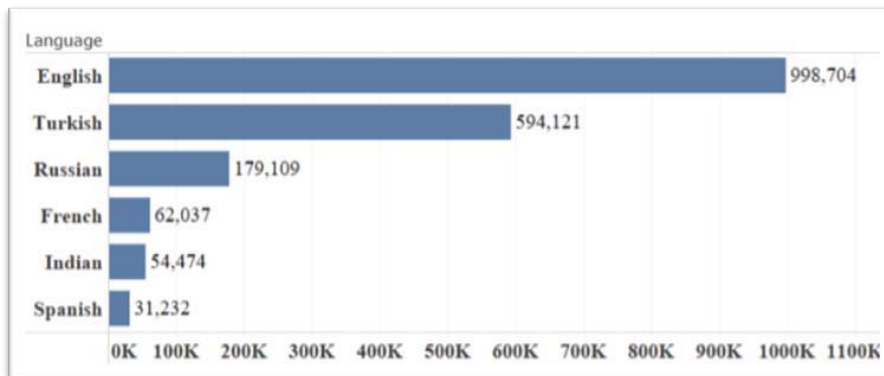
With the start of the Nagorno-Karabakh War on September 27, the Azerbaijani people achieved to waken World Public Opinion in response to Armenia's attacks by using the hashtag #PrayForGanja on Twitter. Following this hashtag, the hashtags #StopArmenianAgression, #StopArmenianTerrorism, and #KardashiansSupportTerrorism all ranked high on social media. On November 8, 2020, after Azerbaijan regained the critical city of Shusha, the hashtag #SHUSHA was placed number one worldwide.





Schedule 1: On 27 September and 10 November, the numbers of sharing that were shared by İlham Aliyev and Nikol Paşinyan.

According to the data shown in Schedule 1, During the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev posted 151 posts on Facebook, 141 posts on Instagram and 154 Twitter. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Paşinyan also posted 174 posts on Facebook, 18 on Instagram and 66 on Twitter. Twitter has been declared the strongest platform in social networks and had a prominent place in the pursuit of Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts. Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev announced on Twitter that the war had ended, and the winner was the State of Azerbaijan. It has been seen that on the official page of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the number of Twitter followers reached approximately 400,000 users on 27 September to 9 November 2020 (HUSEYNZADE, 2020).



Schedule 2: The number of Tweets that were shared in the most active languages on the Twitter's data set during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War. Resource: Kaynak: Ekonomi and Journal of the Foreign Policy Research Center

4. Result

The Republic of Turkey, as earlier in the Karabakh wars, has also supplied full support the Azerbaijani State in the 2020 war. Turkey gained the love of the people of Azerbaijan after the



war, and in both social media and settlements of the region, it was possible to see the Turkish flag. via social media in Azerbaijan, "Use of Turkish Goods" was called for and this irritated Armenia and the countries that support Armenia. This led to a boycott of Turkish goods in many countries. This boycott was even effective in Muslim Middle Eastern countries. As a result of the developments, negotiations were held between Turkey and Azerbaijan to increase trade volume (KAPLAN, QHA, 2020).

2020 Nagorno-Karabakh, War It was not only the victory of Azerbaijan, but also the result that the Azerbaijani people were united caused. With this war, Azerbaijan was reborn from its ashes, achieving what could be called the "War of Independence". The right propaganda that Azerbaijan has done on social media put forward "Turkishness Awareness". When the war was assessed by the Armenian front, Armenia created distrust towards its own people as the government of Armenia shares exaggerated and unrealistic information from its official social media accounts and mismanaged the war on social media (ÖZTÜRK, TR.EURONEWS, 2020).

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