
RUSSIA AND TURKEY MAY FILL IN THE DIPLOMATIC VACUUM ON ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT

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28.08.2020

Atlantic Council (27 August 2020)

New Atlanticist by Matthew Bryza

Last month, Armenia and Azerbaijan had their second most serious flareup in fighting since their 1994 ceasefire during their war over Nagorno Karabakh. These latest clashes may have unleashed a dangerous new geopolitical dynamic: heavy weapons fire near strategic transportation assets, military posturing between Russia and Turkey, and lack of an appropriate mediation mechanism. In the absence of US or EU leadership, it may be up to Turkey and Russia to redirect Azerbaijan and Armenia away from the battlefield and toward the negotiating table.

Who shot first on July 12 remains unclear. Both sides agree a pair of Azerbaijani soldiers were riding that night in a jeep along the two countries un-demarcated international border. Yerevan claims its troops warned the two Azerbaijani soldiers to retreat and Azerbaijan responded with artillery fire; Baku claims Armenian artillery fired unprovoked. Ultimately, fifteen Azerbaijani soldiers, including a general, were killed, along with one civilian in Tovuz Province. Four troops and one civilian perished across the border in Armenias Tavush Province.

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