

# The Impact of Russia-Armenia Military-Technical Cooperation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict, 1992-2020

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This report examines the cause-and-effect of the relationship between the Russia-Armenia military-technical cooperation (MTC) and the [former] Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict by clarifying the details of Russia-Armenia MTC in different periods of Armenia's political leadership, including during both the First and Second Karabakh wars. The report was prepared through an analysis of media sources from Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia, as well as reports from international specialized resources and authors's personal interviews. The present study is divided into three parts, considering the extent of influence of Russia-Armenia MTC on various eras of the [former] Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict in three periods: from 1992 to 1999 (including the hottest phase of the First Karabakh War, 1992–1994); from 2000 to 2015; and from 2016 to 2020.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, military cooperation, Second Karabakh War



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### *Introduction*

MTC between Russia and Armenia is based on closely allied arrangements codified with both multilateral and bilateral partnership through more than 200 treaties and agreements. That is, their MTC developed on a bilateral basis, as well as within the framework of regional organizations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

The parties collaborate in several areas, including providing Armenia with comprehensive military training support; the development and provision of weaponry and military equipment (WME); and cooperation in increasing the combat capability of the Russia-Armenia joint group of forces stationed in Armenia.

In addition to transferring an unprecedented volume of military-technical assistance to Armenia, Russia also engaged in the protection of this country's borders. In general, their MTC grew dynamically throughout the period under review and WME supply to Armenia was carried out through the channels of: (a) free-of-charge WME transfer through bilateral military-technical assistance; (b) free-of-charge WME for joint use in the joint air defence (AD) system with Russia; (c) transfer of WME as part of the CIS's military assistance; (d) credit-based supply of WME by Russia; and (e) WME procurement using Armenia's own military budget.

### *The period from 1992 to 1999*

To fully comprehend the impact of Russia-Armenia MTC on the [former] Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, it is necessary to understand the roots of the two countries' war. The establishment of the 'Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast' (NKAO) within and as part of the Azerbaijan SSR by the Soviet leadership, followed by the relocation of Armenians to this region, predetermined the conflict's onset. In 1987, the nationalist forces in Armenia fomented separatism in the NKAO, which led to ethnic tension with the connivance of the USSR's political leadership. In the early 1990s, the USSR's Minister of Internal Affairs ordered the seizure of service firearms from law-enforcement organizations and hunting rifles from the population in Azerbaijan, though such actions were not carried out in either Armenia or the

former NKAO of Azerbaijan. As a result of this policy, Armenia was granted a significant advantage in the development of its armed forces, numbering up to 30,000 personnel, which it deployed in the autumn of 1991 to Azerbaijan's former NKAO.<sup>1</sup>

In general, this period coincides with the start and rapid expansion of Russia-Armenia MTC, as well as the hottest phase of the First Karabakh War between Armenia and Azerbaijan (1992–1994). The cases of weapons transfers from Russia to Armenia, and the participation of military units from Russia (not officially directed by the then Russian leadership) in the hostilities in Azerbaijan's Karabakh region from the beginning of 1991 to the middle of 1992, went far beyond normal MTC and had a significant impact on the course and outcome of the war in favour of Armenia. Around the same period, 180 soldiers, including 22 officers, deserted and joined the military forces of Armenia.<sup>2</sup>

Armenia received a large amount of WME and ammunition from the Russian army's warehouses stationed on Armenian territory until mid-1992; this included 2,000–3,000 AK-74 assault rifles and ammunition, 25 tanks, 87 infantry fighting vehicles (IFV), 28 armoured personnel carriers (APC), and 45 artillery and mortar systems during the evacuation of the 366th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment's soldiers from the city of Khankendi in March 1992.<sup>3</sup>

After the Soviet Union dissolved, its military property was distributed unequally in the South Caucasus, where Armenia acquired most of the WME, including through the unofficial transmission of warehouses containing food, clothing, ammunition, and fuel<sup>4</sup>, as well as the military property of 15th and 164th divisions of the 7th Army of the former USSR, including 167 tanks, 442 armoured fighting vehicles (AFV), 259 canons, and 500 ammunition wagons, in accordance with the Agreement Between Russia and Armenia on the Conditions and Terms for the Transfer of WME to Armenia of Formations and Units of the

1 Hasanov, A. "Armyano-Azerbaycanskiy Nagorno-Karabaxskiy Konflikt", *Preslib. az*, p.55, available at: <http://files.preslib.az/projects/azerbaijan/rus/gl7.pdf> (accessed: December 15, 2020).

2 Retaildive.com, *Armenian lie and information war. Karabakh TV want justice*, September 13, 2018, available at: <https://www.retaildive.com/press-release/20180913-armenian-lie-and-information-war-karabakh-tv-want-justice/> (accessed: June 3, 2022)

3 Turan.az, *Kak my teryali Khodzhalıy*, February 26, 2020, available at: [https://www.turan.az/ext/news/2020/2/free/Want\\_to\\_Say/ru/87568.htm/001](https://www.turan.az/ext/news/2020/2/free/Want_to_Say/ru/87568.htm/001) (accessed: June 3, 2022)

4 From Author's personal interview with Baku-based military expert

Armed Forces of Russia Stationed in Armenia, dated 6 July 1992. Although not specified in that agreement, the 96th AD Missile Brigade stationed in Armenia and hosting S-300 AD systems, 13 Mi-24 combat helicopters, and 8 Mi-8 transport helicopters were also transferred to this country.<sup>5</sup> The assets of military infrastructure and WME of the State Security Committee (KGB) of the USSR's border detachments, the internal forces of the USSR's Ministry of Internal Affairs stationed in Armenia, as well as those of the KGB's Hadrut border detachment, stationed in Azerbaijan's Karabakh region, were also handed over to Armenia.<sup>6</sup>

However, Russia and Armenia not only synchronized their MTC; Russia also supported Armenia in its war against Azerbaijan through

*However, Russia and Armenia not only synchronized their MTC; Russia also supported Armenia in its war against Azerbaijan through military assistance, intelligence gathering, etc.*

military assistance, intelligence gathering, etc. Further support was provided through the reconnaissance and sabotage activities in Azerbaijan of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the Ministry of Defence of Russia and the provision of logistics, training, and recruitment of professionals for Armenia's armed forces.<sup>7</sup> Judging by the statements of the then head of the [former] Ministry of National Security of Azerbaijan, Namik Abbasov, the scale of

the GRU's espionage activities at that time in Azerbaijan was extremely large. By using intelligence agents and technical means of intelligence gathering, the GRU obtained and transmitted information about the army of Azerbaijan to Armenia during the hostilities. The GRU also took actions to discredit mid-level commanders and the entire military-political leadership of Azerbaijan in order to destabilize the situation in the country.<sup>8</sup>

Russia's 336th Guards Motor Rifle Regiment's involvement in committing the Khojaly genocide together with the Armed Forces of Armenia is particularly noteworthy. Criminal negligence and lack

5 Aliyev, E.T., "Mezhdunarodnyy Kontrol Nad Obychnymi Vooruzheniyami I Nekontriruyemoye Oruzhiye, Azerbaydzhan – Nagornyy Karabakh – Armeniya", Arms Control, 2006, available at: <https://www.armscontrol.ru/pubs/eta-az-nk-ar-061121.pdf>

6 From Author's personal interview with Baku-based military expert

7 From Author's personal interview with Baku-based military expert

8 Mustafayev, R. "Azerbaydzhan raspletayet agenturnuyu set GRU", *Kommersant*, December 7, 2006, available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/728183> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

of control by the higher command led to this unit's participation in the capture of the town of Khojaly in Azerbaijan and the killing of most of its civilian residents.<sup>9</sup> There have been several reports of Russian officers, tank crews, and scouts being captured while fighting alongside the army of Armenia. There is also a huge amount of evidence of this in the form of images and film, as well as several interviews with eyewitnesses to and participants in the hostilities.<sup>10</sup> For instance, Russian military journalist Alexander Nevzorov discussed the participation of a paratrooper unit of the Pskov oblast of the Russian Federation in combats in Kalbajar direction in March 1993.<sup>11</sup>

*Moreover, Azerbaijan also introduced a five-point proposal in March 2022 that would serve as a foundation for such a future peace treaty.*

On a daily basis, the army of Armenia received spare parts and rear-service support from Russian warehouses and were trained in Russian military bases. The deployment of a multi-layered AD system in Karabakh region was one of the results of the WME transfer, as was the involvement of Russian specialists in training Armenian officers. This factor increased the aircraft losses of Azerbaijan at that time. From 1992 to 1994, 66 Il-76 and 2 An-12 flights transported more than 1,300 tons of armaments and 4 Su-25 attack aircraft from the Mozdok airfield of Russia to Yerevan.<sup>12</sup> In 1994, Russia also delivered the Tunguska anti-aircraft missile and cannon system to boost the AD capability of Armenia's armed forces in Azerbaijan's formerly occupied territories.

According to the report of General Lev Rokhlin, chairman of the Russian State Duma's Defence Committee, published on 2 May 1997, as well as documents from the Russian Center for Analysis of Strategies and

9 Abushov, K. "Regional level of conflict dynamics in the South Caucasus: Russia's policies towards the ethno-territorial conflicts (1991-2008)", Phd Thesis, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, available at: <https://d-nb.info/1010267027/34> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

10 Gazeta.ru, '*Iz glaz torchali okurki*': kto vinoven v *Xodjalinskoy tragedii*, February 26, 2020, available at: <https://www.gazeta.ru/social/2020/02/24/12974581.shtml> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

11 Vestnik Kavkaza, *V khode pervoy karabakhskey voyny za armyan vovevali nanyatyey imi pskovskiyey desantniki*, December 12, 2020, available at: <https://vestnikavkaza.ru/analytics/nevzorov-v-hode-pervoy-karabahskoj-vojny-za-arman-voevali-nanatyey-imi-pskovskie-desantniki.html> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

12 Armiya.az, *Rossiyskiy general, 'vzorzavshiy' s azerbaydzhanskimi voyennymi 'Armyangeyt'*, July 3, 2018, available at: <http://armiya.az/ru/news/134585/Российский-генерал,-«взорвавший»-с-азербайджанскими-военными-«Армянкейт»> (accessed: June 3, 2022)

Technologies (2018)<sup>13</sup>, Russia transferred large batches of free WME for the Armed Forces of Armenia on a regular basis during the years 1993–1996.<sup>14</sup> The outcomes of this report lead to the conclusion that the Russian Federation violated UN General Assembly resolutions 51/47B (8 January 1997) and 51/45F (January 10, 1997) on disarmament and illicit transfer of conventional arms, as well as its obligations under the Missile Technology Control Regime. The report revealed that Armenia received:

- In 1994: 64,200 tons of service fuel; 15,977 items of communications equipment and radio stations; 41,003 km of field cable; and 25 T-72 tanks, accompanied by spare parts from Russia’s military base in Gyumri, Armenia, and other spares supplied by military transport aircraft from Russia’s Kubinka and Kamenka (Penza) airfields.
- In 1996: an additional 4 tanks from Russia’s former military base in Vaziani, Georgia; another 4 tanks and 33 IFVs from the former 142nd Tank Repair Plant in Tbilisi, Georgia; 1 tank from Gyumri base; 17 BMP-2s from Russia’s former military base in Batumi, Georgia; another batch of 50 T-72 tanks and associated weaponry and spare parts; 36 D-30 howitzers; 18 D-20 howitzers; 18 D-1 howitzers; 18 Grad multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS); 40 Iгла anti-aircraft missile systems and 200 missiles for them; and 12,600 artillery shells, including 1440 rockets for the Grad systems.
- In 1995–1996: 31 An-24 and 13 Il-76 cargo aircraft were transferred from Russia’s Jasmine (Akhtubinsk) airfield to the Zvartnots airfield of Armenia.
- At various times: 8 R-17 Elbrus operational–tactical complexes and 32 ballistic missiles for them (300 km range); 27 Krug-M-1 medium-range AD systems and 349 missiles for them; 40 guided missiles for the Osa-AK short-range anti-aircraft missile system; 84 T-72 tanks of various modifications; 50 BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles; 72 towed artillery pieces of various calibres; 18 Grad

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13 Makienko, K.V, “V ozhidanii buri: yuzhnyy kavkaz”, *Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies*, available at: <http://cast.ru/upload/iblock/b0a/b0a00906a408158d431afb51cdee7440.pdf> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

14 *Armiya.az, Rossiyskiy general, ‘vzorvavshiy’ s azerbaydzhanskimi voyennymi ‘Armyangeyt’, op.cit.*; Nikushkin, A, “Genshtab Bez Tayn (glava 24) Rokhlin i ‘armyangeyt’”, 2016, available at: <https://nikitushkin.wordpress.com/2012/01/16/генштаб-без-тайн-глава-24-рохлин-и-армян/> (accessed: June 3, 2022)

MLRS; 26 mortars; 40 Igla portable anti-aircraft missile systems and 200 missiles for them; 20 SPG-9 and AGS-17 mounted grenade launchers; 306 machine guns; 7,910 rifles; 1,847 pistols; 489,000 artillery shells; 478,500 rounds for BMP-2; 945 anti-tank guided missiles of various types; 345,800 hand grenades; and 227,000,000 small-arms rounds.

An-124 and Il-76 military transport aircraft made 139 flights for the transportation of supplies. Moreover, 5 Il-76 aircraft transferred 85 tons of spare parts from the Chkalovsky airfield of Russia. This was in addition to various machinery, materials, transport vehicles, radio equipment (including satellite communication systems), communications kits, radar stations, batteries of various types, spare parts for tanks, guns, IFVs, etc.

On 16 March 1995, an intergovernmental agreement was signed to establish the 102nd Military Base of Russia in the Armenian city of Gyumri. This agreement also covered the reform and strengthening of the capabilities of and supply for this military base. For this purpose, the 3624th Air Base in Erebuni, located near to the capital, Yerevan, was incorporated into the 102nd Base in May 1996.<sup>15</sup> Armenia also started to cooperate with Russia for the training of its military officers and specialists in Russia's military colleges and academies, as well as in Armenia itself. Moreover, the armed forces of Armenia increased their combined combat drills with Russia.<sup>16</sup>

On 29 August 1997, the two countries signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance that consolidated the mechanisms for exercising the right to collective self-defence, ensuring mutual security, providing military assistance, and eliminating threats. The treaty included provisions for joint border protection, joint security, expanding national armed forces' interactions, and military-technical cooperation.<sup>17</sup>

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15 European Parliament, "Russian military presence in the Eastern Partnership Countries", Workshop Paper, 2016, available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/108547/Russia%20military%20in%20EaP\\_Workshop.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/108547/Russia%20military%20in%20EaP_Workshop.pdf) (accessed: June 1, 2022)

16 Kommersant, *Itogi vizita Pavla Gracheva v Zakavkazye*, March 25, 1993, available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/105115> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

17 UN Digital Library, "Letter dated 97/09/09 from the representatives of Armenia and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General", August 1997, available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/243780?ln=en> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

Only after the visit of Azerbaijan's then-President, Heydar Aliyev, to Moscow in mid-1997 was the economic blockade of Russia against Azerbaijan lifted and political relations normalized. Until 2000, there were no further noteworthy developments in Russia-Armenia MTC. Nevertheless, the armed forces of Armenia were the best supplied in the South Caucasus at that time.

### *The period from 2000 to 2015*

This period was characterized by the dynamic development of MTC and attempts towards increasing Armenia's military potential to balance Azerbaijan's expanding military capacity. However, given the 'frozen' nature of the conflict, marked by the absence of large-scale confrontations, the influence of this cooperation on Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict was not substantial.

In the meantime, Russian-Armenian MTC continued, and military exercises to increase interaction between Russian forces (land, air, and air-defence) in Armenia and the Armed Forces of Armenia took place on a regular basis. Within the CSTO framework, military servicemen of Armenia were trained in Russian military educational institutions free of charge from 2005.

From 2001, the air-defence forces of Armenia and the aviation group and the anti-aircraft missile regiment of Russia's military conducted joint combat drills. This gave the armed forces of Armenia a significant opportunity to save its financial resources, as anti-aircraft missile systems and fighter aircraft are expensive types of WME. Russia delivered to Armenia one Mi-24P combat helicopter in 2002 (and later, in 2011, two Mi-24P); five Mi-8MT and two Mi-8IV(Mi-9) military transport helicopters in 2003; and two Il-76M military transport aircraft in 2004.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, in 2008, Armenia received a wide range of WME free of charge from the 102nd Military Base of Russia in Gyumri. The list included: T-72 tanks (21), BMP-2s (27), armoured personnel carriers 70/80 (12), BREM-2s (5), ZSU 23-4 Shilka (4), BM-37 mortars, BM-

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<sup>18</sup> Armyrecognition.com, *Analysis: Armenian-Azeri fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh*, April 4, 2016, available at: [https://www.armyrecognition.com/armies\\_in\\_the\\_world\\_analysis\\_focus/analysis\\_armenian-azeri\\_fighting\\_in\\_nagorno-karabakh\\_tass\\_5040416.html](https://www.armyrecognition.com/armies_in_the_world_analysis_focus/analysis_armenian-azeri_fighting_in_nagorno-karabakh_tass_5040416.html) (accessed: June 1, 2022)



21 Grad MLRS (9), Akasia self-propelled canon (16), Gvozdika self-propelled howitzers (14), MT-12 Rapira 100-mm canons (5), as well as machine guns, grenade launchers, and various ammunition, including rockets. Russia also transferred WME to Armenia from its bases stationed in Georgia between 2005 and 2007. Armenia received three divisions of the S-300PT AD system in 2007, most likely from these bases in Georgia.<sup>19</sup>

In 2010, Armenia signed a protocol with Russia on the extension of the presence of the 102nd Military Base for the next 49 years (until 2044). And, although the transfer of two battalions of S-300PS AD systems and 144 5V55U missiles for S300 systems to Armenia in 2009–2010 was presented as a sale<sup>20</sup>, Yerevan could not afford such a large purchase using its own funds. In 2009–2010, an undefined number of Gaz-3308 military trucks and six Tiger armoured vehicles were also delivered to Armenia, followed, in 2011–2014, by 200 military trucks.<sup>21</sup>

In August 2012, Armenia received another donation of WME from Russian bases in the country that included: T-72 battle tanks; BMP-2 AFVs; R-149 command and staff vehicles based on the BTR-80; Akasia 2S3 self-propelled artillery; Giyatsint-B canon; 122-, 240-, and 300-mm rockets; 100-, 122-, and 152-mm artillery shells; 125-mm artillery shells for tanks; 5V55 anti-aircraft guided missiles for the S-300 complex; S-5 and S-8 unguided missiles; R-60M and Kh-25ML guided air missiles.<sup>22</sup>

Since Armenia did not have enough financial resources to balance Azerbaijan's increasing military power, official Yerevan signed another MTC agreement with Russia in 2013 to purchase relatively cheaper military products.<sup>23</sup> According to the UN Register of Conventional Arms, Russia delivered the following WME to Armenia in 2013: 35

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19 Mikhaylov, V. "Oruzheynnyy skandal nakanune referendum", *Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye*, January 30, 2009, available at: [https://nvo.ng.ru/armament/2009-01-30/11\\_scandal.html](https://nvo.ng.ru/armament/2009-01-30/11_scandal.html) (accessed: June 1, 2022)

20 Armyrecognition.com, Analysis: Armenian-Azeri fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, *op.cit.*

21 From Author's personal interview with Baku-based military expert

22 Agregator, *Besplatnoye oruzhiye dlya Armenii – Spisok*, September 25, 2020, available at: <https://aqreqator.az/az/politika/1026582> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

23 Aleksandrov, M. "Military-technical cooperation between Russia and Armenia is gaining momentum", *Noev Kocheg*, 2014, available at: <https://noev-kovcheg.ru/mag/2014-02/4297.html> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

T-72 tanks; 110 BTR-80/82 AFVs; 50 launchers for Fagot anti-tank missiles and 200 missiles for them.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, 50 BMP-2 AFVs were repaired during the same period. However, deliveries of 4 Tochka-U tactical-operative missile systems and a Kasta 2E2 radar system in 2013 were not listed in that registry.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, the KAMAZ-Armenia Service Centre, which is a subsidiary of Russia's Kamaz factory, was opened in Yerevan in 2013.<sup>26</sup> In 2013, the Russian AFM SERVICE company supplied a batch of Ptero-E5 UAVs to Armenia, and then provided technical support to organize serial production of a modified version of the X-55 UAVs (Armi-55) in Armenia.<sup>27</sup> In 2015, Russia also completed a contract with Armenia to upgrade the S-125 AD system to the Pechora-2M level and supplied two BM-30 Smerch MLRS.<sup>28</sup>

Armenia's attempts at creating an imbalance through its MTC with Russia were balanced by the intensification of Azerbaijan-Russia MTC from 2007. The period under analysis also featured improved interstate relations between Azerbaijan and Russia compared with those in the early 1990s. Meanwhile, policymakers in Moscow believed that instability in Azerbaijan might also negatively affect the situation in Russia's southern provinces (the North Caucasus), especially at a time when Russia was conducting a military operation in Chechnya. There was also a shift in Russia's policy toward Azerbaijan. This was conditioned by two main factors: (1) the Russian military-industrial

24 Grigoryan, G. "Osnovnyye etapy rossiysko-armyanskikh voyenno-politicheskikh vzaimootnosheniy v postsovetskiy period", September 2018, p.88, available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327884114\\_Osnovnye\\_etapy\\_rossijsko-armanskikh\\_voyenno-politicheskikh\\_vzaimootnoshenij\\_v\\_postsovetskij](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327884114_Osnovnye_etapy_rossijsko-armanskikh_voyenno-politicheskikh_vzaimootnoshenij_v_postsovetskij) (accessed: June 1, 2022)

25 Poliqon, *Armenia's open and secret arms trade: regional threats are increasing* (translation from Azerbaijani), available at: <https://poliqon.az/ermenistanin-aciq-vezgizli-silah-alveri-regional-tehdidler-artir/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

26 Zainetdinov, V. "MKV·ES ODKB osoboje vnimaniye udelyayet roli standartizatsii oboronnoy produktsii v obespechenii konkurentosposobnosti voyennoy promyshlennosti i sozdaniyu Mezhdunarstvennoy sistemy katalogizatsii predmetov snabzheniya vooruzhennykh sil", Official website of CSTO, October 4, 2013, available at: [https://odkb-csto.org/news/news\\_odkb/mkves\\_odkb\\_osoboe\\_vnimanie\\_udelyaet\\_rol\\_i\\_standartizatsii\\_oboronnoy\\_produktsii\\_v\\_obespechenii\\_konkure/](https://odkb-csto.org/news/news_odkb/mkves_odkb_osoboe_vnimanie_udelyaet_rol_i_standartizatsii_oboronnoy_produktsii_v_obespechenii_konkure/) (accessed: June 1, 2022)

27 Hasanov, A., "Armyanskiye voyennyye skazki: ot sozdateley mifa ob 'Armenikume'", *Armiya.az*, April 3, 2018, available at: <http://armiya.az/ru/news/130567> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

28 Tass.ru, *Armeniya poluchila ot Rossii vooruzheniye na \$200 mln*, July 22, 2018, available at: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/5394196> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

complex was seeking new sales markets, and (2) the supply of any type of weapon to Azerbaijan enabled Russia to manipulate Armenia more. Purchases of modern weapons by Azerbaijan forced the leadership of Armenia to augment its military imports from Russia. Armenia, however, had limited financial resources, and even the sale of WME to Armenia at domestic Russian prices was insufficient to make up for the imbalance in military-technical equipment.

In order to reduce Armenia's deficit, in 2015, Russia offered a loan in the amount of US\$200 million for the supply of new WME. The loan was given for a period of 13 years with payments beginning in 2018 at an interest rate of 3% annually.<sup>29</sup> As part of this loan package, Armenia would receive 9K58 Smerch MLRS with ammunition; Igla-S and Verba MANPADS; TOS-1A Solntsepyok heavy flame-thrower systems; Konkurs-M and Kornet-E anti-tank missile systems; Tiger armoured vehicles; Dragunov sniper rifles, and Aytobaza-M mobile electronic intelligence complex.<sup>30</sup> In addition, Armenia ordered RPG-26 grenade launchers as well as communications and engineering equipment, spare parts, and scopes for tanks and trucks.<sup>31</sup> Armenia received part of the WME listed above at the beginning of 2016, but the April fighting with Azerbaijan in that year affected not only this transaction, but also the entire Russia-Armenia MTC arrangement in general.

### ***The period from 2016 to 2020***

The period under study coincides with the attempts of the Russia-Armenia MTC to adapt to Azerbaijan's developing military-technological superiority. Given that there were two wars during this period (one short-term and one full-fledged), the impact of this MTC on the former Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict needs a separate evaluation for each period. There are two aspects of MTC's effect on this entire period:

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29 Eurasia Daily, *A US\$200-million loan: What weapons will Armenia buy from Russia?*, July 2, 2015, available at: <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2015/07/02/a-us200-million-loan-what-weapons-will-armenia-buy-from-russia> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

30 Martirosyan, A. "Armeniya vydělila 214 mln rubley v kachestve predoplaty po oboronnomu kreditu ot Rossii", *Kavkazskiy uzel*, September 30, 2016, available at: <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/290176/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

31 Mehdiyev, M. "President Aliyev Calls on Russia to Refrain from Arming Armenia", *Caspian News*, August 18, 2021, available at: <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/president-aliyev-calls-on-russia-to-refrain-from-arming-armenia-2021-8-18-0/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

(1) Armenia’s army personnel were primarily trained by and educated in Russia, and (2) they fought using Russian-made armaments.

On April 2, 2016, a brief, high-intensity conflict, known as the ‘April War’, took place between the armed forces of Azerbaijan and Armenia in the former conflict zone (the occupied territories). Given that the active engagements occurred only on the first two days of the fighting, and the sides exchanged artillery strikes on following days, there was no large-scale influence of Russia–Armenia MTC during the April War. However, Russia’s military-political pressure during the April War became obvious, with its forces from the 102nd Base and Russia’s South-Eastern Military District (deployed to polygons in Daghestan) put on high alert.<sup>32</sup> Armenia’s army, which was repelled from a small part of the territories they previously occupied during the April War, drew some conclusions in terms of the military-technological gap vis-a-vis Azerbaijan’s army. Armenia, therefore, decided to increase budget expenditure on defence. Armenia obtained the most up-to-date weaponry systems in the following years, including a variety of electronic warfare (EW) systems.<sup>33</sup>

**Table 1:** The Armenian budget for the defence sector, 2016–2020

Year	Amount allocated in million US\$	Percentage change from previous year
2016	430	+3%
2017	443	+3.5%
2018	518	+16.9%
2019	647	+24.9%
2020	625	–3.5%

In 2016, Moscow and Yerevan established the Joint Group of Forces of Russia and Armenia in the Caucasus region of collective security. The group comprised the 5th Army Corps of Armenia and military units (or personnel) of Russia’s 102nd Military Base in Gyumri. The main tasks of the joint group of forces were to be timely detection and reflection

32 Lurer.com, *Rossiya nachala voyennyye ucheniye na granitse s Azerbaydzhanom - v Dagestane*, April 5, 2016, available at: <https://lurer.com/?p=218728&l=ru> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

33 Nersisyan, L., “Armeniya poluchila ot Rossii ‘Iskander’: Azerbaydzhan mozhet zabyt pro Karabakh”, *Regnum*, September 17, 2016, available at: <https://regnum.ru/news/2180732.html> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

of an armed attack against either country; covering the land part of both countries' state borders within established limits of responsibility; protecting Russia's and Armenia's state borders in the airspace; as well as the participation of troops and utilization of critical infrastructure to ensure effective AD.<sup>34</sup>

The former President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, stated in an interview that, “between 2010 to 2018, Russia supplied Armenia with free military-technical support in the amount of 50 thousand tons.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, in the first quarter of 2016, Russian enterprises began modernizing Armenia's T-72 tanks. Meanwhile, Armenia received the following WME in 2016: 44 BM-30 Smerch MLRS; 6 Tiger armoured vehicles; 1 T-90S tank as a prize of “Tank Biathlon 2014”; 4 Iskander-E operational-tactical missile systems; 200 Igla AD systems; Undefined numbers of Buk-M1-2 AD systems, portable Infauna, and R-325U EW systems.<sup>36</sup>

According to the UN Register of Conventional Arms, Russia transferred 300 pieces of Igla-S and Verba portable AD systems, as well as 6 TOS-1A Solntsepek and 100 pieces of Kornet anti-tank missile systems, and 1 Nebo-M radar station to Armenia between December 2016 and January 2017.<sup>37</sup> However, the submission of national reports to this UN Register of Conventional Arms is voluntary and, therefore, most WME deliveries to Armenia were undocumented or unreported by the Government of Armenia.

In 2017, Russia allocated a new loan of \$100 million in order to expand the volume of WME shipments. According to the loan agreement, Armenia received credit with a 3% annual interest rate for a 15-year

34 Interfax.ru, *Armeniya ratifitsirovala soglasheniye s RF ob obyedinennoy gruppirovke voysk*, October 5, 2017, available at: <https://www.interfax.ru/world/581847> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

35 Sputnik Armenia, *Rossiya besplatno peredala Armenii boleye 50 000 tonn vooruzheniy v 2010-2018gg*, August 19, 2020, available at: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/politics/20200819/24158615/Rossiya-besplatno-peredala-Armenii-bolee-50-000-tonn-vooruzheniy-v-2010-2018gg---Sargsyan.html> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

36 Eurasia Daily, *Armeniya obkhodit Azerbaydzhan na oruzheynom virazhe: Su-30 menyayut balans sil*, December 30, 2019, available at: <https://easaily.com/ru/news/2019/12/30/armeniya-obkhodit-azerbaydzhan-na-oruzheynom-virazhe-su-30-menyayut-balans-sil> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

37 Rusarminfo.ru, *Rossiya predostavila OON dannyye o postavkakh oruzhiya Armenii i Azerbaydzhanu*, June 13, 2017, available at: <https://rusarminfo.ru/2017/06/13/rossiya-predostavila-oon-dannyye-o-postavkax-oruzhiya-armenii-i-azerbajdzhanu/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

term and had to use these funds between 2018 and 2022.<sup>38</sup> Within the framework of this loan agreement, Russia delivered an undefined number of UAZ-Cargo and UAZ-432 military vehicles to Armenia between 2017 and 2020, and 2 Repellent EW systems to counter UAVs in 2017–2018.<sup>39</sup>

Albeit the post-‘Velvet Revolution’ (April 2018) period in Armenia raised certain political tensions between the new political leadership of Armenia and the Russian Federation, it did not affect the degree of MTC between the two countries. Thus, in August 2018, Armenia’s Royalsys Engineering Ltd. and Russia’s Kalashnikov signed an agreement for the licensed production of the AK-103 assault rifle in Armenia, and production started in July 2020. In addition, this joint company began producing optical-electronic devices, thermal night sights, and five different-calibre cartridges.<sup>40</sup>

In 2018, Russia transferred to Armenia a Kasta-2-1 mobile radar station, an Aistenok portable radar station, and an Avtobaza-M electronic intelligence complex, as well as Ural and Kamaz military trucks, engineering equipment, and guided missiles for the Smerch MLRS. In 2019, Armenia bought from Russia 4 Su-30SM heavy fighters and 4 Tor-2MKM AD systems and 50 9M338 missiles for them.<sup>41</sup> Remarkably, following the delivery of these fighter jets, Russia offered Azerbaijan the opportunity to purchase Su-35SM and MiG-35 jets.<sup>42</sup>

According to a five-year report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) released on 9 March 2020, Russian

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38 Eurasia Daily, *Minoborony Armenii: Zakupili mnogo oruzhiya, chto konkretno — voyennaya tayna*, December 6, 2019, available at: <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2019/12/06/minoborony-armenii-zakupili-mnogo-oruzhiya-chto-konkretno-voennaya-tayna> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

39 Petrosyan, T. “Voyennyye obozrevateli nazvali problemy Armenii v sfere vooruzheniy”, *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, April 1, 2018, available at: <https://kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/318570/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

40 The Firearms Blog, *Armenia to Start Licensed Manufacturing of AK-12 and AK-15 Rifles*, August 27, 2018, available at: <https://www.thefirearmblog.com/blog/2018/08/27/armenia-to-start-licensed-manufacturing-of-ak-12-and-ak-15-rifles/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

41 Azatutyun.am, *Armenian Military To Get More Russian Warplanes, January 28, 2020*, available at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30402222.html> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

42 Mehdiyev, M. “Azerbaijan in Talks to Buy Next-Generation Military Aircraft From Russia”, *Caspian News*, April 12, 2020, available at: <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/azerbaijan-in-talks-to-buy-next-generation-military-aircraft-from-russia-2020-4-10-54/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

armaments accounted for 94% of all weapons in Armenia between 2015 and 2019.<sup>43</sup> During a visit of the Defence Minister of Russia, Sergei Shoigu, to Armenia in October 2019, an agreement was reached to improve the combat capacity of the 102nd Military Base by delivering new types of weapons. Parallel to this, a cooperation plan for 2020 was signed, which allowed for further joint exercises involving all types of armament and equipment.<sup>44</sup>

The year 2020 was a busy one for Russia-Armenia MTC because of the two military escalations, therefore it is relevant to perform an analysis of these events under three sub-periods, including the time preceding the escalations.

#### *From 1 January to 10 July 2020*

In 2020, the supply of 1,343 military trucks and 33 units of engineering equipment to Armenia that had started in 2018 was also completed by Russia. Some of the items, particularly 1,000 automobiles and items of automobile equipment, were delivered to Armenia through an alternative logistics path from Russia between 2018 and 2020. This involved shipping via the Volga River, across the Caspian Sea to Iran's Caspian ports, and then by road to Armenia across the Iran–Armenia border.<sup>45</sup>

#### *From 11 July to 26 September 2020*

From 12 to 16 July 2020, border clashes occurred between the armed forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the latter's north-western state border in the direction of its Tovuz district. This further four days of fighting was, however, limited to a small portion of the border and mainly involved rocket and artillery exchanges. Moreover, Armenia also allegedly used EW equipment to challenge the performance of Azerbaijan's UAVs.<sup>46</sup> Russia's military-political leadership made

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43 Abay, E. G., "Russia provides 94% of Armenia's weapons in 5 years", *Anadolu Agency*, October 29, 2020, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/russia-provides-94-of-armenia-s-weapons-in-5-years/2023969> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

44 Azatutyun.am, *Russia To Beef Up Military Presence In Armenia*, December 24, 2019, available at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30342769.html> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

45 From Author's personal interview with Baku-based military expert

46 Azatutyun.am, *Armenia Demonstrates 'Azeri Drones Shot Down In Border Clashes'*, July, 21, 2020, available at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30739643.html> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

regular demands for an end to hostilities, meanwhile announcing unexpected and unscheduled drills in its Southern Military District.<sup>47</sup> Armenia’s vulnerability to Azerbaijan’s loitering munitions and drones purchased from Israel was an underlined factor in this fighting.<sup>48</sup>

*The volume of WME delivery to Armenia, particularly EW systems, increased dramatically after the July fighting.*

The volume of WME delivery to Armenia, particularly EW systems, increased dramatically after the July fighting. In the short period from 17 July to 26 September, Russian military cargo aircraft alone delivered about 1,000 tons of military goods to Armenia. Although Russia justified the nature of the

flights as being for the transportation of conscripts and the delivery of building materials for its military base in Gyumri (Armenia)<sup>49</sup>, these cargo flights actually transported the Repellent EW systems, Nebo-M radar station, and Avtobaza-M electronic intelligence systems.<sup>50</sup> Apart from the supply of WME, the period after the July 2020 clashes was marked by joint Russia-Armenia tactical exercises, in which 70% of the Russian base’s military personnel were involved and that simulated various scenarios such as joint drone counteraction drills and landing forces behind enemy lines.<sup>51</sup> In August 2020, the Defence Ministry of Armenia and the United Aircraft Corporation of Russia signed a deal for the modernization and repair of Su-25 attack aircraft.<sup>52</sup>

*From 27 September to 10 November 2020*

The Second Karabakh War (aka the 44-Day War) began on 27 September

47 From Author’s personal interview with Baku-based military expert

48 Frantzman, S. “Drones play key role in Azerbaijan-Armenia clashes”, *Drone Wars: The book*, July 19, 2020, available at: <https://dronewars2021.com/2020/07/19/drones-play-key-role-in-azerbaijan-armenia-clashes/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

49 Jafarova, E., “Russian military shipments to Armenia – a dangerous escalation?”, *Euractiv*, August 31, 2020, available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/azerbaijan/opinion/russian-military-shipments-to-armenia-a-dangerous-escalation/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

50 Ostapenko, Y. and Agayeva, S., “Moskva postavlyayet oruzhiye v Armeniyu v razgar boyev: ne povod li zadumat’sya nad smenoy posrednikov?”, *1news.az*, August 14, 2020, available at: <https://1news.az/news/20200814050105632-Moskva-postavlyayet-oruzhie-v-Armeniyu-v-razgar-boev-ne-povod-li-zadumatsya-nad-smenoi> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

51 Tass.ru, *Russian, Armenian military begin joint exercise Kavkaz-2020 in Armenia*, September 21, 2020, available at: <https://tass.com/defense/1203085> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

52 Arka.am, *Armenia signs contract with Russia to repair and modernize its Su-25 strike aircraft*, August 24 2020, available at: [https://arka.am/en/news/society/armenia\\_signs\\_contract\\_with\\_russia\\_to\\_repair\\_and\\_modernize\\_its\\_su\\_25\\_strike\\_aircraft/](https://arka.am/en/news/society/armenia_signs_contract_with_russia_to_repair_and_modernize_its_su_25_strike_aircraft/) (accessed: June 1, 2022)



2020 and ended with the liberation of most of Azerbaijan's territories from the occupation of Armenia, as well as Armenia's capitulation on the night of 9–10 November 2020 following the signing of the Trilateral Statement between the state leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia.<sup>53</sup>

During the war, Russia supported its ally Armenia through: (1) *Regular provision of arms and ammunition for Armenia's military forces, including*<sup>54</sup>:

- Delivery of military cargoes to Armenia by aircraft of the Military Transport Aviation Command of Russia (7 flights were recorded);
- Transfer of weapons and ammunition from the warehouses of the 102nd Military Base of Russia in Armenia;
- Supply of military supplies delivered by military and civilian aircraft of Armenia from Minvody airport in Russia (more than 20 flights were recorded).<sup>55</sup>

The resupply of ammunition by Russia influenced the firepower of Armenia's army during the 44-Day War. For instance, most of the rockets and missiles previously supplied by Russia to Armenia did not explode during in the missile attacks on Azerbaijan's cities of Mingachevir and Ganja on 4 and 5 October 2020.<sup>56</sup> However, during the bombardment of Azerbaijan's city of Barda on 27–28 October 2020, all 10 rockets fired detonated.<sup>57</sup> That is to say, the missiles used until mid-October were expired stock, and only after the delivery of new missiles from Russia did the situation change. This was indirectly confirmed by the criminal cases brought against weapons suppliers in

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53 Kremlin.ru, *Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation*, November 10, 2020, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

54 From Author's personal interview with Baku-based military expert

55 Focus.ua, *Mineralovodskiy ekspress: vse, chto izvestno o taynoy pomoshchi Armenii so storony Rossii*, November 2, 2020, available at: <https://focus.ua/world/466410-mineralovodskiy-ekspress-vse-chto-izvestno-o-taynoy-pomoshchi-armenii-so-storony-rossii> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

56 Mejid, F., "Obstrel Gyandzhi obernulsya zhertvami sredi gorozhan", *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, October 4, 2020, available at: <https://kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/354928/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

57 Mejid, F., "Vyroslo chislo pogibshikh v rezul'tate obstrela Bardy", *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, October 28, 2020, available at: <https://kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/355855/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

Armenia after the war.<sup>58</sup>

*(2) The establishment of conditions for the Armenian lobby to export of weapons, mercenaries, and volunteers from Russia.*

Various Russian Federation government bodies, in collaboration with the Armenian lobby, devised several fastest-possible-delivery schemes for the export of weapons, mercenaries, and volunteers.<sup>59</sup> The Armenian lobby arranged this using civil aircraft from Russian airports. Armenian businessmen purchased an Il-76 military cargo transport aircraft from Russia to smuggle the weapons in the guise of a humanitarian cargo.<sup>60</sup>

With the support of VoMA, allegedly a military-patriotic organization functioning in Armenia, the Union of Armenians of Russia publicly recruited mercenaries and volunteers to participate in the 44-Day War on the side of Armenia by using Russian social network services.<sup>61</sup> During the recruitment process, they prioritized people with sniper and anti-tank guided system operator skills.<sup>62</sup> Video footage of numerous VoMA battalions fighting in the war was circulated on the internet. The capture of the volunteer Eduard Sergeevich Dubakov, a Russian citizen, by Azerbaijani forces is confirmation of this fact.<sup>63</sup>

*(3) Contribution of unofficial paramilitary units and regular forces of the Russian Federation to combat missions during the 44-Day War on the side of Armenia*

There is a lot of information in the media proving the planned participation of Wagner PMC's former fighters, as confirmed by a 58 Panorama.am, 'Patron Davo' arestovan, October 1, 2021, available at: <https://www.panorama.am/ru/news/2021/10/01/Давид-Галстян-арест/2574530> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

59 From Author's personal interview with Baku-based military expert

60 Rbc.ru, *Aliyev obvinil armyanskikh biznesmenov v kontranbande oruzhiya iz Rossii*, October 16, 2020, available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/16/10/2020/5f89c23b9a7947d7671697c6> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

61 AIR Center, "Use of Mercenaries and Foreign Fighters by Armenia", November 2020, available at: <https://aircenter.az/uploads/files/Mercenaries%20report.pdf> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

62 See website of the VoMA, available at: <https://www.voma.center/en> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

63 Turan.az, *A Russian citizen was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment on charges of fighting on the side of the Armenians*, July 22, 2021, available at: [https://www.turan.az/cache/2021/politics\\_news/free/news-2021-7-free-politics\\_news-en-6022.htm](https://www.turan.az/cache/2021/politics_news/free/news-2021-7-free-politics_news-en-6022.htm) (accessed: June 1, 2022)

survey of combatants.<sup>64</sup> According to an investigation, the PMC fighters dressed the uniform of the Special Forces of Armenia (Multicam) and a total of 500–600 PMC personnel are believed to have participated in the fighting. Bodies of their fighters were found after the battles for the cities of Khojavend, Aghoghlan, and Shusha, and their involvement in battles near Aghdere was also reported in the Russian media.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, Russian proxy militants from among SAR military personnel and Syrian Armenians were transferred to Yerevan by five aircraft from Russia's military bases in Khmeyim and the capital of Syria. This was relatively a young formation that first participated in the battles for Libya in 2020.<sup>66</sup> This fact is backed by numerous images and videos published in the media during the war that depicted bodies of militants who appear to be from the Middle East.<sup>67</sup> Russia's efforts in this regard influenced the personnel losses of Armenia during the war, as the participation of militants decreased the number of personnel casualties among the Armed Forces of Armenia.

Moreover, a group of Russian military personnel from the 102nd Military Base, as part of the unified AD system, carried out reconnaissance of part of Azerbaijan's airspace and the combat zone to assist Armenia in countering aerial assaults, allegedly, through electronic countermeasures (such as Krasukha-4 and Pole-21M EW systems).<sup>68</sup>

After 15 October 2020, the Caspian Flotilla of Russia conducted unscheduled manoeuvres in the middle part of the Caspian sea to

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64 Yapparova, L., "Sostoyaniye otchayaniya, ponimayesh? Kak dvoye armyanskikh dobrovoltagev dve nedeli vybiralis iz okruzheniya, a vsya ikh strana v eto vremya razocharovalas v Rossii", *Meduza*, November 20, 2020, available at: <https://meduza.io/feature/2020/11/20/sostoyanie-otchayaniya-ponimaesh> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

65 From Author's personal interview with Baku-based military expert

66 Öztürk, A., "Sensational facts about Russia sending Syrian and Lebanese mercenaries to Karabakh (translation from Azerbaijani)", *Report.az*, December 14, 2020, available at: <https://report.az/qarabag/rusiyenin-suriyali-ve-livanli-muzdlulari-qarabagagonderdiyine-dair-sensation-faktlar/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

67 TRT Russian, *Na storone Armenii v Karabakhe voyevali sotni siriytsev, - pravozashchitniki*, December 9, 2020, available at: <https://www.trtrussian.com/novosti-azerbaydzhan/na-storone-armenii-v-karabahe-voevali-sotni-siriycev-pravozashitniki-3790577> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

68 Ramm, A., "Elektronnoye 'Pole' protiv dronov-ubiys", *Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye*, December 4, 2020, available at: [https://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2020-12-04/1\\_1120\\_karabakh.html](https://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2020-12-04/1_1120_karabakh.html) (accessed: June 1, 2022)

*In general, Russia-Armenia MTC should be viewed through the perspective of Russia's foreign policy towards the South Caucasus. The overall MTC between Russia and Armenia had certain impacts on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.*

the north of Azerbaijan's Absheron Peninsula with the involvement of four Caliber-NK cruise missile (range: up to 2,000 km) carrier ships.<sup>69</sup> Fighter aircraft of Russia's Aerospace Forces started conducting training flights in the north-eastern portion of the maritime border during these drills until the beginning of November, making numerous incursions into the airspace of Azerbaijan.<sup>70</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In general, Russia-Armenia MTC should be viewed through the perspective of Russia's foreign policy towards the South Caucasus. The overall MTC between Russia and Armenia had certain impacts on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

In addition to other factors (civil war and coup d'état in Azerbaijan; better organized military formations on the side of Armenia), Russia-Armenia MTC also contributed to Armenia's victory in the First Karabakh War. In the First Karabakh War, Armenia's military forces and a contingent of Russian troops stationed in Armenia complemented each other. Thus, the Russia-Armenia MTC became one of the key factors leading to Azerbaijan's defeat during the First Karabakh War and, consequently, to the occupation by Armenia of Azerbaijani territories.

However, due to the evolved military capability of Azerbaijan, this MTC did not help in avoiding the defeat of Armenia in the Second Karabakh War. During that war, Armenia's army suffered significant manpower and equipment losses. Russia's additional provision of ammunition and weaponry, however, enabled Armenia to cause severe personnel (civilian and military) and equipment casualties on the side of Azerbaijan. Albeit the Russia-Armenia MTC accelerated during 44-Day War, it did not significantly influence the overall pace of war or change the plans of Azerbaijan. Among all the WME given by Russia

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69 Brimelow, B. "On a quiet but tense corner of Russia's border, its neighbors are gaining on it", *Business Insider*, November 10, 2021, available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/russias-neighbors-are-developing-military-capabilities-in-caspian-sea-2021-11> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

70 From Author's personal interview with Baku-based military expert

to Armenia between 1992 and 2020, apart from the Su-30SM fighters, everything, including heavy missile systems, was used during the war by the Armed Forces of Armenia.

Although Russia did not become directly involved in the 44-Day War, former Defence Minister of Armenia David Tonoyan confirmed that he “kept in touch with Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu throughout the war,” adding that “there were days when we talked on the phone several times a day. ... in the midst of a war, Russia tried its best to meet its allied commitments.”<sup>71</sup> Moreover, according to Movses Hakobyan, the former head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Armenia, “Russia supplied Armenia with weapons ... from the very first days of the war, even before the head of Armenia contacted the President of Russia by phone.”<sup>72</sup>

Despite Russia’s military-technical and material assistance to Armenia, Russia’s leadership has consistently confirmed that the Karabakh region is an internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan and has refused to intervene directly in the conflict, unlike other crisis situations in the post-Soviet area. President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has constantly called for the cessation of arms supplies to the aggressor country, Armenia, and warned of the necessity of stopping attempts to modernize the Armed Forces of Armenia after their defeat in the Second Karabakh War. Owing to the difficult domestic political situation in Armenia, and the economic pressure on Russia, notably the targeted sanctions against Russia’s military-industrial complex, it is difficult to predict the medium- and long-term prospects for the development of MTC between Russia and Armenia from now on.

Given the non-transparency of Russia-Armenia MTC and the confidentiality of the procurement policy of the Defence Ministry of Armenia regarding the supply of WME, only part of the volume and range of WME supplied by Russia to Armenia has been identified by the author in this article. Also, the formerly occupied [by Armenia]

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71 Mediamax.am, *Davit Tonoyan: Political melancholy looms over our people*, January 25, 2021, available at: <https://mediamax.am/en/news/interviews/41674/> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

72 Krasnaya Vesna, *Armeniya poluchala ot Rossii vooruzheniya, o kotorykh ne mogla mechat' - general*, November 19, 2020, available at: <https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/6d1499f1> (accessed: June 1, 2022)

territories of Azerbaijan turned out to be a ‘gray zone’ for hiding the true extent of Armenia’s WME imports. That is, Armenia did not register the real extent of its imports of certain types of WME in its reports to international and regional organizations, that is, WME that were stored in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan.