

An Analysis of the Deployment of Turkey's Drones in Nagorno-Karabakh War

ABSTRACT

The “second” war in Nagorno Karabakh, which ended with the ceasefire of 9 November 2020 after forty-four days of combat, presents noteworthy novelties in the conduct of operations. It is not yet the revolution in military affairs, initiated by the United States, China, and from numerous other countries that possess research capabilities in the field of digitization and “emerging & disruptive” technologies, but something to be observed carefully because that revolution partly heralds it.

From a geopolitical point of view, it also represents a confirmation of Russian's ability to maintain Russian hegemony in the provinces of the former Soviet empire. Nonetheless, Turkey has played and continues to play an important role, confirming itself as a very assertive player in the revision of regional balances. Turkey has vowed to fast-track the delivery of Turkish-manufactured drones to Azerbaijan, which have provided a transformative advantage on Azerbaijan's victory. Not only weaponry systems themselves but also the transfer of knowledge and skills on the utilization of this technology has displayed that a new air power concept successfully implemented by the Turkish Armed Forces in Syria and Libya have been performed by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces in the Caucasus. Nagorno-Karabakh War has shown that the effects of unmanned aerial systems on the battlefield can go beyond the tactical level and can bring remarkable influence on geopolitical dynamics. In this context, the aim of this paper is to analyse the drones' role in the succession of the Nagorno-Karabakh War in favour of Azerbaijan and how it shapes the dynamics of the region. Secondly, as Turkey moves toward more hard power-oriented foreign and security policies, the paper also sheds light on the changing nature of Turkey's aerial warfare approach, which can be labelled as “dronization” era. The paper is based on qualitative research focusing on the systematic analysis of primary and secondary sources, including resolutions, summaries, working documents, recommendations, and reports.

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