FORGOTTEN EXCLAVES OF AZERBAIJAN

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The Soviet Union’s divide and rule policy and its exploitation of ethnic and social conflicts to construct artificial borders constitute complex border problems in today’s Post-Soviet countries. Besides the controversial borders, exclave areas in these regions can also cause conflicts from time to time and even wars. The term ‘exclave’ describes the case where a part of a state’s territory is separated by another state’s territory.

Complex border problems in Central Asia, especially in the Fergana Valley, are concentrated between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the South Caucasus. While the Azerbaijan-Armenia clashes that started on September 27 continue around Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven adjacent districts, an exclave region like Nakhchivan, which has no borders with Azerbaijan, comes to the fore. Yet apart from Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven adjacent districts, other small exclaves of Azerbaijan under Armenian occupation remain in the background.

Nakhchivan

Despite the rising intensity of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Nakhchivan finds more coverage in global public opinion. The exclave has no border with Azerbaijan while it does with Turkey, Iran, and Armenia. Nakhchivan, which constitutes an autonomous region of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, was disconnected from the mainland and became an exclave after the Zengevur region was taken from Azerbaijan and given to Armenia in 1924. Turkey’s relation with Nakhchivan is quite remarkable. The Kars Treaty signed in 1921 between Turkey and USSR gave Turkey the right to intervene in the case of a third party.
attacking the region. In 1992, in the face of a threat of the Armenian invasion on Nakhchivan, Turkey brought up the treaty and it made a deterrent effect on Armenia.

The Forgotten Exclaves

Nakhchivan is considered as a popular and large exclave of Azerbaijan. Together with the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven adjacent districts, it is also the subject of many political agendas. However, apart from these problematic areas, Azerbaijan has other exclave areas that are currently under Armenian occupation.

Yukhari Askipara

Yukhari Askipara is a region under Azerbaijan’s Qazakh District. This region, which has an area of approximately 37 square km, has no connection with Azerbaijani lands. Yukhari Askipara is an exclave region located completely inside the Armenian territory. The village, which was occupied by the Armenian Armed Forces in 1992, was destroyed and the Azerbaijani population there was expelled.

The region is an old Turkish settlement among the historical artefacts of Azerbaijan Turks. Today, around 650 people live in Yukhari Askipara, which is in the Tavush region of Armenia.

Barxudarlı

It is a region under Azerbaijan’s Qazakh District. Barxudarlı is an exclave area that is located completely inside the Armenian territory and not connected with Azerbaijani territories. The area of approximately 22 square km area has been under Armenian occupation since 1992. After the occupation, the Armenian population was settled in the region and it was administered as a part of Armenia’s Tavush province. The current population of the region, which was established by Azerbaijani Turks in the 16th century, is around 450.

Sofulu

Sofulu, a region under the Qazakh District of Azerbaijan, borders Barxudarlı. The region is not connected with the Azerbaijani mainland and is an exclave area within the Armenian territory. The Armenian Armed Forces occupied the approximately 40 square km area in 1992. The current population of the region is around 200.

Karki

Karki is a region connected to the Sadarak District of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan. This region has neither connection with Azerbaijani lands nor with Nakhchivan. It is an exclave area located completely inside the Armenian territory. The name of the village, which was occupied by Armenia in 1990, was changed by the Yerevan administration to “Tigranashen”. The area of the land, located near the strategic Yerevan-Jermuk highway, is approximately 19 square kilometers.

Azerbaijani Turks who were in the region after the occupation became refugees and were settled in an area called “New Karki” in the Kangarli District of Nakhchivan. Today, there are no settlements in the region.

Two Unnamed Exclaves

Two unnamed agricultural lands, parallel to the village of Yaradullu in Azerbaijan’s Agstafa District, are referred to as Azerbaijan exclaves. These areas are also under Armenian occupation.

Armenian exclave: Bashkend (Artsvashen)

Bashkend is an Armenian exclave completely surrounded by Azerbaijani lands. Today, the area of approximately 35 square km is connected to Azerbaijan’s Gadabay District.

During the Karabakh War, the Armenian army used this area to shoot some villages in Gadabay and Tovuz. The Armenian army, which turned Bashkend into a military build-up and attacked the civilian population from this region, aimed to unite the region with Armenia by removing it from the exclave situation. While many Azerbaijanis lost their lives with the Armenian attacks since 1991, Azerbaijan gained control of the region by a counter move in 1992.
International Law and Azerbaijan’s Right

Thirty years of occupation in Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven adjacent districts have made grave impacts since it left the abovementioned Azerbaijani territories remain in the background. According to international law, these regions are considered Azerbaijani territory but the Armenian occupation continues in these areas. These exclaves belong to Azerbaijan. Even though they look like miniscule pieces of land, they have very strategic importance to the country. In addition, the rights of Azerbaijani people who were expelled from these regions after the occupation were seized. Don’t they count?