

Caucasus Edition

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In this issue:

Analysis:

- Opening Borders, Preserving Walls: Opportunities to Support the Karabakh Peace Process
By Laurence Broers
- Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: War, Humanitarian Challenge and Peacekeeping
By Margarita Tadevosyan

Blogs:

Shut up! The enemy might hear you!
By Anahit Shirinyan

Building Dialogue
By Arzu Geybullayeva

The Fragile Ceasefire and the Prospect of Reconciliation in Nagorno-Karabakh
By Efgan Niftiyev

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Academic

Opening Borders, Preserving Walls: Opportunities to Support the Karabakh Peace Process

By Laurence Broers

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Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: War, Humanitarian Challenge and Peacekeeping

By Margarita Tadevosyan

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Blog

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The Fragile Ceasefire and the Prospect of Reconciliation in Nagorno-Karabakh

By Efgan Niftiyev

The August 2008 war in Georgia showed how dangerous and fatal frozen conflicts could become in just a few days. The outcome of the five-day war between Russia **Read More on Page 4**

BLOGS

Shut up! The enemy might hear you!

By Anahit Shirinyan

A couple of weeks ago one of the most popular and respected Armenian Diaspora organisations posted a YouTube video link on its Facebook official fan page. The video showed a peaceful demonstration of an Azerbaijani opposition party in the center of Baku that was soon harshly dispersed by the police. A gloating remark on how undemocratic Azerbaijan is accompanied the link. As expected, the post has received many “likes.”

I usually refrain from commenting under Facebook fan page posts, where a lot of strange people engage in endless and useless arguments. I wouldn't do it this time either if the remark wasn't an “official position.” So I wrote a comment mentioning that almost all anti-governmental demonstrations in Armenia end in a similar way: the police come and disperse the protesters with the use of force, thus violating people's **right to peaceful assembly and demonstration**. So I don't see why we should be pointing out at the state of democracy in a neighboring country when we have democracy shortcomings of our own.

Soon this comment was attacked by many people (Armenians) who were criticizing me for daring to draw parallels between situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan and doing it publicly, under the scrutiny of the “enemies.” “It can't be compared with what's happening in Azerbaijan,” “Even if that's the same case with Armenia, you don't need to say it out loud. Turks and Azerbaijanis never criticize each other publicly” were the main arguments against my comment. “Instead of rebuking, you'd better keep up the nation's pride.” I went on explaining to them that the fact that someone from a neighboring country might be watching us, didn't mean that we should remain silent on violations in our country. Happily there were other people who supported this point. I would have never thought this was a topic worth writing about if a week later I didn't come across a [blog post](#) made by an Azerbaijani blogger, Arzu, who has found herself in a similar situation. In her blog, Arzu shared her experience on how she was harshly criticized by her fellow Azerbaijanis during a Caucasian regional conference in Tbilisi for speaking about the two detained Azerbaijani bloggers Emin and Adnan and criticizing the Azerbaijani government for that in front of an audience where there were also Armenians.

It is not a secret for anyone that both Armenia and Azerbaijan are experiencing serious democracy problems in this period of transition. Yet representatives of the two nations would rarely confess this fact whenever they have a chance to discuss it. The reason of this “cautiousness” is the state propaganda which actively exploits the “enemy factor” and suggests that we'd better not speak about democracy drawbacks when we're at a state of cold war with a neighbouring country. Throughout almost two decades the authorities in Armenia and Azerbaijan have been successfully using this method to distract people's attention from serious internal problems to the enemy out there. Anti-Armenian and anti-Azerbaijani rhetoric has very often kept people silent on human rights and democracy issues at home. This practice becomes especially effective when new elections are on the horizon.

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh along with other things has much hindered the democratization processes in the two countries. But the new generations of Armenians and Azerbaijanis should be starting open discussions on democracy and human rights issues. We should be learning from each other, not hiding the problems that are so much the same and known to everyone in the two countries. Happily, there is an uncountable amount of online resources —YouTube videos, blogs and newspapers — that tell the truth about what is happening in Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is useless to intimidate people so that they don't speak and discuss these issues with the other side.

So instead of hiding it, we should speak up! The “enemy” already knows everything from their own experience.

Building dialogue

By Arzu Geybullayeva

We often tend to overlook the importance of this word — dialogue. In day-to-day life, we actually use it all the time when we speak to our parents, siblings, friends, neighbors or colleagues at work.

While doing research on essence and basis of a dialogue I also came across an interesting article that was exploring importance of dialogue in schools among student and teacher interaction.

The author of the article, a teacher once himself, was assessing his previous experience as a teacher and the way he interacted with his students; it was purely on a written basis, with very little dialogue. “I saw clearly how much information I had lacked [...] I had known very little, for example, about my students’ own perceptions of their writing and about their strategies and processes for writing [...] in my comments [...] I had been engaged in a one-sided conversation [...] carrying on a monologue when dialogue was called for.”

Now, let us move from the “classroom” context into a more complicated “post- conflict” context, where instead of students, we have civilians, from two conflicting sides, with little or almost no dialogue. With such a situation persisting, it is unlikely for any peaceful prospects for both sides.

To me, this is how it has been in case with Armenia and Azerbaijan, the two countries that know very little of one another and whose people are engaged in very little dialogue. But things are changing. Through regional meetings among youth, civil society and human rights activists, small steps are taken. A sign of possible positive outcome for the future, these meetings are perhaps the only way to explore the “other” side since there are no other means of communication apart from the virtual world.

When I was first invited to participate at one of these regional meetings, I had zero expectations. But with me, low or no expectations is a way to go; that way I always get more. At that particular event, I was there as a trainer to talk about new social media and its impact on dialogue between the two countries. I was actually presenting together with an Armenian journalist who also happened to be a blogger, and that was how we virtually met — through our blogs.

The event was taking place in Georgia, in a small town, just few hours from Tbilisi. Participants were young people from all three countries representing different organizations, universities and age groups. Seeing how these young people interacted among each other, talked to each other and laughed together made me realize that we need more of this. And it was the final team project at the end of our third day that made me realize that there is so much potential in this youth and that with a little help they can change their future. Through communication, sharing, perhaps even shouting and crying — by simply starting up a dialogue, change is possible.

The more I got involved, the more I saw of such regional meetings. Among these were [Model Caucasus Parliament](#), [CRISP](#), [DOTCOM](#) and [Imagine Center’s Dialogues](#). Even [American Councils](#) together with the US Embassies of all three countries organized an alumni-gathering event for graduates of FLEX, a one-year exchange program in the US to learn and discuss future joint projects among alumni in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.

Each of these meetings/trainings/conferences have different agendas — education, youth development, civil society development, political participation and activism, but yet, they all are one in their purpose and that is creating room for dialogue.

Of course, one cannot guarantee an absolutely smooth transition. In cases like these, there is always a possibility that things might go wrong, that someone might say something the other side might not like. The chances are always high for an argument, confrontation or anger explosion, and that is when experienced facilitators come into play.

Personally, I have had a problem only once, and that was ironically with the team from Azerbaijan. To me, this was caused as a result of participants’ young age and little exposure as well as experience for these types of events. But these are small things when compared to a greater picture, and that is breaking deeply embedded stereotypes through dialogue. And so, I want to end this post with a Somalian proverb — “To agree to have dialogue is the beginning of a peaceful resolution.” Let us agree on having a dialogue first; the rest will slowly come.

The Fragile Ceasefire and the Prospect of Reconciliation in Nagorno-Karabakh

By Efgan Niftiyev

The August 2008 war in Georgia showed how dangerous and fatal frozen conflicts could become in just a few days. The outcome of the five-day war between Russia and Georgia made it necessary for the international community to pay more attention to the frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus. Along with Abkhazian-Georgian and South Ossetian-Georgia conflicts, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is one of the ethnic disputes that still wait to be reconciled.

The ceasefire agreement in 1994 ended an active war but has not been able to bring durable peace and reconciliation to the conflict. In the last fifteen years, both internal and external pressures could not make the adversaries agree on a peace agreement. The stalemate in the peace process still continues, despite the efforts of the Minsk Group and other international actors. On one hand, Armenia insists on self-determination rights for Nagorno-Karabakh and favors its secession from Azerbaijan, while keeping seven districts outside the region under Armenian control with the excuse of creating a buffer zone of security for Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. On the other hand, the other party of the conflict, Azerbaijan, does not want to compromise its territorial integrity and demands immediate withdrawal of Armenian troops from those territories.

For now it seems pretty hard to reconcile the positions of the two sides. However, it does not mean that the efforts to reach a peace agreement should stop. Looking at the rapprochement process between Turkey and Armenia, despite the fact that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is not mentioned in the official protocols signed in October 2009, there has been intensification in meetings to reach a peace agreement on the conflict. Presidents Sarkisian and Aliyev have met seven times in different capitals with the participation of the Minsk Group to draft basic principles towards reconciliation. This shows that there is a positive trend in the peace process and there is possible ground (the Madrid principles constitutes the essential framework of peace talks) for ending hostilities.

Increased efforts from international actors also show reasonable understanding that without solving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, there is no other way to achieve cooperation and stability in the South Caucasus. Thus, after fifteen years of inertia the international community and new geopolitical conjuncture urges both sides to move towards making efforts to reach a peace agreement. The status quo and shaky ceasefire do not serve any interests. As long as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains unresolved, both Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot return to normalcy and live like any other European country. At this point, since no international power can dictate the terms of peace, both countries need to take necessary steps.

The continuity of a stalemate in Nagorno-Karabakh continues to put a durable stability and peace in the region at stake as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict did in the Middle East. There is no way to create democratic states and economic welfare in the Caucasus — “the biblical tower of languages and nations” — without reconciling ethnic disputes.

If there is continued lack of real progress, it will be quite possible to see another bloody war in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan has increased its military expenditure (which equals almost \$2 billion annually) and it is also speculated that the military balance between Azerbaijan and Armenia has changed. Azerbaijan may soon see war as the only solution to the problem given the recent statements by Azerbaijani officials. Another war in the region can lead to catastrophe and unavoidable results for the people of the region, since they are the ones who actually suffered (both Azerbaijanis and Armenians) for years from animosity. Thus, the international community and the leaderships of the conflicting states need to take the initiative before things get to the point of military engagement, as was the case in Georgia.

ACADEMIC

Opening Borders, Preserving Walls: Opportunities to Support the Karabakh Peace Process

By Laurence Broers

On April 26, 2010, Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin II attended a meeting of world religious leaders in Azerbaijan at the invitation of Azerbaijani Shi'a Muslim leader, Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, and also Russian Orthodox Church leader Patriarch Kirill. During his visit Garegin II met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and prayed at what was once the central church and place of worship for Baku's former Armenian community. Together, the religious leaders affirmed their commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Garegin II further invited Sheikh Pashazade to visit Armenia.

Garegin II's visit crystallized two different areas where more can be done to support the once again stagnating Karabakh peace process. One area is the contribution that mutual visits by Armenians and Azerbaijanis to each other's countries could make to the overall process. The visit of the Catholicos to Baku is a welcome and historic move. Yet mutual visits need to move beyond well-known public figures to become a routine aspect of relations between Armenian and Azerbaijani civil societies and ordinary citizens. A solid web of civil society interaction would serve as a vital support (and cushion) to the vagaries of the formal peace process.

A second area is the role that the preservation of cultural heritage could play in re-building confidence between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Abandoned churches and mosques are a feature of the landscape across the region, poignant reminders of the vibrant life of different communities that once existed side by side. Reciprocal moves to open up access to such heritage sites, as Turkey has falteringly begun to do with regard to Armenian sites in Anatolia, could serve an important confidence-building role—and counter the legacy of mutual ethnic expulsion.

Garegin II's visit to Azerbaijan followed earlier precedents in July 2007 of visits to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh by representatives of the Azerbaijani elite, and a mutual visit in July 2009 organized by the Armenian and Azerbaijani ambassadors to Russia, Armen Smbatian and Polad Bulbuloglu. These visits are on one level an important, positive development challenging the established wisdom that reciprocal visits by Armenians and Azerbaijanis to each other's countries do not and cannot happen.

Yet while the Catholicos's visit to Azerbaijan is indeed extremely welcome and groundbreaking, it is also a reminder that Armenian-Azerbaijani visits in recent years have been almost exclusively the monopoly of political and cultural elites. Such visits that do take place are highly choreographed, stage-managed affairs that do not, as yet, form part of an ongoing process. Their intermittent and therefore unusual and extraordinary character also renders such visits very vulnerable to misrepresentation in societies that have been heavily exposed to negative stereotypes and propaganda about the other side. There is not, as yet, any kind of overall public relations strategy surrounding such visits, seeking to inform skeptical public opinion about what they are trying to achieve and why they are valuable.

More importantly, there are practically no visits at the level of civil society. These used to take place in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but in recent years they have declined amid negative media coverage of such visits and harassment and other repercussions for those participating in them. This absence of civil society-level interaction has remained the case even after the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents' "Moscow

Declaration” of November 2009, in which they explicitly endorsed confidence-building measures as a pillar of a reinvigorated Karabakh peace process.

While Armenians, as the winning side in the 1991-1994 war, have generally taken a more relaxed view towards visits by Azerbaijanis to Armenia or Karabakh, Azerbaijanis have generally taken a more negative view, rejecting such visits for as long as large swathes of Azerbaijan are under Armenian occupation. Visits by Armenians to Azerbaijan in recent years have been very few and far between, being limited to visits by Armenian professionals in various—usually apolitical—fields, such as wrestling.

It is useful to contrast this situation with Turkish-Armenian dynamics. While myriad problems remain, both Turkish and Armenian societies have opened up sufficiently to allow free movement of each other’s citizens across their borders. As Thomas de Waal (2010) notes in a recent paper, “[e]ven if the current Armenian-Turkish Protocols process fails, there is a thick web of civil society interaction which will continue between Armenians and Turks” (p. 1). The same cannot be said for the Karabakh peace process. If the current round of the Karabakh peace process associated with the “Madrid Principles” fails, there is no cushion of solid civil society ties to ease the fall and allow for regrouping and re-envisioning of the peace process. Only a very small number of individuals have been involved in Armenian-Azerbaijani dialogue meetings. While there are many reasons for this state of affairs, the fact that such meetings always have to take place in a third country is undoubtedly an important one.

The cautiousness of elites to allow a more “bottom-up,” grass roots-level peace process is understandable. In the tightly controlled, highly polarized and periodically violent contexts of Armenian and Azerbaijani politics, Karabakh remains a wild card. Firmly lodged in national ideologies and capable of eliciting deep emotions on both sides, the Karabakh conflict and prospects for its settlement raise uncomfortable issues for today’s elites with their weak democratic credentials. They have consequently exercised a tight monopoly on the peace process, minimizing the role of independent NGOs, other associations, networks and individuals. In Azerbaijan in particular, militant rhetoric suggesting the use of force to resolve the conflict has further narrowed the space for civic initiatives. Although attempts have been made by international peace-building NGOs in the last two years to organize reciprocal civil society-level visits, this remains, hitherto, a closed door. A small number of Azerbaijanis have been able to visit Armenia, and even Karabakh in the case of a few individuals.

Yet the Karabakh peace process has also shown over the years that the presidents cannot do it alone. Societies inculcated with negative propaganda about the other side and encouraged to believe in total victory cannot suddenly be made to swallow bitter pills of compromise. Recent elite-level visits may indicate, then, that the presidents have learned from earlier phases of the peace process, when societal resistance was instrumental in stymieing alleged agreement. It may also be that they are trying to gauge likely popular reactions to different strategies, and/or that they believe they have achieved as much as they can in the Track-I process, and fearing the fallout of another round of failure, are trying to root that progress in wider legitimacy. Whatever the reason, both Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents need to take the plunge and allow a much wider range of visits between Armenians and Azerbaijanis to take place.

Rather than seeing greater civil society interaction as a threat to their power, Armenian and Azerbaijani leaderships need to be encouraged to see such interaction as supportive of their efforts at the negotiating table. The massive highs and lows of expectation and disappointment in the Minsk Group-mediated negotiations, for which the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents carry responsibility, can be attenuated by a steady process of inter-societal contact. While this will narrow the rhetorical space available for assertions that force can be used to resolve the conflict, there are clear strategic advantages for all conflict parties. For both sides, increased contact will create a pool of experience informing each side’s choices in the peace

process. Misinformation and misperception remain key threats to the Karabakh peace process, and mutually informed strategic calculations at least reduce the risk of unintended escalation.

For Armenians, better acquaintance with Azerbaijan means better acquaintance with an adversary and neighbor undergoing far-reaching social change. No one is clear, as yet, where this change is taking Azerbaijani society, but it would be foolish to ignore the development that is taking place. For Azerbaijanis, civil society-level visits can open a necessary, alternative path to Baku's official definition of the conflict as an inter-state conflict with Armenia. One way or another, Baku needs to find a way to talk to the population living in Nagorno-Karabakh today, which it claims as its own. There is a clear contradiction between seeking to reincorporate this population and discouraging the free movement of Armenians to Azerbaijan. Inclusive dialogue at civil society level is one way to begin to address this dilemma.

Armenians and Azerbaijanis have long deferred bilateral communication to vertical communication with outside powers, according to the false logic that "the solution has to come from outside." It is time to open up the Karabakh peace process, and in doing so, open minds to the benefits of direct, unmediated communication.

Garegin II's visit to the Armenian Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator in central Baku also pointed to an important area of possible "win-win" confidence-building measures: collaborative preservation of cultural monuments and heritage. Faltering—and controversial—steps in this direction have been taken in the context of Turkish-Armenian relations, with the 2005-2006 restoration of the Armenian Cathedral of the Holy Cross on Akhtamar island, and subsequently the recent decision to allow Christian worship there once a year. (Asbarez Armenian News, 2010) Taken on their own, such moves can easily be dismissed as paltry tokenism (and there have certainly been problems from an Armenian perspective with how the Akhtamar restoration was managed and presented). Yet seen as part of a process of acknowledging the past, pushing cognitive barriers and ultimately reviving the notion of a currently defunct community life, they are certainly significant.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani context is different, of course, for several reasons. For one thing, military confrontation remains a live factor. There is also a sometimes aggressively articulated discourse of the return of displaced people, which at times seeks to score political points rather than consider what the return of a displaced community to a multiethnic context really entails. And unlike Turkey, where an Armenian community continues to exist (however precariously), there is no Armenian communal life intact in Azerbaijan, despite a disputed number of ethnic Armenians remaining in the country.

Yet there is a possible reciprocity to moves towards shared control of cultural sites. The intermingled nature of Armenian and Azerbaijani populations prior to the conflict means that each side is in control of cultural and religious monuments of special significance to the other. Just as churches formerly frequented by Armenians stand empty in Azerbaijan, mosques formerly frequented by Azerbaijanis stand empty in Nagorno-Karabakh. There have been regular mutual recriminations over the alleged effacement of cultural heritage, exacerbated of course, by the lack of access and information. When restoration of monuments does take place, it engenders fears that the "national character" of such monuments is being deliberately diluted or worse. Reciprocal moves to share the future of cultural heritage could ease these tensions. Such moves do not need to be initially wide-ranging in order to be significant. Allowing the other side visiting rights and a say in how heritage is curated is enough to begin a meaningful dialogue.

There are also some clear incentives to such an initiative for all parties. For Azerbaijan, rehabilitating the possibility of an Armenian community life is an absolute prerequisite for its agenda of reincorporating Nagorno-Karabakh. Yet creating conditions more conducive to reviving Armenian community life in

Azerbaijan should not be tied exclusively to this goal. A disputed number of Armenians continue to live in Azerbaijani society; according to some official sources this population is as high as 20,000, almost certainly an exaggeration.¹ Whatever the size of the population, however, its mere existence offers an opportunity to shape perceptions over what Armenians can expect in the new Azerbaijan. Human and minority rights groups have in the past expressed concern regarding everyday discrimination for Armenians in Azerbaijan.² Leading government officials, however, have asserted a change of policy in this direction, reportedly taking steps to assure freedom from discrimination for ethnic Armenians. Azerbaijan could do well to support highly visible heritage restoration projects with less visible but just as important moves to address everyday obstacles confronting individuals of Armenian ethnicity in Azerbaijan.

For the Armenians of Karabakh, the displacement of Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh hangs as a sword of Damocles over their aspirations to internationally recognized sovereignty. Although Karabakh Armenians can legitimately point out that mass expulsions of Armenians also took place in Azerbaijan (not to mention Azerbaijanis from Armenia), it is a reality—however unfair—that *de facto* states face different criteria. Demonstrating openness on an issue where no strategic advantage stands to be lost could contribute to Karabakh Armenian bargaining power—and provide an entry point to the peace process (broadly understood) other than by proxy representation by presidents of Armenia of Karabakhi origin.

And all sides can learn from the Turkish experience: in the modern era the attempted obliteration of collective identities returns to haunt “successor” societies long after the perpetrators have gone. Initiatives acknowledging shared ownership of and, possibly, ultimately delegating a degree of responsibility in managing cultural heritage can create an important platform, to no strategic cost, for building confidence and, over time, dialogue on other issues. Ultimately such initiatives could serve to begin to bridge the gap between parallel but mutually exclusive narratives of identity that divide and isolate Armenian and Azerbaijani societies both from each other and fuller understandings of their own history. This underlines the fact that any such initiative would have to be guided by the spirit of pragmatism and reciprocity, rather than nationalistic politicization. If the latter wins out, cultural heritage on both sides will stand like the mosque on the seafront in Chania, Crete, and the shells of Greek Orthodox churches dotted across Anatolia: reminders and nothing more that once, things were different.

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Footnotes

¹ Most are wives in mixed Armenian-Azerbaijani or Armenian-Russian marriages.

² See, for example, Minority Rights Group International, entry for Armenians in Azerbaijan in the World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, available at <http://www.minorityrights.org/1943/azerbaijan/armenians.html>.

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: War, Humanitarian Challenge and Peacekeeping

By Margarita Tadevosyan

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been one of the most important issues on the agenda of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan from early 1988 until now. Nagorno-Karabakh is not a “frozen conflict” as changes in the internal policies of Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as changes in the international system have affected different aspects of the conflict. The successful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will promote further stability in the explosive Caucasus region as well as global stability in the context of Russian-Western relations.

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is very interesting from the viewpoint of international relations. First, it is a multifaceted and protracted conflict which developed as an internal conflict of a superpower, but very quickly was transformed to an international conflict. In addition, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict ended with a cease-fire agreement, but the final settlement has not been reached during more than a decade of ongoing negotiations. Despite these efforts, lingering tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan negatively affect the Caucasus as a whole.

Four years of warfare have had three major impacts on the region, including the creation of hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced people on both sides, the economic breakdown of the region, and the creation of an atmosphere of mutual intolerance and hatred between two neighboring nations. In the context of the new security paradigm where the human being and its dignity are viewed as top priorities, there is a vital need to address the issue of those who were displaced in order to create a viable peace in the region.

The objective of this paper is to look at the conflict holistically and assess the opportunity to deploy an international peacekeeping force that can contribute to the ongoing political dialogue and draw together the edges of reconciliation.

Conflict Background

With the end of the Cold War, the world was anticipating a more peaceful future for humanity. However, the reality was radically the opposite. With the diffusion of the bipolar world the globe became fractured by dozens of conflicts across all continents that involved millions of people. Dissolution of the Soviet Union revealed historical antagonisms that were repressed during Soviet rule and dozens of ethnic conflicts sparked within and between former union republics. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is one of the bloodiest and long-lasting wars on the territory of the former Soviet Union. Though the modern era of the conflict had started with glasnost and perestroika of the Gorbachev era, the roots of the conflict date back to the beginning of the 20th century.

Historical context

The total land area of Nagorno-Karabakh is 4,800 square kilometers and it is only 1.5 times bigger than the state of Rhode Island (Croissant, 1998, p. 10). However, this small land area carries very high symbolic importance both for Armenians and Azeris. It is the symbol of freedom for Armenia, as it was the only Armenian populated territory that was independent when the rest of Armenia was under Iranian rule (Hunter, 1994, p. 97). At the same time in the 19th century, “Karabakh became a major center of emerging Azerbaijani cultural and political nationalism and hence came to occupy a special place in the Azerbaijani national consciousness” (Hunter, 1994, p. 97).

Without going very deep into the pages of history, it is worth mentioning that Nagorno-Karabakh was a bone of contention for the two states during their short independence in the beginning of the 20th century. “[The] first major Armenian-Azerbaijani clash occurred in 1905 in the ethnically mixed city of Baku” (Fraser, Hipel, Jaworsky, & Zuljan, 1990, p. 655). With the help of the Ottoman Empire and the British, Nagorno-Karabakh was made part of newly independent Azerbaijan, a fact that was not accepted by the Armenians and was the reason for war between the two states in the early 1920s (Hunter, 1994, p. 98). The dispute at that stage was “settled” by the Sovietization of both Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1921, as a result

of which the region was put under the jurisdiction of Soviet Azerbaijan. This approach reflected Stalin's principle of divide-and-rule (Croissant, 1998, p. 19).

In order to understand the modern phase of the conflict there is a need first of all to understand the roots and development of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. There is no consensus among scholars about the main causes of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Among the most popular versions are economic causes that were reflecting the real and perceived differences of living standards of two ethnic groups both in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as in Armenia and Azerbaijan proper (Yamskov, 1992, p. 134; Yamskov, 1991, p. 640). Another main cause that scholars argue sparked the discontent of the Armenian majority of the province was a national-cultural and linguistic cause. While under the rule of Soviet Azerbaijan, the use of the Armenian language was allowed along with Russian and Azeri, but education in the Armenian language was not widespread and available. In addition, there were limitations on the broadcasting of Armenian TV channels, and Armenian history was excluded from the school curriculum (Yamskov, 1991, p. 643; Kaufman, 2001, p. 58). Furthermore, the ethno-demographic shift in population was perceived to be very alarming for the Armenian population. "[T]he size and share of Armenians in the total population decreased from 124,100 persons (96%) 123,000 persons (76%) between 1921 and 1979, while the Azerbaijani population at the same period increased from 7,400 persons (6%) to 37,000 persons (23%)" (Yamskov, 1992, p. 135). This ethnic shift was not only the result of central government policies but also the qualitative differences of the two ethnic groups; Azerbaijanis were mostly peasants, while Armenians were more urban (Fraser et al., 1990, p. 655). At the same time the education level among the Armenian population was much higher, and they had better Russian language skills, which resulted in their higher mobility and emigration (Yamskov, 1991, p. 647; Yamskov, 1992, p. 135). Lalig Papazian (2001) argues that this demographic shift preoccupied Armenians, as they "feared that [Nagorno-Karabakh's] fate could be similar to that of Nakhichevan, another Armenian stronghold under Azeri rule, whose population decreased drastically while that of Azeris increased as a result of demographic manipulations" (p. 66).

The final decision to incorporate the mainly Armenian populated region into Soviet Azerbaijan was viewed unjust by the majority of Armenians. Thus, the Armenian population of the province was using every opportunity to challenge the status quo. "Armenian attempts to change the status of Nagorno-Karabakh can be traced back to the 1930s" (Fraser et al., 1990, p. 656). The softening of the political atmosphere in the 1960s gave a new impetus for the tensions to reappear. "In 1968 clashes broke out between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (Nagorno-Karabakh AO)" (Hunter, 1994, p. 98). Since that time, the communal tension was in the air till the late Soviet times when it escalated in to full scale war (Hunter, 1994, p. 98).

Modern phase

There is a widely accepted consensus that the modern phase of the conflict is marked with the glasnost and perestroika of the late 1980s that allowed "latent resentments and aspirations to resurface" (Hunter, 1994, p. 99).

In both republics nationalistic sentiments began surfacing that eventually led to the polarization of two societies. Dmitry Furman and Carl Johan Asenius (1996) argue that with the decline of communist ideology, nationalism became the uniting force in all former Soviet republics that led to a situation when "every republic developed bureaucratic intellectual elite" (1996, p. 41). The authors stress the fact that the emerging elite in Armenia was very powerful and was enjoying popular support, which they saw to be the result of traditionally very strong Armenian ethnic consciousness (Furman & Asenius, 1996, p. 41). In Armenia, the era of "openness" was regarded as an opportunity to address the "territorial 'injustice' imposed by Stalin" (Croissant, 1998, p. 26). Armenians of the province were appealing to Moscow with the request to change the status of the province and put it under the direct jurisdiction of Soviet Armenia. In this regard, Armenia was an active supporter of the process where the intellectual elite played a very important role shuttling between Yerevan, Stepanakert, and Moscow (Kaufman, 2001, p. 61). "Karabakh's request was supported by massive rallies and demonstrations in Yerevan [Armenia]. Unusual in their character and sheer volume, these demonstrations received worldwide attention. They were, in fact, the first such

movement by a people in what was then the Soviet bloc” (Libaridian, 1999, p. 6). The events that followed these mass rallies are characterized by Gerard Libaridian (1999) as a “political earthquake” (p. 5). On February 20, 1988, the Nagorno-Karabakh Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution requesting that Moscow make changes in the borders of the province putting it under the administrative and territorial jurisdiction of Armenia (Libaridian, 1999, p. 5; MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, p. 13). As anticipated, this decision was not welcomed by Azerbaijan and led to direct violence between the ethnic groups. “In the wake of the February 1988 demonstrations, Armenian and Azeri residents engaged in communal violence, characterized by individual attacks ‘mainly at night, aimed at destroying livestock and harassing people’” (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 1994, p. 3). Moreover, deadly clashes occurred in the villages and towns of Nagorno-Karabakh, namely the Azeri town of Aghdam and the Armenian town of Askeran (Kaufman, 2001, p. 63; Nadein-Raevski, 1992, p. 120). These events are considered to be the starting point of the cycle of deadly mutual violence that started first in the Azeri industrial city of Sumgait, then the capital of Baku and then spread all over the region (Nadein-Raevski, 1992, p. 120). Mass killings of Armenians in Sumgait and Baku were considered by Armenians to be a “new act of genocide against the Armenian people, planned and organized by the Azerbaijani state and party leaders” (Nadein-Raevski, 1992, p. 120). As a response to those events, the Azeri population was partially evicted from Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh. By the end of 1988, “Armenians were expelled *en masse* from Azerbaijan and vice versa” (MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, p. 14). This marked the next cycle of violence--Operation “Ring,” which was carried out by special-purpose militia brigades with the support of Soviet Army forces (Croissant, 1998, p. 41). Many scholars argue that the real purpose of the operation was not passport check and seizure of illegal weapons, but rather it was intended to curb the Armenian population’s desire for independence (Croissant, 1998, pp. 41-42). As a result of Operation “Ring,” hundreds of Armenian men were arrested, thousands were deported, and almost twenty-four Armenian villages were cleared (HRW, 1994, p. 4; MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, p. 15; Croissant, 1998, pp. 41-42). This was followed by the coup d’etat in Moscow in 1991, as a result of which the region was pushed into a full-scale war.

Political Context

In order to understand the full nature of the conflict as well and assess the opportunities for its peaceful resolution, there is a need to briefly discuss the internal political situation in both republics in the wake of the conflict.

As it was already mentioned, the communist ideology in both countries was replaced by nationalist movements that further fueled the conflict. Anatoly Yamskov (1992) argues that “inter-ethnic conflicts reflect the contradictory interests and aspirations of different ethnic groups and are accompanied by the formation of national movements seeking to defend these interests” (1992, p. 132). Accordingly, in both republics the political power was seized by nationalistic parties. In Armenia, it was the Armenian National Movement (ANM) headed by Levon Ter-Petrossian, and in Azerbaijan it was the Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF) headed by Abulfaz Elchibey.

There are scholars who think that the violent manifestation of the conflict is a result of failure to control the political process. Libaridian argues that at first, Karabakh started out as political conflict that was very soon transformed to a violent one (1999, p. 26). Its impact on the political thinking in both republics was huge, particularly when direct violence was implemented “[Sumgait] pogroms polarized public opinion in two republics and politicized the issue” (Libaridian, 1999, p. 6). The polarization was great in Armenia and the public was absolutely not supportive toward forces that were ready for dialogue with the other party. “The situation led to strengthening of the nationalistic circles in the political parties of the Republic” (Nadein-Raevski, 1992, p. 124). The Nagorno-Karabakh issue became a central one in Armenian politics that “[brought] together foreign policy, security, domestic policies and economy” (Libaridian, 1999, p. 13).

At the same time, the atmosphere in Azerbaijan was quite nationalistic as well. Altstadt points out that during the Soviet period, Azerbaijan had undergone a “strong course of Russification” that resulted into weakening of the Azeri sense of nationhood (Carley, 1998, p. 19). To strengthen their own identity, several theories were put into circulation that Nadein-Raevski considers the basis of Azeri nationalism. First of all, in

Azerbaijan Armenians are seen as newcomers to the region that have no historical ties to it. "Azerbaijani leaders consider the Armenian population of the republic to have no rights on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh" (Nadein-Raevski, 1992, p. 115). Another theory that according to Nadein-Raevski served as a basis of Azeri nationalism is the manipulation of the Caucasian Albanian theory, according to which people living in Nagorno-Karabakh are neither Armenians nor Azeri; they are Albanians, who are considered to be the ancestors of the Azeri people (Nadein-Raevski, 1992, pp. 115-116). The author goes on to stress that due to propaganda and a "unique" interpretation of history, the "Azerbaijani population is not ready to perceive the problem of Azeri-Armenian relations in the broader context" ((Nadein-Raevski, 1992, pp. 115-116).

Both sides try to reduce the importance of their own nationalism by pointing at the other side. As such, Armenian scholar Armen Aivazian emphasizes that nationalism has played an important role for mass mobilization around the Karabakh issue in both societies; however its role is "subordinate to much more predominant role of geostrategy and geopolitics" (Carley, 1998, p. 5). On the other hand, Azeri scholar Nasib Nasibzade attributes an important role to ANM in "stirring up 'extreme nationalism' among Armenians. Azeris became the targets of this promotion of Armenian nationalism, thereby easily providing basis and incentive for Armenians to go to war against Azerbaijan" (Carley, 1998, p. 6).

At a more general level, authors like Lalig Papazian look at the structure of the Soviet Union as the main source for the ethnic tensions. "Many territorial and ethnic disputes during the late 1980s had been the consequence of Soviet style nation building, where the systematic displacement of national groups had resulted in the distortion of the ethnic balance, established artificial borders, divided ethnically homogeneous groups and contributed to inter-ethnic tensions" (Papazian, 2001, p. 59). In her analysis of the amalgam of factors that led to the manifestation of the conflict, Papazian concludes that the irredentism that was demonstrated by Armenians was based on "real and perceived Azeri threats" (Papazian, 2001, p. 60). However, the author suggests that an oppressive rule was executed over the region that fueled Armenian irredentism, thus giving birth to nationalism. "Had Azerbaijan's treatment of the region been less harsh, had Nagorno-Karabakh's population been content both as individuals and as an ethnic group, and had the region enjoyed true autonomy, the probability of Armenian irredentism could have been lower" (Papazian, 2001, p. 67).

Refugees and Internally Displaced People

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was one of the most serious conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union, and it resulted in tens of thousands dead and almost one million refugees and internally displaced people (IDP) on both sides. Though there is a political framework designed to hammer out a political solution to the problem, the issue of the refugees and IDPs still remains unaddressed. This section of the paper will focus on the refugee and IDP issue and will try to outline the main challenges in this respect.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict emerged from a complex set of variables that included multiple actors, and since then went through at least four phases, each of which had a role to play in the issue regarding refugees and IDPs (Maresca, 2000, p. 70). The fact that both sides committed atrocities towards each other, cleansing towns and villages on the disputed territory is unquestionable. However, Levon Chorbajian (2001) argues that "it was Operation Ring, Sumgait and Baku that escalated the conflict to the level of war" (p. 17). Papazian (2001) divides the whole conflict into two main phases and four subsequent periods (pp. 68-73).

<i>Onset Phase</i>	<i>Escalation Phase</i>			
<i>Pre-Crisis Period</i>	<i>Crisis Period</i>			
<i>October 1987– February 19, 1988</i>	<i>February 20, 1988–February 28, 1993</i>			
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
	February 20, 1988 to February 27, 1988	February 28, 1988 to November 27, 1989	November 28, 1989 to November 25, 1991	November 26, 1991 to February 28, 1993

Source: Papazian, Lalg (2001). A people's will: Armenian irredentism over Nagorno-Karabakh. In Levon Chorbajian (Ed.), *The making of Nagorno-Karabagh: From secession to republic* (pp. 54-95). Hampshire: Palgrave.

According to this timetable, the forced population movement between Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as from Nagorno-Karabakh started when the conflict went into its crisis period. One of the first and most comprehensive studies on refugee and IDP movement was done by Human Rights Watch in 1994 right after the cease-fire was signed between the parties.

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh resulted in an estimated 25,000 dead as well as around one million refugees and IDPs on both sides (HRW, 1994, p. vii; MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, p. 1). Each time the pendulum of dominance changed and the conflict moved from one stage to another, it affected the refugee and IDP flow as well. One of the early refugee waves occurred right after the Sumgait and Baku pogroms when about 300,000 Armenians left Azerbaijan proper (Libaridian, 1999, p. 7). In response to the anti-Armenian pogroms, violence spread in Armenia, where the Azerbaijani population was targeted being outnumbered by local Armenians. As a result, around "160,000 mostly rural Azerbaijanis left their homes in Armenia" (Kaufman, 2001, p. 67; Libaridian, 1999, p. 7).

A full-scale war broke out in 1991, creating a large humanitarian crisis in the region with a new wave of refugees and IDPs on both sides. In spring 1992, Armenian forces took control over the Azeri-populated town of Shushi (HRW, 1994, p. 5). Though there is no official data on the number of refugees, it is a fact that from 1992 to the present there are no Azeris living in Shushi. The advancement of the Karabakh Armenian forces late in the spring resulted in control over another Azeri-populated town called Lachin, creating a land "corridor" between Armenia proper and Nagorno-Karabakh (HRW, 1994, p. 5). The changing success in the war resulted in a reverse flow of refugees. Azerbaijan's offensive against Armenian settlements in early summer of 1992 produced "a further 40,000 Armenian IDPs who remained in Nagorno-Karabakh and refugees who fled to Armenia" (MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, p. 17). Within the next year a large-scale Armenian offensive was launched in the same region, and this allowed Armenians to return the settlements that were lost during the Azerbaijani offensive of the previous year. According to Human Rights Watch, as the fight took place in largely depopulated areas it had a minimal affect on the civilian population; however, it "[allowed] the return of the ethnic Armenian population" to areas of their former settlement (HRW, 1994, p. 6). In April 1993, Armenian forces advanced to the west gaining control over Kelbajar province, with a "mixed population of some 60,000 Azeris and Kurds" (MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, p. 17). After Armenian forces got control over the province those people were forced to flee (HRW, 1994, p. 9). At this stage, for the first time the larger international community expressed its concern with the situation--the UN Security Council issued Resolution 822 that demanded withdrawal of forces from Kelbajar province (United Nations Security Council [UNSC], 1993c). Despite this, the Armenians, taking advantage from the internal political constraints in Azerbaijan, continued their offensive and gained control over Aghdam at the eastern border of Nagorno-Karabakh. "The action in Aghdam added approximately 50,000 to the IDP population, most of them settling temporarily in camps in central Azerbaijan" (MacFarlane & Minear, 1997,

p. 18). The Armenian offensive continued until the official cease-fire was signed in late spring 1994. Before the cease-fire was signed, the United Nations Security Council issued two other Resolutions, numbers 853 and 884, condemning the hostilities and the military actions. These Resolutions, however, did not affect any of the warring parties and failed to produce any positive results (UNSC, 1993b; UNSC, 1993a). "The war caused some 25,000 deaths and the uprooting of some 1,250,000–1,500,000 refugees and IDPs. Approximate figures include 350,000–400,000 refugees in Armenia; 600,000–650,000 IDPs and 200,000 refugees in Azerbaijan; and 15,000 IDPs in Nagorno-Karabakh." (MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, p. 20). Almost twenty years after the end of active military action, the two countries continue to live with extensive affected population on their territories. However, the issue of the refugees and IDPs is largely neglected in both countries and is regarded to be directly dependent on the political resolution of the conflict with the issue of the status of the province at its heart.

Humanitarian Challenge in Armenia and Azerbaijan

Armenia is a relatively small country with a population of a little less than 3 million (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2009a, para. 1). As a result of the conflict, an estimated 300,000 refugees and about 100,000 IDPs were residing in Armenia (UN, 1996, para. 2, 22). Armenia was facing a real humanitarian issue as the refugee and IDP population that was in the need of assistance "made up more than 10 percent of the population resident in Armenia" (MacFarlane & Minear 1997, p. 37).

The number of IDPs and refugees that the government of Armenia was using to describe the situation is usually around 72,000 and 300,000- 350 000 respectively (IDMC, 2010, p. 29; 22). Experts point out that the laws and legislation are still imperfect, leaving many people out of the legal framework. There is also ambivalence in attitude towards refugees and IDPs from different conflict regions that further complicate their status and integration into society. Given the tense situation with Azerbaijan, the Armenian government did not expect refugees from Azerbaijan proper--Baku and Sumgait--to go back. At the same time, this assumption did not apply to refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, and they were largely excluded from the new Armenian citizenship law that basically did not give any rights to them (MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, p. 40). This inattention usually is explained by the fact that Armenia never set up refugee camps; however, "[b]y 2009, most were living in rented accommodations or with relatives and friends (IMDC, 2010, p. 8). Despite all these challenges, there have been serious steps undertaken with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to address the issue of IDPs and refugees. By 2004, Armenia had successfully naturalized about 65,000 refugees, which is considered to be one of the most successful voluntary naturalizations in the last decade (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2004, para. 1).

Another main challenge that the refugee population (especially those from Azerbaijan proper) experienced was language discrimination, as a majority living in Azerbaijan did not speak Armenian. "Thousands of Russian-language speakers, including refugees, displaced persons, aliens and stateless persons, have been forced to try to adapt to living in Armenia" (Helton & Voronina, 2000, p. 89). The additional difficulty was that some refugees had difficulties adjusting and integrating into society in the urban parts of Armenia "given their predominant rural background" (MacFarlane & Minear 1997, p. 40).

However, under the auspices of special return programs around 28,000 people returned to their previous location, and there was a plan for the return of 39,000 more (International Displacement Monitoring Center [IDMC], 2002, para. 7). According to the same International Displaced Monitoring Center data in 2006, there were still around 8,400 displaced people on the territory of Armenia (IDMC 2006, par. 1).

Azerbaijan is a much larger country than Armenia and has a larger population of around 8 million people (CIA, 2009b, para. 1). The data on numbers of the IDPs and refugees differ, but there is a more or less general consensus that there are at least around 570,000 displaced people as well as around 185,000 refugees in Azerbaijan (Helton & Voronina, 2000, 95). Given the large number of fleeing people, IDPs and refugees were placed at temporary emergency refugee camps in the height of the crisis (Tagwerker, 2008, para. 6). The attitude of the government towards refugees and IDPs at the early stages of conflict and right after the signing of the cease-fire agreement was strictly one-dimensional. The government of Azerbaijan

was very reluctant to encourage any resettlement of the IDPs, fearing that it might undermine prospects for return.. In the early stages, the international community was eager and provided a substantial amount of relief to the affected population. However, the change in approach within the international community from one of humanitarian assistance and relief programs towards one of development projects forced the government to reshape its approach as well. With the help of the international community and the support of the government, a huge effort was undertaken to resettle IDPs. By 2007, the government of Azerbaijan had closed the last two tent camps in the country, resettling about 50,000 people. This was recognized by the UNHCR as one of the biggest achievements of the Azerbaijani government (Tagwerker, 2007, para. 8-9). Even with such positive outcomes, the issue of displaced people still is the top priority of the Azerbaijani government. Relocating the refugees and IDPs has not always included the allocation of new or decent housing. Only 22 percent of the total population was able to be housed in new or abandoned houses (IDMC, 2008, p. 3). One of the biggest concentrations of IDPs are very close to the contact line, where they “[form a] so-called ‘IDP belt’ around the occupied area, while the quarter of [IDP] population have moved further east to the capital Baku” (NRC, 2002, p. 140).

In Azerbaijan as well as Armenia, some refugees were able to return to their homes near the contact line (IDMC, 2008, p. 5). However, in all settlement areas, whether new, permanent, or temporary, the displaced population was faced with hard socio-economic problems with limited employment opportunities, lack of transportation, roads, and other infrastructure (IDMC, 2008, pp. 4-6).

The development efforts by the international community in Azerbaijan were catalyzed by the understanding of the danger that those settlements harbor. MacFarlane and Minear point out that the problem of displaced people must be taken much more seriously, as it can act as a “time bomb” (MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, p. 96). In addition, parallels were drawn between the long-lasting refugee situation in the Middle East and a possibility of the same scenario developing in Azerbaijan if the issue is not addressed on time and properly. “Some observers have hinted that these camps may become a fertile ground for a new kind of radicalism, including extremism as happened in the Palestinians camps” (Hunter, 1994, p. 101).

The OSCE and the Minsk Peace process

From the very early stages of open confrontation, numerous attempts were made to negotiate some type of agreement between the warring parties. The earliest attempt was made by Russian President Yeltsin and Kazakh President Nazarbaev in 1991. This effort, however, did not produce any results. Several other unsuccessful mediation attempts were made later by Iran in 1992, and again by Nazarbaev in 1992 (Mooradian & Druckman 1999, p. 710; MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, pp. 30-32). The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also became involved in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as early as 1992. In March 1992, OSCE/CSCE with eleven interested member states agreed to set up a peace conference in Minsk, Belarus with an incentive to find a peaceful solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Dehdashti, 1997, p. 464). Although the conference never took place due to a lack of agreement by all parties, the future political framework for the negotiations still is titled the Minsk Group peace process (Freire, 2003, p. 131). It was the first time that the OSCE was getting involved, as an impartial third party mediator, in dispute resolution in an ethnic conflict that was taking place on the territory of the former Soviet Union (Freire, 2003, p. 131). “This conflict provided an opportunity for the CSCE[OSCE] to establish itself as an effective regional conflict prevention/settlement organization” (Mooradian & Druckman, 1999, p. 710). The appropriateness of OSCE involvement was justified by its status as a regional organization in which all parties to the dispute were members. “It has a competence to solve disputes and to prevent conflicts” (Freire, 2003, p. 464). At the same time, the OSCE was mandated by the United Nations to carry out its mediation mission between the parties (Freire, 2003, p. 465). Moreover, “in line with Boutros-Ghali’s Agenda for Peace, the regional organization was given primary responsibility” (Furman & Åsenius, 1996, p. 150).

While it may seem that the OSCE is a multinational organization that does not have a direct interest in the region and can serve as an impartial mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the individual

member states of the Minsk Group, however, have national agendas that they are more inclined to follow. The United States has a direct economic interest in the oil reserves in the Caspian Sea, while historic ties with Armenia tend to make France lean toward Armenia. Turkey is considered to be pro-Azeri (Freire, 2003, pp. 465-66). Russia also had its own agenda for its "near abroad." As a result of the shuttle diplomacy of special envoy Vladimir Kazimirov, Russia was able to make the parties agree to a cease-fire in 1994 (Mooradian & Druckman, 1999, pp. 710-711). However, experts consider it to be a "backward-looking cease-fire" as it ends the immediate military action but fails to address the root causes of the hostilities (Druckman & Lyons, 2005, p. 267).

In addition to the lack of impartiality, there is another issue that makes the resolution of the conflict and the OSCE mediation even harder. Looking at the legal framework of the conflict itself, many scholars come to the conclusion that this conflict is about two competing principles of international law--the right of self-determination and territorial integrity (Hunter, 1994, p. 105). The OSCE's operational principles are documented in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, where the same ambivalence about these two principles exists. The member states pledge to respect the territorial integrity of other member states and "refrain from making each other's territory the object of military occupation or other direct or indirect measures of force in contravention of international law, or the object of acquisition by means of such measures or the threat of them" (OSCE, 1975, p. 5). However, at the same time Section VIII of the same act attributes equal rights of self-determination to all peoples. "By virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, all peoples always have the right, in full freedom, to determine, when and as they wish, their internal and external political status, without external interference, and to pursue as they wish their political, economic, social and cultural development" (OSCE, 1975, p. 7). Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot come to a general conclusion about which principle should dominate, while the co-chairs of the Minsk Group are trying to propose a solution that integrates those two principles. The Minsk Group Co-Chairs have offered the parties three main solution proposals--step-by-step, package, and "common state."

Initially the OSCE established a step-by-step approach, tasking the Minsk Group to define a political agreement while the Minsk Conference was to determine the status of Nagorno-Karabakh in a second stage. The co-chairs soon began suggesting comprehensive package agreements, however, which also addressed status. ... [I]n Key West, the negotiators also attempted to find a package deal starting with a "common state" proposal. (ICG, 2005, p. 11).

While the negotiation over the final status with the current political framework came to a stalemate, different scholars suggest looking for alternative issues that can bring together the edges of reconciliation and facilitate the resolution process. It is apparent that the issue of the refugees and IDPs is one of the most important ones that must be solved in the context of a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Many scholars believe that the humanitarian dimension and acknowledgment of the suffering of the civilian population can serve as a starting point for further negotiations and settlements (Minasyan, Aghajanyan, & Asatryan, 2005, p. 3). Walker also argues that the refugee issue can serve as an incentive to try to establish a durable peace that will allow people to return to their homes (Carley, 1998, p. 11). However, it seems that the parties are more focused on the political dimension of the conflict, and will not consider any issue ancillary to that. This is confirmed by MacFarlane and Minear who state that, "The humanitarian dimension thus received too little attention in OSCE planning" (MacFarlane & Minear, 1997, p. 93). However, it has to be noted that this type of low planning is due to the structural constraints of the OSCE as an organization. The OSCE does not have the organizational structure and authority to properly address the issue of people displaced as a result of war. "Among OSCE mechanisms and procedures relevant to forces migration are the human dimension mechanisms, which provides for exchanges of information and meeting and expert missions" (Helton & Voronina, 2000, p. 49). One of the main tools for working in the area of forced migration is the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which is actively involved in establishing rule of law, promoting and protecting human rights, and assisting with the implementation of

legislative reforms (Helton & Voronina, 2000, pp. 50-51). Although such activities are important, it is solely the responsibility of nation states to actually enact and implement those legislative reforms that can benefit refugee and IDP populations.

Deployment a Peacekeeping Contingent: Challenges and Opportunities

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is considered to be one of the most difficult and complex issues on the post-Soviet territory; however, it is “less famous” among other similar conflicts in the world. The effect of the conflict in terms of damage was also huge; equal or “greater than it [was] in and around Kosovo” (Kazimirov, 1999, p. 93). Furman and Åsenius (1996) argue that the “Karabakh conflict, comparable to that in Yugoslavia in the scale of military action and the number of victims, has drawn much less attention from the world than it deserves (p. 139).

In his analysis of the reasons why the opportunities were missed in the Caucasus, John Maresca points out that for a long time the conflict was viewed as a matter concerning the internal affairs of Soviet Union. In addition, when after the collapse of the Soviet Union the international community became engaged in the conflict resolution process, it lacked consensus about who were the parties to the conflict. He writes “The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh was viewed by some as an internal problem of Azerbaijan, by others as an international conflict between the newly declared state of Nagorno-Karabakh and the state of Azerbaijan, or between Azerbaijan and Armenia.” (Maresca, 2000, p. 69).

On the other hand, in the initial stages of the intervention, the OSCE was quite successful in creating a negotiation framework that included all parties to the conflict. This success came in spite of the unwillingness of Azerbaijan to talk directly to Nagorno-Karabakh and the desire of the latter to be represented as a sovereign state (Maresca, 2000, pp. 78-79). While involved in the political settlement of the conflict, the military experts of the Minsk Group countries suggested an opportunity to establish an observer operation in the region. Initially, it was planned to establish a monitoring mission that would be composed of from 300 to 700 military observers (Vilén, 1996, p. 91). This idea had gradually evolved into a concept of a multi-national peacekeeping operation (Vilén, 1996, p. 92). The Budapest Summit in December 1994 came to be a turning point in the peace process. The OSCE and Russia had overcome their disagreement, and a decision was made to send a multi-national peacekeeping contingent to the region with the strength of 3,000 troops (HRW, 1994, p. 81). To further develop the proposal for establishing the mission, a High Level Planning Group (HLPG) was created. The HLPG has an open-ended mandate “to make recommendations to the CiO on developing a plan for the establishment, force structure requirements and operation of a multinational OSCE peacekeeping force for the area of the conflict dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference (Nagorno-Karabakh)” (OSCE, 2009, para. 1). The endeavor on the outset was very promising as the HLPG had the opportunity to utilize all the existing institutional experience in the peacekeeping domain, as well as to reach out to the United Nations headquarters and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) for new ideas and best practices that would have aided in avoiding mistakes (Vilén, 1996, p. 92).

Despite these favorable conditions, the peacekeeping mission failed to be deployed, which is due partly to some objective as well as subjective conditions. On the objective side of the problem is the institutional structure of the OSCE as an implementer of a peacekeeping operation. Nagorno-Karabakh was the first time that OSCE was going to carry out a peacekeeping operation. With the Security Council resolution it was given “something of a UN mandate” to implement that mission (Maresca, 2000, p. 74). However, OSCE peacekeeping and UN peacekeeping, while sharing some characteristics, also differ in a number of ways. The legislative basis for OSCE peacekeeping is the 1992 Helsinki Document that clearly states that the peacekeeping operations are supplementary tools to the efforts of political solutions. “OSCE peacekeeping activities may be undertaken in cases of conflict within or among participating States to help maintain peace and stability in support of an ongoing effort at a political solution” (OSCE, 1992, p. 14). In a sense, the OSCE peacekeeping role is regarded to be more “precise” (Ronzitti, 1997, p. 241). Addressing the stalemate situation around the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, Mient-Jan Faber argued that there is no strong

international presence in the region, and in order to ensure progress in the peace process there is a need to upgrade the status of the OSCE “from mediation to arbitration” (Faber & Kasprzyk, 2003, p. 2). However, this contradicts the Helsinki Document provisions that restrict the OSCE from being involved in peace enforcement operations (Ronzitti, 1997, p. 241). In addition, OSCE peacekeeping share three main features with UN peacekeeping, which include impartiality, consent, and the time limit of the mandate and deployment (Ronzitti, 1997, p. 241). The combination of the time limit requirement and the consent of all parties can also be held responsible for the failure to actually deploy troops in the region. While the Helsinki Document states that “peacekeeping operations cannot be considered a substitute for a negotiated settlement and therefore must be understood to be limited in time,” conflicting parties were looking at different time frames (OSCE, 1992, p. 14). Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh were insisting in long-term deployment up to 10 years, while Azerbaijan was pushing for short-term deployment--no longer than 7 months (Potier, 2001, p. 90).

Very strict organizational procedures had an important role to play. The Helsinki Document requires several preconditions to be in place before a peacekeeping mission can be deployed on the ground. Those preconditions include the existence of durable cease-fire, an agreement on the necessary Memoranda of Understanding, and safety guarantees for the personnel involved (Ronzitti, 1997, p. 244; OSCE, 1992, p. 14). Maresca (2000) stresses that these complex rules and procedures did not allow the immediate parties to the conflict to trust such an operation and give their full consent (p. 81). In addition, he argues that those procedures also “guaranteed that a peacekeeping force could not be provided promptly,” which reduces the possibilities of a robust response (Maresca, 2000, p. 71).

One of the major stumbling blocks for the OSCE in carrying out peacekeeping operations is that it has no military capabilities, and that function needs to be undertaken by existing military alliances like NATO (Ronzitti, 1997, p. 238; Freire, 2003, p. 37). The troop composition was one of the major, if not the major, obstacles in designing a peacekeeping mission for Nagorno-Karabakh. The main issue in this context was the dispute between Russia and the OSCE about the actual composition of troops that “prolonged the military standoff over Nagorno-Karabakh” (Maresca, 2000, p. 73). After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia wanted to continue holding control over its “near-abroad” and “intervened both openly and covertly in the internal affairs of its ex-republics, ostensibly for peacekeeping and humanitarian purposes” (McNeill, 1997, p. 97). Regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh peacekeeping operation, the OSCE came to an internal stalemate because Russia was the only country that was eager to contribute troops. While western countries were distrustful of Russian peacekeeping in the territory of the former Soviet Union, no other nation was ready and willing to “take the lead in replacing the Russians” (Maresca, 2000, p. 72). This issue was again very closely connected to the institutional structure and operations of the OSCE. As an organization, the OSCE’s work is based on unanimous consensus and it gives equal status to all participating states. This means that even if one of the states dissents, no peacekeeping mission can be implemented (Ronzitti, 1997, p. 249; Freire, 2003, p. 22). At the same time, Russia was trying to prove that it is her duty to lead peacekeeping operations in the “near-abroad:”

(1) Russia as the successor to the former Soviet Union has a special role to play in the region which it traditionally has ruled; (2) the territory of the former Soviet Union is a geostrategic space in which Russia has special interests; (3) Russia has a special responsibility for the security and well-being of Russian citizens, ethnic Russians, and Russian-speaking communities throughout the CIs; and (4) Russia as a great power has both regional and global responsibilities. (McNeill, 1997, p. 101)

Gian Luca Burci (1997) argues that Russia’s *vis-à-vis* attitude towards its “near abroad” represents one of the main challenges for the OSCE in implementing its policies in the conflict management arena (p. 300). As for Nagorno-Karabakh, Russia had a proposal that would allow the interposition of a Russian or Russian dominated “Separation Force” with an authorization to use force to curb any violation of the cease-fire (Maresca, 2000, p. 83). This approach completely contradicted the activities that the OSCE peacekeeping

mission was allowed to carry out. The Helsinki Document limits the OSCE activities to “supervision and maintenance of cease-fire, monitoring troop withdrawals, support of law and order and providing medical and humanitarian assistance to refugees” (Ronzitti, 1997, p. 242). The most important aspect of OSCE peacekeeping is that it does not allow the use of force and in this sense overlaps with traditional UN peacekeeping (Ronzitti, 1997, pp. 241-242).

Regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the main reason that made other members reluctant to give a green light to the Russian (or Russia-CIS) led peacekeeping operation was Russia’s fundamental difference in approach to peacekeeping functions. “Russian peacekeeping has been described as being different from UN peacekeeping--traditional peacekeeping as well as modern ‘extended peacekeeping’--and closer to ‘enforcing’ a peace” (Jonson & Archer, 1996, p. 4).

Other factors that contributed to the incomplete peacekeeping initiative in Nagorno-Karabakh were international developments mainly in the Balkans and Chechnya that shifted attention from the Transcaucasus region. In his analysis, Maresca stresses that there was also an ambivalence existing in the way international community was approaching Russia and its dominance in the Transcaucasus. While the West and most notably the United States were fully focused on Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia, “there was an unspoken tendency to leave the problems of the former USSR to Russia” thus keeping her away from Yugoslavia, which was a primary interest point for the West (Maresca, 2000, pp. 70, 74). However, at the exact same time, Russia got trapped into the Chechen war, which “put Russian peacekeeping credentials in the region into much more serious doubt, and saddled Moscow with a major military effort that made the possibility of undertaking another operation nearby less plausible (Maresca, 2000, p. 88). In addition, Russia was accused of being more coercive in its use of force as well as lacking impartiality, and reliance and involvement of the contingents of the parties to the conflict (Jonson & Archer, 1996, p. 8). Even though in 1996 there were scholars that thought all the necessary basic conditions were in place for mounting a peacekeeping mission in Nagorno-Karabakh, that mission is still not a reality (Vilén, 1996, p. 94).

The peace process within the framework of the Minsk Group still continues and the deployment of an international peacekeeping force is still on the agenda of the Co-Chairs. Mediation efforts resulted in a proposal to the presidents of the two countries (Armenia and Azerbaijan) that includes core principles which could serve as a basis for the long-lasting settlement (Bloed, 2006, p. 345). Concurrently with the implementation of those principles, there would also be an international peacekeeping force deployed to assist the overall political transition (Bloed, 2006, p. 345).

It has to be noted, however, that neither of the parties is currently particularly enthusiastic about the possibility of deploying a peacekeeping contingent in the region. Grigor Hakobyan (2006) is seriously questioning the necessity of such a contingent, arguing that after the signature of the cease-fire, no major military operation had taken place in the region, which he relates to the existing “balance of power ... and the construction of Baku-Jeyan oil pipeline” (Hakobyan, para. 4). In addition, drawing from the experience in the Balkans he discusses the negative effects that a peacekeeping force can have in respect to the development of an illicit economy and organized crime (Hakobyan, 2006, para. 4). Taking all these factors into consideration and the developments that are taking place around the conflict, it can be asserted that the possibility of a peacekeeping force is still being explored. Although there is insufficient information about all the details of such a mission, there are significant numbers of reports indicating that this is one of the main issues that the Minsk Group is currently working on (Danielyan, 2005, para. 1).

After analyzing the developments that have taken place in the region, the evolution of peacekeeping itself, and the international environment, it can be implied that the deployment of a peacekeeping mission in Nagorno-Karabakh is on the verge and can fall either way. It is up to the international community to decide to push or to pull. Following the patterns of today’s interventions, particularly in ethnic conflicts, Michael Rear (2008) stresses that the main obstacle for the deployment is the existence of a stalemate. He includes a quote by Sally Morphet in which she states “...where there has been no fundamental agreement, peacekeeping is more likely to become part of the problem inasmuch as it can provide an excuse not to tackle actual peacemaking” (Rear, 2008, p. 54). In this regard, Nagorno-

Karabakh is one of the most difficult cases as the parties cannot agree on two opposing principles of international law. The lack of such an agreement might prevent them from signing on to the consent for deployment of the peacekeeping force.

A second factor is that if there is a substantial interest on the part of the larger international community, such an agreement can be actually reached. The political developments in the Balkans can serve as an outstanding example of a case where an active and consistent approach had created the necessary ground for the intervention to happen. In addition, the Balkan case can serve as a case study because of the number of similarities in these conflicts. The logic of such an argument suggests that conflicts that are similar by their origin, legal aspects, and war dynamic can be used to apply lessons (Mihalka, 1996, p. 17).

Third, since its original involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the OSCE has evolved as an organization and has gained enough experience to be able to restore the trust that, according to Maresca, both the West and peace through peacekeeping lost in the eyes of the conflicting parties (Maresca, 2000, p. 71). As such, the OSCE can largely utilize the confidence building measures which are an integral part of its structure, in order to move out from the deadlock and lead the parties to progress toward peace and stability. The necessity of relying on confidence building measures was stressed by both Faber and Kasprzyk¹ (Faber & Kasprzyk, 2003, pp. 3-4). The implementation of some of those confidence building measures has already resulted in progress toward reducing distrust in a future peacekeeping mission. One of the main concerns of the parties was troop composition. Yerevan and Stepanakert were against Turkey's participation in the peacekeeping mission, while Baku was very reluctant to accept a Russian dominated mission (Potier, 2001, p. 90; Mihalka, 1996, p. 19). In this regard, the OSCE has worked out another peacekeeping plan that most probably will exclude neighboring states and Minsk Group Co-Chair states (Turkey, Russia, France, and the United States) from contributing troops to such a peacekeeping mission (Danielyan, 2005, para. 5; Hakobyan, 2006, para. 1). At the same time, other CIS countries, like Ukraine, have expressed their readiness to contribute troops for the peacekeeping mission (Today.az, 2006, para. 6).

Peacekeeping is one of the most expensive tools of conflict resolution. It requires not only a significant monetary investment but also must be accompanied by a sustainable political will from all parties involved. When analyzing the potential of the peacekeeping mission in the Transcaucasus region, in light of the recent developments in Georgia, it can be concluded that another peacekeeping mission most probably will fail to achieve the goal that it was designed for. Such a conclusion is based on the following facts:

- a. Because there is no active military warfare in the region and the situation does not qualify as a significant "breach of the peace," the United Nations cannot issue a resolution that authorizes a peace enforcement operation that does not require the consent of the parties involved.
- b. As such, the peacekeeping mission in Nagorno-Karabakh should be, in form, a traditional peacekeeping operation that is based on impartiality, neutrality, and consent.
- c. In order for the parties to issue their consent for the deployment of the peacekeeping contingent, they must be sure that it would not jeopardize their own interests. This is closely linked with the composition of the peacekeeping contingent to the national pattern to which direct parties of the conflict are very sensitive.
- d. The role of other major actors in the region cannot be neglected. With the Russia-Georgia conflict in 2008 and Russia's desire to re-establish itself as a superpower in the world and as a "guardian" of its "near abroad," it would be impossible to bypass the influence of Russia in the potential peacekeeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh. And while Armenia most probably will welcome the Russian dominated contingent, Azerbaijan as well as other Western countries will most probably oppose another peacekeeping mission with Russian domination.

¹ Mient-Jan Faber is Political Director of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, and Andrzej Kasprzyk is the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-Office for Nagorno-Karabakh.

- e. On the other hand, even though Western countries in general and the United States in particular do not want to see Russia holding a substantial footprint in the region, they do not have enough resources or support of their constituents to get more actively engaged in the region. With the need to deal with the ongoing situation in Iraq, the growing interest towards bringing stability to the African continent, and the commitment of the Obama administration to eliminate the Taliban in Afghanistan, it becomes difficult if not impossible to find the necessary resources and political will for another peacekeeping operation.

Even though the deployment of a peacekeeping mission can contribute greatly to further stability and peace, it can achieve little when implemented alone. The OSCE should continue to push for parties to reach political consensus. In paraphrasing John Mackinlay, Rear wrote "...success of a mission depends upon the conditions on the ground, which are beyond the control of peacekeeper. If the situation is ripe for a resolution, then UN [OSCE] can be effective as a facilitator. If not, then there is little the UN [OSCE] can do to affect the outcome" (Rear, 2008, p. 56).

Conclusion

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is one of the longest and most protracted conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union. It affects not only the overall situation in the Transcaucasus but also determines the life of millions of people on both sides. The unsolved "neither war, nor peace" situation is a big contributing factor to the delayed development of the region in political, economic, and social sectors. As a result of the unresolved conflict, both countries have developed strong military and authoritarian regimes which have contributed to an absence of the rule of law and good governance on one side, and an increase in Islamic fundamentalism on the other. Regarding economic development, although both countries had come out of a post-Soviet period of stagnation, the continuation of the conflict has not allowed a substantial amount of foreign direct investment that could take the economy to the next level and directly improve the living standards of the population. Regarding the social sector, the biggest challenge is still the refugee and IDP issue that is multilayered and requires special attention. However, most of those issues are in direct correlation with conflict resolution and cannot be addressed in a sustainable way until the resolution is reached.

In a conflict that has moved on from the direct open confrontation phase, it is very important to show the parties involved that there is a commitment on the side of the international community to assist in resolving the conflict by speedy and peaceful means. Nagorno-Karabakh clearly demonstrates a case where the conflict was used by two opposing forces (the United States and Russia) for their own foreign policy needs. This situation created a high degree of distrust among the conflicting parties themselves and contributed to the creation of highly authoritarian regimes in both countries. The overall situation is complicated by the fact that there is a significant degree of ambiguity in application of international laws and standards. This approach sends polysemantic messages to conflicting parties and makes them more reluctant to make concessions and mutual compromises.

In similar cases in which, due to lack of interest, a much smaller regional organization with no direct experience in peacekeeping is delegated to act as intervener, it is very important to actively cooperate with those actors who have extensive experience in the field and can provide valuable insight. Furthermore, in distrustful and divided societies it is crucial for the intervener to reach out to the lower levels of society. This will allow a decrease in the monopoly power of the government to issue their consent or refusal for the peacekeeping mission. However, this directly implies that peacekeeping cannot be regarded as an end in itself for such conflicts. Its planning and implementation should take into account the fact that it is an auxiliary tool to the political settlement. Nevertheless, the humanitarian aspect of the problem should be properly addressed. This includes its incorporation in the planning process as possible, or if the organizational structure does not allow such incorporations, its delegation to another relevant international organization. There is strong evidence from the Balkans that supports the concept that only a multi-pillar approach can insure a durable and long-lasting solution.

This extensive literature review and analysis of the potential peacekeeping operation in the region leads to the conclusion that the ongoing situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is mainly due to its rank as a low priority on the foreign policy agendas of the main actors in the international arena.

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