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In this issue:

Analysis:

- Reassessing the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in the Aftermath of the Russia-Georgia War.
By Gulshan Pashayeva
- Clash of Narratives: The under-appreciated role of identity in non-resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict.
By Phil Gamaghelyan

Blogs:

- The oppression of 'Tolerance'
By Edgar Khachatryan
- Russia's 'Return' to Caucasus and Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement
By Efgan Niftiyev
- Key Chain
By Jamila Mammadova
- Peace, Trust and Love as a Cornerstone to Co-existence
By Sirun Gharagyozyan

Analysis

Reassessing the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in the Aftermath of the Russia-Georgia War

by *Gulshan Pashayeva*

After the Russia-Georgia war, it has been widely understood that the three stalemated conflicts between Georgia-Abkhazia, Georgia-South Ossetia and Armenia-Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh could easily be transformed into a new cycle of violence and put the stability of the South Caucasus region at risk. "In fact, Russian-Georgian war followed by annexation of the part of Georgian territory by Russian Federation changed the very basis of the international order emerged in the part of the world after the year 1991. Certain international (Read more on Page 2)

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by *Phil Gamaghelyan*

Until now, the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) peace process has been by and large limited to official negotiations between the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and the return or exchange of territories. Yet while the political process is certainly central to the conflict and its potential resolution, there are also other factors that influence the conflict, and those typically are ignored. The sustainable resolution of the conflict, however, requires a comprehensive approach that will address all the (Read More on Page 4)

Blog

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Key Chain

by Jamila Mammadova

I am an Azerbaijani who has been living in the U.S. A few months ago, I was invited to participate in an Azerbaijani-Armenian workshop. It was a 12-day event, and it was conducted between **Read More on Page 10**

Peace, Trust and Love as a Cornerstone to Co-existence

by Sirun Gharagyozyan

Armenians and Azerbaijanis, representing conflicting countries, have long been denied the chance of mere communication, which unfortunately has resulted in two-sided hostility during confrontation **Read More on Page 11**

ANALYSIS

Reassessing the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in the Aftermath of the Russia-Georgia War

by Gulshan Pashayeva

After the Russia-Georgia war, it has been widely understood that the three stalemated conflicts between Georgia-Abkhazia, Georgia-South Ossetia and Armenia-Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh could easily be transformed into a new cycle of violence and put the stability of the South Caucasus region at risk. "In fact, Russian-Georgian war followed by annexation of the part of Georgian territory by Russian Federation changed the very basis of the international order emerged in the part of the world after the year 1991. Certain international consensus and rules, which were a milestone of stability and security in the Eastern Europe (or Western Newly Independent states – Western NIS) does not exist anymore."^[1]

In this context, the symposium on the theme "Reassessing the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in the Aftermath of the Russia-Georgia war" by the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Boston last year gave an excellent opportunity for Armenian, Azerbaijani and other experts, practitioners and policy analysts to discuss and reassess the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and ways out of a deadlocked situation lasting almost 16 years. It is well-known that the unresolved conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh is considered the most daunting issue for regional security in the South Caucasus. Since 1994, when a cease-fire was reached between the parties, many attempts have been made to find a political solution to this conflict. The geopolitical situation was noticeably changed after the Russia-Georgia war and a number of different interventions were introduced by regional and non-regional actors which directly or obliquely could have favorable influence on ways to reach a comprehensive solution to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The following initiatives could be listed among them: "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform;" Moscow Declaration; Eastern Partnership and Nabucco pipeline project; Joint Statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; the preliminary version of the Basic Principles for a settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; and Armenian-Turkish rapprochement.

One of the first multilateral diplomatic initiatives announced in Moscow on August 13, 2008 was the "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform" (CSCP) offered by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Aimed at promoting peace, stability and cooperation in the Caucasus region among all three South Caucasus countries including Turkey and Russia, the CSCP is an updated version of an older idea on the establishment of a "Stability Pact for the Caucasus," proposed by Turkish President Suleyman Demirel in 2000. However, an agreement on a CSCP is not easy to reach today due to the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, complicated Turkish-Armenian relationships and current Russian-Georgian relations that seriously suffered in the aftermath of the Russia-Georgia war. The Moscow Declaration signed in November 2008 by the Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents demonstrated by itself an example of Russia's increasing interest to play a more active and persistent role as a broker in this process and restore its reputation after the war with Georgia. It became the second signed document since May 1994, when a cease-fire agreement was reached due to Russia's mediation efforts. It contributed to an intensification of negotiation processes on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. To date, six meetings have been held between the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents in 2009 and one, most recently in Sochi on January 25, 2010. However, no tangible results have been achieved in this process yet.

The European Union's new initiative, the so-called "Eastern Partnership," was inaugurated in May 2009 by the leaders of six post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. It can be viewed in this context as a next step in bringing the South Caucasus region closer to the European Union. At the same time, the realization of the Nabucco pipeline, one of the important projects contributing to European Energy Security (Azerbaijan is considered one of the transit and possible supplier countries), could be very beneficial for the diversification of the current natural gas suppliers and delivery routes to Europe. Possible incorporation of the South Caucasus states into the geopolitical and energy

security framework of the European Union could also trigger the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Joint Statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict issued on July 10, 2009 by the presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group's Co-Chair countries and a preliminary version of the Basic Principles for a settlement to the conflict prepared in November 2007 in Madrid (the so called "Madrid principles") gave a new impetus to the negotiation process. A preliminary version of the Basic Principles stipulate the return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control; an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance; a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh; future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will; the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence; and international security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation^[2]. Work on an updated version of this document is in progress, and the parties reached an agreement thus far only on the wording of the preamble of this document in Sochi on January 25, 2010. However "following his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow, Memmedyarov^[3] said Azerbaijan accepted the principals in general terms. Noting that Armenian side has contradictory statements over the principals, Memmedyarov cited a positive peace atmosphere in case Armenia approached the issue from a positive point of view"^[4]. Thus, if the parties are able to overcome a few disagreements and accept the revamped Madrid Principles it will laid the foundation for the comprehensive peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh region.

The Armenian-Turkish rapprochement also intensified after the Russian invasion of Georgia. The efforts started with "soccer diplomacy" in September 2008 ended with the two protocols on the establishment of diplomatic relations and on the development of bilateral relations between Armenia and Turkey on October 10, 2009 in Zurich. However, their ratification by the Parliament of Turkey seems quite questionable now. This is due to the fact that Turkey closed its border with Armenia in response to the Armenian occupation of Kelbajar, one of the adjacent Azerbaijani districts located outside Nagorno-Karabakh. Therefore, it insists on the return of occupied territories to Azerbaijan as a precondition for opening the border and establishing diplomatic relations with Armenia. At the same time, the continuous work of Armenian lobby groups to recognize 1915 events as genocide through resolutions in foreign parliaments, including the United States Congress, creates serious impediments for the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations.

[1] O. Sushko. "The end of "International order – 1991," Impact of 2008 Russia-Georgia war on Ukraine," Heintish Boll Stiftung, Warshaw, November, 2008, p.1.

[2] The White House – Press Office – "Joint Statement on the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict," July 10, 2009

[3] Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan – GP

[4] Azerbaijan waits for Armenian response to Madrid principle, TRT, March 27, 2010 (<http://www.trtenglish.com/trtinternational/en/newsDetail.aspx?HaberKodu=c183e243-6dfc-4acd-a2dd-61a8bc2dba78>)

Clash of Narratives: The under-appreciated role of identity in non-resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

by Phil Gamaghelyan

Until now, the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) peace process has been by and large limited to official negotiations between the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and the return or exchange of territories. Yet while the political process is certainly central to the conflict and its potential resolution, there are also other factors that influence the conflict, and those typically are ignored. The sustainable resolution of the conflict, however, requires a comprehensive approach that will address all the underlying causes of the conflict, and not only the political ones.

The focus of this particular article will be on an underlying cause which up to date is given very little attention in the peace process or conflict related literature — the identity-conflict between Azerbaijanis and Armenians that manifests itself in deep mutual mistrust rooted in hostile historical memories. It analyzes the relationship between the most commonly-held historical narratives in present-day Armenian and Azerbaijani societies and the continuation of the conflict. The article is written with the hope of initiating a discussion and receiving suggestions about the role of historical narratives as well as on the broader topic of identity in the conflict and its resolution. The narratives presented below are certainly subjective. Their sources are notes taken by the author during four separate Armenian-Azerbaijani dialogue workshops between 2007 and 2009. Yet the topic of the article is not the objective history (as it happened), but rather the collective memory of history (as it is transmitted and commonly “remembered”) and its influence on the conflict. These subjective yet collective narratives, therefore, have a particular relevance for the purpose of this article.

The formation of the present-day Armenian identity is an important factor contributing to the continuation of the conflict. Armenians place great pride in considering themselves an “ancient nation.” They commonly trace their ancestry to the sixth century B.C. According to Suny, Armenian identity was consolidated as a “unique, identifiable, ethno-religious community when they adopted an exclusive form of Monophysite Christianity and a common language in the fourth century A.D.” (Suny 1993).

The Armenian popular narrative often refuses to acknowledge Azerbaijanis as a distinct ethnic group and associates the Turkic speaking Azerbaijanis with Turks. According to the Armenian narrative, ancestors of the present-day Turks and Azerbaijanis played a devastating role in Armenian history. They invaded the region along with other Turkic tribes between the tenth and twelfth centuries and were responsible for innumerable massacres and the colonization of indigenous peoples, including Armenians. This historic injustice culminated in the Armenian Genocide of 1915 in Ottoman Turkey, in which the entire Armenian population of Anatolia was destroyed (Hovannisian 1988). In the Armenian collective memory, therefore, the Turkic speaking Azerbaijanis are considered part of the “genocidal” Turkish nation, responsible for massacres, ethnic cleansings, and the destruction of Armenian culture. As a consequence, Armenians fear discrimination, ethnic cleansing, or possible genocide of the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, should NK become part of independent Azerbaijan. The nationalistic public rhetoric of the Azerbaijani authorities and repeated threats of a new war, along with the policy of support of Turkey’s denial of the Armenian genocide, does not discourage those perceptions either.

Nagorno-Karabakh has a particular importance for the Armenian collective memory. According to some Armenian historians, Nagorno-Karabakh has always remained autonomous or independent, even when the rest of Armenia was under the rule of one or the other empire (Hovannisian 1988). Armenians in other regions were assimilated, but in Nagorno-Karabakh they preserved their identity. This notion has become a major component of the Armenian collective memory in the last two decades, contributing to the perception of Nagorno-Karabakh as the “last Armenian stronghold,” the surrender of which will result not only in the loss of territory but in the loss of a big part of the Armenian identity.

The formation of the Azerbaijani identity is another factor contributing to the intractability of the conflict. Azerbaijanis trace their ethnic ancestry from the aboriginal Caucasian Albanians and the Turks. The Azerbaijani cultural traditions are mainly those of Shi'a Islam (Croissant 1998). By some accounts, Azerbaijani identity consolidated in the 17th-19th centuries, while others trace it as a distinct identity group going back to the 10th century or earlier (Atabaki 2000). This discrepancy might have to do with the fact that the Muslim groups in the Ottoman and Persian Empires, although they had many distinct features such as culture and language, did not have a tradition of describing themselves in present-day ethnic terms and had one overarching Muslim identity. The situation changed after the Russian conquest of the Caucasus and the overall rise of nationalism as a dominant ideology replacing religion.

Similar to the Armenian case, Nagorno-Karabakh has a special place in the Azerbaijani collective memory. It is remembered as the birthplace of Azerbaijani identity, the center of Azerbaijani culture, and the home to many Azerbaijani poets and musicians. The loss of Nagorno-Karabakh equated to the loss of a big part of national identity.

According to the Azerbaijani narrative, Armenians play a very destructive role in the history of Azerbaijan. Tsarist Russia employed policies of assimilation and relocated large numbers of Christians, mostly Armenians, to the region populated by Azerbaijanis while simultaneously deporting Muslims from the same areas. Russians also favored local Christians, particularly Armenian Christians, who assumed political and economic control. The Azerbaijani collective memory also contains examples of 1918 Russian massacres of Azerbaijanis that Armenians participated in. At that time, the Azerbaijani identity was also consolidated and defined in ethnic terms, reinforced by the ideology of Pan-Turkism, a secular form of Turkic nationalism. Azerbaijani (or Azeri) identity, although it developed in protest to Russian (Christian) policies and colonization, was mainly directed against the local "privileged" Christian Armenians (Atabaki 2000). Armenians were seen as opportunistic aggressors that used their good relationship with Russia to expand to the east into Azerbaijani territories. The present-day Russian-Armenian military alliance and the continuing presence of the Russian army in the Caucasus reinforce this perception.

In the last two decades, since the onset of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 1988, the Azerbaijani and Armenian historical narratives have grown increasingly hostile, each portraying its own group as indigenous and peaceful. The other has become the archenemy who methodically destroys their population and cultural heritage with the help of the assimilatory and discriminatory policies of the regional powers, Russia and Turkey respectively. Both narratives blame any possible past or present tragedy exclusively on the other group, be it injustices, genocides, the destruction of cultural heritage, the start of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, ethnic cleansings resulting in hundreds of thousands of refugees, or economic disaster. Both consider the other's historical accounts to be lies, manufactured for political purposes. This mutual perception has grown so hostile that any compromise or concession, particularly related to the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, is now seen as humiliating, defeatist and unacceptable to either side.

The current Armenian and Azerbaijani governments have risen to power on radical nationalistic slogans with mutually exclusive claims to deliver Nagorno-Karabakh to their respective constituencies. Every politician who takes a moderate stand and tries to improve relations is inevitably stamped as a traitor. This dynamic creates a vicious cycle of political outbidding in which politicians are forced to take more and more radical positions so as not to appear unpatriotic compared to the opposition. This war of rhetoric, produced mostly for internal consumption, forces the leaders on both sides to adopt an increasingly radical stance vis-à-vis the other side. It widens the gap between the positions of the two parties and leaves little room for a solution. Even worse, the rhetoric penetrates the media and educational institutions, gradually transforming them into propaganda machines. Entire generations have been raised on this propaganda during the 20 years of conflict. It has intensified the feeling of mutual mistrust and hatred, while elevating the mutually exclusive myths of Nagorno-Karabakh to such a level that no politician can suggest any concession without producing public outrage. The polarization of public opinion is so deep that if the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan could reach an agreement, they would likely fail to implement it because of the fear of making such agreements public. The current negotiation effort, therefore, is something of a farce since any possible solution that would determine the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh would be dissatisfactory to at least one

party and likely both. Both sides refuse to acknowledge any need to cooperate until a solution is found, and each side wants that solution to satisfy its own demands.

The above analysis shows that the collective memories and identities of Azerbaijanis and Armenians have developed in opposition to each other and the “Us versus Them” dynamic is central to defining relations between the two societies. This has a direct negative influence on the political process and the inability of the leaders from both sides to find a compromise, as identities based on the exclusion of the other preclude a possibility of peaceful coexistence. The game indeed becomes zero-sum, when either of the groups, if it finds itself a minority in other’s state, is guaranteed exclusion, to say the least. A meaningful peace process intended to achieve a lasting solution, therefore, should approach the identity dimension of the conflict as seriously as the political one. A long-term comprehensive strategy that addresses the identity-dimension of the conflict has to go hand-in-hand with the political process and complement it. Every success story in conflict resolution, be that the French-German, Jewish-German, Northern Irish, and others suggest a strong need to work on the resolution simultaneously from a number of angles and that focusing on the political process alone is a short-sighted approach that will be short-lived and might even backfire.

Yet any work with non-political dimensions of the NK conflict, until now, has been conducted sporadically, with very limited financial or political support, and often despite it. Almost no scholarship exists that would examine the conflict from non-political perspectives. This article is not written to insist that identity is *the* problem in this conflict. It is a problem. A problem ignored.

Why do the narratives grow increasingly hostile? How are the memories created, transmitted? How much influence do the narratives have on the identity formation? What is the correlation between the collective memories and policy making? What is the exact role of oral narratives, commemoration ceremonies, historical educational materials, and electronic and printed media in shaping policy? How can agents of memory transmission be transformed into factors contributing to the resolution rather than exacerbation of conflicts? Can a better understanding of the relationship between memory and conflict be used to produce less dichotomous policy-making? How can this knowledge contribute to the peace process? These questions are worthy a discussion, a research paper or two, perhaps are even central questions. It is hard to know until the discussion happens.

This article is a modified version of a chapter on identity from '[Rethinking the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Identity, Politics, Scholarship](#)' originally published in the International Negotiation Journal, Volume 15, Number1, 2010, pp. 33-56(24) available at <http://brill.publisher.ingentaconnect.com/content/mnp/iner/2010/00000015/00000001;jsessionid=178t73sadfqs.alice>

BLOG

The oppression of “Tolerance”

by Edgar Khachatryan

Two years ago I had the opportunity to provide a workshop on the issue of tolerance, human rights, and peace with the participation of activists from the Caucasus, Germany, and Latin America. The perspectives of participants from Latin America toward the topic brought me to the decision to explore it a bit deeper, to look to the issue, and try to analyze it, from other perspectives. The following article is aimed to explore and critically analyze the definition of tolerance and to discuss its usefulness and applicability to conflict transformation strategies, and its potentially oppressive effect.

My small study of internet resources, aimed at comprehending the diversity of understandings of the definition of tolerance, has shown that the general meaning of tolerance is the ability to accept something even while disapproving of it. “In social, cultural and religious contexts, Toleration and tolerance are terms used to describe attitudes which are “tolerant” (or moderately respectful) of practices or group memberships that may be disapproved of by those in the majority” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolerance>). In analyzing the definition, I have paid special attention to the word “majority.” It seems to me that, according to this definition, tolerance is about relationships between majorities and minorities, about those who have power versus those who don’t.

Rainer Forst, Professor of Political Theory and Philosophy at Cambridge University, divides tolerance into a “permission” conception and a “respect” conception in the publication “Tolerance in Conflict. History, Content and Presence of a Controversial Concept” (<http://www.ici-berlin.org/de/vergangene-events/past/2008-12-11-the-power-of-tolerance/>). The first conception is that you can only tolerate something if you are operating from a position of power and dominance; giving someone permission to do something, if you are in a position of domination over them. It means no longer persecuting that group but also not giving them equal rights. At the same time, however, Forst reveals the dynamic of an emancipatory dimension of tolerance when it functions as a strategy to resist domination. If minority groups claim their (equal) rights through invoking tolerance, they invoke a respect conception of tolerance.

Tolerance matters are often used in peace building, including ethno-political issues and conflicts; many trainings and conferences on tolerance building between conflicting societies have been organized, and in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, for more than 15 years tolerance building activities have been delivered for different target groups from countries and regions divided by conflict. Let’s try together to explore their possibilities for success. If we agree that tolerance has an element of power relationships, we need to clarify for ourselves which conflicting party is the majority, and which is the minority; which has the power to tolerate, and which one needs to be adapted to? Of course, I am waiting to readers’ comments to both, but let’s first explore a bit deeper. Analyzing tolerance, we can divide it into 3 components:

1. Objection: we can only say we tolerate something, if we think it is wrong. If we think it is good, we would not speak of toleration; if we think it is interesting but strange, we would also not speak of toleration.
2. Acceptance: if we can provide proper rational, reasoned justification for why this something should be tolerated.
3. Rejection: if we can provide proper, rational, reasoned justification why this something goes beyond the limits of tolerance, e.g., racism, homophobia.

Although it is common knowledge that in armed ethno-political conflicts there are no winners and only losers, in societal perceptions this is not always the case. Usually, the conflict divides the conflicting societies into “perpetrators” and “victims”; different perceptions on “perpetrators” and “victims” are strongly cultivated within the countries in conflict. This pushes the division deeper and deeper. Because of these unequal positions, it is unlikely—or even impossible—that tolerance building strategies within these countries

or regions will work. From a discursive perspective there are a number of tensions within these arguments. Where do the power relations figure in this analysis? Who decides what is “proper” justification or defines the limits of “rationality”? If the concept of “tolerance” already constitutes the candidate for tolerance as deficient, deviant, wrong, then how can it have the positive twist?

Another perspective is the definition of tolerance as “The capacity to endure hardship or pain” (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/tolerance>). Therefore, in conflicting societies where the victim image is actively cultivated, it is almost impossible to achieve a situation in which “victims” will ever respect the position of “perpetrators;” wouldn’t that mean that they “tolerate” the perpetration against themselves? Consequently, I see here an element of oppression; it seems to me that we press the parties to respect or accept each others’ positions, although without attempting to create a space for them to understand each other’s position; it seems to me that ones with “power” attempt to force “tolerance” toward them on those without “power.”

Because of all of the above, I perceive tolerance more as an obstacle to achieving sustainable peace than as a supporting method, even if only because there is a great element of oppression and of prioritizing power in it.

Russia's "Return" to Caucasus and Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement

by Efgan Niftiyev

The busy agenda of Caucasus in 2009 was peace, which, in 2008, was hitting the headlines across the world with Russian-Georgian War. Eventually, concrete steps were taken in Turkish-Armenian talks mediated by Switzerland. The talks, accelerated by "Football Diplomacy," were welcomed by two superpowers – Russia and the U.S. — whose regional interests do not overlap *per se*. With their visits to the region, the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton and her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov urged sides to be courageous and confident. The U.S. support for Turkish-Armenian rapprochement wasn't a surprise. After August war in Georgia, the new U.S. administration seemed to prefer not to confront Russia, and decided to execute its Caucasus plans via Turkish hand. A potential Turkish-Armenian compromise could possibly conduce to the solution of Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Thus, the West could have had the chance to save Armenia from Russian domination to a certain extent and have more secure and favorable energy corridor through Armenia instead of Georgia, which is under threat at any time.

What was surprising was Russia's support for the process, although its interests coincide neither with Turkey nor the U.S. (the West). Since the demise of Soviet Union, Russia has seen the Caucasus as its "back yard" or with former Primer Minister Prikamov's words "blijnee zarubejje" – "near abroad." In this sense, it can't be argued that Russia would accept the domination of a regional (Turkey) or global power (the U.S.) in the Caucasus. In fact, Ankara-Tbilisi-Baku (West-East) line, made up by Demirel, Aliyev and Shevardnadze and backed up by the West, had limited Russia's influence significantly in the region. Actually, dealing with its own economic and political problems for a long time, Yeltsin's Russia was not in a position to do something about that. In spite of all the pressures by Russia, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline was established by the support of the West and Turkey. On the other hand, Russia closely cooperated with Yerevan and Teheran trying to establish a North-South cooperation line.

But suddenly Russia's hands started to strengthen. Georgia's poorly calculated intervention into Ossetia gave Russia the opportunity to get its hands on the region. Russia not only shocked Georgia within two days, but also recognized the independence of the rebel regions, Ossetia and Abkhazia, and thus increased the number of its allies to three together with Armenia, and more importantly succeeded in paralyzing the Tbilisi link of Ankara-Tbilisi-Baku line. Everybody would recall how trapped felt Ankara and the West during Georgia crisis. This was actually an admonitory process for Baku. Russia was within an ace of pulling Baku apart from the West. And this opportunity was given through Turkish-Armenian rapprochement process. There are two major reasons why Russia supported Turkish-Armenian rapprochement. The first one was to improve its post-war image and to seem a pro-peace country. The second was to cause a rift between Azerbaijan and Turkey and thus wholly eliminate Ankara-Tbilisi-Baku line. During Turkish-Armenian negotiations that held behind closed doors, Russia was busy with instigating Baku against Turkey. Ill-communication between Ankara and Baku was serving to this end, indeed. It was very late when Baku heard an official statement from Ankara.

In the meantime, Azerbaijanis were provoked against Turkey through pro-Russian media in the country. It was as if Turkey suddenly realized the severity of the issue. While aiming at reducing the pressure from outer world regarding genocide issue by getting along with Armenia, Turkey faced the risk of loosing its closest ally – Azerbaijan. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan hastily visited Azerbaijan and pledged not to open the borders with Armenia until there would be a solution to Nagorno-Karabakh issue, and so tried to dispel anxiety of Azerbaijani authorities and public. The effect of the speech is open to question, but the fact is that Russia achieved in pulling Azerbaijan toward itself, even if not pulled it apart from the West and Turkey. Despite the fact that the protocols on the establishment of diplomatic relations and re-opening the borders signed, it seems that the process is doomed to fail. Both Turkey and Armenia are far from the dialogue they achieved last year and the chance of ratification of protocols in the congresses of both countries decreases. It is evident that Russia is the most profitable side in this process. Russia kept Armenia under its influence and managed to alienate Azerbaijan from Turkey and thus from the West more than ever before. Although recently both Turkish and Azerbaijani officials underline that the relations of two countries are very strong, it seems the relations suffered last year will not be recovered easily.

Key Chain

by Jamila Mammadova

I am an Azerbaijani who has been living in the U.S. A few months ago, I was invited to participate in an Azerbaijani–Armenian workshop. It was a 12-day event, and it was conducted between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in an isolated house in nature.

The beginning of that venture was difficult for me, as I faced a dilemma: Do I attend a workshop with Armenians, come face to face, eat, sleep, and spend 12 long days together? Or do I reject the invitation right now and forget about the existence of such a dialogue? For me, it was either I decide now or refuse to be broken in the middle and leave the dialogue by showing my weakness. It was also about my family. My father, who was a volunteer during the Nagorno-Karabakh war, was absolutely against my attending the dialogue. Despite these difficulties I made my decision to attend the workshop. I said to myself, “You studied the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution; it is now time to prove that you have really understood what you have studied and are ready to apply it.”

The workshop was divided into a number of phases. One of the phases composed discussions about the past, present and the future of Nagorno-Karabakh from the perspective of the conflicting sides: Azerbaijanis and Armenians. The purpose of the discussion was not about arguing with or persuading opposing parties on each other’s positions. Rather, it was about sharing views and opinions concerning the issue. Discussions on the subject, nevertheless, led to a number of high tension debates among participants.

During one of the heated debates an Armenian participant and I blew up at each other on the subject. We could not hear each other, nor were we willing to understand each other’s points from opposing perspectives. We both tried to prove the point that was so essential for both of us. We desperately wanted to persuade each other on how much Nagorno-Karabakh is part of our respective identities. We would *not* be so desperate or anxious to explain if it would not have been so crucial for both of us. The question remains whether we were able to eventually understand each other’s views or not!

After few days I became a good friend with that same Armenian participant. Because he was older than me and had witnessed the Nagorno-Karabakh war, he shared his stories about his Azeri friend before the war. He explained how tragic it was for him to lose his friend due to political discrepancies between two neighboring states that were closer to each other than any other Soviet state. Not only are we neighboring states, we have always been confused because of our physical appearances that looked so much alike. I also shared my story about my father’s experience as a volunteer during the war.

When the workshop was about to end he gave me a gift. It was a key chain with one of Armenia’s largest churches on one side and “Armenia” written on the other. It is a very valuable gift for me. I was chosen among many other fellows to receive that gift. I value and hold it today. But again, as before attending the workshop I face a dilemma. I went to the workshop to apply my skills and experience in Conflict Analysis and Resolution. But I came back with another conflict inside of me, a conflict that has been splitting me apart ever since:

“Do I attach my keys to the key chain and be a betrayer to the people of my own country, my nation, or do I just keep it in the drawer and be a betrayer to my friend?”

Peace, Trust and Love as a Cornerstone to Co-existence

by Sirun Gharagyozyan

Armenians and Azerbaijanis, representing conflicting countries, have long been denied the chance of mere communication, which unfortunately has resulted in two-sided hostility during confrontation anywhere on the globe. In fact, this confrontation occurs occasionally only within the frames of joint European or American projects outside the countries in conflict. As a matter of fact, I was one of the privileged to have witnessed such a confrontation.

As an Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program alumna, I spent one academic year sharing a short-term lifetime with an Azerbaijani girl within the scopes of the same program. However, I am grateful that “Muskie” brought us together, otherwise the stereotypes I held against the Azeri people would have remained unbroken forever.

In the beginning, though, it was quite a breathtaking challenge to face each other until we established a mutual trust. I recall our first meeting with a flashback, because I had a hidden fear I would lose control and throw a temper tantrum when meeting an Azeri. But actually, that didn't happen because I managed to conceal my emotional turbulence when we met in Washington, D.C. It was perhaps because I had presumed she was Georgian judging by her complexion. Later during orientation we were informed that we were both meant to study at the same university and were taking the same flight to Minneapolis. This was already a tougher challenge but I realized backing out would not comfort me, and I decided to be polite and demonstrate positiveness. During the flight we engaged in a conversation about finding housing and shared common concerns about a new life in the USA. This conversation, however, ended with a painful reminiscence of the Nagorno-Karabagh war's destructive consequences in our lives and economies. We remembered the deceased among our relatives and friends. Actually, we cried without daring to look at each other, since the unspoken grief had arisen in us. This was when we both agreed upon tabooing the apple of discord—Nagorno-Karabagh—since we knew it would bring non-stop tears and heartbreaking memories with it. This decision averted the chance of further conflicts during our friendship. I think we both realized that continuous attempts to resolve this discord at our level would only yield an evanescent result. But instead, we decided to alleviate and facilitate our co-existence by putting it aside and establishing our own peace, though we had our own subjective views about territorial objectivity. I believe this was the best solution we arrived at, otherwise we would have held a grudge against each other and would have aggravated the situation.

I have shared my most precious times with Leyla, my “Muskie” sister. We have gone through everything together. We traveled, we shared a bed, we shared food, we shared a wonderful piece of life together. Now when I look back on where we started and where we are now, I am amazed by the magic of friendship, love and peace we have created. I feel so proud we were courageous enough to have broken the ice and got the ball rolling. Leyla is the greatest friend of mine, and I hope many other Armenians will have such a precious friend as she.

About The Journal of Conflict Transformation

The Journal of Conflict Transformation is an independent online publication that provides a forum for scholars, practitioners, policy analysts, starting researchers and bloggers to analyze as well as discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and issues related to it. The purpose of the publication is to contribute to sustainable resolution of the conflict by expanding scholarship on the subject and encouraging diverse perspectives and analysis.

The Journal welcomes contributions from established researchers and is also committed to include the voices of emerging analysts and writers within the peace process. This inter-disciplinary online publication accepts scholarly and analytical articles, as well as reflective writings, that contribute to the better understanding of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and suggestions for improvement of the peace process and positive transformation of inter-societal relations. The articles can analyze the conflict as a whole or any factor that potentially has implication for the conflict and/or its resolution from the perspective of political science, economy, sociology, anthropology, social psychology, collective memory studies, comparative history, ethnic conflict, identity-conflict, conflict resolution, peace studies, mediation and facilitation, conflict transformation and comparative case studies.

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