

Caucasus Edition

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Meddling From Afar: Diasporas' Role in Conflict Resolution
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Diasporas provide the uprooted masses a home away from home and a sense of belonging. Along with preserving their heritage, culture, and identity **Read More on Page 10**

Freedom of Choice
By Veronika Agajanyan

So when I appeared in this world I was already given several facts about myself in the following package:
1. Nationality: Armenian
2. Place of Birth: Baku, Azerbaijan
3. Year of Birth: 1988 **Read More on Page 12**

Creating Safe Spaces: Building Civil Society Networks and Partnerships for Dialogue and Reconciliation
By Zahid Movlazadeh

Building dialogue-oriented networks and partnerships of civil society actors representing different sides of a conflict is considered to be a part of a multi-faceted process of addressing frozen and post-conflict situations. Many of these network or partnership building processes are essentially aimed at bridging the gaps between the conflicting societies and building confidence and trust. This in turn will create a safe space for the sides to start manifesting their values and underlying motivations, thus making a shift from expressing their positions to discussing their interests **Read more on Page 5**

'Thanks to the Armenian People...'
By Edgar Khachatryan

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ANALYSIS

Literature Matters

By Phil Gamaghelyan

This article examines the trends in literature on Nagorno-Karabakh from the onset of the conflict until today and traces the impact it had on each step of the political process. It shows how the dominant trends in literature at any given period have been closely informing the political process, whether this link was explicit or not. The aim of the article is to demonstrate the importance of supporting research as one of the determining factors in whether this conflict will remain frozen, will escalate into a new cycle of violence, or will be solved.

The analysis of the trends in literature shows that the status of Nagorno-Karabakh was at the center of discussion from the early days of the conflict until the mid 2000s. Starting from 2005, writings focused on the process of conflict resolution, rather than the outcome, gradually replaced that earlier trend, contributing to major changes in the political process. This article does not represent an in-depth review of literature, but rather an attempt to group together the major themes and chronology of trends in scholarly and analytical literature on Nagorno-Karabakh and their impact on the peace process.

The bulk of literature during the early stages of the conflict (starting from 1987) ranges from open propaganda to pseudo-theoretical and theoretical analysis and is written by scholars, journalists, and policymakers who are usually of Armenian or Azerbaijani origin. All the mainstream media both in the region and diasporas also represent this trend. In this period, most of the literature, even if academically sound, such as Chorbajian or Nassibli, is focused on legitimizing the position of their own side and disregarding the most basic needs and interests of the other side.

Armenian writers focus on the right for self-determination of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. They write that Soviet Azerbaijani rulers have actively discriminated against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and that the survival of Armenian identity and culture is in danger. The vital concerns of the Azerbaijanis, including the faith of the Azerbaijani community of Karabakh or that of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis from the seven occupied districts outside of Nagorno-Karabakh, are not discussed. Nagorno-Karabakh is portrayed in exclusivist terms as a historical Armenian (therefore non-Azerbaijani) territory, excluding a possibility that Azerbaijanis might also have a legitimate sense of belonging to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijani writers focus on the right of Azerbaijan to preserve its territorial integrity within the borders of the Azerbaijan SSR and portray Armenia as an aggressor aiming to seize Azerbaijani territories. The concerns of Armenians are not addressed, including such vital ones as the security of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. The grievances that led to the war, such as the discrimination against the Armenian population in Soviet Azerbaijan, are not addressed or are deemed lies invented to justify the Armenian aggression. Just as in the Armenian case, Nagorno-Karabakh is presented in an exclusivist way as a historical Azerbaijani (therefore non-Armenian) land, a birthplace of Azerbaijani culture and identity, excluding a possibility that Armenians also might have a legitimate sense of belonging to Nagorno-Karabakh.

In the literature of this period both Armenian and Azerbaijani authors often use rhetorically charged language with every positive feature attributed to their side and every negative feature to the other. The conflict is seen from an adversarial point of view. Two sides are united in their critique of the international community's inability to deliver a "just" solution, the Armenian version of which is the opposite of the Azerbaijani one. These writings suggest ways to reinforce the leverage of one side vis-à-vis the other, usually by trying to attract the sympathies or interests of international actors, and to force the other side to concede. Approaches to the resolution of the conflict look for a "**win-lose**" outcome in which one side will gain everything and the other will lose it all. This trend, still prominent today, had no alternatives in the early days of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, between the late 1980s and early 1990s. Key scholars and actors

during that time (e.g., Balayan) contributed to the escalation of the tensions between the sides resulting in the war. Neither did the literature concern itself with a search for a sustainable solution or non-violent approach to the conflict that could account for the interests of both sides and provide a knowledge base or blueprints on which the tension could have been diffused, or an agreement built in the immediate post-war period.

The next trend emerges in the early to mid-1990s and includes authors who tend to take a neutral or objective stance, yet who also look at the conflict from a zero-sum point of view. Abasov and Khachatryan, Croissant, Carley, Crocker, Hampson, Aall, and others in that period focus on “objective” **unfavorable** context, conflicting interests of external actors, ancient hatreds, and internal politics of conflicting parties. The solutions proposed by these authors are typically schemes for autonomy and self-governance of Nagorno-Karabakh within the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan. Many of these ideas were immediately adopted by the Minsk Group mediators and served as a basis of official negotiations over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh in the early stages of the process. They delivered no results as offered “lose-lose” outcome that dissatisfied both sides.

A variation of this “lose-lose” trend is an option first proposed by Sakharov in 1988 but one that received more attention in the second half of the 1990s when developed further by Goble, is the so-called “territorial swap” — handing Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia along with the territory that separates the two, in exchange for giving Zangezur to Azerbaijan, thus linking Azerbaijan proper with its autonomous region of Nakhichevan, but also depriving Armenia from a border with Iran. This option also landed on negotiation table and was considered during presidential talks in 2000-2001 in Key West, Florida, again delivering no results as the concessions asked from the sides were very extensive. The other theme that surfaced in the literature in mid- 1990s was a form of a “common state,” a federation or confederation of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. This was offered to the conflicting sides as a solution in 1998 by the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group and was rejected by the Azerbaijani side.

Every possible variation of “compromise” or “**lose-lose**” solutions known to political science surfaced in the literature on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the mid-1990s and made it to the negotiation table, yet not surprisingly were rejected by one party or the other, and often both.

In the mid to late 1990s a new trend of literature emerges, moving away from the adversarial views and looking for “mutually beneficial” solutions. Phillips, De Waal (in “Black Garden”), Emerson, and few others represent this approach. They look for points of common interest yet often overlook objective threats and obstacles to the solutions they offer. As an example, Emerson proposes to create a “Trans-Caucasian Confederation,” with an assumption that the regional integration can help to solve the conflicts. This proposal, as with other “**win-win**” oriented scenarios, never gained political currency. Despite good intentions the “win-win” scenarios share the main shortcoming of the “win-lose” and “lose-lose” approaches that were predominant in the earlier period. They focus on the final solution without elaborating on the process necessary to get to that solution. However, these approaches were met with enthusiasm by some sectors of civil societies and peace activists and served as a common ground for uniting around alternative ideas.

The latest trend in literature on Nagorno-Karabakh, starting from the mid-2000s, signals a clean break with the previous preoccupation of literature with the immediate solution to the status issue. The authors representing this trend are process, rather than outcome, oriented and include conflict resolution organizations, such as the International Crisis Group and Conciliation Resources, as well as a number of young Azerbaijani and Armenian social scientists. The **positions** of these authors regarding the status of Nagorno-Karabakh might greatly differ from one another, and often be similar to those of the earlier authors who took a one-sided approach when discussing the solutions. Yet what unites these authors and what differentiates them from others is that they break with the tradition of looking for a quick solution to the status issue and put a great emphasis on the analysis of the conflict and its dynamics, and better understanding the needs and interests of both sides. Their suggestions are process rather than outcome oriented, focusing on specific aspects of the peace process and steps necessary to move forward.

This approach can be seen in a number of individual research papers produced starting from 2005 and beyond. In 2005, the International Crisis Group started producing a series of reports urging the

international community and others involved in the peace process to focus on improvement of relations between the societies along with working on a political solution, thus mainstreaming the process-oriented approach to the resolution of the conflict. In 2008, a group of Azerbaijani and Armenian social scientists organized a panel on the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process during the annual conference of the Association of Studies of Nationalities at Columbia University. The panel resulted in a special issue of the **International Negotiation** journal on Nagorno-Karabakh focusing on the role of civil society and identity, as well as suggestions for the improvement of the peace process itself. In 2009, International Alert conducted a meeting of researchers and civil society representatives with the mediators and policy makers in Vienna for a discussion focused specifically on how to improve the peace process and how to normalize relations between the societies. The UK-based Conciliation Resources started facilitating a series of publications by Armenian and Azerbaijani authors in 2009 focusing on various aspects of the political process. The project became known as "Karabakh 2014." Also in 2009, a conference assessing the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process was held at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. In April 2010 the Caucasus Edition, an online resource devoted exclusively to the analysis and resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, has been established featuring some well known, but mostly dozens of newly emerging Azerbaijani and Armenian writers.

As an indication of a clear shift in thinking about the conflict, only a slim minority among the articles published since 2005 and described in the previous paragraphs discuss the final outcome or political solution to the conflict. Instead, most fall into categories of analysis of the situation and suggestions to improve the peace process. The literature goes out of the boundaries of politics. A number of writers take on exploring identity, collective memory, and other anthropological or sociological topics. Critical approaches to historiography are also gradually emerging (by Gamaghelyan, Garagozov, and Oganesyanyan). In terms of suggestions for conflict resolution, the focus shifts to the suggestions for the process that could transform the relations between the societies and make sustainable co-existence of Azerbaijanis and Armenians possible. The need to accept each other's grievances as a legitimate step toward eventual reconciliation is also discussed. Most stress the necessity of involving civil societies in the peace process.

The shift in literature from goal oriented to process oriented was followed by a similar shift in the political process. Until the mid 2000s, the main focus of negotiations, just as of literature, was the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the last few years the conversation over the negotiation table, including the most recent Madrid principles, leave the status to be decided at a later stage, while the immediate focus is on targeted but smaller steps and the gradual normalization of relations. Simultaneously, the governments dropped their previous staunch opposition to Track II work that is followed by a revival of cross-border initiatives, the number of which grew at least tenfold between 2006 and 2010.

Conclusions

The evolution of the political process is certainly not influenced by literature alone, and this article does not intend to discount the influence of geo-political, economic, and other factors. Moreover, and without doubt, the literature itself is often influenced by politics. However, because there is direct correlation between the trends in scholarship at any given time and these exact ideas landing on the political field, it is safe to say that the knowledge generated by literature informed the content (if not the context) of political developments at every stage.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the literature was almost exclusively developed by the supporters of one side or the other who favored a "win-lose" outcome. This period was followed by the onset of violence and war. In the early and mid-1990s, the conflict attracted the attention of political scientists who studied it from the realpolitik point of view and offered a number of "lose-lose" outcomes; they urged both sides to compromise and make painful concessions. These ideas largely informed the negotiating process, but failed to produce an acceptable solution, as they continuously dissatisfied both parties. In the late 1990s conflict resolution experts joined the debate and offered what they considered a number of "win-win" possibilities. Their proposals tried to find a political solution that would satisfy both parties. Some of the proposals have been presented to the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents by the Minsk Group co-chairs during negotiations, but none of them proved viable.

In the last few years the conversation gradually transformed, and research expanded covering identity, memory, historiography, and other areas. Writers increasingly approached the resolution of the conflict less as an outcome and more as a process. Mediators have adopted some of these principles, the status issue was put on hold, and long-term steps toward normalizing relations took priority.

This latest and crucial trend in literature emerged with limited political or financial support and in spite of numerous obstacles. It emerged mainly thanks to individual efforts of a few concerned Azerbaijani and Armenian social scientists, and limited institutional support of a few UK-based NGOs, but still remains marginal. Because there has been a strong correlation between the scholarship on this conflict and politics, the mainstreaming and growth of this latest trend of literature can inform and improve the peace process and lead to a sustainable solution. Increased support for conflict-focused research in the fields of sociology, anthropology, political science, education, and critical historiography can produce the breadth of knowledge critical for the progress.

The conclusion is simple: Literature matters.

Creating Safe Spaces: Building Civil Society Networks and Partnerships for Dialogue and Reconciliation

By Zahid Movlazedeh

Introduction

Building dialogue-oriented networks and partnerships of civil society actors representing different sides of a conflict is considered to be a part of a multi-faceted process of addressing frozen and post-conflict situations. Many of these network or partnership building processes are essentially aimed at bridging the gaps between the conflicting societies and building confidence and trust. This in turn will create a safe space for the sides to start manifesting their values and underlying motivations, thus making a shift from expressing their positions to discussing their interests – a key factor in addressing any conflict in a sustainable manner.

The rationale behind writing this article was my attempt to deconstruct, understand, systematize and articulate some of the key stages that shape a successful process of building networks and partnerships for dialogue, and to identify some characteristics and dynamics within each phase. I hope that this article may be helpful for practitioners both facilitating and participating in such processes.

At the same time, this article does not intend to serve as a rigorous analytical reference, but is rather an initial attempt to summarize personal practical experiences in facilitating dialogue, confidence building and reconciliation processes, as well as building networks, coalitions and partnerships between civil society groups from across the conflict divide in the Caucasus, Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

In this article I consciously avoid exemplifying processes described, as most of these are politically sensitive.

I. Why Build Networks of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from Across the Conflict Divide?

By their nature and vocation, civil society actors are well positioned to represent the grassroots insights, interests and motivations from all sides of a conflict, especially those communities and constituencies that are directly affected. At the same time, CSO actors are often less locked in extreme perceptions of their societies and are willing to demonstrate more flexibility and willingness to relate to the other side. These factors create good conditions for civil society groups to interact and engage with their counterparts from across the conflict divide, and through these processes they represent their

constituencies and societies. There are multiple arguments behind building dialogue networks and partnerships. However, two main reasons seem to strongly justify these efforts.

First, due to the fact that the CSO groups tend to be strongly linked with conflict-affected constituencies, they can play an important role in supporting the official negotiation process by **providing perspectives, input and feedback from the grassroots level towards the official negotiation process.**

Second, the role of civil society actors becomes particularly crucial once a peace agreement is reached on the official level. During the process leading up to the official peace agreement, and after the agreement has been reached, civil society groups can be a **driving force behind preparing conflicting societies for reconciliation** and possible future coexistence.

II. Key Conditions of a Legitimate Dialogue-oriented Network Building Process

There are many factors that ensure legitimacy and effectiveness of dialogue-oriented network building processes. The following are the three minimum necessary conditions that should be met when designing the process.

Inclusion

Most of the conflicts result in a diverse range of newly emerging social groups that have been affected by a conflict in different ways. These groups might differ in their interests, motivations and sets of values, as well as different social patterns in responding to a given conflict. It is important to realize that these differences are observed not only on opposite sides of a conflict divide, but also among different sub-groups within each side of a conflict.

Thus, an effective dialogue-oriented network building process should aim to include civil society groups that represent key conflict affected groups across and within the conflicting societies, ensuring that different interests are communicated and taken into consideration during the process.

Representation

It is important to ensure that civil society actors that are part of a dialogue-oriented network building process are genuinely rooted in their constituencies and are able to translate and deliver the messages from the grassroots level.

In this regard, one of the common faults that occur in designing such processes takes place when a network building process is limited only to those “advanced” groups of civil society organizations, sometimes referred to as “CSO establishment” — the organizations that are popular among international development or peace-building agencies. An effective process should also include grassroots CSO groups that are less visible or might appear to be less dominant but are more strongly rooted in their constituencies. Eventually, they will play a key role in translating and voicing messages from across the conflict divide to those communities that will be coexisting in the future.

External facilitation

Questions often arise on the added value of international organizations intervening to facilitate dialogue processes in conflict-affected societies. The assumption made in this article is that external facilitating organizations can have a positive impact in such processes. Yet, the ability of an international organization to contribute constructively to a dialogue process is strongly linked with its level of legitimacy with all stakeholders. This is ensured through having no affiliation with any conflict side, not being associated with a particular political agenda and being perceived by all parties as being able to play an impartial role in facilitating the process. The level of legitimacy is also increased when an external-facilitating peace-building organization is invited by one or more conflict sides or conflict-affected groups.

In some cases a dialogue-oriented network building process cannot be initiated by either of the conflicting sides as it might be perceived as an attempt to impose peace and reconciliation by a de-facto prevailing side. In these cases, a process can only be initiated by an external facilitating agency, whose legitimacy is directly linked with its impartiality and political neutrality.

The role of external facilitating organizations is all the more important in that they have the potential to gain access to underlying motivations of all sides. If they are able to strategically position themselves, they will have the capacity to act as a mediator and channel messages across the conflict divides, therefore creating safe spaces conducive to dialogue.

III. Key Stages of a Dialogue-oriented Network-building Process:

1. Identification of Key Participants

The foundation of an effective dialogue-oriented network-building process is based on a thorough context analysis and systematic stakeholder mapping. This stage is also aimed at building relationships and trust with key civil society groups. Throughout this stage, a facilitating organization must be able to position itself as a credible and transparent actor.

When key conflict-affected groups and civil society actors are identified, the facilitating organization can initiate the process of gathering participants to be part of the process.

2. Development of an Intra-group Identity

Once an external facilitating organization has identified the participants, a process of communication among CSOs within each side of a conflict can be started.

This process is essentially aimed at developing a common intra-group identity, which will unite organizations within each side of a conflict, despite possible internal fragmentation or possible disagreements on values and interests among themselves.

This stage is often characterized by intensive intra-group dynamics. CSOs try to position themselves within their own group and power-struggle patterns may also be observed. This is a gradual process, at the end of which participants will be able to identify a common unifying ground that they will later be communicating to the “other” side.

3. Meeting the ‘Other’ Side and Shaping a Common Intra-process Identity

Once an intra-group identity is shaped on each side of a conflict divide, direct interaction between CSOs from conflicting sides can start taking place. The first few encounters between CSO groups are structured around two crosscutting processes.

Mutual assessment. Throughout this stage, organizations from across the conflict divide assess each other’s potential and capacity to relate to the “other side.” This process includes assessment on many levels: an ability to communicate on an interpersonal level, an assessment of the organizational capacity, and an assessment of ability and legitimacy to represent diverse conflict-affected groups on both (or more) sides.

Developing a common intra-process identity. The second dimension of this stage is structured around developing a common network identity, which allows organizations from across the conflict divide to feel part of a united process. Shaping a safe space and building a common intra-process identity often involves finding and condemning a “negative other,” usually a third party that is not present around the table. In this case, the artificially constructed image of a “negative other” contributes to shifting immediate responsibility to an external actor, which in turn contributes to the unification of the network and thus creates a positive internal dynamic.

A particular feature of this stage is that participants would choose to relate to each other through discussing “safe” topics, and would avoid talking about underlying conflict issues directly. Many disagreements may take place nevertheless, but these clashes would take place around non value-based issues, such as terminology, composition of groups, or other technical matters.

At this stage it would be rather premature and difficult to start developing joint strategies or concrete details of cross-border initiatives. It is important to allow the participants to initiate these discussions at a point when they feel comfortable enough to engage in such issues.

4. Engaging with Each Other on Values and Underlying Interests

Once the common intra-process identity is formed, CSOs will feel safe and comfortable enough with each other to be able to engage in discussions on root causes and underlying conflict issues. The level of comfort established by this stage allows for a shift from discussing symptoms to finally touching upon values and underlying interests of the conflicting sides.

At this stage, such values and interests are usually processed on two levels.

Retrospective. Creating a mutually acceptable conflict narrative, where CSO actors attempt to review the conflict history, its backgrounds, and the consequences for the different sides. The negotiated conflict narrative will then serve as a foundation for future communication and engagement and will help to form a common denominator, enabling the participants to relate to each other when challenges arise.

Prospective. Attempts to envisage the future, where the values are also processed and addressed while discussing practical plans, including the details of possible joint or cross-border projects, as well as the scope and the composition of future activities. The engagement on underlying values is also accomplished when the process participants start developing strategies and approaches on engaging external actors including media, governments and the general public, through discussion on joint memorandums, public statements, and appeals.

5. Escalation and Open Confrontation

Communication about underlying values and interests may lead to open confrontation, which in turn can take the process towards an escalation of tensions between participants. At this stage CSOs representing different sides may take extreme positions. In reality, those extreme positions might differ from what participants genuinely believe in and could be perceived as one of the ways to communicate the interests of constituencies and societies they represent.

At this stage, the role of a facilitating organization is crucial – it is important to allow for the escalation and confrontation to take place as this might be the only possibility to uncover some of the deeper value-based issues and bring them to the surface. In this regard, a facilitating organization should be able to capitalize on the previously acquired knowledge of interests of both sides, keeping the confrontation on a level of constructive interaction without allowing the process to slide towards a point of no return. If this stage is not facilitated and navigated carefully and in a sensitive manner, the entire process might collapse without any possibility to develop it further.

6. Shift in the Quality of Interaction and Increased Level of Trust

If the open confrontation is managed and de-escalates, the interaction between CSOs can shift to the next qualitative level. At this stage the different sides communicate with each other having more in-depth insight into each others’ underlying values and perceptions. The level of confidence and trust between participants is higher than at any previous point of the process. On the other hand, the open confrontation stage does not pass without losses, and some of the participants might choose to leave.

Communication continues in a more transparent and open manner, which allows for joint or cross-border activities and projects to be initiated. At this stage, these activities would usually remain within the scope of participating CSOs.

This stage may also lead to a turning point when some of the civil society actors would start communicating and feeling comfortable enough to engage with each other without the support from an external facilitator.

7. Expanding the Circle and Projecting Trust to a Broader Group

Once the process takes off, participants will gradually start projecting trust to a broader audience. At this stage, CSOs will start engaging other actors from conflict-affected groups in their activities and joint projects, thus gradually expanding the number of stakeholders directly cooperating with each other across the conflict divide.

IV. Conclusion

It is important to acknowledge that the process described is not necessarily linear. The stages are interrelated and may overlap. Events might take the entire process back to the initial stages, or the process can develop faster or stagnate at certain points.

However, if the participants and facilitating organizations are aware of possible dynamics and key characteristics of every stage, this may help them to consciously maintain a distant, yet engaged attitude towards the process. This self-awareness will also help participants to recognize their own behavioral patterns and prevent them from feeling overly frustrated or disoriented throughout the process.

While not intending to provide a comprehensive analysis of the process, I attempted to gather some conclusions resulting from extensive participation, facilitation, observation, asking questions and listening, and multiple failures as well as inspiring successes of building dialogue-oriented networks. I hope that this article will help sharpen the instruments supporting development of civil society networks and partnerships that work towards bringing conflicting societies closer to each other.

BLOGS

Meddling From Afar: Diasporas' Role in Conflict Resolution

By Afa Alizada

Diasporas provide the uprooted masses a home away from home and a sense of belonging. Along with preserving their heritage, culture, and identity, diasporas also play an important role in enriching their adoptive homes by contributing to the cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic diversity. Furthermore, many diasporic groups become politically active in an effort to influence policymaking not only in their adoptive homes, but to also bring about change in their countries of origin by contributing to democratization and promotion of human rights.

However, when it comes to conflict resolution, diasporic groups, wittingly or unwittingly, seem to do more harm than good. The United States – as a major player in international affairs and home to a political system that is highly conducive to lobbying activities – provides a good case for examining diasporas' role in conflict resolution (or perpetuation) in their native homes. Such lobbying activities and power contests are apparent among the Armenian and Azerbaijani diasporas in the US. Large segments of both diasporas have adopted quite an intransigent stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, thus partly contributing to the setbacks in the peace process.

Armenian-Americans constitute a larger and more established diasporic group in the US. The tragic history of persecution has been central to forming a distinct identity for the Armenian diaspora and has guided many of its activities. Shortly after the Nagorno-Karabakh war broke out, the Armenian diaspora, which views homeland Armenia's security through the prism of genocide by Turks, adjusted its activities accordingly. For example, the Armenian diaspora played a (not insignificant) role in the resignation of President Levon Ter-Petrossian, a moderate who was ready to make concessions on the Nagorno-Karabakh and sought, albeit unsuccessfully, to normalize relations with Turkey, even if that meant deemphasizing the genocide issue. To the Armenian diaspora, for whom the 1915 genocide constitutes a significant part of their identity and a major mobilizing cause, reconciling with Turkey (and their Turkic Azerbaijani kin) at the cost of relegating the issue of genocide was inconceivable. The diaspora, therefore, sought to support and strengthen the more nationalistic politicians in the government who were less yielding on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and more in-sync with the diaspora's efforts of genocide recognition.

The Azerbaijani diaspora, although smaller in number and less organized, is, nevertheless, becoming increasingly visible and active, thus contributing to the counterproductive power contest. In contrast to the Armenian diaspora, the Azerbaijani diaspora is on the receiving side (of both financial and other support) in its relationship with the homeland. The Azerbaijani government is funding much of its diaspora's activities in an effort to counter the Armenian diaspora's activities. Just as their counterparts, the Azerbaijani diaspora is emphasizing the issues such as the Khojaly massacre of 1992 and is working toward the recognition of the events of March 1918 as the Azerbaijani genocide by Armenians. The Azerbaijanis are also not sparing their efforts in promoting the linkage between the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which further complicates the peace process.

The argument here is not that these diasporic groups are single-handedly or even largely responsible for the derailment of the peace processes. Leaders both in Azerbaijan and Armenia have repeatedly failed to capitalize on windows of opportunity and rally their people around a peaceful resolution when an opportunity presented itself. However, the point here is that while having the power to wield a positive impact on the conflict resolution, the diasporas, more often than not, choose to pursue less conciliatory avenues.

However, diasporas can and should play a positive role in conflict resolution. To do so, they first need to ask themselves a very important question; "How representative are we of the people in our native homes and are our activities reflective of their current needs?" Despite the linguistic, cultural, and religious

ties, the diasporas develop distinct identities and needs over time. So, the assumption that they know what's best for their brethren overseas should be put aside. Secondly, diasporic groups should take advantage of the political space and other freedoms available in their adoptive homes (that is usually absent in their countries of origin) to open up dialogue with the opposite side. Finally, they need to remember that by promoting the hardliner approach and contributing to the endurance of the conflict, they are not helping the plight of their brethren in the conflict zones, since it is those people who suffer the day-to-day realities of living as refugees and IDPs or fearing for their lives because of the ongoing violence.

'Thanks to the Armenian People...'

By Edgar Khachatryan

According to my observations, when watching news in Armenia you hear more words related to "Azerbaijan" and "Turkey" than "Armenia" sometimes, practically always in a negative sense, and—most problematically—practically always having the effect of deepening the enemy image within society. The ever-present enemy image does not, however, confine itself to news programs or state-run media. These last months on Armenian public TV a strange advertisement has been showing every day (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHUj7596Qz4&feature=related>). The aim of this ad is to convince people to buy milk products from a certain company. This would not be unusual, if it were not for how they're doing it.

Imagine that on your TV screen you see a young official with symbols of Turkey on the wall behind him, with subtitles noting that he's an official representative of one of the regions in Turkey. Can you guess what he says? He says he is grateful to the Armenian people, who buy Turkish products and with these purchases support Turkey in overcoming the financial crisis and empower their military.

I would like to reflect on the messages in this ad for Armenian milk products. I've started to ask my Armenian friends and colleagues what they think about this advertisement. Most of them think that it is quite funny. Then I asked if they think that this is a real person representing Turkey who is speaking to Armenian society, and here the opinions differ. Some people think that this is a real government official, but not a very "important" one, who is authorized to speak to Armenian society. Others think that this is an actor, but probably he represents the official position of Turkey. Another group thinks that this is just a funny ad. Finally, the last group tells me, "Oh, I watched it. What's an insolent Turkish guy doing teasing Armenians for supporting Turkey's military? They're sneering at us." Knowing my friends and colleagues, I wouldn't say that they are foolish; most of them are very well educated and quite open minded, but for them it was not so clear who this man is in reality. Here is the trick! Few people will try to analyze or go deeper to understand if it's a real person from Turkey or just an actor playing his role.

The main thing that is shocking is that the "official representative" started to talk to the Armenian people about the empowerment of the Turkish military. Friends told me that there is another in this series of ads, with a Chinese representative this time. I've never seen it, but I asked if the Chinese representative also talked about the Chinese military, and the answer was no. So what does this mean? For me, the message is "Armenians, you buy Turkish products and support your enemy to strengthen its military to fight against you." Maybe I am simplifying things, but for me, there is no difference if instead it said to buy Armenian products in order to strengthen the Armenian military to fight against Turkey, because in both cases the ad would be exploiting militaristic propaganda and the enemy image in order to sell the product.

For me this example shows how our media and business participates in the exploitation and in the deepening of the enemy image. It's one thing when they're presenting all the international news from the perspective of the conflicts in which Armenia is involved. I find it dangerous for our society when the media participates in the exploitation and deepening of the enemy image by making fun of Turkey by using the stereotypical enemy image. I see real danger in how easy it is for the state-created enemy image to be deepened without any serious effort, through its exploitation by private companies, and no one objects to it.

Usually we complain about why society doesn't support peace, and then you see that society is actually living with such "advertisements," and really enjoys them because they are so funny!

Freedom of Choice

By Veronika Agajanyan

Our birth does not depend on our will. We are never free to choose where and when to be born. So when I appeared in this world I was already given several facts about myself in the following package:

1. Nationality: Armenian
2. Place of Birth: Baku, Azerbaijan
3. Year of Birth: 1988

In 1988, I could not imagine that the first two facts were actually about to be incompatible. And it was not me to decide that at the age of one I would have to leave the city, where my life had started, without a right to ever go back. Anyway, it had to happen and it happened.

My family left for Yerevan, where life restarted from an absolutely new page. I was growing and with time understood who my mommy meant when she repeated from time to time: "I wish I could have any news from Jamal Mekhtiev" (Jamal was her favorite student in Baku). I learned what a strange word "Montino" meant (it is the name of the neighborhood where we lived). I was actually told so many different stories about my family's peaceful life in Baku and the tragic events we turned to be engaged in, that it was really difficult for me to define what I exactly felt about all that.

Many years passed and I chose political science as my major at university. On the one hand, I realized that I was truly interested in that field of study. But on the other hand, I could notice that my profession was making me a hard-hearted person. I started perceiving events mostly in the light of tough politics. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict for me was less about compromise/dialogue and more about fighting till the end. Though if you asked me, I certainly was totally unaware where that "end" had to be....

More years passed and I got a chance to participate in a project called "Model Caucasus Parliament" aimed at creating a platform for young people of the South Caucasus to develop cooperation for positive political change in the region. It was the first time when I met Azerbaijani guys. To tell the truth, I had mixed and uncertain feelings and expectations from the upcoming meeting. The first day of the program confirmed my thought on a slim possibility of both a dialogue and even a simple communication. But the second day was already totally different. It started from the moment when an Azerbaijani guy who seemed to be the most intolerant and impolite (shame on me for that thought about him!) came up to me and introduced himself. We shook hands and started talking about so many similar things about us. That was only the first step and a perfect start to the program, my acquaintance with Azerbaijanis and finally a future global change in my perception of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations.

And then... effective parliamentary coalition building; an unforgettable cruise of the Bosphorus; presenting gifts to each other in Istanbul; a bright photo shoot with the flags painted on our faces in Crimea; exemplary teamwork on planning a political campaign and discovery of new friends in Telavi; singing "Wind of Change" as a hymn; absolutely useful debate skills; cheerful outdoor activities in Gudauri and many other warm memories from the time when we worked on building mutual respect and trust. Every new task/discussion/interactive game within the frameworks of those projects was challenging us to find out whether we were ready to listen to and hear other participants, draft any proposal on the basis of universal human values, and realize an utmost necessity to unite in order to solve a lot of our essential issues concerning civil society, free media, parliamentarism, and conflict transformation. My experience revealed that not only were we ready to face those challenges but also could succeed in most cases.

Today my major is still political science. And the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is still frozen. The policies of the Azerbaijani and Armenian governments did not change almost anything at all. However, something very important changed in myself. Now I clearly see that none of our countries will become developed unless we live in a peaceful region. Otherwise, the whole world will further avoid starting any projects here, because we do not recommend ourselves as a sustainable region, which other countries can trust and rely on. So the fight till the end, which I mentioned above, has to be directed against endless hate, vengeance, and malice for our compatriots who did not yet have a chance to realize that they are on a wrong way.

Well, our birth indeed does not depend on our will. However, it is always us who decides how to live further. We are always free to make a choice between war and peace, hate and love, destruction and creation, death and life. Taking into account the facts of my life one can notice that I was actually too close to devote myself to the negative feelings. But my parents as well as Armenian and Azerbaijani friends did not allow it to happen. And I am most grateful to all of them for that.

P.S. The birth of our children also doesn't depend on their will. And neither will they be given a chance to choose the circumstances to be born in. So if each of us takes responsibility to bring and keep peace in the region, our children before their birth might be confident that there is something in this world they must be born and live for.

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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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