

# The Mosaic of Solutions: Alternative Peace Processes for the South Caucasus

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The conflicts that originated with the collapse of the Soviet Union are often named “intractable” in academic and analytic literature. Indeed, the conflicts in the South Caucasus are nearing their thirty-year “anniversary” without a solution in sight. Violence in Ukraine erupted much later, but the conflicts there quickly repeated the trajectory of the conflicts in the South Caucasus “catching up” in the number of the displaced as well as the isolation and alienation of the breakaway regions that make reintegration and reconciliation incredibly difficult.

In this paper, we attempt to place the past and present peace processes in the post-Soviet space within the academic debate surrounding conflict resolution and transformation and suggest alternative approaches to peace processes that have not been considered in the contexts of the post-Soviet conflicts. Using examples from both neighboring countries and the global context, we look into the following range of interrelated methodologies that have not been applied in the South Caucasus and that could contribute to conflict transformation – transitional justice mechanisms, rehumanization practices, peace education, multilingual education, and civic nation aspirations. While these approaches are usually applied to post-violence peacebuilding processes, we are offering to consider these approaches even in the contexts of ongoing violence to open prospects and a long-term vision of transformation.

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The Imagine Center is an independent, non-political organization that is dedicated to positively transforming relations and laying foundations for lasting and sustainable peace in conflict-torn societies.

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# Introduction

The conflicts in the South Caucasus and Ukraine are far from getting resolved. It is not, however, for the lack of peace initiatives led concurrently by intergovernmental bodies, such as the UN or the OSCE, international organizations, as well as international and local civil societies. The problem, therefore, is not in the absence of attention nor the quantity of peacebuilding efforts but their adequacy for the post-Soviet context.

For the past few decades, three distinct schools led the debate surrounding the approaches to conflict – Conflict Management, Conflict Resolution, and Conflict Transformation. **Conflict Management**, linked closely with the realist school of international relations, assumes human nature to be inherently competitive and violent and solutions to conflicts unattainable. Instead of seeking lasting solutions, Conflict Management is focused on managing the levels of violence to minimize human suffering as conflicts remain intractable. Following Paffenholz’s theoretical review, Conflict Management relies on diplomatic initiatives and peace agreements with a focus on the short-term management of violence without addressing the roots of the conflict (Paffenholz 2009). **Conflict Resolution** is conceptually closer to the liberal school of international relations that believes in the benefits of cooperation and win-win solutions. While working with state actors is central to the school of Conflict Resolution as well, this variation sees conflicts as solvable and can rely on non-official efforts and civil society to address root-causes of conflicts complementing the official efforts. Conflict Resolution is oriented at searching for long-term solutions and building or rebuilding relationships with various activities. The **Conflict Transformation** approach, closely associated with the constructivist paradigm, is best known from the works of Lederach who focuses on the transformation of conflicts through building “long-term infrastructure” for peacebuilding (Lederach 1997). Central for Lederach’s version of Conflict Transformation is the concept of reconciliation and the strengthening of the society’s peacebuilding potential on three levels – state mediation (Track 1), work with inter-societal relations with mid-level leaders (Track 2), and a wide range of grassroots peacebuilding approaches, such as local peace commissions, community dialogue projects, or trauma healing for the majority of the population (Track 3).

Up to date, almost all systematic peace initiatives in the context of the post-Soviet conflicts fall into the category of conflict management. State actors and intergovernmental organizations have been managing the levels of violence keeping them relatively low, while no sustainable solutions have appeared in sight. The displaced populations and others affected by the wars have continued suffering; the ethnic and linguistic groups have increasingly grown apart. In the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, proponents of the conflict resolution approach have made occasional attempts to agree on a peace plan that will involve a comprehensive peace agreement and the return of the displaced. However, such attempts have always been short-lived with no chance to succeed considering that efforts preparing the populations for peace have been absent.

A series of grassroots initiatives have also been taking place through all these years. It is hard to place them, cumulatively, into the conflict transformation paradigm as these have rarely been systematic, have been conducted often ad hoc and on a short-term basis without any particular methodology or long-term strategy in mind. In turn, the near-monopolistic control over peacebuilding resources by the international NGOs, who would come in when funding was available and leave when it was not, made it hard for the local institutional capacity to develop (Gamaghelyan 2017).

Before continuing, we also find it important to make it explicit where we stand in our conceptual understanding of conflict and approaches to it. While “conflict” is often mistakenly equated with violence, we see “violence” as only one possible manifestation of conflict. The latter also includes many non-violent stages, such as contradiction of interests or absence of effective communication and understanding. Conflicts, therefore, if transformed, can remain entirely non-violent. To be able to deal with conflicts non-violently, however, the societies need to work on transforming their attitudes toward self, others, and conflict, accepting the latter as a normal part of social life.

In this paper, we suggest considering a longer-term investment in the approach of conflict transformation, aimed at addressing relationships, achieving mutual understanding, and transforming the conflict dynamics from destructive to constructive on various levels of the society. While a variety of approaches to conflict transformation have proven to be effective in conflicts around the world, here we discuss transitional justice, rehumanization, peace education, multilingual education, and building a civic nation as some core approaches that we find particularly pertinent to the South Caucasus.

**Transitional Justice** has been used traditionally as a process of *post*-conflict reconciliation by *state* actors. This combination might explain why, despite its popularity among peacebuilders worldwide, it has not been considered in the context of the ongoing conflicts in the South Caucasus. As is discussed in the first section of this paper, however, in recent years, transitional justice mechanisms have been used not only in post-conflict contexts, but also as a peace process mechanism employed by *non-state* actors during *ongoing* conflicts, particularly in Colombia and Turkey.

**Rehumanization**, discussed next, is a process aimed at transforming enemy images. Similar to transitional justice, it often takes place after a violent conflict is resolved politically. Yet, it can also be used for the prevention of violence and conflict transformation. This paper discusses the use of this approach to counter the practices aimed at dehumanizing displaced persons in Ukraine and the relevance of that experience for the South Caucasus.

**Peace Education** is discussed in this paper as a peace process mechanism that can become efficient for both long-term transformation and conflict prevention. We discuss peace education as a mechanism that can counteract negative attitudes toward the outgroup often promoted by the traditional national education curricula, particularly by the subjects of Literature, History, Early Education, and even Civic Education. Japan and Germany can serve as case studies for building peace education policies for the South Caucasus.

Continuing the topic of education, **Multilingual Education** approaches are proposed here as an example of a peace process mechanism in a complex context where the titular language is important for nation-building, while the “minority” languages, as well as Russian and English are competing for the status of languages of intergroup and interstate communication. The case of multilingual education in Kazakhstan is put under scrutiny for generating learning for the South Caucasus.

In the section **Building a Civic Nation as a Step Toward Conflict Transformation**, we discuss the potential of violent mobilization along the lines of “ethnic/cultural nation” on the one hand and “civic nation” on the other with examples from the South Caucasus and the region of Trentino-Alto Adige in Italy. While we acknowledge that the “civic nation” paradigm has its own problematics, we argue that it is better positioned to bring about a solution and transformation to conflict-torn societies compared to the “ethnic/cultural

nation” paradigm that contributes to exclusion based on ethnic or cultural identity and creates a potential for violence.

## Limitations

Given the limitation of space, we are conscious that we are able to discuss only a few possible approaches to transformative peace processes in this paper. A non-exhaustive range of other possibilities that could well complement the approaches proposed in this paper include:

As discussed above, the term **Track 1 diplomacy** refers to official negotiations by state actors, and **Track 2 diplomacy** denotes unofficial interactions between influential members of the society who aim to support the official negotiations. In between these, there is also **Track 1.5 diplomacy** – unofficial interaction between official representatives of states or authorities that can fill the gaps between the first two tracks, help overcome a deadlock in official negotiations, and directly influence the power structures, yet not be driven by political agendas (Mapendere 2005).

**Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration** (DDR) is an approach aimed at increasing security in a post-war and post-settlement situation and can be part of peacekeeping operations. According to UN definitions, disarmament is the collection, documentation, control, and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons from combatants and often from the civilian population. Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces and groups including a phase of “reinsertion”, which provides short-term assistance to ex-combatants. Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire a civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. It is a political, social, and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. (United Nations Peacekeeping n.d.)

**Elections** are also seen as a possible stabilization mechanism *after* violence is stopped and as a final step in implementing a peace agreement. Elections can move a divided society to peace if they increase confidence toward democratic institutions and trust between former conflict parties toward each other and can legitimize new, post-conflict relations within the society (Flores 2014). It should be acknowledged, however, that in divided societies, elections can also mobilize the populations along sectarian lines leading to a continuation of the conflict.

**Mediation and negotiations** are approaches based on the distinction between positions and interests and looking for solutions that satisfy the interests of all parties. Negotiations, ideally, result in a signed agreement.

**Reconciliation** is a long-term, deep, broad, and a very inclusive process aimed at rebuilding relations between conflict parties, in which “perpetrators” are expected to acknowledge and repent, and “victims” to forgive (Lerche 2000). It addresses collective trauma and advances truth, justice, forgiveness, healing, and peaceful coexistence.

**Art, sport, and culture** can also be used for helping people to overcome traumatic violent experiences. Art and photo exhibitions, festivals, sport contests and events bring people together, tell stories of people affected by conflicts, release various emotions, and in general, provide a solid background for mutual understanding, reconciliation, and the prevention of violence in the future.

Finally, **Zones of Peace** or demilitarized zones can be an example of a practical conflict transformation mechanism in times of an ongoing conflict.

To illustrate the possible benefits of one of the further possible approaches mentioned above, this paper is followed by a short article co-authored by researchers from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia on the transformative potential of establishing Zones of Peace in the South Caucasus.

## Transitional Justice in Ongoing Conflict

Transitional justice has been increasingly used in post-conflict contexts to deal with the legacy of a violent past. According to Teitel, it is “a concept of justice, intervening in a period of political change, characterized by a juridical answer to the wrongs of past repressive regimes” (Teitel 2003). The UN defines transitional justice more widely as “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation” (United Nations 2010). It is an approach that “provides redress to victims and creates or enhances opportunities for the transformation of the political systems, conflicts, and other conditions that may have been at the root of the abuses” (United Nations 2008).



The change or transition that this mechanism refers to may either be from violence to peace or from an authoritarian to a democratic regime with the aim of preventing the recurrence of violence. One of its main objectives is to provide recognition for victims and promote a social and political setting of non-violence, reconciliation, and democracy (Spoerri 2011). Transitional justice may include both judicial (criminal prosecutions and trials) and non-judicial mechanisms, such as truth-telling, reparation, institutional reforms, reconciliation, social reconstruction, and memorialization (International Center for Transitional Justice 2009); public access to police and government records, public apology, reburial of victims, compensations, and rethinking of historical narratives (Andrieu 2010); amnesty, lustration, and vetting (Sriram 2007).

Due to the characteristics of contemporary armed conflicts, which often continue in low intensity, conflict and post-conflict settings often intertwine with each other, and the lines between peace and war are blurred (Engstorm 2013). This has an impact on transitional justice attempts as well, which has been increasingly used when transition is unclear, vulnerable, or even non-existent (van Nievelt 2016). Especially protracted conflicts, such as the Kurdish one in Turkey and the South Caucasus ones, might be examined as contemporary armed conflicts in which the separation between peace and conflict cannot easily be made.

As already mentioned, conventionally, transitional justice has been implemented after a peace deal had been reached, as part of a broader post-violence peacebuilding framework. Establishing transitional justice mechanisms amid an ongoing conflict is a rather new approach, and the literature on this topic is currently evolving. In the few cases in which transitional justice has been implemented during the conflict, the pursuit of accountability was the main focus and judicial mechanisms, such as prosecutions, have played the biggest role to achieve this end (Engstorm 2013).

In this paper, we are interested in the feature of transitions between violence and peace which affect transitional justice itself.

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*What benefits could we extract from transitional justice during a peace process and before a formal peace deal is reached? We suggest that the success of the formal negotiations and of transitional justice are very much interdependent and both seek to achieve sustainable peace.*

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Therefore, transitional justice might be used to facilitate the ending of a conflict especially through transforming social relations (van Nievelt 2016). In fact, it may precede the official peace process by fostering its onset and durability through relevant mechanisms.

While each conflict is of course unique and the design of any intervention should take the specifics of the context into account, there are several standards that a transitional justice process should reach. First, in order for transitional justice mechanisms to achieve their goals, they have to pursue political and societal transformation, which would eventually lead to a structural change. Van Nievelt argues that transitional justice amid conflict should employ a transformative approach rather than restoring the status-quo prior to the conflict (van Nievelt 2016). As the conflict often penetrates all domains of life of a society, and politics is often built on the conflict dynamics, transitional justice practitioners should acknowledge that it will be a political struggle to transform the conflict, and it will probably continue long after violence has ended.

Another important factor of a successful transitional justice period concerns the participation from below. This refers to local ownership of the process, as well as the involvement of victims as the agents to design and implement transitional justice. Especially internationally-led transitional justice processes tend to deprive victims from their agency as political actors and reduce them to passive subjects (Uçarlar 2015). Indeed, since the victims are those who have been marginalized, discriminated, and dispossessed systematically by a regime or a system that has maintained its power based on the inequalities within society, the victims' agency in bringing a sense of justice is paramount. By empowering victims to guide the process of transitional justice, power relations between perpetrators and victims can be transformed, and this can eventually pave the way for the transformation of the conflict itself.

Finally, considering the tendency of many peace initiatives to further marginalize the victims, one major critique is important to take into consideration when designing a transitional justice mechanism prior to a peace accord – the critique of a solely legalist approach to transitional justice. Andrieu argues that transitional justice often over-emphasizes the legal response to atrocities, getting detached from those who were actually affected by the conflict (Andrieu 2010). Nagy similarly criticizes the influence of the international legalist paradigm on transitional justice and argues that this tendency leads transitional justice to stay indifferent to the socio-economic implications of the conflict, such as poverty. Another consequence of the legalist

approach is the limited definition of victimhood as only those affected by intentional physical violence, excluding those who were affected by structural violence and social injustice. Forced displacement, sexual violence, and disappearance are the most common violations that are often not included in transitional justice mechanisms (Nagy 2008).

While legal (as in retributive or punitive) mechanisms are the most common tools to pursue justice in transitional periods, they do not seem to contribute much to delivering justice and peace in the eyes of those who have been victimized (Engstorm 2013). Restorative justice mechanisms that focus on the restoration of the victim rights as opposed to the punishment of the perpetrator consist of non-judicial means to repair the broken social relations and can set the ground for a possible peace process<sup>1</sup>. Conflict transformation, therefore, requires the development of transitional justice mechanisms which go beyond the legal tools, engage restorative justice as well, and have the capacity to include marginalized voices and transform relations and, as a consequence, the ongoing conflict.

While the above factors will augment the likelihood of success in a transitional justice process, there are still various challenges to transitional justice, and its mechanisms should be designed carefully to minimize the risks that might be especially high when the conflict is ongoing.

The first challenge is that transitional justice runs the risk of being instrumentalized for political goals during the conflicts (van Nievelt 2016). As an example, it can be used by a government as a means to prosecute the opposing party while leaving the crimes perpetrated by the government supporters unaddressed. Secondly, while physical violence is still present and political consensus does not exist, criminal prosecutions, which are the most common judicial transitional justice mechanisms, could undermine the efforts for negotiations, mediation, and reconciliation. The third challenge is that with the societies often radicalized as a result of an ongoing conflict and mobilized against the other, a non-violent mechanism of conflict resolution might meet staunch resistance.

These three challenges, similar to the efficiency factors discussed above, indicate that social relations should be addressed for transitional justice to be

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike retributive justice, the restorative justice approach defines crime not as a violation of the law but rather as harm given to people and relations.

successful. Besides, as creating a legitimate official mechanism during an ongoing conflict will be difficult, considering an informal forum becomes a viable option. Further, while legalistic (punitive) justice is likely to be abused by power holders and exacerbate the conflict, focus on restorative justice based on the rights of victims, reconciliation, and the reintegration of those who committed wrongs into the society can help transform the power dynamics and social relations.

## Transitional Justice as a Conflict Resolution Mechanism in Colombia

Colombia is one of the rare cases where transitional justice was implemented as a conflict transformation tool prior to a peace accord and as a complement to the official process. First of all, the “Justice and Peace Law” was passed in 2005 to demobilize the state-friendly AUC<sup>2</sup> fighters. Although there was no direct reference to transitional justice in the text, the government recognized it as an instrument that could lead to truth recovery and reparations (Center for Justice and Accountability 2005). While this document carries an obvious bias in favor of state-friendly paramilitaries; human rights activists, NGOs, and victim groups also used it, and the victims’ rights to truth, justice, and reparation acquired a key role in the transitional justice and peace debates that followed (van Nievelt 2016).

After this initial step, the “Victims and Land Restitution Law” came into force in 2012 to regulate the reparations for more than 5 million people, who had been forcefully displaced (van Nievelt 2016). According to the government, this law was “unique in that it applies transitional justice mechanisms during an ongoing armed conflict, created a complex institutional framework, combining administrative and transitional justice mechanisms, for delivering reparation, including land restitution, to victims” (Amnesty International 2014). Later, the “Legal Framework for Peace”, a constitutional amendment, came into force to facilitate peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> AUC stands for “*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*” (United Self-Defenders of Colombia). It was a paramilitary organization in Colombia and was known for drug trafficking, displacement, kidnapping, and extortion.

<sup>3</sup> FARC stands for “*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*” (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and was a guerilla group that was involved in the armed conflict in Colombia since 1964.

Thanks to the prior transitional justice work, victim rights, including reparations, truth, political participation, and land reform, became part of the negotiations agenda. Although there is still work to be done, Colombia presents an inspiring case of innovative approaches that could be a path to follow for our region as well.

## **Informal Transitional Justice Practices in Turkey**

Different from Colombia where transitional justice was implemented with the involvement of the government, Turkey offers an example of informal transitional justice implemented during an unresolved conflict. Non-governmental organizations, such as the *Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi* (Truth Justice Memory Center), have been working on transitional justice by building databases in relation to enforced disappearances in Turkey after the 1980 military coup d'état. They have produced comprehensive publications in relation to the Kurdish issue in Turkey (Budak 2015). Moreover, while the peace process between the state and the PKK was still ongoing in Turkey, establishing truth commissions on the local level was numerously suggested by human rights activists and left-wing political parties. Journalists, human rights activists, academics, and politicians were getting together to discuss the possibilities for sustainable peace, believing that peacebuilding should start from below and include different segments of the society. The "Truth and Justice Commission for Diyarbakır Prison"<sup>4</sup> was established in 2007, prior to the human rights activists taking the cause of transforming the Prison into a memory site (Krajeski 2011). There have been meetings with more than 500 persons who were subjected to human rights violations between 1980-1984 in the prison, and the resulting reports were shared with the public. This was an unofficial attempt to deal with the past as a starting point for developing official truth commissions for the other atrocities and wrongdoings in the history of the Turkish Republic (Bickford 2007).

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<sup>4</sup> The Diyarbakır Prison was built by the Ministry of Justice in 1980. It transferred to the army after the 1980 coup d'état. It has been notorious for severe human rights violations of the inmates, including torture and rape. The estimated number of those who were tortured is around 5,000, and the litigations of ex-prisoners were dropped on the grounds of statute of limitation. The Diyarbakır Prison remains to be the most symbolic manifestation of the 1980 coup d'état human rights violations.

We agree with Bickford; non-official transitional justice attempts can serve as a starting point for conflict transformation and official peace accords. However, the difficulties of this approach in the current political atmosphere in Turkey should not be underestimated. Currently the state of emergency, declared after the coup d'état attempt on July 15 in 2016 and extended several times since then, narrows the space where any political initiative can take place. The oppression of the authoritarian political regime makes peace seem less urgent and important to people who suffer from expulsion, arbitrary detention, lack of social security, and political frustration. Additionally, the continuing clashes between the state armed forces and the PKK have further polarized the society.

Despite these challenges, there is still ground for unofficial initiatives. Since the ongoing conflict and polarization is hampering a widespread and comprehensive conflict transformation process, modest steps, such as local truth commissions, could serve as a starting point. Starting from this level would also ensure the local ownership and a bottom-up peacebuilding process in the future.

Another form of informal transitional justice is connected with memory work. In the Turkish context, one example of such work taking place in a post-conflict environment is the project "*Habab Çeşmeleri*" by Fethiye Çetin and the Hrant Dink Foundation. Fethiye Çetin, who is the granddaughter of an Armenian genocide survivor, formed a group to restore a damaged fountain in the village of Çetin's grandmother. The volunteers in the group had Armenian, Kurdish, and Turkish backgrounds and spent two weeks in the village. As Çetin and her group restored the damaged fountains, people from the neighboring villages and towns visited Çetin to share the stories of their own Armenian grandmothers. These sentimental encounters offered an opportunity to confront the violent past and reconcile with each other in a safe setting. At the end of the project, both the participants and coordinators told that the Muslims around this village became more tolerant to maintaining the Armenian heritage, and local authorities supported the project, which in return generated hopes that in the long-term, the state might also confront the violent past on the national level (Truth Justice Memory Center n.d.).

## Implications for the South Caucasus

As argued in the previous sections, transitional justice mechanisms can be applied not only in post-official accord contexts but also as integral parts of peace processes that facilitate conflict transformation. They can be particularly

effective in cases of protracted conflicts with no political solutions in sight, as are the conflicts of Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia-Abkhazia-South Ossetia, and Ukraine. As we saw, despite their shortcomings, transitional justice processes applied during ongoing conflicts have helped advance conflict transformation processes in Turkey and particularly in Colombia.

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*In ongoing conflicts, like the ones in the South Caucasus, the primary focus should be on restorative justice, including addressing the rights of victims and restoring the broken relations between communities.*

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In this regard, the displaced populations as well as other groups affected by the conflicts are a particularly important group that could benefit from such a process. Even without the prosecution of those guilty of war crimes at this stage of the process, searching for truth and advancing healing could be a constructive first step. Moreover, civil society-led mutual truth commissions, during which the sufferings of victims would be acknowledged by the wider public, could enjoy greater trust and not carry the risk of political manipulation, which is often present in government-led commissions. Further, acknowledging atrocities and war crimes in these non-judicial settings could lay foundation for further official attempts to deliver justice to victims. The acknowledgment may be coming either from state authorities in the form of an apology or from non-official truth commissions and community reconciliation initiatives. Whether these processes are implemented through official or non-official mechanisms, the voice of the marginalized and victimized groups should be at the core of it. This is a crucial step in guaranteeing a transformative transitional period and long-lasting peace.

## Rehumanization in Peacebuilding Practices

Most people affected by violent conflicts are familiar with expressions describing the “Other” as a “non-human”. Stable peace becomes unattainable when official and mainstream discourses in the societies divided by conflict include such dehumanization. Individuals, communities, the media, and politicians pose questions such as “Is peace with the ‘beast’ possible?” or “Is it



safe to reconcile with the ‘evil’?”. “Tumor”, “vampires”, “Colorado beetles”, “cockroaches”, “monkeys”, “terrorists”, and other words that contain animal, medical, or criminal labels are attached to those seen as the enemy. Such perceptions make peace and reconciliation hard to achieve, and the need to rehumanize the “Other” becomes an indispensable part of the peace process. In this paper, we discuss peacebuilding practices aimed at rehumanization within the relationship between the internally displaced populations (IDPs) and host communities in Ukraine.

## **Dehumanization and Rehumanization in Socio-Psychological Research**

Dehumanization – the cognitive process of the denial of the humanness for a person or a social group – has been studied by the discipline of psychology for over 40 years. As a routine process, dehumanization is explored through its cognitive and emotional consequences (Bastian and Haslam 2011) including its relation to social ostracism (Bastian and Haslam 2010), through the prism of social neuroscience (Harris and Fiske 2009), etc. In his synthesis of dehumanization studies, Haslam mentions various scholarly domains where dehumanization becomes an object for research and study – ethnicity and race, gender and pornography, medicine, disability, technology, and others. Analyzing numerous studies of dehumanization, Haslam has described its two common forms – denying humanity through animalization or mechanization (Haslam 2006). At the same time, dehumanizing semiotics can also be conveyed through the usage of labels of antisocial groups such as criminals, terrorists, fascists, etc.

Dehumanization has its place in the psychological dimension of intergroup conflict as well. In the mutual perception of conflict parties, it becomes a factor of conflict escalation and a precursor for mass violence, violation of human rights, and more. Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim have outlined how name-calling and dehumanization contribute to conflict escalation and violence: “Name-calling strengthens the impression that Other is morally inadequate and dissimilar to Party. Some names make Other seem particularly subhuman. Name-calling makes it easier for Party, and for those who hear Party’s statements, to aggress against Other – since Other is thereby dehumanized” because “dehumanization makes the universal norm against harming other human beings seem irrelevant”. If the “Other” is perceived as less than human, the norm of non-violence does not apply. (Pruitt, Rubin and Kim 1994, 90)



Relying on our experience with various peacebuilding practices, we propose a few mechanisms of peacebuilding that employ rehumanization based on empathy-building: 1) facilitating a communicative shift from the representation of own positions into the representation of own needs, emotional attitude, and personal experience; 2) facilitating a transformation of the dehumanized image of an abstract “Other” into a rehumanized image of a specific person; 3) facilitating the transformation of relationships from intergroup to interpersonal. In practical terms, this involves a dialogue where the perceptions of participants undergo transformation – from seeing positions as incompatible to noticing mutual or similar human needs interwoven with personal experiences that involve secondary<sup>5</sup> emotions of vulnerability, guilt, shame, hope, pride, and more.

## **Practices of Rehumanization of IDPs and Host Communities in Ukraine**

One of the consequences of a war is the appearance of the new social category of displaced people – IDPs and refugees. As of February 2017, the number of the displaced in Ukraine is estimated at 1.63 million people (Foundation.101 2017). Most of them are from the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, with the number of the displaced originating from Crimea not exceeding 60 thousand.

Several inquiries and monitoring surveys conducted by NGOs offer insight into the dehumanization processes applied to the displaced in Ukraine. The NGO “Detector Media” in its media-monitoring identified a number of stigmatizing and dehumanizing words used towards the displaced, such as “Dawnbass” (a combination of negative stereotypes toward individuals with the Dawn syndrome and the inhabitants of the Donbass region) (Bezkorovaina, et al. 2016). The dehumanizing label of “terrorists” often applied towards the combatants and civilians who continue living in the separatist regions of Lugansk and Donetsk, is sometimes applied to the displaced individuals from these territories as well. Labeling the displaced as “terrorists” creates ground for discrimination and violence against them.

The NGO “STAN” conducted another research aimed at “revealing stereotypes about IDPs during trainings and workshops with the representatives of both

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<sup>5</sup> Secondary emotions are the reactions to primary emotions; for example, the anger one might feel as a result of feeling sad is a secondary emotion.

IDPs and hosting communities". The research detected other dehumanizing stereotypes, such as "They run like mice" or "We've sheltered a viper near the heart" (Minkin, Oslavska and Skorkin 2015). The displaced were also named "criminals" and "zombies". The findings of a sociological study by researchers from the Ukrainian Catholic University reaffirm that the media representations also use elements of "othering" and stigma towards the displaced (Mikheeva and Sereda 2015). Such "othering" creates exclusion in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of the communities and the whole society and, thus, demands corresponding peacebuilding programs. These include dialogues based on various methodologies, such as non-violent communication, restorative circles<sup>6</sup>, Living Library<sup>7</sup>, Forum Theatre<sup>8</sup>, and others.

In Ukraine, a number of such programs have been implemented aimed at changing the dehumanized image of the displaced. With the help of a small questionnaire, 10 expert-facilitators of such various practices shared their observations of rehumanization from their dialogue activities in different parts of Ukraine. According to the expert-facilitators, among the dialogue participants, the perception of the "Other" as "Alien" changed to the perception of the "Other" as "Different", a human being but with a different experience, needs, interests, and feelings. This shift happened partly because dialogue participants had the opportunity to speak up about their lived experiences, emotional states, needs, and interests.

The expert-facilitators have illustrated their observations quoting the dialogue participants<sup>9</sup>:

*"Mutual understanding on the level of needs was a real discovery!"*

*"I've realized that there is a need to come to an agreement making small steps. But the main thing is to understand the needs of the other person. Later we will agree."*

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<sup>6</sup> For the methodology of restorative circles, see for example (Restorative Circles n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> For the methodology of the Living Library, see for example (Living Library n.d.).

<sup>8</sup> For the methodology of the Forum Theater, see for example (Forum for All n.d.).

<sup>9</sup> The quotations have been provided by 10 expert-facilitators of various dialogues held in Ukraine between 2014 and 2015. They were collected at the request of one of the co-authors of this paper Iryna Brunova-Kalishetska as part of her research for a report at the Institute of Social and Political Psychology of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine.

*“In a short period of time, I felt like previously unknown alien people have become close ones, friends.”*

*“I’ve realized that before I met IPDs, I was full of stereotypes, but IDPs and their stories have totally changed my attitude.”*

*“I was able to find like-minded persons – partners, with whom I want to stay in contact and cooperate.”*

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*As illustrated by the last comment, after dialogue initiatives that put great effort into rehumanization and relationship-building, participants become ready to transfer from sharing their experiences and feelings about the conflict towards joint solution-oriented activities, identifying individual partners in the dialogue group and planning joint actions with them.*

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## **Rehumanization Lessons for the South Caucasus**

Due to wars, natural disasters, political crises, and other events, the countries of the South Caucasus have had to deal with a few waves of displaced populations since the late 1980s. The focus of the governments and the international organizations, with a varying rate of success, has since been on addressing the visible and material problems of the displaced, such as shelter, medical help, education, social payments, documents, etc. At the same time, integration cannot be limited to material factors. It also requires support in building relations with host communities, developing social networks, and forming social capital in their new environments. Even when these issues are addressed, time and ongoing efforts are needed to achieve sustainability. Displacement is a challenge for both the displaced and the host communities. Yet, the needs of the hosting groups are often lost in the vision of those elaborating various integration programs and strategies.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, after more than 20 years, many of the displaced in Azerbaijan still need to deal with “segregated education, discrimination against children of the displaced and IDPs’ limited participation in decisions that affect them” (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2014). The problems with integration are sometimes the results of seeing displacement as temporary.

Limited public participation and the view of displacement as temporary is a challenge for integrating the displaced in Ukraine as well. Here, the public participation of the displaced in the local elections in 2015 caused tension within the host communities as the displaced were seen by locals as temporary inhabitants who should not have the right to elect local authorities. The negative stereotypes towards the displaced as “those who would vote in a ‘pro-Russian’ way as they did in Donbass that caused the current war” exacerbated the situation.

The social discourse about displacement as a “temporality” is also prevalent in Georgia despite the parallel expectation that “the majority of the IDPs originating from South Ossetia and Abkhazia will not be able to return in the foreseeable future” (Tarkhan-Mouravi 2009, 14). Even with time, the displaced have difficulties with being accepted as “locals” and stay with the label “IDPs” or “refugees” attached to them as it happened with the so-called “old IDPs” from the early 1990s (for a more nuanced discussion of the isolation faced by the displaced people in Georgia see (Mitchneck, Mayorova and Regulska 2009).

Armenia also has a large number of displaced people who try to overcome similar problems. In her research of second and 1.5 generations (those who were born in Baku and as children fled to Yerevan) of Armenian refugees from Baku, Tatyana Sargsyan found several dynamics that segregate the displaced from the rest of the Armenian population. This includes the use of Russian and the difficulties with becoming fluent in Armenian, living in compact settlements, mutual negative stereotypes with locals, the low level of social capital and linkages, not feeling “rooted” enough in Yerevan, and more. Thus, the “1.5-generation of Baku refugees marks its social status as victims of a monoethnic state, aimed at the clear social differentiation of ‘locals’ (Yerevan/ours) and ‘Bakuvians’ (visitors/strangers)”. (Sargsyan 2011, 60)

The Ukrainian experience might be instructive in devising integration programs in the South Caucasus since a number of state and civil society programs aimed at the integration of the displaced populations have already been implemented. A state program supporting the social adaptation and reintegration of IDPs was adopted by the government and included an article on “the prevention of the negative attitudes towards displaced citizens, providing social harmony and social cohesion in local communities that accept displaced citizens” (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 2015). The civil society is also active in advancing the integration process.

The Ukrainian experience shows that interpersonal contacts and dialogue initiatives can help with integration; programs aimed at de-segregation and the involvement of IDPs into decision making can address discrimination. The rehumanization processes and empathy building can help in changing the image of the displaced from a “problem” or the “beggars” to an attitude towards them as individuals who are an integral part of the society.

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*The explicit efforts aimed at the rehumanization of the displaced can also serve as an important experience in conflict transformation that could be applied to advance mutual rehumanization of Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Armenians and Turks, Georgians and Abkhazians and Ossetians, and others.*

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## Peace Education and Conflict Transformation

This paper, as already discussed above, aims to identify structures and dynamics that contribute to the reproduction of the conflicts and prevent the peace processes in the South Caucasus from moving forward successfully, offering alternatives. One such structure are the educational institutions in the region that tend to promote ethnic nationalism coupled with the absence of peace education principles from curricula. Before delving deeper into the discussion of peace education as a conflict resolution mechanism, the first facet of the coin – education promoting ethnic nationalism – needs to be demystified.

The protracted conflicts in the South Caucasus are multi-dimensional and take origin in the ideology of nationalism prevalent during the past two centuries that sowed divisions in the region where multi-ethnic coexistence had been the norm for centuries. Another contributing factor to the conflicts have been the nation-building processes in the Soviet Union that created a hierarchy of ethnicities. As a consequence of the peculiar organization of the Soviet Union into ethno-territorial units, the post-Soviet violent conflicts have all been

framed ethnically<sup>10</sup>. The South Caucasus, with its diverse ethnic composition, became home to the majority of such conflicts.

Even though the beginning of these conflicts can be traced back to an earlier period in history, they turned into violent conflicts only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The further instrumentalization of ethnicity for political mobilization, which emerged openly in 1987-1989, was the triggering factor for the development of violent conflicts (Cornell 2001).

The openly nationalist agenda of the first president of independent Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, coupled with separatist movements, led to violent conflicts in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, resulting in thousands killed and up to 250,000 displaced. Following ceasefire agreements in 1992 and 1994 respectively, the conflicts remained “frozen” until a new wave of escalation took place in 2008, known internationally as the Russia-Georgia war over South Ossetia or simply the August 2008 War.

The beginnings of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in the late 1980s similarly falls on the last days of the Soviet Union, although some authors and particularly the media tend to describe the conflict as historic (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) 2016), (Cornell 2001). The intense territorial dispute between the Soviet Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the late 1980s turned into an open war in 1991 as they gained independence. The war ended with a Russian-brokered ceasefire in 1994, leaving hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis and Armenians displaced.

Since then, in all of these cases, negotiations brought minimal to no results, and the Nagorno-Karabakh context has been showing signs of escalation and preparation for a new war. One of the contributing factors to enforcing the mindsets of war, regrettably, have been the education systems. They have been used as a tool to implement nationalist policies aimed at building enemy images and dehumanizing the “Other”, preparing the populations for war, portraying the conflicts as historical and unsolvable, and sustaining mobilization for war efforts.

According to a leading voice in critical pedagogy Freire, education is designed to serve political agendas (Freire 1985). In other words, as long as the state controls and mandates education, it cannot be seen as a neutral disseminator of

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<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the politicization of ethnicity in the Soviet Union and the ethnic framing of the conflicts in the South Caucasus see (Abbasov, et al. 2016).

knowledge but a tool to promote particular political agendas and affect the minds of new generations.

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*In a multicultural and extremely delicate region as is the South Caucasus, it is important for the education systems to promote inclusion and coexistence and be conscious of the role that education and educators can play in either promoting peace and stability or divisions and war.*

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Some commentators go further in their recommendations for the role of education in promoting peace. According to one of the founders of the field of Peace Studies, Galtung, peace education should not simply focus on the knowledge of the concepts of peace and war, but it should actively promote conflict competence. Young people and adults alike can learn self-awareness and how to cope with self-destructive anger. They can learn about violence and reconciliation after violence, about justice and injustice. Degree programs in Peace and Conflict Resolution can be promoted. Peace education should actively prevent the intensification of tensions and stereotypes between groups that contribute to the emergence of negative attitudes, which in turn results in violent behavior. (Galtung 1969)

According to Galtung, the traits of the “cultural mentality” held by the people of the Caucasus pose considerable obstacles for any peace process. When discussing the “Warrior Mentality”, he refers to violence, being a professional pursuit in the Caucasus: statues of man on horseback and textbooks on warrior heroes enforce a perception of violence as normal and natural. This mentality also entails the idea that conflicts as well as negotiations are about winning, not solving. The “Chief-Sheikh Mentality” refers to the poor civil society traditions the region has, where all the decisions, including those on war and peace and foreign policy, are made by the Chief-Sheikh-type of a leader while people submit. Though if he (assuming that the leader must be a man) does not deliver concrete results, people soon begin to look for a new Chief. The final of the three cultural traits, the “Victim Mentality” has formed because of the suffering that the groups have experienced from others. Each group demands undivided attention and focus only on their own trauma. Therefore, a dialogue easily turns into parallel monologues: nobody listens to each other, but each participant articulates their grievances. This mentality is the prerequisite to preserving the



status quo of conflicts as new ideas are not welcome if they do not put “our” concerns in the center of the discussion. (Galtung 1997)

The combination of these cultural traits inhibits the shift from mindsets of war to mindsets of peace. Even though school students in the region might have not directly experienced conflict manifestations, nor have a memory of them, history textbooks help maintain an image of the other country being the enemy, which prevents a sustainable resolution to their problems (Sultanova 2012) (Akpınar, et al. 2017) (Karpenko and Javakhishvili 2013) (Karpenko 2014) (Zolyan and Zakaryan 2008). The state-approved education system through its textbooks of Literature, History, and more recently Civic Education forces the new generation to maintain the historical memory of conflicts, which evokes by-gone conflicts as present-day ones, as well as intensifies the stereotypes, assumptions, and negative attitudes towards the “Other”, that have been culturally constructed within the societies throughout time. Thus, promoting a culture of tolerance, anti-discrimination, and peaceful conflict transformation is challenging in the face of the content of the textbooks of the above-mentioned subjects.

In addition to the studies cited above, another one conducted on the role of state education policies on history textbooks in Azerbaijan and Armenia has shown that the state uses history textbooks to create a negative and dehumanized image of the other country’s people and disseminates that in the society (Hakobyan 2016).

A study on Georgian History, Literature, and Civic Education school textbooks for Grades 9-12 conducted in 2016 also showed that the textbooks of Georgian Literature as well as History use xenophobic language or contain texts of xenophobic content; some questions and comments of the authors of the textbooks are also biased and xenophobic. In several textbooks of History, Literature, and Civic Education, some texts are based on stereotypical attitudes used to portray various religious and ethnic groups. Stereotypic qualities are generalized and assigned to different ethnic or religious groups portraying them as a common negative feature of the entire group. (Mindiashvili, Gakheladze and Taboridze 2016)

The current state of affairs with education in social sciences and humanities in the South Caucasus is also at odds with international standards. In 1995, UNESCO made a pledge to improve textbooks and teacher training as well as implement other necessary activities “with a view to educating caring and



responsible citizens open to other cultures, able to appreciate the value of freedom, respectful of human dignity and differences, and able to prevent conflicts or resolve them by non-violent means". According to Article 1 of the UNESCO document, tolerance – and one that is not understood as concession or condescension – is the virtue that makes peace possible and that contributes to the replacement of a culture of violence by a culture of peace (UNESCO 1995). Education for tolerance should encourage the development of independent judgment, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning skills (Page 2008).

The constitutional mandate of UNESCO notes that war begins in the minds of individuals, so too should the defenses against war be constructed in the minds of individuals (Page 2008), implying that education systems should not be used as a weapon to form negative images of the "Other"; instead peace education principles should be implemented in national educational curriculums.

Article 26 of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" of 1948 proclaims that "Education shall be directed [...] to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship [...] and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace" (Page 2008). According to the UN resolution 39/11, "Right of Peoples to Peace", peace is seen as a human right, therefore "people should have the right to be educated and informed about that right, as any particular right is rendered meaningless if individuals and societies are not informed that they have it" (United Nations 1984) (Page 2008).

The "Vienna Declaration and Program of Action"<sup>11</sup> sees peace education as part of human rights education and human rights education as crucial for world peace: "Education should promote understanding, tolerance, peace and friendly relations between the nations and all racial or religious groups" (World Conference on Human Rights 1993).

These international standards have translated into concrete policies for several countries. Japan and Germany have successfully experimented with peace education for the past 50 years. After its defeat in World War Two in 1945, Japan reformed its education system on the basis of a new Constitution and specifically the "Fundamental Law of Education" or the "Basic Act on Education". The Constitution, particularly its Article 9, proclaims pacifism and

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<sup>11</sup> The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action is a human rights declaration adopted by consensus at the World Conference on Human Rights on June 25 in 1993. The United Nations General Assembly subsequently endorsed the declaration as part of Resolution 48/121.

democracy to be its core and renounces war forever as a sovereign right and the use of force as a means of settling international disputes (Library of Congress 2015) (Hara 2012). In line with the Constitution, the preamble of the “Basic Act on Education” aspires to further develop democracy and “to contribute to world peace and to improving the welfare of humanity” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan 1948 (2006)).

As the consequences of and the damage caused by the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki began to be revealed to the public, the Japan Teachers Union adopted the slogan “Never send our students to the battlefield again”, and it became the central focus of the Union’s activities for a long time. In 1968, the Hiroshima Municipal Board of Education distributed its first official guidelines for teaching the subject of peace education to elementary, junior high, and senior high schools. Since then, peace education has been taught not only as an independent subject, but also across different subjects, such as social studies and Japanese literature, as well as through special activities, such as school excursions to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, since the 1980s. (Hara 2012)

Similarly, in the entire post-World War Two Germany, “re-education” or “re-orientation” was an important factor in rebuilding the societies. The process entailed dismissing teachers with Nazi party affiliations and backgrounds and destroying ideologically biased textbooks. The new Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, also promoted peace and democracy, and granted educational autonomy to the State (*Länder*) governments, which helped to decentralize the education system, setting basis for grass-roots peace education in the Federal Republic of Germany. Since then, the textbooks in Germany are not written and published by the central government or government-selected scholars and therefore differ between the States. Based on the belief that school education should not undermine the independent and critical thinking of children, textbook drafts have been judged based on whether they were in line with the Constitution, and not infused by ideology. Although the educational guidelines of individual German States vary to some extent, they have a lot in common in terms of their attitudes towards history education that is today regarded as a part of peace education. (Hara 2012)

In order for conflict transformation processes to take place in the South Caucasus, a shift in educational policies is necessary. Peacebuilding is a long-term process and as Lederach stated, it might take 20 years of peacebuilding efforts to achieve lasting, positive peace.

*Using education as a tool to promote a culture of tolerance, equality, and non-violence is an integral part of a peace process with longer views.*

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As one of the founding fathers of the field of Peace and Conflict Studies, Galtung has put it, ending direct violence is only possible by changing conflict behavior, which will ensure peace, though a negative one; ending structural violence is possible through removing structural contradictions and injustices; while ending cultural violence can be achieved by changing attitudes, and the latter two will lead us to positive and sustainable peace (Galtung 1969) (Galtung 1990).

## **Multilingual Education Policies as a Mechanism of Conflict Transformation and Prevention**

The protection, revival, and development of a native language, national culture, and guaranteed rights of national minorities feature prominently among the popular demands that contribute to the onset and intensification of ethnically-framed conflicts. In this regard, some authors emphasize the importance of negotiating on the middle-ground, which excludes the “all-or-nothing” positions represented by a discriminating state and a secessionist group (Thomas 2015). The achievement of this “middle-ground” is largely determined by the adequate constitutional changes on state and regional levels, including the provision of sufficient infrastructure. While language policy alone cannot solve all the frictions, it is one of the crucial components of the prevention or mitigation of intergroup conflicts. Therefore, a coherent and inclusive language policy is an integral aspect of peace processes.

This section of our paper attempts to analyze the opportunities and implications of implementing multilingual policies aimed at addressing the potential and already existing conflicts in the South Caucasus. As a prior paper by the Caucasus Edition writers deals with language policies and minority integration

questions in Georgia (Bobghiashvili, Kharatyan and Surmanidze 2016)<sup>12</sup>, in this paper, we focus on the cases of Armenia and Azerbaijan and their language policies. Even though sizable parts of the populations of these countries have maintained bilingualism to a certain degree, the role of the Russian language has been continually declining since the collapse of the Soviet Union. And English, despite its steadily increasing popularity, is not yet spoken by enough people to replace Russian as the language of regional and intergroup interaction. While we support the need to enhance education in state languages, we argue that a parallel education in additional languages and language policies addressing the ethnic minorities' rights leave much to be desired.

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*We argue that a properly implemented multilingual policy would improve communication among various language communities within and between the societies; moreover, it would also ensure the rights of minorities to education in their native languages leading to improved relations.*

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## Language Policies in Armenia and Azerbaijan

In the post-Soviet space, the linguistic factor is not only a means of ethnic identification, but also an instrument for realizing the interests of political elites. For the last 25 years, almost every country of the region has been undergoing a process of consolidating the monopolistic position of the dominant group's language, which became also the state language. The process has been popular, since decades of Soviet rule had marginalized the role of the languages of the local majorities in the Soviet republics and privileged the Russian-speakers, repercussions of which are still felt in the outright or latent frictions within the societies. And yet, the consolidation of the dominant status of the state language often happens at the expense of the positions of the languages of other ethnic groups and, as a result, leads to the infringement of their rights. The simultaneous loss of Russian and absence of any other common language also breaks down communication between and among the populations of the states in the South Caucasus as they lose access to a common language.

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<sup>12</sup> For other background and policy recommendations on minority rights including language rights in the South Caucasus, see (Duygulu and Karapetyan 2017)

## Azerbaijan: Language Policies and Ethnic Minorities

In Azerbaijan, the implementation of a language policy demands special concern and delicacy from the leadership of the country in view of the multi-ethnic population of the country. The Constitution acknowledges the official status of the Azerbaijani language and guarantees the free use and the development of other languages spoken by the population of the country. Article 45 on “the right to use a native language” emphasizes the citizens’ rights to use their native language, receive upbringing, education, and engage in creative activities in any language” (Milli Majlis of the Azerbaijan Republic 2009).

Today only around 10 percent of the population of Azerbaijan are ethnic minorities. According to the census conducted in 2009, the largest groups are Azerbaijanis (8,172,800 or 91.6 percent), Lezgis (180,300 or 2 percent)<sup>13</sup>, Armenians (120,300 or 1.3 percent)<sup>14</sup>, Russians (119,300 or 1.3 percent), the Talysh (112,000 or 1.3 percent), Avars (49,800 or 0.6 percent), and others (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2009). In October 2000, Azerbaijan ratified the “Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities” initiated by the Council of Europe. According to the report the country has been said to undergo a few positive developments; the latest resolution has particularly emphasized Azerbaijan’s open attitude and willingness to cooperate, as well as measures taken by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in printing some textbooks for minority schools, initiation of

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<sup>13</sup> Alternative sources provide far bigger numbers of Lezgis and the Talysh with a reference to numbers provided by these communities (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization 2015).

<sup>14</sup> The official assessment of the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan includes Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh. According to the 2015 census of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (National Statistical Service of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic 2015), 144,683 Armenians lived on this part of the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan. According to Head of Information and Public Affairs Department of the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Rafael Suleymanov, the number of Armenians living in Azerbaijan (excluding the occupied territories) was 220 with 140 of them residing in Baku according to the 2009 Census (Oxu.az 2015).

cultural events by national minority associations with the support of local authorities, NGOs, the Ministry of Culture (Council of Europe 2015).

There are a number of schools with Russian, Georgian, and Jewish language instruction sanctioned by the MoE. Seven secondary schools continue to provide classes in the Lezgin language until ninth grade in regions where Lezgis live compactly (Council of Europe 2015). Talysh, Avar, Udin, Tat are typically studied for two hours a week in Grades 1-4 in areas where the respective minorities reside compactly (Government of Azerbaijan 2017), but the quality and availability of the textbooks and the lack of adequately trained language specialists makes the education ineffective (Advisory Committee on The Framework Convention for The Protection of National Minorities 2013). The Baku branch of the Dagestan State University that prepared specialists in the Lezgi and Avar languages was closed in 2008, and currently only one institution prepares teachers of Lezgi – the Kusar branch of the Baku Pedagogical School. The only opportunity for Lezgis to continue education in their native language is in Dagestan, Russia.

The Azerbaijani government has recently made some efforts to improve the quality of teaching materials in several minority languages. New textbooks have been published in Lezgi and Talysh replacing the outdated or foreign textbooks. However, according to a number of sources, textbooks for studying other minority languages, such as Tat and Avar, still leave a lot to be desired (Rust 2008), (Matveeva 2002) (Advisory Committee on The Framework Convention for The Protection of National Minorities 2013).

Although there are occasional talks of independence among Lezgis and the Talysh in particular, so far, these intentions are mitigated and these minority groups have political voice through elected representatives to the Parliament, government, and especially the local governments (Rust 2008). However, the European Commission notes that national minorities in general are hesitant to claim their linguistic and cultural rights because of the tense atmosphere and suspicion toward minorities resulting from the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (Advisory Committee on The Framework Convention for The Protection of National Minorities 2013).

## **Armenia: Language Policies and Ethnic Minorities**

Following the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis at the onset of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenia became a nearly monoethnic

state. Still, the Constitution of the country recognizes the rights of the minorities for the “preservation and development of their traditions, religion, language and culture” (National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia 1995). As Article 1 of the “Law on Language” states “The Republic of Armenia guarantees the free usage of minority languages on its territory” (Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia 1993). The principles and priorities of the state towards the Armenian language as well as the minority languages are defined in the “State Program on Language Policy” adopted in 2002. The Program acknowledges that the minority languages need to be promoted for the sake of democracy and compliance with international standards; yet it securitizes the “factual prevalence of the Armenian language in all domains of social life”, naming it a “factor of national security” (Government of Armenia 2002).

According to the census conducted in 2011, around 2 percent of the population of Armenia were from ethnic minorities. The largest groups are Armenians (2,961,801 or 98.1 percent), Yezidis (35,308 or 1.2 percent), Russians (11,911 or 0.4 percent), Assyrians (2,769 or 0.09 percent), Kurds (2,162 or 0.07 percent), Ukrainians (1,176 or 0.04 percent), Greeks (900 or 0.03 percent), and others (National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia 2011). The number of ethnic minorities in the country has consistently declined resulting from waves of immigration caused by the economic conditions. Among the South Caucasus states, Armenia is the only one that has ratified the “European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages”. Accordingly, the Yezidi, Russian, Greek, Kurdish, and Assyrian languages are protected under the Charter (Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 2017). There is a number of unions of ethnic minority NGOs functioning in the country (Russian, Yezidi, Assyrian, Kurdish, Greek, and Jewish).

The languages of the ethnic minorities are taught in secondary schools in the places of their compact residence: there are 43 schools where education is in Russian, 24 schools where Yezidi is taught (although none in Yerevan despite 10,000 Yezidis living there), 7 schools where Kurdish is taught, and 6 schools where Assyrian is taught. Greek is taught through no systematic efforts and sometimes through Sunday schools. Even though the government has brought considerable improvements in the update and publishing of the textbooks in the Yezidi language, there is still a lack of textbooks for all grades and for the other minority language textbooks. There is also a lack of qualified teachers and professional training of the minority language specialists. (Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 2017)



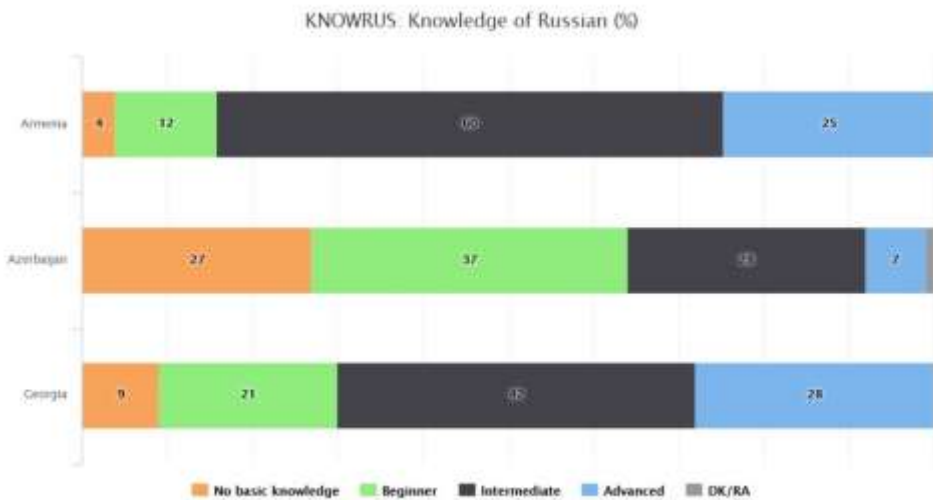
Most of the representatives of ethnic minorities are fluent in Armenian, which allows them to pursue their higher education in the state language. Many of them are also fluent in Russian. Since 2005 the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Yerevan State University also offers free or partly subsidized places reserved for Yezidi, Kurdish, and Assyrian minority representatives who wish to specialize in their native language and culture and who have been put forward by their own community. However, single students up to date have taken advantage of this opportunity (Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 2017). The problems with minority language and education, therefore, are less political and mainly about the lack of enough financing, qualified teachers, and sufficient infrastructure.

In general, the languages of minorities in Azerbaijan and Armenia are in a state of regression: their transmission from generation to generation has declined due to the state language policies aimed at deeper assimilation under the single national identity. The younger generation often moves to larger cities and assimilates with ethnic Azerbaijanis or Armenians in order to have equal job opportunities.

## **The Role of the Russian Language in Armenia and Azerbaijan**

The Russian language stands apart among all other non-dominant languages in Armenia and Azerbaijan. It has not been assigned the status of an official language in either of these countries, although in Armenia it is recognized as a minority language under the “European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages”. In Azerbaijan, it is referred to as the language of interethnic communication, particularly for communication with the societies of the neighboring countries. Russian is the second popular language in both countries, particularly among ethnic Russians, bilingual native speakers, and certain ethnic minority groups. In a 2013 survey, around 85 percent of individuals in Armenia indicated that they know Russian on an intermediate or advanced level, and around 35 percent did so in Azerbaijan (Caucasus Barometer 2013). Still the use of Russian has been declining in both countries – to some extent due to the language policies implemented since the first years of independence.





*Figure 1 Knowledge of Russian According to Caucasus Barometer 2013 Regional Dataset (Caucasus Barometer 2013)*

The early period of Azerbaijan’s independence saw a number of policies aimed at the advancement of Azerbaijani as the dominant language. These included its designation as the official language, making it the primary language of instruction in the educational system, restructuring the lexical system in line with modern communication needs, intensifying the study of its history. In the first years of independence under the Azerbaijani Popular Front party, the Russian language and ethnic Russians residing in the country experienced particularly strong pressures. This changed with the ascension to power of Heydar Aliyev in 1993, and while Azerbaijani remained the primary language, a more favorable political climate developed for the Russian language.

Similarly, entering office in 1991, the Armenian Allnational Movement party initiated the transition of all documentation and education to the Armenian language. Going a step further than Azerbaijan, it also closed practically all the university departments and schools with Russian as the language of instruction. This process led to the outflow of a considerable number of Russian-speaking specialists from the country. The rest were largely marginalized.

Today, there are 43 schools that offer classes taught in the Russian language with textbooks published in Armenia and supplementary materials arriving from Russia (Advisory Committee of Experts on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 2017). According to a MoE regulation, only children of ethnic Russians, Russian citizens, and children from mixed

marriages when one of the parents is a foreigner of any nationality are allowed to study in the Russian language sectors of public schools (Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia 2010 (2014)). Still, considering the economic and cultural ties, such as the large Armenian diaspora in Russia, the percentage of the Russian-speaking population remains high compared to Azerbaijan and Georgia as shown by Figure 1 above.

Despite the vocal opposition to teaching in the Russian language in both countries, the general population still favors the teaching of Russian as a mandatory language in schools, according to Figure 2 below. The marginalization of the Russian language, however, in the absence of another international language widely spoken by the population hinders cooperation in the scientific, technical, and educational spheres, as the translation of professional literature into the national languages is practically not carried out.

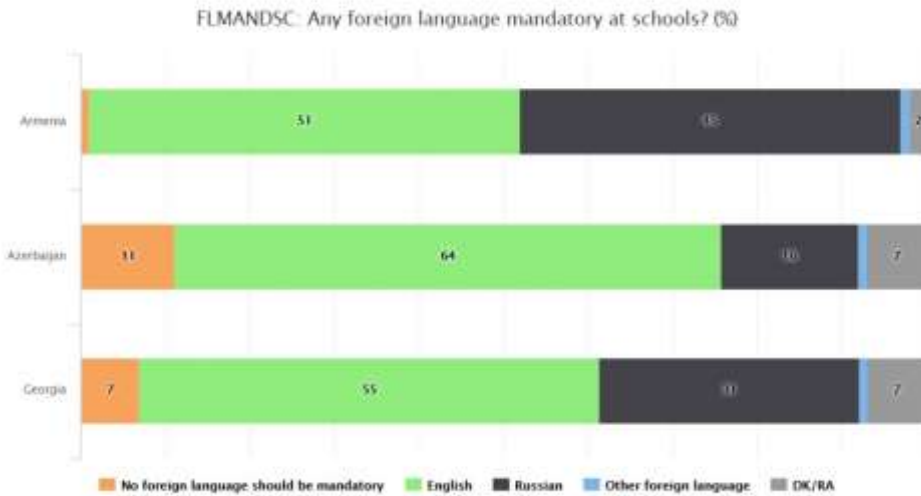


Figure 2 Mandatory Foreign Languages at Schools According to Caucasus Barometer 2013 Regional Dataset (Caucasus Barometer 2013)

Curiously, the importance of Russian was acknowledged by President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili, who at the international forum “NATO-Georgia” called it on the one hand an “instrument” and even “weapon”, which can be used by the “external enemy” against the national interests of the country, and on the other hand, a “convenient language for spreading information” especially “in delivering our single message to Abkhazians and Ossetians” (Dvali 2017).

In the same tone, according to Deputy Director of the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of Azerbaijan, Gulshan Pashaeva, in the framework of the active public diplomacy conducted by Azerbaijan, the Russian language is an indispensable tool for protecting the national interests of the country in the post-Soviet space (Pashaeva 2017). Similarly, in a 2016 interview, Minister of Education and Science of Armenia Levon Mkrtchyan noted that “the field for Russian is more favorable since our people with its thinking and post-Soviet system comprehends it easier than English”. While stressing that the “Law on Language” declaring Armenian the only state language should not be changed<sup>15</sup>, the Minister is also of the opinion that the knowledge of foreign languages is important for Armenia not to be an “auxiliary country” but a scientific and educational space in the world (Zakharyan 2016).

The disappearance of a common language for the countries of the South Caucasus also has negative implications on the already complicated interstate and inter-societal relations. Its absence makes the already deep isolation almost impenetrable and dialogue difficult not only ideologically but also technically. Apart from this, the absence of a shared language can smooth the way for informational abuse and manipulation of the societies drawing them further into conflict. Therefore, the coherent implementation of a multilingual policy in the South Caucasus countries can to a certain degree contribute to the peace processes or at least prevent the deterioration of the situation.

## **Multilingualism as an Instrument of Conflict Transformation**

As a result of the expansion of the political, economic, and cultural connections of the former Soviet republics with the international community, the position of the English language is gradually strengthening in the region. This process leads to presumed competition between English and Russian in the linguistic space of a number of post-Soviet countries. And Russian prevails as up to date, only a small and affluent part of the population has been able to master English. According to the latest surveys conducted by the Caucasus Barometer, 16

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<sup>15</sup> In Summer 2017, a new wave of heated public, media, and political discussions in Armenia was triggered by a new law adopted in the Parliament of the Russian Federation allowing citizens of countries where the Russian language has a constitutionally accepted official status to work in Russia as drivers without having to exchange their national driver’s license (Grigoryan 2017).

percent of Azerbaijanis know English at a beginner's level, 7 percent at an intermediate level, and 1 percent at an advanced (Caucasus Barometer 2013), whereas 25 percent of Armenians know English at a beginner's level, 12 percent at an intermediate level, and 3 percent at an advanced level (Caucasus Barometer 2015). However, in contrast to the Russian language, which currently faces resistance from a considerable part of the population as the language of cultural colonialism, the English language is accepted favorably, especially among the young generations of both countries.

But are policies promoting English and Russian mutually exclusive? Do the Armenian and the Azerbaijani societies, or for that matter, the Georgian society, have to choose? The experience of some other post-Soviet countries, particularly of Kazakhstan and the Baltic states shows otherwise.

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*Trilingualism or even multilingualism, rather than bilingualism, can serve a number of beneficial roles: it can ensure more than one language for intergroup interaction and through this contribute to improved communication and conflict transformation; it can ease the worry of cultural colonialism as a result of learning one foreign language as it will be balanced by the knowledge of another; and it will make the society better prepared for integration into the global economy.*

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In this context, the case of Kazakhstan is particularly instructive. The tensions initiated by the nationalistically-spirited citizens have intensified along with increased accusations against the government of Kazakhstan in promoting Russian colonialism represented by the Russian language. The introduction of the English language as a part of a trilingual policy of the country served to ease these concerns and achieve the mentioned goals.

Initially the idea of introducing trilingualism, i.e. mastering of the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages by Kazakhstani citizens, was announced by President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev in October 2006 at the XII session of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. In his address to the people of Kazakhstan in 2007, President Nazarbayev proposed the beginning of a phased implementation of the cultural project "Trinity of Languages" – "...Kazakh – the state language, Russian – the language of interethnic communication and English – the language of successful integration into the global economy" (Official Website of the President of Kazakhstan 2007).

The introduction of the English language can be seen not only as favorable for successful integration into the global economy but also a counterbalance to Russian and giving the population access to the western narrative. Another step in this direction was the recent Latinization of the Kazakh alphabet<sup>16</sup>.

Alongside with an overall enhancement of education and competitiveness of human capital, the trinity of languages has another very important meaning – larger societal cohesion and the preservation of interethnic harmony and peace. Considering the large number of ethnic groups residing in the country after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the government of independent Kazakhstan has been especially cautious about its language policy: on the one hand, there was a strong impetus to revive the Kazakh language; on the other hand, it was crucial not to provoke conflicts among the diverse ethnic communities that for several decades had been speaking the Russian language. This has been reflected in the policies that attempted to encourage rather than force representatives of other ethnic groups to learn the Kazakh language although comprehensive measures on the enhancement of the role of the Kazakh language have also been introduced. The Russian language has remained relevant, and the Russian-speaking citizens enjoy the same rights as ethnic Kazakhs do.

The recent language policy aims to achieve 100 percent of the population speaking Kazakh, 95 percent speaking Russian, and 25 percent speaking English by 2020 (Yeskeldiyeva and Tazhibayeva 2015) (Jankowski 2012). Currently the country is intensively engaged in reforming the education sector, introducing e-learning, training highly qualified trilingual specialists, issuing books and other teaching aids in three languages. Still, the vast majority of the research on the topic primarily concerns the quality of teaching and the training of multilingual specialists rather than the particular role played by trilingualism in preventing ethnic tensions. In her speech at the Conference on “Education and Cultural Diversity in Central Asia”, education expert Marina Gurbo underlined that multilingual education has an essential element of social justice (Gurbo 2016), and it would be very important to explore the changes in inclusion and respect for diversity with links to multilingual education in Kazakhstan and elsewhere where such policies are being implemented.

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<sup>16</sup> Before the introduction of Cyrillic characters during the Soviet time, the Kazakh alphabet was Latin-based.

Within the South Caucasus region, multilingual education policies can serve a number of goals.

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*Multilingual and transformative language policies should go beyond the acquisition of state languages by minorities. The introduction of multilingual policies where the population is provided with the opportunity to learn the national language along with English, Russian, as well as a minority language where there is demand would contribute to integration and conflict transformation, along with other benefits.*

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Such policies, of course, require extensive investment in competent and qualified teaching staff, sufficient infrastructure, and adequate supply of materials. The investment, however, is certain to pay off and yield disproportional return in form of both regionally integrated, well-educated, globally competitive, and peacefully coexisting societies.

## **Building a Civic Nation as a Step Toward Conflict Transformation in the South Caucasus**

The liberal consensus that dominated the global arena for a few decades after World War Two assumes that developed and internally coherent nations should profess the values of the rule of law and democracy and not just an “endogamic” affinity to a specific ethnic group. Yet the formal adherence to liberal values does not guarantee acting in accordance with them, and the consensus might be illusory. In the past several years, a number of nationalist leaders have been increasingly active manifesting their resentment against liberal values, including in the Euro-Atlantic zone. Such leaders do not openly reject the rule of law and democracy; they preach democracy but of a different sort, which they call “sovereign” or “illiberal”, with a specific kind of rule of law that aims at a divided society with a further strengthened majority at the expense of various minorities. This aids them in making their power perpetual,

and at the same time, promotes cronyism in the economic sphere. Many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including the Balkan states and several post-Soviet states, are plagued by such policies.

Another division exists between two competing nation-building models, the civic versus ethnic nations. In his discussion of Kuhn's ideas, Calhoun writes that the divide is seen as originating from the essence of different nationalist ideas: the Central and Eastern European nationalism "stressed particular national identities, an emotional connection to history, and development rather than transcendence [...] drew on myths of the past, dreams of the future, and distinctive intellectual traditions to imagine an ideal fatherland, closely linked with the past [...] focused on developing culture and thus was initially more remote from projects of practical reform," while the Western (at least in its idealized form), in particular French and English nationalism, focused on transforming existing states (Calhoun 2007, 138).

This idealized version hardly exists in reality: as Brubaker noted, the difference between civic and ethnic understandings of nationhood is more complex, and the essentially "civic" quality of West European nationalism becomes problematic, particularly considering the ethnopolitical conflict in Belgium and the successes of xenophobic parties in many countries (Brubaker 2004, 133-134).

Accepting the challenge that Brubaker presents and that the civic nation is also not the ideal type, we, nevertheless, argue that it is a preferred form of societal organization that has a bigger potential of contributing to the formation of inclusive societies and through this to conflict resolution. As experience shows, most mainstream political parties in Western countries continue to maintain a devotion to civic nation-building<sup>17</sup>, while the situation is manifestly different in most of Central and Eastern Europe where ethno-nationalism prevails. Lately, of course, ethno-nationalism has been on the rise in the countries which joined the NATO almost two decades ago as well, and in various parts of the European Union, as well as in all post-Soviet states.

There is also a close resemblance between the situation in many post-Communist, and particularly post-Soviet states, fitting Brubaker's description of newly-emerging or re-emerging nationalisms which "involve claims made in the name of a 'core nation' or nationality, defined in ethnocultural terms, and

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<sup>17</sup> The "mainstream", of course, may change with time, considering the percentage of votes in favor of nationalist parties in recent European and American elections.



sharply distinguished from the citizenry as a whole". Calling this type of nationalism "nationalizing", Brubaker analyzes how "[t]he core nation is understood as the legitimate 'owner' of the state, which is conceived as the state *of* and *for* the core nation". Brubaker notes that this form of nationalism is challenged by "transborder nationalisms of [...] 'external national homelands' [...] oriented to ethnonational kin who are residents and citizens of other states", and particularly puts Russian nationalism into this second category, which "asserts a state's right – indeed its obligation – to monitor the condition, promote the welfare, support the activities and institutions, and protect the interests of 'its' ethnonational kin in other states". At the same time, Russian minorities tend to profess the third form of nationalism, demanding a state recognition of their distinct ethnocultural nationality, as well as collective, nationality-based cultural or political rights (Brubaker 1998, 277).

It may also be observed that "core nation" and transborder nationalisms can coexist in cases when the "core nation" of one state has ethnic kin in another. The Armenian case falls into this category: the "core nation" nationalism within the country is supplemented by the "external national homeland" type, particularly regarding the case of ethnic Armenians in Georgia's Samtskhe Javakheti region, where, in turn, the minority nationalism may be observed. All that is augmented by what Brubaker considers the fourth form of nationalism: one that seeks to protect the mores or cultural patrimony against alleged threats from outside, brands its political opponents as antinational, idealizes the past, and criticizes the imaginary ills of the "West" and of "modernity" (Brubaker 1998, 277-278). Numerous hateful populist statements as manifestations of this fourth form of nationalism might serve as object for a separate study. Some particularly bizarre examples include a statement by the Public Council of Armenia against the non-discrimination law: "It is an irrefutable fact that the draft establishes grounds for the legalization of immorality and perversion [...] the ultimate depravity will be unavoidable" (Public Council Subcommittee on Religion 2013), and recurrent statements, particularly by the clergy, that people not belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church cannot be considered Armenians (A1plus.am 2017).

The Armenian case may seem extreme. However, as already mentioned, in some cases NATO and EU membership may not prevent the rise of ethno-nationalist parties as evidenced by the Brexit, the rise of Le Pen's National Front, Pegida, and many others. The political gains from playing the ethnic card may particularly be observed in the Hungarian case. After Fidesz's return to power



in 2010, ethnic Hungarians living in neighboring countries were granted citizenship and allowed to vote by post, while Hungarian expats cannot vote the same way. The result was a significant electoral advantage for the ruling Fidesz-KDNP<sup>18</sup> bloc in subsequent elections. Similarly, since granting citizenship to ethnic Armenians in Samtskhe Javakheti, the ruling Republican Party of Armenia has been bussing them to voting stations in Armenia for each election; Armenian expats who are mostly critical of the government are not allowed to vote (Coalson 2013).

As a contrast, the “core nation” approach could be observed in Slovakia: the process of national self-identification is still more on the ethnic and cultural side than on the civic and territorial one and therefore minorities cannot be fully accommodated. Slovak reality can be characterized by the notion “*Kulturnation*”, rather than “*Staatsnation*” (Dostál 2006, 144). Anti-minority sentiments and accordingly shaped policies, specifically against the Hungarian minority, were applied in the 1990s, as well as in 2006-2014. The situation sometimes became rather bizarre with hate speech and apocalyptic pronouncements by leaders of a government coalition party. For example, the party announced that the construction of road infrastructure and new bridges paved a road for “Hungarian military invasion” (while both Hungary and Slovakia already were members of the NATO and the EU) or that the usage of the Hungarian language in public sphere should be limited not to infringe on the Slovak language, contrary to the “European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages”, and so forth (Grigoryan 2010).

The political gains of populist mobilization by means of narratives related to the “cultural nation” mean that in the short term, the situation in the East European neighborhood may hardly change. However, there are also examples demonstrating that historical determinism and the prevalence of ethnic and cultural self-identification over a civic and territorial one can be overcome without relinquishing one’s identity.

South Tyrol or Alto Adige, located in the north of Italy on the Austrian border, is one of the two provinces that make up the autonomous region of Trentino-Alto Adige and covers 2.4 percent of Italy’s territory. It was annexed by Italy in 1919. According to a pre-war Austrian census, 93 percent of the region’s population was German, 4 percent were Ladins whose language is related to Rhaeto-Romanic, and 3 percent were Italians. In 2009, the region’s population

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<sup>18</sup> KDNP stands for “*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt*” (Christian Democratic People’s Party).

was about 500,000 – nearly 70 percent German-speakers living mostly in rural areas, about 26 percent Italian-speakers concentrated in 4 major cities, and 4 percent Ladins (Benedikter 2009, 69).

During the interwar period, the Italian government undertook repressive measures forbidding German-language schools and forcibly changing personal names into Italian. (Benedikter 2009, 69). A 1946 agreement attached to the Italian-Austrian peace treaty provided for a “substantial autonomy”. However, Italy’s Constituent Assembly extended the regional autonomy also to the adjacent province of Trentino, a region with an overwhelming Italian majority. Disappointment among the South Tyroleans resulted in mass demonstrations and, beginning in 1957, even bombings. A joint Italian-South Tyrolean commission appointed to seek a compromise eventually proposed a 137-point package providing for an effective autonomy. It was adopted in 1969, and a new autonomy statute was approved by the Italian Parliament and enforced from January 1972. It took another 20 years of negotiations before the principal measures contained in the package were implemented. The Italian government sent a notification of implementation to Vienna on April 22 in 1992, and the Austrian government officially declared before the UN on June 11 in 1992 that the conflict had been settled.

The “South Tyrol Autonomy Statute” is aimed to ensure the maintenance and cultural development of the German and Ladin linguistic groups within the Italian state. At the same time, the autonomy is a territorial one, i.e. the benefits of self-government apply to the members of all three official linguistic groups (Benedikter 2009, 70). The central government has no veto power over the provincial legislation. Public officials must prove their knowledge of both Italian and German, while in the Ladin areas three official languages must be mastered (Benedikter 2009, 72). The province has few taxation powers but it is entitled to the 70 percent of the value added tax collected locally and almost 90 percent of other taxes, and also receives benefits from the EU sector funds (social, structural, and agricultural), so its financial situation is quite advantageous (Benedikter 2009, 73).

In the case of South Tyrol, Austria acted as a guarantor of the rights of the German-speaking population; so, the autonomy package adopted in 1969 had also to be approved by the Austrian government. That was a provision of the 1946 peace treaty, which is not the case in most of the other kin-state situations. Most importantly, however, the issue was not exploited for domestic populist mobilization. Even though violent conflict potential in the region of South Tyrol

was overcome through decades, the effort for building civic citizenry is still underway even today both for enhancing the current mechanisms of diversity management and in the face of new challenges, such as migration flows. The Institute of the Minority Rights of the European Academy of Bozen/Bolzano produced a number of recommendations to continue guaranteeing both the integration of new migrants and the protection of traditional autochthonous communities and minorities of South Tyrol (Medda-Windischer and Carlà 2013).

## Recommendations

In this paper we, a group of authors from Ukraine, Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, discussed a number of peace processes that have proven to contribute to conflict transformation in conflict contexts worldwide, and yet up to date, have not been applied or considered thoroughly in the context of the South Caucasus conflicts. While many other transformative processes exist, we limited our discussion here to transitional justice, rehumanization, language policies, and the concept of the civic nation as we see these particularly important as steps that can move the societies of the South Caucasus out of the current deadlock. The proposed peace processes can be applied individually although they would bring the best results if applied in combination.

- Transitional justice is a particularly important process to start early. Most of the time, a peace accord does not immediately address the root causes of conflict, and a very long period of time is needed to overcome the long-term effects of a violent conflict. As it has been seen in most of the cases, signing a peace accord does not necessarily assure that the conflict has been transformed and sustainable peace has been fully achieved. For this very reason, transitional justice is implemented for the purpose of a long-lasting transformation of societies, structural changes, and the ultimate abolition of the root causes of the conflict. Certain transitional justice tools may be initiated beforehand with the aim of addressing and transforming social relations. Memory work, unofficial truth work, art projects, local reconciliation practices, and community dialogue attempts may be effective entry points. Although a certain amount of state support is fundamental for transitional justice mechanisms in general, civil society efforts are highly important for unfolding the will of the society to end the conflict. The attempts to establish an unofficial truth commission by human rights

activists in Turkey indicates that it is possible to increase such efforts without expecting an immediate state involvement. On the other hand, the Colombian case demonstrates that an early and complementary approach to transitional justice and peace may facilitate the actual beginning of official peace talks.

- In regard to the integration of the displaced populations, the states and the civil societies should pay attention not only to the material conditions (which of course are critically important), but also to the rehumanization and social integration of the displaced, their socio-psychological state, the relations and interactions between the displaced and the host communities. The peacebuilding practices aimed at rehumanization should take into account the views of representatives from various parts and strata of the society that would help to build connections in both horizontal and vertical directions. Such practices can also help reduce tensions and prevent conflicts within and between the communities. Rehumanization of the displaced and their inclusion into the development of state strategies of integration will enrich solutions to economic, social, humanitarian, and other challenges.
- The development of peace education curricula would also prepare ground for peaceful conflict transformation in the region and within each society as it will prepare the new generations to work with conflicts constructively. To this end, the reform of textbooks and teaching methodologies, particularly in the disciplines of history, literature, as well as civic and early education in accordance with the principles of peace education is crucial in regions affected by protracted conflicts.
- The language policies are also critical for conflict prevention and resolution. So far, the countries of the South Caucasus have been promoting one official national language making the interethnic and cross-border communication difficult and contributing to the isolation of the societies from one another. These policies and the colonial past also contributed to the worries associated with learning Russian; yet forgetting Russian further exacerbates the mutual isolation of the groups from each other and from the world. Initiation of public discussions on the models of multilingual education, therefore, can help alleviate all of these concerns. Introduction of multilingual education will require to reconsider the laws on the state languages with the improvement of legal guarantees for the protection of languages of national minorities and allow the use of minority languages in administrative and educational structures, contributing to positive peace.

The simultaneous learning of both English and Russian will solve political questions, alleviate the worries of the societies about the Russian “soft power”, and allow the societies to better integrate into global economy.

The successful implementation of multilingual education should go beyond the primary school level. Multilingual departments at the universities with a number of concurrent languages of instruction particularly in departments preparing teachers for minority languages with provision of scholarships for representatives of ethnic minorities could further the goal. Changes to the legal framework, such as the 1+4 policy in Georgia aimed at promoting the Georgian language among the minorities and facilitating their access to higher education, can serve as the basis for development of multi-language education (Agenda.ge 2017) (Bobghiashvili, Kharatyan and Surmanidze 2016). Introduction of strong English and Russian language teaching at public schools and universities in addition to the titular and minority languages with adequate textbooks and well-prepared teachers would complete the picture.

- All of the above recommendations, in turn, require a firm commitment of all the countries of the South Caucasus to the principles of a civic nation, with derivative commitments to the rule of law and democratization. Considering the multi-ethnic composition of the region and the long history of violent conflicts, taking the ethno-national route is a building step toward perpetual divisions and violence detrimental both to each state and the region as a whole.

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*The adherence to the values of an inclusive and democratic civic state, instead, can pave the way for the transformation of relations and coexistence.*

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

EU – European Union

IDPs – Internally Displaced Person/People/Populations

MoE – Ministry of Education

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PKK – *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* (Kurdistan Workers' Party)

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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