BRIDGING THE VOID

Social Media's Potential to Transform Intergroup Relations in Fractured Societies

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

Submitted by ELISE S. CRANE

Advised by Eileen Babbitt, PhD

March 9, 2011

http://fletcher.tufts.edu

THE FLETCHER SCHOOL

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

---

[1] See http://groundviews.org/.

1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"As in Plato's allegory of the cave, the prisoners have little choice but to accept the images on the wall as reality. The ultimate power of the media to influence the course of a conflict is rooted in the fact that antagonists are almost always kept in separate caves."
-Gadi Wolfsfeld

"*Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that we have to erect the ramparts of peace*"
-UNESCO Charter

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When physical contact between divergent groups is either impossible or socially unacceptable, mainstream media may exacerbate stereotypes of "the other" and detract from any progress toward intergroup reconciliation. In this context, certain social media tools seem poised to positively influence social processes. Here I examine the potential for moderated discussion fora to improve intergroup relations, particularly in post-conflict societies afflicted by an intergroup contact void. I apply tenets of conflict resolution literature and technology theory to measure attitude transformation in a case study of *Caucasus Edition*, a fully moderated website dedicated to generating discussion on the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process. The site invites participants (primarily Armenians and Azerbaijanis) to post original content and to comment on postings. Its key attribute is arguably the sense of trust fostered through strong moderation; vitriol and ad hominen attacks are not tolerated. Although it is difficult to satisfactorily measure attitude transformation, and social media are no silver bullet, such moderated websites may be capable of eroding enduring stereotypes and exposing human commonalities to help transcend monolithic perceptions of "the other."

II. INTRODUCTION

The media's potential to perpetuate hatred and incite unimaginable brutality has been canonized in humanitarian catastrophes spanning from Rwanda to Bosnia. Often overlooked, however, is

mainstream media's tendency to inflame conflict by entrenching group stereotypes and omitting critical context. For the purpose of this paper, mainstream media's gravest shortcoming is its relentless search for dualism; in seeking a good versus evil story in every conflict narrative, the media paint conflict—and post-conflict relations—in Manichean hues. Where intergroup relations are tenuous or shattered, mainstream media reporting may drip vinegar into bitter wounds and devastate progress toward reconciliation. Although extremists may cling to their seemingly fundamental separate group identities, the moderates interested in exploring peace with the other side lack a platform for this discussion.

The UNESCO-funded MacBride Report (1984) recommended a new communications order to provide for "more justice, more equity, more reciprocity in information exchange, less dependence in communication flows, less downward diffusion of messages, more self-reliance and cultural identity, and more benefits for all mankind."[2] Although the MacBride Report failed to effect substantial change in media structures, its appeal remains imperative today. The report presents a compelling case for more democratic participation in media processes, not least to facilitate communication—which Yochai Benkler (2006) cites as the building block of social relations[3]—between divided groups.

The nexus of participatory social media—defined in this paper as digital-based platforms that promote people-to-people interaction, encourage networked communication, and impose no limits on participation—and peace journalism principles presents an opportunity to engage divided groups which would otherwise remain isolated from "the other."[4] In this paper, I explore

---

[2] UNESCO. *Many Voices, One World*: The MacBride Report (Paris: UNESCO, 1984): 18.
[3] Yochai Benkler, The *Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006), 369.
[4] "The other" is used widely throughout this project to denote both individual outgroup members and the outgroup writ large.

whether highly moderated discussion fora[5] may help to facilitate attitude transformation by enhancing intergroup communication in fractured societies.[6]

First, I will examine the primary shortcomings of mainstream media in conflict and post-conflict situations. Second, I will review the literature on four conflict resolution theories of change: the contact hypothesis, social categorization theory, grassroots peacebuilding, and peace media. I will also review the literature on two technology-related theories—computer-mediated communication (CMC) and the power of digital networks—that may facilitate attitude transformation. Third, I will present three hypotheses and six accompanying indicators of how social media may affect change. This section will include the methodology by which I will analyze a discussion forum in the Armenia/Azerbaijan region. I define this region surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh as a fractured society[7] in which physical intergroup contact is virtually nonexistent. Fourth, I will conduct a content analysis, supplemented by a questionnaire posed to forum participants, to determine whether the indicators seem to be present. I will conclude by acknowledging limitations, addressing key counterarguments, and suggesting directions for future research.

A. MAINSTREAM MEDIA: A PERVERTED VIEW OF CONFLICT

In his seminal work on the power of communication, Manuel Castells (2009) establishes media processes, including agenda setting, priming, and framing, as central in constructing the

---

[5] The distinction between a blog and a discussion forum has been muddled as expansive comment sections have transformed even seemingly single-author blogs into conversations involving a plethora of voices. The case study in this project is perhaps most accurately described as a multi-contributor website that spans the gap between blogs and discussion fora. In the interest of brevity, I will call it a "discussion forum."

[6] "Fractured society" will be defined herein as a post-conflict, enduring-violence context in which disparate groups—defined primarily along ethnic lines—are isolated from each other and have little or no contact.

[7] In this paper, Armenia/Azerbaijan will be collectively referenced as a fractured society; although far from precise, this designation reflects broken ethnic relations both within each country and spanning their common border.

public mindset.[8] This tremendous power is often misused in the hands of the mainstream media; in a climate of information overload and news-related attention deficit disorder, the media compress complex events into grossly simplified sound bites and slapdash digests that deprive media consumers of the context so critical for genuine understanding. Search for Common Ground founder John Marks (2003) says, "Traditional journalism usually stresses conflict—and often exploits it for its entertainment value. Editors seem to work from the premise that conflict is interesting and agreement is dull."[9]

Samuel Peleg (2006) paints the media as storytellers obsessed with attracting the largest possible audience and thus aiming for maximum drama, emotion, provocation, and sensationalism.[10] Mainstream coverage of conflict falls into neatly cleaved lines of "us versus them," Peleg argues, that absolves the "us" of all responsibility.[11] Gadi Wolfsfeld (2004) points to mainstream media's tendency to paint "enemies [as] more frightening, opponents more vicious"[12] and cites its catalytic role in concentrating anger toward the enemy, stirring discontent as if "wind on a fire."[13] Sandya Hewamanne (2009) believes that in Sri Lanka, mainstream media sensationalism and a lack of inter-ethnic contact cultivated a perception of a monolithic other,[14] in which individual differences are suppressed and the outgroup is viewed as a single, distasteful entity.

---

[8] Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 157.
[9] John Marks, preface to *The Power of the Media: A Handbook for Peacebuilders*, eds. Ross Howard, Francis Rolt, Hans van de Veen, & Juliette Verhoeven (Utrecht, the Netherlands, European Centre for Conflict Prevention: 2003), 15.
[10] Samuel Peleg, "Peace Journalism through the Lens of Conflict Theory: Analysis and Practice," *Conflict and Communication Online*, 5.2 (2006), www.cco.regener-online.de (accessed October 25, 2010), 6.
[11] Ibid, 9.
[12] Wolfsfeld, 19.
[13] Ibid, 31.
[14] Sandya Hewamanne, "The Color of Tears is the Same Everywhere: Inter-ethnic networking and grassroots organizing among women workers in conflict-ridden Sri Lanka," in *Social Capital and Peace-Building: Creating and Resolving Conflict with Trust and Social Networks*, edited by Michaelene Cox (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 98.

Tim Allen and Jean Seaton (1999) similarly describe mainstream media as "othering," owing to its reliance on simplistic explanations of conflict situations.[15] The concept of "the other" is ubiquitous in literature, popular film, and other cultural forms. Without delving too deeply into the socio-psychological concept of "me" versus "not me," otherness can be briefly defined by a figure that represents something essentially opposed to the self. A City University of New York essay attributes otherness to those of different race, nationality, religion, social class, political ideology, sexual orientation, or origin.[16] This dichotomy is a leading catalyst of drama and arguably a natural function of most human relationships. However, the mainstream media inappropriately exacerbates such tendencies in the name of selling more newspapers or attracting more viewers.

"Othering" both inhibits outsiders' understanding of the conflict and retards potential post-conflict reconciliation between the parties by deepening the gulf between them and entrenching enemy images. Martin Shaw (1996) notes mainstream media's social distancing function.[17] While "social distance" may take many forms, in this paper I interpret it as the ultimate manifestation of the "every man is an island" aphorism that mainstream media tends to manipulate. Mainstream media channels' flair for the dramatic leads them exaggerate differences between parties and keep its antagonists in "separate caves."[18] Richard Reuben (2009) labels this social distance as "autistic hostility," in which divisive media coverage makes estranged parties less and less likely to talk to each other.[19]

---

[15] Tim Allen & Jean Seaton, eds., *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 4.

[16] "The Other." City University of New York, Brooklyn. http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/other.html (accessed January 11, 2011).

[17] Martin Shaw, *Civil Society and Media in Global Crises: Representing Distant Violence* (London: Pinter, 1996), 9.

[18] Gadi Wolfsfeld, *Media and the Path to Peace* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), 226.

[19] Richard C. Reuben, "The Impact of News Coverage on Conflict: Toward Greater Understanding," *Marquette Law Review* 93:45 (2009): 63.

With its Manichean rhetoric that promotes social distancing, mainstream media exerts a profoundly isolating force. Combined with the effects of post-conflict trauma and alienation from "the other," this creates an acute void that must be filled to improve intergroup relations. Donald Ellis (2006) warns that when deprived of contact with the other, each group will retreat into the nest of its own myth.[20] The mainstream media's tendentious story selection favors conflict narratives, Ellis says, which promotes fear and entrenches divides,[21] thereby galvanizing group myths.

While the general picture of mainstream media's role in conflict seems only to perpetuate violence and misunderstanding, there is perhaps reason to hope for a brighter future. Wolfsfeld notes that stories echoing "local myths and prejudices" are easier to produce than stories that highlight common ground between sparring groups[22] but he believes that better papers attract readers that care about the complexities and are more willing to learn about the other side. In this way, although media's vested, commercial interest in telling a compelling story may obviate any significant transformation, Wolfsfeld conjectures that media *could* play a more constructive role in conflict reporting.[23]

B. ROOM FOR OPTIMISM: A SNAPSHOT OF PEACE MEDIA

Peace media's founding truism is that if media can mobilize hatred and cultivate stereotypes, it can also mobilize peace by giving voice to alternative narratives and allowing moderates to identify common ground. Graham Spencer (2005) calls for discourses among non-elites that might illuminate similar interests, thus forming bridges between divided groups and

---

[20] Donald Ellis, *Transforming Conflict: Communication and Ethnopolitical Conflict* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 49.
[21] Ibid, 48.
[22] Ibid, 176.
[23] Ibid, 123.

promoting awareness about peace and its advantages.[24] Gina Ross (2003) believes that media can create a "healing vortex,"[25] representing the human ability to overcome isolation in the wake of conflict and reestablish social connections with the other side. Combating this sense of essential otherness—which mainstream media coverage of conflict exacerbates with its dramatic conflict narratives—may prove to be one of peace media's most important contributions to conflict resolution and reconciliation.

However, these processes require *space* within which to unfold. Although this space would ideally take the form of face-to-face interaction, in truly fractured societies, this may be impossible. Onnik Krikorian, whose work with citizen bloggers in bridging relational gaps between Armenians and Azerbaijanis largely inspired this paper, speaks of the travel restrictions that prevent meaningful and sustained Armenian-Azerbaijani contact and necessitate another approach.[26] Similarly, Azerbaijani journalist Famil Ismailov describes his as the first generation that lacks friends on the other side of the border.[27] In short, average Azerbaijanis and Armenians are currently deprived of physical space for intergroup contact; something else must fill the gap.

The ICT4Peace[28] movement, which emerged from the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), represents the conviction that the Millennium Development Goals hinge on peace. Proponents of ICT4Peace see technology's potential in "improving communication, facilitating negotiations, increasing transparency, and building trust."[29] While acknowledging such stumbling blocks as the digital divide and poor regulation, ICT4Peace

---

[24] Graham Spencer, *The Media and Peace: From Vietnam to the "War on Terror"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 190 and 194.
[25] Gina Ross, *Beyond the Trauma Vortex: The Media's Role in Healing Fear, Terror, and Violence* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2003), 36.
[26] Onnik Krikorian, phone interview by author, August 25, 2010, Somerville, MA.
[27] Famil Ismailov, phone interview by author, October 26, 2010, Somerville, MA
[28] ICT stands for Information and Communication Technologies.
[29] Daniel Stauffacher, William Drake, Paul Currion, & Julia Steinberger, *Information and Communication Technology for Peace: The Role of ICT in Preventing, Responding to and Recovering from Conflict* (New York: United Nations ICT Task Force, 2005), 6

advocates conceive that technology can provide platforms for "organized, sustained dialogue" and ways in which to jointly address shared issues.[30] In post-conflict situations, ICT4Peace addresses technology's ability to build trusting relationships and create space for collective problem solving at a grassroots level, rather than imposing a solution from the outside.[31] Among the key recommendations in a 2005 UN report on ICT are: 1) devising shared frameworks to support trust and confidentiality, and 2) cultivating people-to-people connections within conflict zones and transnationally.[32]

Given the technology boom and its unique ability to bridge gaps, when contact space in the physical world is unavailable, certain social media tools seem poised to provide an alternative. Scholars recognize the limitations of mainstream media, particularly where government control over the media is stifling, and have begun to hint at the potential for cyberspace to provide an alternative venue for dissent and debate.[33] Other recent research on female bloggers in the Muslim world suggests that online platforms can empower personal expression and increase outsiders' understanding of key issues in the region. As Joseph Mayton says, "Through online media, women can create a niche that takes the discussion away from stereotypes and shed light and real understanding on the nuanced issues…that so often lack substantial coverage."[34]

To date, no analysis has been undertaken to explain what kinds of changes social media would need to catalyze in order to support attempts at ameliorating intergroup relations. In this paper, I attempt to fill this gap in the literature by explicitly linking technology's connective

---

[30] Ibid, 36 and 52.
[31] Ibid, 55 and 48.
[32] Ibid, 57-63.
[33] See, for example, Tariq Jazeel, "Sri Lanka inside-out: cyberspace and the mediated geographies of political engagement," *Contemporary South Asia* 18.4 (2010): 443-449.
[34] Joseph Mayton, "New, independent media empowering women," *Common Ground News Service*, December 14, 2010, http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=28961&lan=en&sp=0 (accessed January 13, 2011).

potential with specific conflict resolution theories of change. I propose that discussion fora may facilitate intergroup communication where it would otherwise be impossible, potentially encouraging attitude transformation through individualized exposure to "the other" in a moderated online space. As I will discuss, computer-mediated communication may represent a less threatening and anxiety-inducing mode of interaction and thus decrease the perceived costs of intergroup engagement. In essence, by providing a platform for grassroots, personalized interaction with "the other," discussion fora seem poised to advance ICT4Peace's recommendations, undermine mainstream media stereotypes, and immeasurably improve intergroup relations.

III. THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF ATTITUDE TRANSFORMATION

In this section, I will review literature on four conflict resolution theories of change and two technological theories that seek to explain attitude transformation.

A. CONFLICT RESOLUTION THEORIES OF CHANGE
1) The Contact Hypothesis

The contact hypothesis is one of conflict resolution's most seminal and hotly debated theories, associated with such figureheads as Gordon Allport, Marilynn Brewer, and Thomas Pettigrew. Contact theory posits that increased contact between divided groups may staunch discrimination and improve intergroup social relations. Through a series of race-related experiments in 1950s-era American inner cities, Allport (1954) stipulated certain conditions that need apply for contact to improve—rather than worsen—intergroup relations. These conditions

include equal status, cooperative activity toward common goals, intimate acquaintance that reveals human commonalities, and structural and institutional support.[35]

Scholars have challenged the comprehension of these four conditions, noting that one must distinguish between essential and facilitating conditions and recognize that other conditions may apply.[36] Pettigrew and Tropp's (2000) meta-analysis of contact theory-based interactions, for example, showed that only 19 percent of the total samples of "successful" contact situations displayed Allport's conditions.[37] This strengthens Pettigrew and Tropp's later (2004) suggestion that mere contact may be sufficient to reduce bias and also to generalize beyond the contact experience, in the sense that contact with a single outgroup member may alter one's view of the outgroup as a whole.[38]

Thomas Pettigrew suggests that a fifth and *essential* element for positive contact is the opportunity for participants to become friends. He holds that outgroup friendships will lead participants to reduce their prejudice across multiple outgroups,[39] even in the absence of contact with those outgroups.[40] Pettigrew and Tropp (2000)'s meta-analytic study indicates that intergroup friendships are indeed a key independent variable associated with lower intergroup prejudice.[41] Stephan and Stephan (2000) concur on the importance of personalizing one's understanding of the outgroup and of making friends with outgroup members.[42]

---

[35] Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co, 1954): 281.

[36] Thomas Pettigrew, "Generalized intergroup contact effects on prejudice," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23 (1997): 182.

[37] Thomas Pettigrew & L.R. Tropp, "Does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Recent meta-analytic findings," In *Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination: Social Psychological Perspective*, edited by S. Oskamp (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2000).

[38] Jack Glaser & Kimberly Kahn, "Prejudice, Discrimination, and the Internet," in *The Social Net: Human behavior in Cyberspace*, edited by Yair Amichai-Hamburger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 255.

[39] Thomas Pettigrew, "Intergroup contact theory," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49.1 (1998), 65-85.

[40] Pettigrew 1997, 182. See also Brewer & Miller, 1984.

[41] Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000.

[42] Walter G. Stephan & Cookie White Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice," in *Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination: Social Psychological Perspective*, edited by S. Oskamp, 23-45 (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2000).

Stephan and Stephan also suggest that intergroup fears and threats have a profound impact on contact situations.[43] They note that when there has been much conflict, the outgroup's perceived threat to the ingroup is likely to be higher,[44] and they point to individualized interaction as an opportunity to reveal information inconsistent with ingroup stereotypes of the outgroup, thus undermining its apparent threat to the ingroup.[45] Particularly in post-conflict environments, social media may play a critical role in decreasing the anxiety of contact and thus maximizing contact's chances of improving intergroup relations.

Yehuda Amir (2002) discusses manifold negative contact conditions, including involuntary contact, competition-oriented and/or frustrating activities, and significant status differentials between participants that may worsen intergroup relations.[46] Amir also suggests that contact may spur change in the intensity, but not the direction, of prejudice and intergroup attitudes. This is a critical counterargument to the value of increased intergroup contact and will be revisited below.

2) Social Categorization Theory

Allport (1954) hypothesizes that attachment to one's ingroup need not translate to enmity toward the outgroup.[47] Building on this, Marilynn Brewer (2004) presents three typologies of social categorization theory (decategorization, recategorization, mutual differentiation) that, while closely related to contact hypothesis tenets, constitute an additional layer in relationship transformation.[48] Through personalized interaction, decategorization can highlight individualized

---

[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid, 38.
[45] Ibid, 41.
[46] Yehuda Amir, "Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations," in *The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence*, edited by Eugene Weiner, pp. 162-181 (New York: Continuum, 2002).
[47] Marilynn Brewer, "The Psychology of Prejudice: Ingroup Love or Outgroup Hate?" *Journal of Social Issues* 55.3 (1999): 429.
[48] Brewer 2004, 304.

information, thus destroying the monolith of the outgroup and exerting a humanizing effect.[49]

However, some individuals may be seen as exceptions to the outgroup stereotype rather than evidence of a faulty stereotype. Recategorization seeks to make categories more inclusive by raising the level of group identity, while mutual differentiation acknowledges the value of separate identities while anchoring disparate groups in the pursuit of a common goal.

Recognizing the innate human impulse to categorize, Brewer (2000) suggests that crosscutting identities, which may be based on such commonalities as gender, age, religion, ethnicity, or occupation, may be more realistic than decategorization or recategorization. By dulling the salience of ingroup-outgroup distinctions and complexifying the "other," crosscutting identities may undermine the foundation of ingroup bias.[50] However, Brewer highlights the tension between differentiation and inclusion, or the need to feel "special and distinct" while also feeling part of a group.[51] In so doing, she admits the difficulty of cognitive restructuring for groups in the midst of conflict,[52] whether explicit or implicit. High cognitive complexity and tolerance for uncertainty may help individuals overcome this tension in order to adopt multiple and more inclusive identities.[53] John Brewer (2010) suggests that groups can find ways to preserve their differences while cultivating "some sort of sameness,"[54] thus addressing the tension between differentiation and inclusion.

Brewer posits an eventual scale-up potential of bias reduction[55] and concurs with Pettigrew that intergroup friendships can have vicarious effects on bias reduction outside the contact

---

[49] Brewer 2004, 304.
[50] Marilynn B. Brewer, "Reducing prejudice through cross-categorization: Effects of multiple social identities," in *Reducing prejudice and discrimination*, edited by S. Oskamp, 165-183 (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2000), 170.
[51] Brewer 2004, 307.
[52] Ibid, 307.
[53] Brewer 2000, 178.
[54] John D. Brewer, *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010), 27.
[55] Brewer 2004, 305.

situation. As Stephen Wright et al. (1997) assert, "knowledge that an ingroup member has a close relationship with an outgroup member can lead to more positive intergroup attitudes."[56] In short, contact across group boundaries can provide individuals with direct experience with the other and foster the possibility of crosscutting identities.[57] Critically, where this direct contact is impossible due to physical or psychological limitations, social media may help fill the void and provide opportunities to complexify the distant other.

3) Grassroots Peacebuilding and Space for Civil Society Engagement

Johan Galtung (2007) emphasizes that common people, rather than governments, should strive for conflict transformation and move beyond seeing the world dualistically.[58] This is the backbone of grassroots peacebuilding and evokes elements of John Paul Lederach (1997)'s celebrated pyramid of peacebuilding, in which people and networks may be primary advocates for change.[59] Prendergast and Plumb (2002) agree that bottom-up processes are critical in moving toward peace and healing societal divisions.[60] Elise Boulding (2000) evokes the MacBride Report's mandate for participatory information flows in seeking to empower each society to tell its story, thus bridging communication gaps between divided groups and creating social spaces in which peace may be possible.[61]

---

[56] Stephen C. Wright et al., "The extended contact effect: Knowledge of cross-group friendships and prejudice," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73 (1997), 73.
[57] Ibid, 178.
[58] Johan Galtung, "Introduction: peace by peaceful conflict transformation—the TRANSCEND approach," In *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, edited by Charles Webel & Johan Galtung (New York: Routledge, 2007), 21.
[59] Anthony Wanis-St. John & Darren Kew, "Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion," *International Negotiation* 13 (2008), 23.
[60] John Prendergast & Emily Plumb, "Building Local Capacity: From Implementation to Peacebuilding," in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, edited by Stephen Stedman, Donald Rothchild, & Elizabeth Cousens (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002); quoted in Anthony Wanis-St. John & Darren Kew, "Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion," *International Negotiation* 13 (2008), 18.
[61] Elise Boulding, *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 211, 213, and 100.

J. Brewer calls for "institutional spaces" and "bridge-building fora" in which civil society can seek to transcend the borders that traditionally keep people apart.[62] This concept of a "space for hoping"[63] recurs throughout the literature on grassroots activity and relationship building. Lederach (1997) notes that space in which to acknowledge the past and envision the future is a critical factor in reframing the present.[64] In 2002, he narrowed this term to "strategic social spaces."[65] Lederach (2005) also calls for "smart, flexible platforms" to catalyze a web approach that seeks to connect people to *people* in pursuit of peace.[66] Critically, Lederach stresses the importance of intentional design in creating these relational spaces.[67] Lederach proposes two related concepts that are highly relevant to this paper:

> **Social spaces**: "the locations of interaction among people who are not like-minded about the conflict and not like-situated across the social divisions and levels of leadership within the setting."
> **Horizontal capacity**: "the ability to build and sustain relational spaces of constructive interaction across the lines of divisions in systems and societies divided by historic patterns of identity conflicts."[68]

Related to horizontal capacity is Hewamanne's (2009) concept of social capital as civil society currency. She notes the impact of inter-ethnic networking and contact in creating social capital and overcoming societal isolation.[69] Maja Korac (2009) bolsters Hewamanne's argument that intergroup connections are critical to bridge ethnic boundaries and work against the hateful stereotypes perpetuated by political elites.[70] She describes an email link (*Za mir*, or "for peace")

---

[62] Ibid, 55 and 151.
[63] Ibid, 129.
[64] John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 27.
[65] John Paul Lederach, "Building Mediative Capacity in Deep-Rooted Conflict," *The Fletcher Forum* 26.1 (2002), 6.
[66] Lederach 2005, 126 and 89.
[67] Ibid, 174.
[68] Ibid, 182
[69] Hewamanne 2009, 103.
[70] Maja Korac, "Gender, Conflict, and Social Capital: Bonding and bridging in war in the former Yugoslavia," In *Social Capital and Peace-Building: Creating and Resolving Conflict with Trust and Social Networks*, edited by Michaelene Cox (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 107.

that was central to facilitating information and building relationships with the other side in the former Yugoslavia.[71] Reminiscent of Marilynn Brewer, Korac describes the ability to remain rooted in one's own group while concurrently putting oneself in the shoes of another group.[72] In this way, Korac posits, grassroots initiatives can transcend paralyzed top-level processes and create people-level "islands of civility."[73]

Castells (1983) serves as a counterpoint to those who claim more information is always better; he suggests that rather than bringing people closer together, more dispersed power structures and information flow have produced widespread alienation.[74] Paolo Carpignano et al. (1990) similarly note that information overload has robbed people of shared experiences.[75] Carpignano argues that the onslaught of emotionally charged images has damaged democratic participation and relegated the public to helpless spectators.[76] Susan Allen Nan (2009) suggests that inclusive networks embedded in civil society may fill this vacuum and promote attitudes of conflict transformation.[77] She highlights such networks' "dynamic interconnectedness" and ability to catalyze diverse conversations that meet the basic human need of bonding with others.[78]

Thania Paffenholz (2009) echoes this bonding function and attitude transformation in her iteration of civil society's seven key functions, including restoring social cohesion and offering participation in networks that, as Korac says, can foster both "bridging ties" (across divided

---

[71] Ibid, 116.
[72] Ibid, 118.
[73] Ibid, 108.
[74] Manuel Castells. "Crisis, Planning, and the Quality of Life: Managing the New Historical Relationships between Space and Society," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 1 (1983): 7.
[75] Paolo Carpignano, R. Anderson, S. Aronowitz, & W. Difazio. "Chatter in the age of electronic reproduction: talk television and the 'public mind,'" *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 33-55.
[76] Ibid 37.
[77] Susan Allen Nan, "Social Capital in Exclusive and Inclusive Networks: Satisfying human needs through conflict and conflict resolution," in *Social Capital and Peace-Building: Creating and Resolving Conflict with Trust and Social Networks*, edited by Michaelene Cox (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 183.
[78] Nan 2009, 179 and 180.

groups) and "bonding ties" (within groups).[79] The U.S. Institute of Peace's recent analysis of the Arabic blogosphere touched upon the "bonding" versus "bridging" function in the context of new media's impact on intergroup attitudes.[80] In-depth link analysis and survey research would be necessary to satisfactorily declare whether new media seems to "bond" or "bridge" divided groups, but its mere potential to exert an effect is notable.

4) Peace Media Tenets and Initiatives

Samuel Peleg (2006) identifies conflict theory as the "ultimate candidate to 'anchor' PJ [peace journalism] to solid ground."[81] At its core, peace media seems poised to advance three functions related to conflict resolution theory: first, to humanize the other so it is no longer a monolithic entity, second, to undermine outgroup stereotypes, and third, to promote positive images of the other. These concepts seem a natural progression from the three conflict resolution theories of change outlined above.

Peace media is a loaded term and may assume conflicting definitions. Defined crudely in opposition to hate media, peace media is an effort to promote peace by highlighting stories on successes, rather than failures, in various peace processes. Some argue that peace media may veer into advocacy journalism or even propaganda. Perhaps in response to this accusation, and to give people more ownership over the communication process, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) has coined the related term "common ground media," which seeks to facilitate conflict transformation, highlight common challenges, and provide balanced information to illuminate a

---

[79] Thania Paffenholz, "Exploring Opportunities and Obstacles for a Constructive Role of Social Capital in Peacebuilding: A framework for analysis," in *Social Capital and Peace-Building: Creating and Resolving Conflict with Trust and Social Networks*, edited by Michaelene Cox (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 194-195.
[80] Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Marc Lynch, John Sides, John Kelly, & Ethan Zuckerman, "Blogs and Bullets: New Media in Contentious Politics," United States Institute of Peace, *Peaceworks* 65 (2010), 10.
[81] Peleg 2006, 15.

"sense of common identity."[82] SFCG has built on founder John Marks' belief that "All forms of print and electronic media are potential tools for peacebuilding."[83] Although the tenets explored in this project perhaps more resemble common ground media than peace media, I will use the term "peace media" to encompass broad efforts to foster peace with communication technologies.

As Ellen Gardner (2000) argues, media can promote peaceful conditions and counter hate media by offering more context and supplying alternative information.[84] Particularly in the context of reconciliation and rebuilding, Gardner says, media can "serve to empower groups that had previously been voiceless."[85]

Vladimir Bratic, drawing on the seminal Johan Galtung, claims that media can counter cultural violence by presenting alternative symbols embedded in peace-oriented media. By transcending a monolithic presentation of "the other," the cumulative effect of exposure to differences and gradations may reduce stereotypes and change attitudes and perceptions of the other group.[86] Galtung emphasizes that peace journalism—representing the "high road"—aims to transform conflict and change attitudes about the other side.[87] This works against the "low road," in which media seek to apply the "DMA" formula, meaning "dichotomy, manicheism, and Armageddon."[88]

---

[82] Howard et al. 2003, 166.

[83] John Marks in Ross Howard, Francis Rolt, Hans van de Veen, and Juliette Verhoeven, eds, The *Power of the Media: A Handbook for Peacebuilders* (Utrecht, the Netherlands, European Centre for Conflict Prevention: 2003, 16.

[84] Ellen Gardner, "The Role of Media in Conflicts," in *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, eds. Luc Reychler and Thania Paffenholz (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 306.

[85] Gardner 2000, 306-307.

[86] Vladimir Bratic, "Examining Peace-Oriented Media in Areas of Violent Conflict," *International Communication Gazette* 70:6 (2008): 492.

[87] Johan Galtung, "The Task of Peace Journalism," *Ethical Perspectives* 7.2-3 (2000), 162-167.

[88] Johan Galtung, "High Road, Low Road: Charting the Course for Peace Journalism," *Track Two* 7.4 (1998), 164.

Samuel Peleg (2006) cites communication as an indispensable determinant in creating awareness of "the other" in conflict and post-conflict situations.[89] Interpreting Galtung's peace journalism model, Peleg sees peace journalism as poised to encourage constructive communication between conflict parties by empowering new voices, engendering empathy, increasing transparency, opening new space in which to consider the situation, focusing on the invisible effects of violence, and humanizing all sides.[90]

Galtung and Vincent (1995)'s first proposal for peace-oriented media is for it to allow both (or all) conflict parties to speak.[91] Lederach speaks of transformative media design as "the capacity to recognize media communication devices able to impact a broader audience within a setting by providing alternative and accurate news and by presenting a vision of peace through an appropriate cultural form."[92] Although Ellis focuses primarily on the mainstream media's ossification of existing stereotypes, he suggests media could play a more positive role by shifting internal identity from "not the other" toward something less exclusive and encouraging real interaction.[93]

As intergroup misunderstandings are aggravated when people lack "access to the identity realm" of the other, Ellis proposes that enabling communication allows groups the opportunity to encounter—and strive to integrate—other perspectives.[94] By encouraging groups to internalize new attitudes and recognize "human universals,"[95] Ellis evokes a concept of attitude transformation reminiscent of M. Brewer's conception of recategorization.

---

[89]Peleg 2006, 2.
[90] Peleg 2006, 5.
[91] Johan Galtung and R.C. Vincent, *Global Glasnost* (Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1995), 126.
[92] Lederach 1997, 121.
[93] Ellis 2006, 73. See also Gaertner and Dovido 2000.
[94] Ellis 2006, 171.
[95] Ellis 2006, 175.

Spencer similarly observes that peace-oriented media can introduce diverse viewpoints to identify shared problems and encourage conflict parties to see constructive counterarguments.[96] Peace media, ultimately, should seek to recreate human bonds by filling the vacuum created by polarizing mainstream media stereotypes and information overload so characteristic of modern society.

Overcoming Isolation

Mainstream media exert a profoundly isolating force; combined with the effects of post-conflict trauma and alienation from the other, there exists an acute void to be filled in order to ameliorate intergroup relations. Betty Reardon (1989) notes that individual alienation must be fought with increased diversity and conscious management of the conditions of separation.[97] Gina Ross (2003) believes that media can create a "healing vortex,"[98] which represents the human ability to overcome isolation in the wake of conflict and reestablish social connections with the other side.

Organizations such as Search for Common Ground, Internews, and the United States Institute of Peace have developed excellent peace media programming in diverse conflict and post-conflict settings. However, these programs have yet to robustly enlist the power of new and social media, sticking primarily to more traditional media such as television and radio. Encompassing an international community of 300 million citizen bloggers, Global Voices is perhaps the most prominent example of peace-oriented new and social media. Global Voices focuses on empowering voices that are "not ordinarily heard in international mainstream

---

[96] Spencer 2005, 168.
[97] Betty A. Reardon, "Towards a Paradigm of Peace," in *Peace*, edited by L.R. Forcey (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989), 23.
[98] Gina Ross, *Beyond the Trauma Vortex: The Media's Role in Healing Fear, Terror, and Violence* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2003), 36.

media."[99] In addition to maintaining a blog with frequent guest contributors from throughout the Caucasus region, Global Voices Caucasus editor Onnik Krikorian is testing social media's potential to promote attitude transformation. Krikorian, an ethnic Armenian, adamantly believes that developing genuine relationships with "the other" is possible even in the absence of physical contact and cites as proof his experience befriending Azerbaijanis on Facebook.[100]

As consummate forms of participatory media, online discussion fora seem to create the space in which Spencer believes media can "blur and dissolve apparently incompatible positions into areas of common interest."[101] Despite social media's potential to provide this space, a recent USIP report postulated that new media could *exacerbate* group polarization by fortifying ingroup identity and making outgroups seem more negative.[102] Far from seeing the Internet as a channel for widening identity and reducing prejudice, Donald Ellis declares the Internet responsible for intensifying communities based on national and ethnic markers"[103] Moderation, however, may help curb uncivil discourse and establish trust; this paper will examine such possibilities below. First I will examine two technology theories that interact with conflict resolution theory to influence social media's potential to transform intergroup relations through increased contact.

C. TECHNOLOGY THEORIES

Two technology-related bodies of research—computer-mediated communication and network power—contribute to my analytic framework by highlighting how social media may be harnessed to transform intergroup relations.

---

[99] *About Global Voices,* http://globalvoicesonline.org/about/ (accessed Dec. 12, 2010).
[100] Onnik Krikorian, phone interview by author, October 5, 2010, Somerville, MA
[101] Spencer 2005, 181.
[102] Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Marc Lynch, and John Sides, "Advancing New Media Research," United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 250 (September 2010), 3.
[103] Ellis 2006, 110.

1) Computer-mediated communication

Yair Amichai-Hamburger and Katelyn McKenna (2005) suggest that computer-mediated communication (CMC) may promote higher quality intergroup contact than face-to-face (FtF) communication, as superficial differences such as appearance and overt group identity are concealed and place the emphasis on the communication process itself.[104] McKenna (2002) posits that CMC poses less "gating features," or barriers to intimate contact, than does FtF communication, and that CMC allows individuals to separate their self-concept from the group concept.[105]

Bargh and McKenna (2002) emphasize that even the socially anxious are motivated to reveal their "true selves" via CMC;[106] this evokes Stephan and Stephan's discussion of intergroup contact anxiety and threat level, which could perhaps be minimized by using CMC instead of FtF communication, at least early in the contact experience. Thibaut and Kelley (1959)'s "stranger-on-the-train" phenomenon holds that people are more apt to disclose intimate facts about themselves if they do not anticipate ever meeting the dialogue partner again.[107] Berger and Calabrese (1975) discuss uncertainty reduction theory as a way for people to increase the predictability associated with intergroup interaction based on robust self-disclosure.[108] For example, via CMC one might be willing to share more personal details—which would exert a humanizing effect—than he or she would in a FtF conversation. With more control over the

---

[104] Yair Amichai-Hamburger & Katelyn Y.A. McKenna, "The Contact Hypothesis Reconsidered: Interacting via the Internet," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11.3 (2006): 7.

[105] Katelyn Y. A. McKenna, A. S. Green, & M. Gleason, "Relationship formation on the Internet: What's the big attraction?" *Journal of Social Issues, 58*.1 (2002): 9-31.

[106] John A. Bargh, Katelyn Y. A. McKenna & G.M. Fitzsimons, "Can You See the Real Me? Activation and Expression of the "True Self" on the Internet," *Journal of Social Issues, 58*.1 (2002): 33-48.

[107] John Thibaut & Harold Kelley, *The Social Psychology of Groups* (New York: Wiley, 1959).

[108] R. Berger & R.J. Calabrese, "Some Explorations in Initial Interaction and Beyond: Toward a Developmental Theory of Interpersonal Communication," *Human Communication Theory* 1 (1975): 99-112.

conditions of contact, and with the optional layer of anonymity, CMC may present a less threatening interaction than does FtF communication.

Self-disclosure, empowered by anonymity, can build trust by increasing the discloser's vulnerability and inviting *quid pro quo* openness.[109] Tidwell and Walther (2002) also suggest that disclosure in CMC may minimize uncertainty in interaction,[110] thus reducing the perceived threat. Joinson (2001)'s content analysis of CMC versus FtF communication indeed shows higher self-disclosure with CMC,[111] illustrating the import of anonymity in online, intergroup interaction. Global Voices' Ivan Sigal identifies anonymity as critical element in empowering new voices and allowing them to choose "any iteration of identity,"[112] suggesting that this facet of CMC may serve as a shield function and reduce the perceived threat associated with intergroup contact.

Spears and Lea (1994), too, see anonymity as a critical factor in empowering speech and reducing status differentials between dialogue partners. Recognizing that faceless communication may also empower destructive human tendencies, John Bargh (2002) cites the need for frameworks to hedge against the potential of anonymity to fuel hate speech.[113] Whitty and Joinson hold that effective moderation can help websites establish reputations as trustworthy[114] and mitigate conflict stemming from aggressive comments.[115] Robert Hsiung (2000) states that moderators can set expectations and demonstrate good behavior by

---

[109] Ibid, 10.

[110] Carina B. Paine Schofield & Adam N. Joinson, "Privacy, Trust, and Disclosure Online, in *Psychological Aspects of Cyberspace: Theory, Research, Applications*, edited by Azy Barak (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13.

[111] Adam N. Joinson, "Self-Disclosure in Computer-Mediated Communication: The Role of Self-Awareness and Visual Anonymity," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 31 (2001): 177-192.

[112] Ivan Sigal, personal interview by author, August 9, 2010, Washington, DC.

[113] John A. Bargh, "Beyond Simple Truths: The Human-Internet Interaction," *Journal of Social Issues, 58*.1 (2002): 1-8.

[114] Monica T. Whitty & Adam N. Joinson, *Truth, Lies and Trust on the Internet* (*London* and New York: Routledge, 2009), 144.

[115] Ibid, 42.

transparently "clarifying the limits for others, modeling conflict resolution, diminishing any paranoia about activity 'behind the scenes,' and allowing others to contribute to the process."[116] This demonstrative effect can help to build trust between participants and between the moderator and participants.

Many scholars have reservations about CMC's ability to undermine group stereotypes. Tom Postmes et al. (2002) contend that depersonalization (defined by high and unyielding ingroup salience) may yield greater group polarization and entrench outgroup stereotypes,[117] and Lea et al. (2001) similarly warn of CMC's potential to ossify group stereotypes.[118] Glaser and Kahn agree that while the Internet is undeniably poised to facilitate increased communication, deindividuation could harden prejudice and anonymity could exert negative effects.[119] Galvanized ingroup identification, they say, could fuel prejudice "above and beyond the disinhibiting effects of anonymity."[120] Mohamed Dadoui, an American university professor who conducted a social media training for Search for Common Ground in Rabat in March 2010, is adamant that FtF is key at the beginning of a dialogue process.[121] He argues that people must establish ties in person and then leverage technology to stay in touch. The case study herein will blend elements of CMC and FtF contact, but the emphasis remains on online dialogue.

---

[116] Robert C. Hsiung, "The Best of Both Worlds: An Online Self-Help Group Hosted by a Mental Health Professional," *CyberPsychology and Behavior* 3.6 (2000): 938

[117] Russell Spears, Tom Postmes, M. Lea, & A. Wolbert, "When are Net Effects Gross Products? The power of influence and the influence of power in computer-mediated communication," *Journal of Social Issues* 58 (2002), in Jack Glaser and Kimberly Kahn, "Prejudice, Discrimination, and the Internet," in *The Social Net: Human behavior in Cyberspace*, edited by Yair Amichai-Hamburger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 256.

[118] Martin Lea, Russell Spears, & Daphne de Groot, "Knowing Me, Knowing You: anonymity effects on social identity processes within groups," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 27 (2001): 526-537, quoted in Yair Amichai-Hamburger, "Personality and the Internet," in *The Social Net: Human behavior in Cyberspace*, edited by Yair Amichai-Hamburger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 43.

[119] Glaser & Kahn 2005.

[120] Ibid, 251.

[121] Mohamed Dadoui, phone interview by author, September 9, 2010, Somerville, MA.

2) Network Power

Echoing Lederach, Castells presents the concept of horizontal networks as an unprecedented opportunity to engage the grassroots in a much wider information-producing base.[122] Indeed, much literature on the power of digital networks resonates with the theories espoused in the above section on grassroots peacebuilding and space for civil society engagement. Castells presents the networked public sphere (a phrase coined by Yochai Benkler[123]) as a "space of societal, meaningful interaction where ideas and values are formed, conveyed, supported, and resisted."[124] Benkler describes this as both a qualitative and quantitative transformation; the networked public sphere implicates "several orders of magnitude more speakers" while the experience of shifting from a listener to a potential speaker influences individual self-perception.[125]

At its core, Gabe Mythen (2010) says that new media subvert traditional hierarchies of information control and offers unprecedented access.[126] Social media transform the traditional hub-and-spoke communication model into a more distributed model that enables "multidirectional connections."[127] Schmidt and Cohen (2010) suggest that cross-border connections, enabled by the networked public sphere, are creating an "interconnected estate" that threatens the very base of power.[128] Ivan Sigal, executive director of Global Voices, sees this as a

---

[122] Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.
[123] Benkler 2006.
[124] Castells 2009, 301.
[125] Benkler 2006, 213.
[126] Gabe Mythen, "Reframing risk? Citizen Journalism and the Transformation of News," *Journal of Risk Research* 13:1 (2010): 48.
[127] Yochai Benkler quoted in Joshua Goldstein & Juliana Rotich, "Digitally Networked Technology in Kenya's 2007-2008 Post-Election Crisis" (The Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard University: September 2008), 3.
[128] Eric Schmidt & Jared Cohen, "The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Diffusion of Power," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2010, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/print/66765?page=show (accessed October 30, 2010).

"functionally transformative" progression that invites "equal potential voice" from a massive population.[129]

As Peter Meyer (2010) argues, new media provide a platform that can empower citizens with "the capacity to strengthen and (re)build community identity and relations."[130] Barak and Suler (2008) suggest that cyberspace is a place of deep connection, in which some feel that "their minds are connected to or even blended with the minds of the others."[131] While this seems a bit spectacular, it denotes the powerful combination of CMC and the networked public sphere.

Certainly new media and the networked public sphere are not silver bullets. Castells warns that the networked public sphere may beget "electronic autism,"[132] in which people find themselves in an ever-shrinking echo chamber. And both media and technology are reflective instruments dependent on their human input. As Kofi Annan says in reference to ICT4Peace, "the technology by itself is no panacea or magic formula."[133] Micheline Calmy-Rey calls for more research on the "potential and proper use of technologies," noting "every technology can be used for good or evil, and no technology is a magic remedy for human problems."[134] The key challenge in leveraging the power of digital networks may be curbing destructive human impulses.

Ellis emphasizes the need for structure in managing communication in intractable conflicts.[135] Peacebuilders must be aware of the technical options that can moderate human volatility and increase the probability that technology will unite rather than divide. The comment

---

[129] Ivan Sigal, personal interview by author, August 9, 2010, Washington, DC.
[130] Peter Meyer in Mythen 2010, 50.
[131] Azy Barak & John Suler, "Reflections on the Psychology and Social Science of Cyberspace," in *Psychological Aspects of Cyberspace: Theory, Research, Applications*, edited by Azy Barak (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.
[132] Castells 2009, 66.
[133] Stauffacher et al*.,* 2005: iii.
[134] Ibid, iv.
[135] Ellis 2006, 137 and 146.

function on discussion fora is perhaps the most obvious manifestation of social media's capability to foster either peace or hatred; in some cases, individuals may feel so insulated by their virtual identity that they post comments too vitriolic for a FtF conversation. Hisham Khribchi (2010) believes the comment function can illustrate commonalities between the blogger and his or her audience[136] and should thus be robust, but the danger of re-traumatizing conflict survivors through venomous or dismissive comments makes the comment function a central consideration in design intentionality.

Social media guru Sean Fitzroy acknowledges that comments present a "tough question" in fractured societies.[137] Forum moderators must impose explicit comment policies, he says, which could be enforced either by individual writers or by a third-party moderator. Fitzroy emphasizes that transparency and consistency are critical. "You can't just have comments disappear without stating why," he says. Fitzroy also suggests requiring site visitors to register before posting their comments to reduce the possibility of random, hostile comments.

A USIP report co-authored by Ethan Zuckerman of Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society stresses that platforms can be engineered to promote "exchange rather than polarization."[138] Joshua Landis, who created an online platform for Syrian-Lebanese dialogue, sees moderation as the key to attracting the right people and discouraging those bent on ad hominen attacks.[139] Vugar Mammadov (F05), now an IT administrator in Baku, is adamant that reputation systems and safe platforms—which he defines as spaces designed by "reliable people and organizations"—are necessary to curb antagonistic and threatening voices, which otherwise

---

[136] Hisham Khribchi, "Blogs Create Common Ground," *CGNews* April 13, 2010
http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=27616&lan=en&sid=1&sp=0 (accessed December 19, 2010).
[137] Sean Fitzroy, personal phone interview by author, May 3, 2010, Somerville, MA.
[138] Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Marc Lynch, John Sides, John Kelly, and Ethan Zuckerman, "Blogs and Bullets: New Media in Contentious Politics," United States Institute of Peace, *Peaceworks* 65 (2010), 26-27.
[139] Joshua Landis, phone interview by author, October 15, 2010, Somerville, MA.

would lead to uncivil discourse.[140] Despite his general pessimism about social media's potential to transform intergroup relations,[141] Zuckerman believes that it may be possible to build trust over time.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. HYPOTHESES AND INDICATORS FOR STUDY

Based on the research reviewed above, I propose three hypotheses of how social media tools may help to facilitate attitude transformation by enhancing intergroup communication in fractured societies. For each hypothesis I propose indicators to measure whether changes that would support each hypothesis seem manifest in the case study.

1) Social media can help complexify perceptions of the outgroup.

In the wake of conflict, particularly where mainstream media has played a role in entrenching group stereotypes, groups must seek a way to reconstruct relations with "the other," which begins with *knowledge* about the other. Decategorization posits that individualized interaction can erode the outgroup's monolithic appearance and humanize outgroup members, while crosscutting identities, based on such markers as age, gender, or occupation, acknowledge the human tendency to categorize and may thus be more realistic than de- or recategorization. As Brewer notes, by dulling the salience of ingroup-outgroup distinctions and complexifying the "other," crosscutting identities may undermine the foundation of ingroup bias[142] and may create more layers by which to perceive the outgroup.

---

[140] Vugar Mammadov, email interview with author, September 21-22, 2010, Somerville, MA.
[141] Ethan Zuckerman, "Does Facebook unite us or divide us? *CNN Opinion*, August 3, 2010. http://articles.cnn.com/2010-08-03/opinion/zuckerman.facebook.global_1_facebook-users-service-friends/2?_s=PM:OPINION (accessed December 14, 2010).
[142] Marilynn B. Brewer, "Reducing prejudice through cross-categorization: Effects of multiple social identities," in *Reducing prejudice and discrimination*, edited by S. Oskamp, 165-183 (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2000), 170.

Social media platforms may be able to capitalize on the demonstrative effect of contact. The inherent transparency of interaction on discussion fora implies that other forum participants witness contact, whether positive or negative, and are affected by it. Pettigrew and Stephan & Stephan posit that having outgroup friends can exert a generalization effect and shift one's perception of the outgroup writ large. Wright et al. (1997) assert that knowing an ingroup member has befriended an outgroup member can result in ameliorated intergroup attitudes on a larger scale.[143] From this, we can hypothesize that the act of watching someone else form friendships with the outgroup on a discussion forum may shift his or her own attitude toward the outgroup.

INDICATORS

a. Individuals identify commonalities (age, gender, occupation) with members of the outgroup and relate positively to each other on those bases.

b. Individuals acknowledge that their perceptions of the outgroup may have been misinformed by the mainstream media conflict narrative.

c. Individuals specify how intergroup friendships have changed their perceptions of the outgroup as a whole.

2) Social media provide a platform for an inclusive social network in which to combat alienation from "the other."

Social categorization literature suggests that isolation breeds fear and suspicion between divided groups; as noted, mainstream media exerts a profoundly distancing function that can exacerbate group divisions and preclude any progress toward reconciliation. The literature on

---

[143] Stephen C. Wright et al., "The extended contact effect: Knowledge of cross-group friendships and prejudice," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73 (1997), 73.

grassroots peacebuilding and the power of digital networks indicate that social media may be an ideal vehicle by which to create space for people-to-people interaction (CMC, in this case) so direly needed in post-conflict societies still defined by fractured intergroup relations. This space, which often does not exist in the physical realm, is elemental to grassroots-level engagement.

By empowering common people with a voice and a means of interacting with "the other," discussion fora allow individuals to challenge enemy images created by a hostile media environment and to envision a more peaceful future. Despite its potential to channel tirades, the Internet seems primed to facilitate inclusive networks and help leverage the power of the grassroots. By creating the possibility of contact with a previously unreachable other, online discussion fora can fill a critical void and fulfill the human need for contact and inclusion. This interaction empowers individuals to experience "the other" without an intermediary (such as mainstream media) and, as a result, may dispel alienation between disparate groups.

INDICATORS

d. Individuals identify alienation from "the other" as being exacerbated by lack of contact.

e. Individuals acknowledge a felt connection with "the other" in their online communication.

3) Intentional design is critical to create civil discourse.

For all its latent promise, technology—as with media—remains a reflective instrument, subject to the whims and caprice of human nature. Social media's layer of anonymity, which is critical to empower self-disclosure and promote higher quality contact, may impart a sense of impunity and reckless abandon that could incite vitriolic speech. Divisive, anonymous comments have the potential to nullify embryonic progress and ensconce group-based divisions. The literature on Internet-based trust, as well as anecdotes from new media professionals, suggests

that strong moderation can modulate this destructive potential and, over time, endow a website with the reputation of being a safe space for dialogue. Bargh, Whitty and Joinson, and Hsiung call for strong rules of engagement to hedge against uncivil discourse and help websites (discussion fora, in this case) establish reputations as trustworthy.

INDICATORS

f. Discourse on moderated online fora is less overtly vitriolic than it is in non-moderated exchanges (e.g. mainstream media) and contains fewer ad hominen attacks.

B. DATA SOURCES

Although "attitude transformation" itself is arguably impossible to measure, I seek here to test my hypotheses by tracking specific conversation threads on the discussion forum over time to see if—and how—any of the indicators manifest. To supplement this content analysis, I interviewed the forum's creator and administered a short questionnaire to forum participants.[144] Arzu Gellabuyeva, one of the most prolific bloggers in the South Caucasus[145] and the editor of *Caucasus Edition,* sent me the names of ten individuals who participate regularly on *Caucasus Edition* and in other cross-border dialogue initiatives. I emailed my questionnaire to all ten, noting that they would remain anonymous and participation was fully voluntary. I received seven responses for a 70 percent response rate.

C. CONTENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

To trace patterns and assess trends over time, both within and among individuals, I examined eight original postings and ensuing conversation threads over the period from April 12, 2010, to

---

[144] Questionnaire attached as Appendix 1.
[145] Arzu's personal blog, "Flying Carpets and Broken Pipelines," can be accessed at http://flyingcarpetsandbrokenpipelines.blogspot.com/ (accessed December 18, 2010).

February 1, 2011. I chose threads related to my hypotheses (e.g. addressing identity questions, stereotypes, and intergroup perceptions), but sought to select sufficiently diverse threads to avoid skewing my findings. I also chose posts that had garnered the most comments in order to analyze the *interaction*, not just the content of the original post. The titles of the eight posts examined are:

1. Between Amnesia and Vengeance: A Path to Reconciliation (April 12, 2010)
2. Warmongering as State Propaganda (July 1, 2010)
3. Dialogue and Future (August 1, 2010)
4. Bridging Armenia and Azerbaijan (August 1, 2010)
5. Stereotypes in National Media – a Closer Look (September 15, 2010)
6. Social Media for Social Lynching? Facebook as a Platform for Xenophobia (November 1, 2010)
7. Let's Start Listening to the Women? (December 1, 2010)
8. Time to Shed a Light on a Hidden Conflict (February 1, 2011)

D. DATA BIASES

First, the results of this content analysis are bound by the impossibility of examining every original post and every comment on the website. I selected a broad array of posts spanning ten months but this picture is not comprehensive. Second, it proved difficult to track data over a sufficient time period to truly measure attitude transformation. Original content peaked in July and August 2010,[146] with very few new posts throughout the fall. Third, there were many fewer comments on each new posting than I had imagined; the relatively feeble back-and-forth calls my basis hypotheses into question, but the interaction that *is* manifest warrants examination.[147] Fourth, the small sample of questionnaire respondents should be noted; these responses are used primarily to buttress data gleaned from the content analysis.

---

[146] This period coincides with the Imagine 2010: Armenia-Azerbaijani Retreat and Dialogue program; many dialogue program participants seem to have felt compelled to continue their conversation online and engage a broader audience following the program. The Imagine Center will be discussed in a subsequent section.
[147] Site founder Phil Gamaghelyan admits that while the posts draw a lot of readers, they do not draw many comments (from an email on February 26, 2011).

Fifth, given language barriers, I looked only at an English-language forum. This assumes literacy on three levels: 1) basic literacy, 2) English literacy, 3) computer literacy (as well as Internet access). Individuals possessing these three attributes are admittedly an elite subject of Armenian/Azerbaijan society, but for the purpose of this paper, they represent the targeted population that seems to embody Lederach's conception of future leaders (literate, versed in foreign languages, etc.) and may thus represent a critical population in fractured societies. As with physical dialogue groups, perhaps online peacebuilding efforts should seek to engage those most poised to affect change. A recent participant in a Kosovo-Serbia dialogue project said, "We will be leaders in ten years and we will remember that we could sit and talk."[148]

By choosing to participate in online dialogue, and by complying with the moderation guidelines, the individuals on this forum are effectively choosing to consider peace.[149] A more exhaustive study might observe *non-moderated* fora, where vitriol and venom are unchecked, to explore potential transformation in hardened radicals who are seemingly uninterested in peace.

V. CASE STUDY

John Brewer suggests the somewhat vague term "post-violence society" to describe societies that have transitioned "from communal violence to relative non-violence,"[150] but in which violence nonetheless persists. Rather than distinguish sharply between conflict and post-conflict situations, this paper focuses on the grey area of post-war, enduring-violence societies, as embodied by the region surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh.

---

[148] Jovana Gec, "Young People From Serbia, Kosovo Meet for a Rare Chance to Talk," Associated Press story in *Winnipeg Free Press*, Oct. 27, 2010, http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/world/breakingnews/young-people-from-serbia-kosovo-meet-for-a-rare-chance-to-talk-105855613.html (accessed Nov. 1, 2010).
[149] It should be noted that even moderates may explode when their buttons are pushed; while moderation largely prevents diatribes, it seems likely that some acerbic comments may emerge even on moderated fora. The content analysis below will measure, to a limited degree, whether this is the case.
[150] J. Brewer 2010, 17.

1. Conflict Précis

Viewed together, Armenia and Azerbaijan present a paradigm of fractured intergroup relations. The 1918-1920 Armenia-Azerbaijan War resulted with the Bolsheviks effectively giving Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan despite its overwhelmingly Armenian population. In 1988, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh began demonstrating for unification with Armenia. Azerbaijanis responded with violent marches, including pogroms in Sumgait in February 1988 that left 26 Armenians and 6 Azerbaijanis dead. Such confrontations led to full-scale fighting between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenians by the winter of 1992.

Russia brokered a cease-fire between the warring parties in May 1994 and the OSCE Minsk Group has since mediated peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan. A final, mutually acceptable solution for Nagorno-Karabakh's status has proved elusive and tensions continue still simmer. In February 2011, an *International Crisis Group* report drew attention to alarming skirmishes along the de facto border. The report highlights "escalating front-line clashes, vitriolic war rhetoric and a virtual breakdown in peace talks" as dangerous indications that Armenia and Azerbaijan may return to full-fledged conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh.[151] Recent Stratfor Global Intelligence reports underscore the volatility of the "precarious, self-regulated cease-fire" that could explode into full-fledged conflict if minor escalations provoke sufficient hostility.[152] The cease-fire *was* breached on February 22, 2011, with shots fired in the Fuzuli region, but conflict has not yet spiraled out of control.

---

[151] International Crisis Group, "Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War," *Europe Briefing* No. 60, February 8, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/ caucasus/B60-armenia-and-azerbaijan-preventing-war.aspx (accessed February 9, 2011).

[152] Stratfor Global Intelligence, "Azerbaijan, Armenia: Clashes Risk Escalation," September 8, 2010, http://www.stratfor.com/sitrep/20100908_azerbaijan_armenia_clashes_risk_escalation (accessed February 25, 2011).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev hosted Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev in Sochi on March 5, 2011, where the three leaders signed a statement declaring their intention to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict peacefully. The parties also agreed to investigate the recent border skirmishes and to complete a prisoners of war swap. These promises, however, transpire against a background of mutually acerbic rhetoric that hints ominously at the prospect of full-fledged war. Azerbaijan has often said that if peace talks fail, it will use force to reclaim Nagorno-Karabakh, to which Armenia has threatened large-scale retaliation.

2. Perceptions of "the Other"

Former BBC correspondent Famil Ismailov points to the 1988 Sumgait pogrom as the moment that decisively shattered Armenian-Azerbaijani friendships and produced the "first generation of people who have no friends on the other side."[153] During the course of the ensuing war (1988-1994), roughly 300,000 Armenians fled their homes in Azerbaijan and roughly 800,000 Azerbaijanis were exiled from Nagorno-Karabakh.[154] The tattered social fabric between Armenia and Azerbaijan—and the dearth of intergroup friendships—is captured by a recent survey, which records a meager 28 percent of Armenians as approving of friendships with Azerbaijanis and a stunning *1* percent of Azerbaijanis as approving of friendships with

---

[153] Ismailov interview. Ismailov was responsible for a 2004 BBC-sponsored project that commemorated the tenth anniversary of the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh. The project, "Finding Friends," created an online platform to reunite old friends separated by the conflict. Moderation was a critical element in "Finding Friends" and Ismailov remains convinced that absent moderation, online communication will devolve into "mudslinging matches." He is a strong proponent of discussion fora and specific, explicit rules for commenting and posting. While this project differs from the case study herein in that it was anchored on a specific goal (finding friends), and also that the participants actively looking for each other had already been in physical contact (though the passive observers had not), some of Ismailov's comments suggest that social media can indeed contribute to improved intergroup relations.
[154] "Nagorno-Karabakh," *Global Security.org*, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nagorno-karabakh.htm (accessed March 7, 2011).

Armenians.[155] Although there is no overt conflict, this case study embodies a post-war, enduring-violence society in which divided groups are denied the opportunity to meaningfully engage with the other side.

Caucasus scholar Thomas de Waal describes a "historical amnesia" permeating the region.[156] "Perception differs from reality and you can select certain episodes to prove different things," he says.[157] "[P]eople are so very much stuck in their black-and-white positions of 'I win, you lose,' that the symbolism of having won or having suffered is still incredibly important." [158]

The Neutral Zone, a new regional blog, recently conducted a video survey on Armenian and Azerbaijani youth perceptions of the other side. In October 2010, survey administrators interviewed ten men and ten women, each under 35, from both sides "to find out what the Armenian and Azerbaijani youth thinks and knows of each other or what they know about each other's attitudes and culture."[159] Respondents, chosen randomly on the street, answered three questions:

1. In your opinion what do the Azerbaijani/Armenian youth think of you?
2. What do you know about Armenian/Azerbaijan music?
3. What do you know about Azerbaijani/Armenian literature?

Youth in both Yerevan and Baku displayed overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards the other side and only a few respondents cited *any* knowledge of the other's literature and music.[160]

---

[155] Arpineh Porsughyan, "The Media in Armenia and Azerbaijan: Effective or Affective?" In Onnik Krikorian, *Caucasus Conflict Voices* 1 (December 2010), 6.
[156] Thomas de Waal, "Moving Beyond Mirages: A New Paradigm for Foreign Intervention in the South Caucasus," *The Fletcher Forum* 35.1 (2011): 17.
[157] Ibid, 18.
[158] Ibid, 21.
[159] "Video Survey: What Do You Think Azerbaijani/Armenian Youth Thinks of You?" *The Neutral Zone,* December 15, 2010, http://caucasuseditionblog.wordpress.com/2010/12/15/207/#more-207 (accessed February 25, 2011).
[160] Ibid.

Armenian Marianna Karapetyan wrote about her childhood image of Azerbaijanis on Onnik Krikorian's personal blog:[161] "They should be like monsters with bloody hands and crazy eyes."[162] Azerbaijani Zamira Abbasova, too, records her early perceptions of Armenians on Krikorian's blog:

> The first time I was told that I have an enemy was when I was just four years old. That was when I was forced to flee my home in Armenia because of the conflict with Azerbaijan in the early 1990s. Since then, the image of the enemy has been a changing one, but primarily based on my own creativity after seeing photos and videos in the newspapers and on National TV.
>
> If you want to clearly understand how that enemy looked for many years then close your eyes and imagine a scenic village surrounded by high trees and bushes. Nothing else is visible or audible, apart from the occasional sound of cheerful voices. Then, one day, someone runs out of the surrounding forest screaming, yelling, and crying. Monster-like figures had appeared in their village and were killing, beating, and butchering people — women, children and old people alike. They were destroying everything in their path.
>
> That's cruel, right, and the image I had when I was a kid. And it was further developed when, every time I was naughty, my Uncle used to frighten me by saying that if I won't sit still he will call the Armenians to come and kill me. What a nasty thing to do to a little kid, isn't it? And also not hard to imagine what image I then formed of my monster-like enemies: Armenians.[163]

Krikorian declares that before the launch of online dialogue, it was impossible to communicate with the other side for three reasons: First, he says, it was seen as "impossible," second, "the other" was said to be uninterested in communication, and third, communication with the outgroup was seen as a betrayal of the ingroup.[164]

3. Media: Fueling Stereotypes

Media has long played an unhelpful role in distancing groups from each other; this conflict is no exception. As Chorbajian et. al discuss in *The Caucasian Knot*, foreign reporters relied on an "inappropriate Christian versus Moslem framework" to substitute for their

---

[161] Krikorian's blog, http://blog.oneworld.am/, invites guest posts from voices throughout the South Caucasus region and is a paragon of cross-border dialogue work.

[162] Mariana Karapetyan, "Friends like Sisters: A view from Moscow," *OneWorld.am*, January 25, 2011, http://blog.oneworld.am/2011/01/24/friends-like-sisters-a-view-from-moscow/ (accessed February 25, 2011).

[163] Zamira Abbasova, "Expired Hatred?" *OneWorld.am*, December 16, 2010, http://blog.oneworld.am/2010/12/16/expired-hatred/ (accessed February 25, 2011).

[164] Krikorian interview, August 25, 2010.

insufficient grasp of the conflict's historical dimensions.[165]   While Armenians do tend to be Christian and Azerjabanis Muslim, this fact was largely irrelevant in the scope of the 1988-1994 conflict.[166] Although this vastly reductionist paradigm has faded since the Khojaly Massacre, in which Armenian forces killed at least 600 Azeri civilians, the media continue to serve largely as a conduit for misinformation and stereotypes, gladly channeling "unforgiving" popular attitudes that galvanize hard-line attitudes commemorating past wrongs.[167]

As Krikorian notes, "the possibility for reconciliation looks bleak, especially when the local media on both sides regularly perpetuates negative stereotypes of the other, often publishing little more than propaganda and in some cases even misinformation."[168] The Caucasus Resource Research Center released a report on local media last summer, concluding, "Without more accurate and unbiased information […] free of negative rhetoric and stereotypes, Armenians and Azerbaijanis will continue to see themselves as enemies without any common ground."[169]

Sasun Khachtryan, a prolific *Caucasus Edition* contributor, argues that the Armenian press is an instrumental component of the "information war" and says its dehumanizing rhetoric paints the Azerbaijani people as "barbarians," "aggressors," "perfidious," "bloodthirsty," "impudent," and "mendacious."[170] Khachtryan says that these hateful terms shape Armenians'

---

[165] Levon Chorbajian, Patrick Donabedian, and Claude Mutafian, *The Caucasian Knot: the history & geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabagh* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1994), 9.
[166] Ibid, 9.
[167] "The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: Still just about frozen," *The Economist*, March 7, 2011, http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/03/nagorno-karabakh_conflict (accessed March 7, 2011).
[168] Onnik Krikorian, "Overcoming Negative Stereotypes in the South Caucasus," *World Bank Blog*, August 6, 2011, http://blogs.worldbank.org/conflict/overcoming-negative-stereotypes-in-the-south-caucasus (accessed February 25, 2011).
[169] Ibid.
[170] Sasun Khachtryan, "Let Them Decide Themselves!" *Caucasus Edition*, September 15, 2010, http://caucasusedition.net/blog/let-them-decide-themselves/ (accessed March 5, 2011).

attitude toward Azerbaijanis and keep the groups apart.[171] Elvin Yusifli, another *Caucasus Edition* contributor and subject of study herein, responds that the Azeri press is equally responsible for perpetuating stereotypes and discouraging intergroup contact. The common stereotype that "Armenians were 'traitors and stabbed Azerbaijan in the back,'" Yusifli says, "is supported by going back to the history and dredging up old stories."[172]

De Waal concurs that regional media play a negative role in both "reinforcing the old stereotypes and conflict propaganda" and failing to expose alternative narratives.[173] As he says:

> "These people [citizens] are not idiots. They realize that Armenians and Azeris and Georgians and Abkhaz are not that different and were not fated to be enemies; there is nothing that genetically predisposes them to hate one another. You meet ordinary people and, after talking to them for a while, you begin to get a different narrative as they remember their friends from the Soviet times, or they find out they've actually traded with someone from the other side and still want to. So, there are different narratives, but they are not being expressed in the public sphere."[174]

De Waal notes the "phenomenon of social networking sites, which some individuals are using to circumvent official media," as an interesting and positive development, but as only "one ray of light in general darkness."[175] The region's record on media freedom is abysmal: Freedom House defines both Armenia and Azerbaijan as "not free" and catalogs a litany of blatant violations of press freedom. In Azerbaijan, government-run media is the norm; "views are highly politicized," reports Freedom House, "as most print outlets are tied to either the ruling party or the opposition."[176] The July 2009 arrest of Azerbaijani bloggers Adnan Hajizada and Emin Milli

---

[171] Ibid.
[172] Elvin Yusifli, "Stereotypes in National Media – a Closer Look," *Caucasus Edition*, September 15, 2010, http://caucasusedition.net/blog/stereotypes-in-national-media-%E2%80%93-a-closer-look/ (accessed March 5, 2011).
[173] De Waal, 21.
[174] Ibid, 21-22.
[175] Ibid, 22.
[176] Freedom House, "Freedom of the Press 2010: Azerbaijan," http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2010&country=7772 (accessed February 25, 2011).

sharply illustrates the hostile media climate.[177] Briefly examining local media coverage in each

Armenia and Azerbaijan highlights the imperative to provide a space for alternative narratives.

Armenia

A three-day sampling of the Armenian news aggregate PanARMENIAN.net includes a

recent outcry over Azerbaijanis' continued "problems with history" and accusations of Baku

sowing "seeds of strife."[178] Some reports seem aimed to arose suspicions of Azerbaijanis with

provocative titles, such as "Russia Equips Azerbaijan with AK-47M Rifles" with scant

substantive information to contextualize the title.[179] One report quotes an "expert" as calling for

a crusade against anti-Armenian propaganda.[180] Another details an Armenian youth

demonstration at Ottawa's Azerbaijani Embassy, aimed to mark the twenty-third anniversary of

the "deadly pogroms" of Sumgait. This report notes, "The Sumgait tragedy and its bloody

repetitions in Azerbaijan, lasting through the years of 1988 to 1991, led to the disappearance of

450,000 inhabitants living in an established Armenian community in Azerbaijan."[181]

---

[177] See, for example,
http://www.rferl.org/content/Azerbaijan_Bloggers_Get_TwoYear_Jail_Sentences/1874853.html (accessed December 20, 2010).
[178] "Azerbaijan Wants Georgia to Engage in Anti-Armenian Propaganda," *PanARMENIAN.net*, February 25, 2011, http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/62618/Azerbaijan_wants_to_engage_Georgia_in_antiArmenian_propaganda (accessed February 25, 2011).
[179] "Russia Equips Azerbaijan with AK-47M Rifles," *PanARMENIAN.net*, February 22, 2011, http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/62232/Russia_equips_Azerbaijan_with_AK74M_rifles (accessed February 25, 2011).
[180] "Expert: Armenian Authorities Should Control Tackling Anti-Armenian Propaganda by Azerbaijan," *PanARMENIAN.net*, February 18. 2011, http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/society/news/62086/Expert_Armenian_authorities_should_control_tackling_antiArmenian_propaganda_by_Azerbaijan (accessed February 25, 2011).
[181] "Armenian Youth of Canada to Protest at Azerbaijani Embassy in Ottawa Feb. 22," *PanARMENIAN.net*, February 22, 2011, http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/62159/Armenian_youth_of_Canada_to_protest_at_Azerbaijani_Embassy_in_Ottawa_Feb_22 (accessed February 25, 2011).

Azerbaijan

On the surface, mainstream Azerbaijani media seem less vitriolic toward Armenia than is Armenian media toward Azerbaijan. However, based on the same analysis period as above, Azerbaijani media reports focus on escalating tensions[182] and largely eschew coverage of the peace process, halting as it may be. Beyond mainstream media, it is worth noting the vitriol that manifests on non-moderated discussion fora. Excerpts from an undated post on the Armenian-Azerbaijani Forum exemplifies simmering Azerbaijani hostility toward Armenians:

> Dear Armenians:
>
> I read the postings on the board and I once again find myself convinced of the "power" of Armenian hatred that seems to have so deeply rooted in the armenian brains. I once again become sure that there is no way an Armenian can put aside his hatred, just for a second, and try to see the world without that hatred.
>
> If they do, they would start realizing that the world has seen many wars, many massacres, and many tragedies. However, nobody but Armenians have made themselves the hostage of the past.
>
> I go to Azerbaijani website guestbooks, and read them. All people leave on those guestbook are "hi", "good job" etc. Never anything bad mentioned about armenians. We are not obsessed with hatred. No man should ever be. Look at armenian guestbooks. All you will find is racist remarks about Turks, Azerbaijanis. All you see is hatred. You call turks "dogs", insult their culture in every possible way, call them "uncivilized". You live for hatred. Compare yourselves with Turks, and you will understand who is civilized and who is an animal with nothing, but a thirst for blood. It is clear from a simple guestbook of a simple personal webpage. With all the hatred and hostility you have, how are we supposed to find a way to live with you? Believe me it is hard. And I don`t see any progress in the near future. You cannot negotiate with somebody who lives in his own world decorated with hatred and racism.
>
> I hate you for forcing me to hate you. [183]

The forum that I will examine below recognizes the detriments and limitations of mainstream media and the importance of forum moderation in staunching uncivil online discourse.

---

[182] See, for example, "Armenian army breaks ceasefire in Fuzuli region," *Today.AZ*, February 24, 2011, http://www.today.az/news/politics/81373.html (accessed February 25, 2011); "Azerbaijani Soldier Killed by Armenian Fire," *News.AZ*, February 21, 2011, http://www.news.az/articles/politics/31726 (accessed February 25, 2011).

[183] Untitled and undated post, Armenian-Azerbaijani Forum, http://www.brittany-net.com/imagine.htm (accessed February 25, 2011).

B. BACKGROUND ON CAUCASUS EDITION

Caucasus Edition: Journal of Conflict Transformation is an independent, online publication dedicated to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and other issues that have frozen Azerbaijani-Armenian relations.[184] The publication was co-founded by Phil Gamaghelyan, an ethnic Armenian, and Jale Sultanli, an ethnic Azerbaijani who also serves as its co-managing editor. Its editorial board is composed of three each Armenians and Azerbaijanis, reflecting the co-founders dedication to joint decision-making processes. At its core, *Caucasus Edition* seeks to expand scholarship on Nagorno-Karabakh and encourage inter-societal relationship transformation through exposure to diverse perspectives.[185] Although *Caucasus Edition* is more academic than most discussion fora, it invites comments on postings and encourages robust discussion. All posts and comments are subject to strict moderation.[186]

Caucasus Edition stems from a physical conflict resolution and reconciliation initiative at The Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation, which was founded in 2006 to house closed-door dialogue groups. This element of prior human contact is the defining factor in *Caucasus Edition* and distinguishes it from other discussion fora. Although not all contributors have met in person, the majority of the most prolific contributors have. Gamaghelyan says he has a "hard time seeing this work without human contact."[187] While he believes that social media may preserve and perhaps expand bonds formed during the dialogue groups—thus exerting some degree of scale-up value—he is skeptical about social media's ability to create new connections out of thin air.

---

[184] "About the Caucasus Edition: Journal of Conflict Transformation," http://caucasusedition.net/about/ (accessed November 13, 2010).
[185] Ibid.
[186] The comment policy is iterated below.
[187] Phil Gamaghelyan, phone interview with author, October 15, 2010, Somerville, MA.

In 2009, a participant suggested that the Imagine Center would have a bigger and more lasting impact if it expanded online. "I'd always wanted to go online, but some participants were worried and wanted to preserve their anonymity," Gamaghelyan says. Gamaghelyan was still ambivalent about taking the Imagine Center online when he attended a conference on Nagorno-Karabakh at The Fletcher School in September 2009. For Gamaghelyan, the conference exposed the paucity of research on the conflict and underlined the need for more robust dialogue about its core issues and potential resolution. Seeking to involve new and constructive voices most directly affected by the conflict, he founded *Caucasus Edition* with two distinct platforms: 1) an analytical section reserved largely for recognized names and in-depth, academic musings about the conflict; and 2), a blog to empower younger and less recognized names, including alumni of Imagine Center dialogue programs.

In November 2010, *Caucasus Edition* launched a separate WordPress-hosted blog, *The Neutral Zone*, which is less explicitly academic and seeks to engage a broader group of contributors. *The Neutral Zone* has now replaced the blog platform on *Caucasus Edition* and would be ideal for future study but its content is currently too limited to warrant study.

The Imagine Center's main project remains in-person conflict resolution training and dialogue, but *Caucasus Edition* may be pioneering the model for transferring in-person dialogue work into the virtual realm. It serves to extend the effects of participation in physical dialogue programs and to set an example for how civil discourse may unfold. Witnessing the flow of original postings and comments may be instructive for those who did *not* attend a dialogue program and are looking for a new model of interaction with "the other." The way in which people contribute to the site may thus exert some moderating effect of its own, which is notably buttressed by the site's official comment policy.

C. DATA

1) Founder's Vision

Gamaghelyan is convinced that cross-border contact can have both scale-up and demonstrative effects in promoting more harmonious intergroup relations. He maintains that it is "not normal for Azerbaijanis to cooperate with Armenians" but that those "strong enough to publish on *Caucasus Edition* opened up the way for others to follow."[188] Arzu Gellabuyeva, too, extols the value of example setting. The goal, she says, is to "reach an acceptance that I have crossed the border and am now talking to a person on the other side," which shows that both groups are human and establishes that there is nothing wrong with talking with the other side.[189] As a prominent Azerbaijani blogger remarks, "People just want to talk to each other."[190]

Gamaghelyan and Gellabuyeva differ on their approach to moderation and the appropriate role of comments. Gellabuyeva is ardent about the communication process itself, seeing any communication with the other side as essentially a good thing. Even if the individual words are combative, she feels that most comments are harmless in the big picture and are welcome evidence that people are *reading* the posts. Gamaghelyan, however, considers strict comment policies and rigorous enforcement as central to the site's reputation and symbiotic recruitment of rational voices. His comment policy is explicit:

1. **No Insults:** By using this forum, you agree that you will not post comments and material which is knowingly false and/or defamatory, abusive, vulgar, insulting, hateful, harassing, obscene, profane, threatening of an individual or a group or invasive of a person's privacy.
2. **Challenge the content of the post**, do not attack the person writing it.
3. **Terms Can Change:** The Terms of Use and other guidelines and rules posted on the Site may change from time to time. Your continued access or use of the Site, any comments you leave constitutes your acceptance of the changes.

---

[188] Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from this section are from the author's phone interview with Phil Gamaghelyan in October 2010.

[189] Arzu Gellabuyeva, phone interview with author, October 11, 2010, Somerville, MA.

[190] Scary Azeri, "A View from the Diaspora: Sometime in my Lifetime," in Onnik Krikorian, *Caucasus Conflict Voices* 1 (December 2010), 49.

4. **Report:** If you experience or witness a violation of Comment Policy, please inform the editors by emailing editor@caucasusedition.net. The editors will make good faith efforts to investigate allegations that comments or submissions violate the Comment Policy but (a) makes no warranty that will edit, remove, or continue to permit the display of any specific Submission, whether or not subject to such allegations, and (b) will have no liability for editing, removing, or continuing to permit the display of any Submission.
5. **No advertising**. Do not use the Site to sell or market your products to others and do not post a URL unless it directly answers a user's question. If any portion of your Submission, including any posted URL, results in any accrual of compensation or benefit to you, you must note this in your post.
6. **Real Email**: Please provide a real email address. Your email will not be shared with anyone or made public. It might be used if the moderators need to communicate with you about the content of your comment. The Journal retains a right to reject the comment if the email address provided is not legitimate.
7. This is a portal open for various views. The views expressed, including those of the authors of posts do not necessarily reflect the position of the Journal.
8. Caucasus Edition retains the right, but not the responsibility, to reject, edit or remove any comments or submission, including those deemed by the editors to violate the Comment Policy.

"We are trying to prevent simple insults because they drive away those who want to write something that make sense," Gamaghelyan declares. Indeed, compared to such examples as the non-moderated Armenia-Azerbaijan Forum noted above, the eight threads examined on *Caucasus Edition* present vastly fewer ad hominen attacks.

2) Content Analysis

This content analysis is designed to measure change on two dimensions. First, I seek to unveil individual changes though a longitudinal observation of two[191] individuals' posts, as well as their comments across different posts.[192] This tracking will attempt to measure changes in attitude toward the outgroup over time by observing language choice, response to comments, and the content of original posts. The individuals I will track are "George" and Elvin Yusifli (the former is a username). Second, I seek to uncover tonal changes in conversation through a cross-sectional analysis of comments on specific postings. For this second component, I examine six posts on motley topics that drew diverse comments, most appearing within a few days of the

---

[191] I would have liked to have followed many more individuals but a limited number consistently comment on articles, beyond somewhat insipid comments that thank posters for their insight. While these kinds of comments are heartwarming in illustrating more positive intergroup relations than those witnessed in mainstream media and non-moderated fora, they do not provide a baseline from which to measure changes over time.

[192] The full comment exchange is often quite lengthy; in these cases, the exchange is attached as an appendix. All comments are reproduced exactly as they appear on *Caucasus Edition*, including typos, although I bolded certain text for emphasis.

original post, and seek to track the changes in tone throughout the conversation. Two of these posts ("Dialogue and Future," and "Stereotypes in National Media – a Closer Look") are used to test both individual and tonal evolution. All analysis is based on the hypothesis and indicators proposed in Section IV and reiterated below:

> **Hypothesis 1:** Social media can help complexify perceptions of the outgroup.
> > **Indicator a**: Individuals identify commonalities (age, gender, occupation) with members of the outgroup and relate positively to each other on that basis.
> > **Indicator b**: Individuals acknowledge that their perceptions of the outgroup may have been misinformed by propaganda or the mainstream media conflict narrative.
> > **Indicator c**: Individuals specify how intergroup friendships have changed their perceptions of the outgroup as a whole.
>
> **Hypothesis 2**: Social media provide a platform for an inclusive social network in which to combat alienation from "the other."
> > **Indicator d**: Individuals identify alienation from "the other" as being exacerbated by lack of contact.
> > **Indicator e**: Individuals acknowledge a felt connection with "the other" in their online communication.
>
> **Hypothesis 3:** Intentional design is critical to create civil discourse.
> > **Indicator f**: Discourse on moderated online fora is less overtly vitriolic than it is in non-moderated exchanges (e.g. mainstream media) and contains fewer ad hominen attacks.

A. Individual Evolution: "George"

Between Amnesia and Vengeance: A Path to Reconciliation (April 12, 2010)[193]

In this early post, Alizada discusses symbolic myths as poisonous to intergroup relations and suggests that physical separation between sparring groups allows the venom to fester. "For the generation of Azerbaijanis who grew up in the wake of the Nagorno-Karabakh War," the Azerbaijani author offers, "the Khojaly Massacre offered the only understanding of the

---

[193] Afa Alizada "Between Amnesia and Vengeance: A Path to Reconciliation," *Caucasus Edition*, April 12, 2010, http://caucasusedition.net/blog/between-amnesia-and-vengeance-a-path-to-reconciliation/ (accessed February 25, 2011).

neighboring Armenia: blood-thirsty aggressors who want to annihilate Azerbaijanis and occupy our lands." The author ends with a plea for intergroup dialogue to foster eventual reconciliation.

This post drew six comments over a period of twelve days. George's first comment is:

George
Apr 18, 2010 13:16
and? what would the middle ground between 'forgetting and vengeance' look like?

The subsequent comment exchange is attached in its entirety as **Appendix 1A.** George does not respond to any of six comments that address his question of what reconciliation would look like, although the conversation around him is quite interesting and epitmoizes civil, rational discourse. The level tone—and lack of ad hominen attacks—throughout the conversation evidences **Indicator f** and seems to corroborate **Hypothesis 3**. Afa's and John's comments about the dearth of physical contact between the groups hit upon **Indicator d**. Edgar's last comment about the media criticizing those who attempt to engage "the other" seems to underscore **Indicator b**, as does his comment about the stereotype of French egg stealers. The general tone of all comments, except George's, seem to substantiate **Indicator e**, a connection with "the other" via online dialogue, but it is difficult to pinpoint specific phrases that would specify *how* this is felt.

George next comments three months later, on **Warmongering as State Propaganda (July 1, 2010)**[194] In his original post, Gafarov posits that ossified intergroup myths and enemy images fuel mutual distrust. He notes how Armenians and Azerbaijanis used to live side-by-side in harmony, but over time, and as the Nagorno-Karabakh issue gained salience, state propaganda painted the sides as irreconcilably opposed. The author calls for an end to the propaganda machines and for mutual concessions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to establish goodwill.

---

[194] Hashim Gafarov, "Warmongering as State Propaganda," *Caucasus Edition*, July 1, 2010, http://caucasusedition.net/analysis/warmongering-as-state-propaganda-and-its-effect-on-the-eventual-resolution-of-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict/ (accessed February 25, 2011).

The post drew eleven comments over eleven days, including three comments from George that signal significant maturation since his April 18 comment on "Amnesia and Vengeance" (above). This post also serves as an example of the cross-sectoral analysis by which we can track tonal evolution throughout a single conversation. The (lengthy) full text is attached as **Appendix 1B.** In this conversation, George patiently and rationally responds to several commenters. Although it is impossible to draw solid conclusions based on a handful of comments and over such a limited time period, George does seem to have better learned the rules of engagement and to feel the value of dialogue with "the other."

George's exchange with "Rashad" in particular seems to manifest **Indicator b**, in that George recognizes that propagandistic rhetoric is keeping the groups from moving forward. Although there is no overt confirmation of **Indicator e**, the evolution of George and Rashad's exchange over the course of the conversation seems to indicate a growing connection between the two. This conversation, as with all threads examined on *Caucasus Edition*, evidences **Indicator f**, or comparatively less vitriolic rhetoric than found on non-moderated fora.[195]

B. Individual Evolution: Elvin Yusifli

Dialogue and Future (August 1, 2010)[196]

This post comes in the aftermath of the Azeri author's participation in a dialogue program at the Imagine Center. Yusifli notes his desire to "overcome the dark stereotypes filling my thoughts by means of learning to trust them [Armenians]." He mentions mutual stereotypes as a catalyst of hostility and the natural result of "not being in real communication" and expresses his gratitude at being able to hear first-hand the Armenian perspective and deep grievances.

---

[195] Based on the Armenian-Azeribaijani Forum and reports from questionnaire respondents on the importance of moderation.
[196] Elvin Yusifli, "Dialogue and Future," *Caucasus Edition*, August 1, 2010, http://caucasusedition.net/blog/dialogue-and-future/ (accessed February 26, 2011).

The post attracted three comments over five days:

Sasun Khachatryan
Aug 1, 2010 15:56
Well done Elvin!
Thank you for such a good post; for being frank and candid about your thoughts before, during and after the program. The trust-building process was really rather tough, and I cannot but say that it did succeed, and that is what really matters for a turbulent region like the South Caucasus, especially for Armenians and Azerbaijani.
Thanks again!
Grigor

Aug 2, 2010 8:12
Thanks a lot for sharing your experience and thoughts. It seems that it was very useful and important project for you! I like such kind of projects very much, because it gives you an opportunity to have a dialogue, to communicate and to break some stereotypes. I also share your optimism on the future of Armenia-Azerbaijani relations. Hope our willingness and, as you mentioned above, green mountains around us will help us to maintain peace, stability and cooperation in the region.
Sincerely,
Grigor Yeritsyan

Shushanik Karapetyan
Aug 6, 2010 5:53
Elvin, I totally do AGREE that everything starts from GREEN MOUNTAINS and BLUE SKIES. Guys, we all did a GREAT JOB in cooperating, in compromising and in understanding each other.
I LOVE YOU ALL…. THANKS!!!!!!!!

These overwhelmingly positive comments from fellow dialogue program participants fail to show any significant development throughout the conversation, though they demonstrate **Indicator e**, a felt connection with "the other" that clearly endures beyond physical contact.

Stereotypes in National Media – a Closer Look (September 1, 2010)[197]

One month after his first post, Yusifli discusses the mainstream media as a key player in ensconcing stereotypes (supporting **Indicator b**). The post attracts five comments over roughly six weeks:

harut
Sep 18, 2010 9:23
EXactly the same conclusions I made looking at hot discussions between armenian and azeri participants in internet fora. One of dangerous things for azeri people is demonization of Armenians

George
Sep 19, 2010 4:15

---

[197] Elvin Yusifli, "Stereotypes in National Media – a Closer Look," *Caucasus Edition*, September 1, 2010, http://caucasusedition.net/blog/stereotypes-in-national-media-%E2%80%93-a-closer-look/ (accessed March 5, 2011).

50

Harut, agree with your opinion about the danger of Azeris demonizing Armenians. But what about the Armenians demonizing Turks and Azeris? See for ex. the next article: http://caucasusedition.net/blog/let-them-decide-themselves/. If you find it dangerous for the Azeris to demonize Armenians, should not then it also be dangerous for Armenians to demonize the Turks and the Azeris? Thank you

Janna
Sep 19, 2010 6:02
all written here is funny in any case, but in order to solve the problem between these 2 nations, first of all STOP BRINGING ILLOGICAL INFORMATION OR FACTS BY NATIONAL MEDIA … No national mass media in Armenia brings reproach on azeries,trust me!

Phil Gamaghelyan
Sep 19, 2010 6:28
Dear Janna,
for a discussion of stereotypes in the Armenian media please see a parallel post by Sasun Khachatryan 'Let Them Decide Themselves' at http://caucasusedition.net/blog/let-them-decide-themselves/
Thank you

Angus
Nov 4, 2010 3:06
I think so far, in my personal dealings with Armenians. 99 out of a 100 Armenians are as described above.

Yusifli does not engage in this conversation, which borders on the hostile (particularly in the last, outlier comment by "Angus"). Yusifli did not respond to comments on his first post ("Dialogue and Future") either, so it is difficult to make any conclusions about his individual evolution. However, his second post is notably less enthusiastic than the first. The glow Yusifli seems to have felt immediately following the dialogue program seems to have faded; he sounds more realistic about the challenges to overcoming stereotypes and mutual suspicion. This does not overtly contradict nor corroborate any hypotheses but is an interesting development. We would need more posts to adequately determine the trajectory of Yusifli's attitude transformation; unfortunately he has posted on *Caucasus Edition* only twice.

C. Tonal Evolution

Bridging Armenia and Azerbaijan (August 1, 2010)[198]

---

[198] Sasun Khachatryan, "Bridging Armenia and Azerbaijan," *Caucasus Edition*, August 1, 2010, http://caucasusedition.net/blog/bridging-armenia-and-azerbaijan/ (accessed February 26, 2011).

After attending an Imagine Center dialogue program, Khachatryan here discusses his surprise at discovering "numerous similarities in their [Azerbaijanis and Armenians] daily lives, traditions, habits and use of colloquial language. He mentions the gradual humanization that blooms throughout the program, transcending national stereotypes and allowing people to be seen as individuals. Not every interaction was rosy, the author reports: "Almost all of us found ourselves in a hornet's nest, in loggerheads with each other and with intransigence and irreconcilability on the offensive, especially when it came to history." But as soon as historical discussions drew to a close, he says, participants once again identified with each other on a basic, human level, laughing and sharing good food and drink. He concludes that the program succeeded in uniting young activists to break stereotypes, "enabling us to get rid of trigger-happy and mind-numbing prejudices we inherited as we grew up and also undermine the dehumanized and inimical character of the other side often abused for propaganda and indoctrination."

Although the focus of this content analysis is on the comments that follow original posts, in this case the original post manifests at least two indicators worth highlighting. First, Khachatryan's discussion of commonalities between the groups, including similar colloquialisms, traditions, and preferences in food and drink exhibits **Indicator a**. Second, his talk of propaganda as a barricade between the groups showcases **Indicator b**.

Khachatryan's post drew four comments (including one from Elvin Yusifi that further evidences his strong belief that contact with "the other" is critical to breaking stereotypes) over a period of roughly one month:

Elvin YUSIFI
Aug 2, 2010 14:19
Sasun, thank you, for this excellent piece of writing! I do share most of the above-mentioned views and assessments of you.
You are pretty accurate in saying "Give the chance and you will see them taken by surprise as they discover numerous similarities in their daily lives, traditions, habits and use of colloquial language". Being so close and having no chance to know each other – this is one of most essential reasons, I suppose, that keeps us apart. As we

learn each other, we will be able to break the deep-rooted stereotypes and build up TRUST that will be a guarantee of peaceful coexistence in the future.

But we have to give ourselves that CHANCE, not anyone from the outside. We ourselves have to take the responsibility to build the common future.

Thank you, Sasun!

sasun
Aug 3, 2010 10:05
Thanks for your appreciation of the piece Elvin.

I do agree with you about giving ourselves the CHANCE. One way would be face-to-face contact which unfortunately is given at extremely rare occasions. But yet it is something compared to none. Online contact can compensate some of that communication.

Importantly, in an attempt to build that trust I think we need more and more communication and cooperation first at individual level assuming that that level will one sunny day become an army of peace-driven and fresh-minded people who will choose other, humanistic ways for problem-solving over guns and grenades.

I know it is a lasting and painstaking process – and who knows may be we ourselves will not see it – but we must walk down that road so that our offsprings will not inherit what we did, so that you, even if not you, then your children or grandchildren will be able to come to Kapan freely and see what it looks like now, so that I or my children will be able to come to Nakhijevan to see the places my relatives were born, to see the hills and the mountains they climbed and collected flowers to bring home and to give to their loved ones. That is what matters for me and I am sure much in the same for you as well.

Thanks again)))

armen
Aug 22, 2010 13:51
Too much appreciation of our Azerbaijani neighbors …

Onnik Krikorian
Sep 5, 2010 18:26
Or maybe it's about time — and from both sides…

The emphasis on lack of contact as a catalyst of mutual stereotypes displays **Indicator d** and hints at **Indicator e**. One commenter's suggestion that individual trust building between the groups may eventually lead to broader transformation in intergroup attitudes suggests the scale-up potential and demonstrative effect of intergroup contact, though this is not sufficiently spelled out to firmly support **Indicator c**. The third comment about excessive Azerbaijani appreciation falls short of an ad hominen attack but is jarring compared to other comments. Though this does not undermine **Indicator f**, it is notably more hostile than most comments on the forum.

Social Media for Social Lynching? Facebook as a Platform for Xenophobia Following the Announcement of an Azerbaijani Film Festival in Yerevan (November 1, 2010)[199]

Phil Gamaghelyan (the site's founder) here discusses the violent reaction to a Yerevan-based NGO's decision to publicize the Azerbaijani Film Festival on its Facebook page. Armenian opposition was immediate and virulent, with some threatening physical violence and most calling prospective Armenian festival attendees traitors. Hostility against the festival crossed into the blogosphere, too; here Gamaghelyan quotes one Live Journal blogger, whose post exemplifies the relative proliferation of ad hominen attacks on non-moderated websites:

> '…grab him [the organizer of the festival] few times in the streets and break his neck; keep him in a basement for few days hungry, he might come to his senses… get him, put into a trunk of a truck, take him to Karabakh and put him into a jail there, let us see how many days he will survive…do this instead of 'promoting' his work on Facebook and other sources…are we really a nation that cannot 'take care' of such a jerk internally?…'

This post drew seventeen comments over six weeks—the most robust conversation yet observed. The lengthy full text is attached as **Appendix 1C**. "Vahagn"'s second comment indicates that Gamaghelyan likely exercised his moderation power and deleted an interceding comment. As Gamaghelyan notes, "I fully respect everyone's opinion including those who disagree with me and am all in favor of freedom of speech, except, as I wrote above, if it promotes hatred and violence." This underscores **Hypothesis 3** and **Indicator f**, and showcases Gamaghelyan's rationale for strong moderation.

After Gamaghelyan's comment, however, the conversation effectively stops, moving toward mere status updates on the festival (which was ultimately cancelled). This could suggest that moderation, while critical to maintaining civil discourse, may actually curb the overall volume of discourse. Here we must ask: is limited—yet civil—discourse between divided groups

---

[199] Phil Gamaghelyan, "Social Media for Social Lynching? Facebook as a Platform for Xenophobia," *Caucasus Edition*, November 1, 2010, http://caucasusedition.net/blog/social-media-for-social-lynching-facebook-as-a-platform-for-xenophobia-following-the-announcement-of-an-azerbaijani-film-festival-in-yerevan/ (accessed February 26, 2011).

preferable to copious uncivil discourse? I would argue in the affirmative, as copious uncivil discourse is evident on non-moderated fora and seems only to entrench stereotypes about "the other." In some cases, less speech—but speech of a higher quality—may be preferable. As Gamaghelyan notes in the comments, "I fully respect everyone's opinion including those who disagree with me and am all in favor of freedom of speech, except, as I wrote above, if it promotes hatred and violence. Unfortunately a big number of posts on the mentioned page [the Facebook page promoting the Azerbaijani Film Festival] do precisely that."

Let's Start Listening to the Women? (December 1, 2010)[200]

Palandijan draws attention to the absence of women in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process and highlights a conversation with an Armenian woman in a village near the Azerbaijani border as evidence that women recognize their ability to live with "the other" in harmony. "We had lived as neighbors with Azeris in this village," the woman said, "and we are more than capable of living with them in peace now."

The emphasis on women's empowerment is worth highlighting, as gender is one of the factors that Brewer considers a potential cross cutting tie. These women—both Azerbaijani and Armenian—seem united in their dedication to playing a larger role in the peace process and making their voices heard, suggesting the presence of **Indicator a**.

The post drew a total of five comments, all on the day of the posting:

Myrthe
Dec 1, 2010 1:59
Why the question mark at the end of the title?

Adrineh
Dec 1, 2010 3:15

---

[200] Tamar Palandjian, "Let's Start Listening to the Women?" *Caucasus Edition*, December 1, 2010, http://caucasusedition.net/blog/let%E2%80%99s-start-listening-to-the-women/ (accessed February 26, 2011).

Luckily, there are peace-building initiatives happening right now between Armenian, Azerbaijani women including residents of Nagorno-Karabakh. There are also other cross-border projects supported by such organizations as the Eurasia Partnership Foundation, the British Council and so on. There is work being done that incorporates women's voices; however, we're not hearing about it in mainstream news or major political circles. Kvina till Kvina Secretary General Lena Ag has been saying what this author has said above: women need to be sitting at the negotiating table (Here's some background: http://www.epress.am/FNew.aspx?nid=6283)

Myrthe
Dec 1, 2010 5:30
I think I should add to or explain my previous comment:
I think that the question mark at the end of the title weakens the message. As it is, it sounds more as if: "Maybe, possibly, if everybody is so inclined, we could start listening to the women?" Without the question mark, the message is much stronger and much more positive, more in accordance with the tone and message of the article itself.

Tamar
Dec 1, 2010 9:19
Thanks for the info Adrineh. Indeed there are some great peacebuilding projects happening. However, as you rightly pointed out, the question is are their voices being heard in the mainstream/political spheres i.e. in the "public sphere"? Women have usually been organizing movements within the "private sphere" or at the informal level, but the reality is, they are not making headway in the public sphere.
I wonder if women were at the negotiating table, if we would be in such a position of deadlock right now.

Tamar
Dec 1, 2010 22:59
Thanks Myrthe for your comment. To be honest, I didn't think this would be so supported and in fact, I'm sure there are those that would disagree with me in the Caucasus and would dismiss the writing. It is in that tone that I wanted to suggest, something which is so obvious for me and perhaps others, but perhaps not so obvious for some folks…. in other words, I was almost trying to be sarcastic by throwing in the question mark because really it's about TIME already! hope I was able to convey my thoughts well.

Adrineh and Tamar's comments show they understands that mainstream media may misinform perceptions of "the other," underscoring **Indicator b**. The overall tone does not significantly evolve throughout the five comments, but Tamar's final comment that she "didn't think this would be so supported" hints at **Indicator e**, a connection with "the other."

Time to Shed a Light on a Hidden Conflict (February 1, 2011)[201]

Caucasus scholar Thomas de Waal calls for increased international attention to Nagorno-Karabakh, including efforts at "detoxifying" the conflict, which he warns could easily escalate out of control. The "illusion of stability can shatter very quickly," he avows. He sees a very

---

[201] Thomas de Waal, "Time to Shed a Light on a Hidden Conflict: Nagorno-Karabakh in 2011," *Caucasus Edition*, February 1, 2011, http://caucasusedition.net/analysis/time-to-shine-a-light-on-a-hidden-conflict-nagorny-karabakh-in-2011/ (accessed February 26, 2011).

difficult 2011 ahead, presenting "a tired peace process, an atmosphere of mistrust between the parties, a fragile ceasefire, [and] lack of leverage on the part of the mediators."

De Waal's post prompted seven comments over ten days. The full text is attached as **Appendix 1D**. The first two commenters lambaste de Waal for his failure to consider Azerbaijani atrocities. Though far from an ad hominen attack, these comments (which de Waal calls "disappointing") are notably more hostile than most on the forum. Throughout the conversation, however, the comments shift from regurgitating history to a more productive discussion of what might be done to mitigate fractured intergroup relations. "Janet" commends de Waal for attempting to transcend the "belligerent mindset that cripples both Armenians and Azerbaijanis" and bemoans that hatred is "being imbued in the young generation" in Nagorno-Karabakh. This observation points to **Indicator b**.

"Bjoern" offers constructive suggestions on how to correct this mindset. He proposes, "…why not organize a series of round tables and conferences to develop ideas and plans for the outbreak of larger hostilities, why not offer trainings to local peace actors how to approach hateful crowds or how to organize underground peace-media, how to keep contact to peace groups in the neighbouring country, how to support each other...." These latter comments—and the tonal evolution throughout the conversation—suggest that progress has been made, though no commenter overtly manifests any indicators that would explicitly support this. This is perhaps due to how de Waal's original post was framed, which was to call more international attention to the "frozen" conflict rather than to overtly address intergroup relations.

3) Questionnaire Analysis

The questionnaire (attached as **Appendix 2**) was theoretically structured to support or contradict the data from my content analysis. Given the small sample size, and the skewing

toward one nationality, it should be seen as a secondary data source and one that reports

primarily on a specific subset of participants. However, even this scant data sheds light on the

subset's views on social media's ability to transform intergroup relations and warrants

examination. **Table 1** provides the demographics of the seven respondents, which are coded 1-7

throughout this section:

Table 1

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Imagine Center program participant?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Nationality	Armenian	Armenian	Armenian	Armenian	Armenian	Armenian	Azerbaijani
Level of education	Master's degree	Master's degree	Master's degree	Master's degree (anticipated)	Bachelor's degree	High school	Master's degree (anticipated)
Social media training?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The sample population is clearly skewed toward Armenians (85 percent), females (also

85 percent), and those with social media training (again, 85 percent). Seventy-one percent hold—

or are currently pursuing—a master's degree, and 71 percent participated in an Imagine Center

dialogue program. The two respondents who did not participate in an Imagine Center dialogue

program *have* participated in other regional dialogue programs, according to Phil Gamaghelyan.

These demographics are illustrated by **Figure 1**, below. It would have been ideal to have a more

robust sampling of men[202] and Azerbaijanis, as well as those who achieved a lower educational level and/or did not participate in any kind of dialogue program.

Figure 1
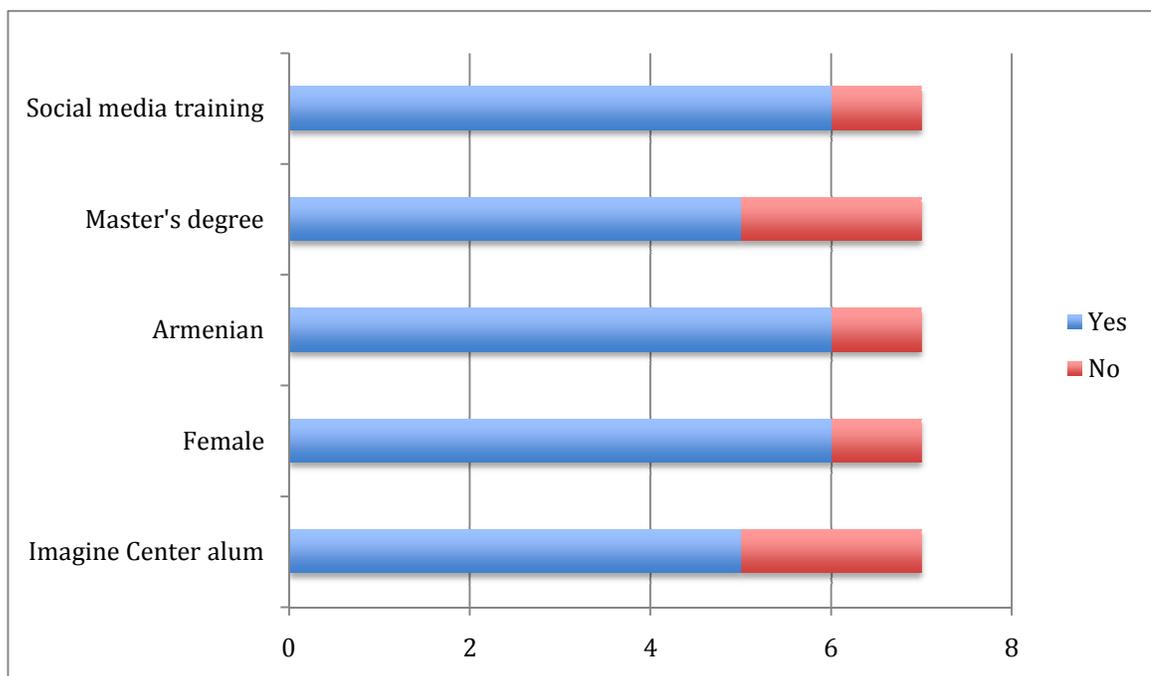
The following summarizes qualitative responses grouped by the three hypotheses.[203]

---

[202] It bears mention that a majority of those engaged in cross-border dialogue in the South Caucasus *are* female; this is not merely a *Caucasus Edition* phenomenon.

[203] The indicators, again, are: a. Individuals identify commonalities (age, gender, occupation) with members of the outgroup and relate positively to each other on that basis; b. Individuals acknowledge that their perceptions of the outgroup may have been misinformed by propaganda or the mainstream media conflict narrative; c. Individuals specify how intergroup friendships have changed their perceptions of the outgroup as a whole; d. Individuals identify alienation from "the other" as being exacerbated by lack of contact; e. Individuals acknowledge a felt

Hypothesis 1: Social media can help complexify perceptions of the outgroup.

Participant 7 says she is optimistic about social media's potential to mitigate stereotypes but believes that "progress regarding the conflict solution options/possibilities" cannot be resolved through social media tools. This answer both supports and undermines Hypothesis 1 and would require more elaboration to make a definitive statement.

Participant 2's comment manifests **Indicator a**: "It [social media] enables the parties, especially for the younger generation, to find out more about each other given the closed borders due to the conflict…they belong to nations that used to live side by side and therefore have a lot in common when it comes to social issues."

Participant 6's response suggests **Indicator b:** "The most important thing is about breaking the existing stereotypes and about re-thinking the concept of the 'enemy.' As you go deeper into the nature of the conflict you learn that it's nothing more than just a result of nationalist propaganda."

Participant 3 says, "I have been lucky to change some negative perceptions about the Azerbaijanis among my friends who could hardly imagine how it was possible to communicate and even make joint projects with the 'enemies.' Especially in countries where traditional media is mainly controlled by the state, social media is the only medium [that involves] ordinary people from conflicting countries." Participant 3's comments about changing her friends' attitudes toward having Azerbaijani friends evoke Pettigrew's and Stephan and Stephan's conception of generalized contact effects and suggest that contact (including CMC) may lead to improved intergroup understanding. However, the participant does not specify *how* these intergroup

---

connection with "the other" in their online communication; f. Discourse on moderated online fora is less overtly vitriolic than it is in non-moderated exchanges (e.g. mainstream media) and contains fewer ad hominen attacks.

friendships have changed her perception of the outgroup, thus only ambiguously marking **Indicator c**.

None of the seven participants posts anonymously and all seem fervently dedicated to full disclosure and non-anonymity; participant 6 says she sees using her full name as a "promotion of freedom of speech." It must be reiterated that most of these respondents met each other in person through the Imagine Center Dialogue *before* launching their online dialogue; perhaps by befriending outgroup members in person, the entire outgroup seems less threatening and anonymity thus less essential as a means to reduce anxiety surrounding intergroup interaction. This would support Pettigrew's argument that intergroup friendships can change perceptions of the outgroup as a whole and thus suggest **Indicator c**, though again, these respondents do not specify *how* intergroup friendships change their perceptions.[204]

Hypothesis 2: Social media provides a platform for an inclusive social network in which to combat alienation from the "other."

Participant 3's responses (above) also support Hypothesis 2**,** specifically reflecting **Indicators b** and **d**.

Participant 2 (comments above) also corroborates **Indicator d**, as she points to the jingoistic shortcomings of mainstream media. Participant 2 also generally underlines the need for an alternative platform, thus broadly supporting Hypothesis 2**.**

Participant 1 notes, "Social media is often used for deepening the communication gaps, rather than bridging them," yet she maintains that communication changed her views "a lot." It is

---

[204] Disapproval about intergroup friendships originating from within the *ingroup* are certainly a consideration; as Krikorian notes, the sense of group betrayal embedded in intergroup communication is acute. However, these seven respondents did not mention ingroup security concerns. As Gellabuyeva says, example setting is paramount; with each new intergroup friendship, there is slow progress toward recasting intergroup relations and accepting contact with "the other."

difficult to interpret whether she sees this change as a positive or a negative; again, this ambiguously undermines Hypothesis 2 but would need more substantiation to say anything definitively.

Participant 4's responses support **Indicator d**: "[These] two societies have no idea about each other, they have strong stereotypes towards each other and social media is the only tool for breaking these stereotypes." This underlines the proposition that alienation breeds ignorance about the other side and fuels stereotypes that retard bridge-building between divided groups.

Hypothesis 3: Intentional design is critical to create civil discourse.

Four of the seven respondents (57 percent) say they generally reply to comments, with some indicating that this exchange in itself sparks new discussions and highlights commonalities. Participant 4 notes that while she is comfortable with anonymous comments, she generally prefers mandatory registration. Participant 6 cites security concerns in her preference *against* registration: "Both in Armenian and Azerbaijan people can be often threatened for their views and there are a lot of people who prefer to comment anonymously," she says.[205] Participant 7 prefers some degree of registration but only to prevent "spam comments." If comments trigger disputes, she says, she attempts to respond to them all and "be tolerant to everyone's opinion expressed." These responses highlight the need for intentional design to ensure that comments are addressed without vitriol and broadly support Hypothesis 3, which underlines the importance of design to harness the power of the Internet.

Though the respondent data set is limited, some of the narrative responses above demonstrate that a specific subset of *Caucasus Edition* participants (primarily Armenian women

---

[205] This sentiment is particularly acute after Adnan and Emin's arrest, as referenced in footnote 114.

with a master's degree, social media training, and dialogue program experience) believe that intergroup attitude transformation can be achieved using social media. From their perspective, this seems to be a project worth pursuing, particularly given rampant stereotypes about "the other" and the absence of opportunities for physical contact by which these perceptions might be changed.

D. FINDINGS

The founder's vision, content analysis, and questionnaire responses provide insightful data. However, the generality of their responses and the thinness of the content analysis only weakly corroborate my hypotheses. The matrix below summarizes whether, and how, each of the indicators manifests in the case study, with more detailed reflection to follow in the conclusion.

Figure 4

Hypothesis	Indicator	Manifest?
1. Social media can help complexify perceptions of the outgroup	**a.** Individuals identify commonalities (age, gender, occupation) with members of the outgroup and relate positively to each other on that basis	Ambiguous. Content analysis and questionnaires show online dialogue unveils commonalities that may erode monolithic perceptions of "the other," but individuals do not overtly specify upon which specific new commonalities they relate to the outgroup. They hint at such similarities as gender ("Start Listening to the Women") and realizing a shared love of good food and drink ("Bridging Armenia and Azerbaijan") but otherwise only vaguely indicate epiphanies of commonalities with "the other"
	b. Individuals acknowledge that their perceptions of the outgroup may have been misinformed by the mainstream media conflict narrative	Yes. Questionnaires indicate that state propaganda and mainstream media fuels stereotypes and myths of the enemy other

	c. Individuals specify how intergroup friendships have changed their perceptions of the outgroup as a whole	Ambiguous/no. Some individuals say that intergroup friends have transformed their attitude toward the entire outgroup but they fail to satisfactorily specify *how*
2. Social media provides a platform for an inclusive social network in which to combat alienation from "the other"	**d.** Individuals identify alienation from "the other" as being exacerbated by lack of contact	Yes. Content analysis and questionnaires show that isolation allows stereotypes to breed
	e. Individuals acknowledge a felt connection with "the other" in their online communication	Ambiguous. Content analysis shows individuals seem happy to connect with outgroup members in a safe, moderated space but this is not explicitly iterated.
3. Intentional design is critical to create civil discourse	**f.** Discourse on moderated online fora is less overtly vitriolic than it is in non-moderated exchanges (e.g. mainstream media or non-moderated fora) and contains fewer ad hominen attacks	Yes. Content analysis shows vastly fewer ad hominen attacks than in a sample of mainstream media sources and non-moderated for a. Both questionnaires and interviews reflect the importance of strong moderation in keeping conversation civil

VI. CONCLUSION

The data gathered in this project is insufficient to firmly corroborate any of my three hypotheses. Although it seems intuitive that social media may help complexify perceptions of the outgroup (**Hypothesis 1**) by introducing new information about "the other" and undermining virulent propaganda, the data herein does not sufficiently confirm all of the corresponding indicators. **Indicator b**—propaganda and mainstream media's tendency to entrench stereotypes about the other—is the most firmly established of the three indicators. The data does not directly contradict **Indicators a** or **c**; there is simply not enough information to support their validity beyond a doubt. While individuals—both in the content analysis and questionnaire analysis—indicate that their perceptions have changed, they fail to adequately specify *on what basis* or according to what cross-cutting commonalities this perception has changed. Similarly, while it seems that

contact with "the other" may influence their attitudes toward the outgroup as a whole, participants do not do not patently say *how* this is the case.

Hypothesis 2 is equally difficult to prove. *Caucasus Edition* does provide a platform for intergroup contact that would not otherwise be available, and seems to help individuals overcome alienation from "the other," but the data does not firmly manifest both indicators. **Indicator d** is strongly confirmed by both the content and questionnaire analyses. The data that could establish **Indicator e**, however, may be skewed by prior human contact; individuals who participated in Imagine Center dialogue programs are effusive about their felt connection with the other, but it is difficult to determine whether this connection would be as strong absent the FtF contact element. **Indicator e** seeks to measure the effect of CMC in generating positive intergroup feelings, and the data herein is simply too thin to corroborate such a proposition. Therefore, the overall effect on Hypothesis 2 is ambiguous.

Hypothesis 3 is perhaps the most difficult to measure, as we cannot confidently say whether intentional design absolutely produces civil discourse. The data shows **Indicator f**, but it is difficult to accept its unassailability without a broader basis for comparison (e.g. more mainstream media sources and non-moderated fora that display unchecked vitriol). Although it is difficult to prove that moderation absolutely leads to more civil discourse, based on the data, moderated fora do seem to present many fewer ad hominen attacks than seen in mainstream media or non-moderated fora.

Suggestions for Further Research

While intentionally designed social media tools *do* seem capable of facilitating social change, more work must be done on a much larger data set before we can satisfactorily answer the research question. The sample population here epitomizes the elusive moderates; by

frequenting sites like *Caucasus Edition* and *The Neutral Zone*, these individuals present themselves as open to the possibility of peace. Such moderates seem to embody M. Brewer's categorization of those who can span the gap between differentiation and inclusion to encounter "the other" and consider a more inclusive identity. Future research, however, should engage a larger range of participants, including non-English speakers, and should examine a broader array of case studies, including those in which participants report negatively about their experiences or indicate that contact worsens intergroup relations. The issue of how to engage the radical outliers, who arguably are most in need of exposure to "the other," would present a fascinating research project.

This study's primary theoretical hindrance in producing more concrete findings is the inability to target exactly when and *how* perceptions and identity may have shifted. The data suggests that intergroup contact may exert a demonstrative effect but the content and questionnaire analyses fail to adequately specify these processes. Future questionnaires should be targeted to ascertain specifically how intergroup contact transformed perceptions of "the other." Perhaps achieving this "how" is a Sisyphean task, but given the 97 percent of Azerbaijanis who currently disapprove of friendships with Armenians, its further exploration seems dazzlingly worthwhile. Future research may also better employ advanced technology—including content analysis, sentiment analysis, meme-tracking, linkage patterns, and data visualization[206]—to provide more satisfying measurement of the "how."

Counterarguments

---

[206] As suggested by Aday et al, "Advancing New Media Research," 2010.

With roughly 72 percent of the world still lacking an Internet connection,[207] the digital divide is a key counterargument against social media's potential to facilitate social change. According to Internet World Stats, as of June 30, 2010, Internet penetration in Armenia is only 7 percent but growing at a rate of 594 percent per year.[208] Internet World Stats' estimate of 44 percent penetration in Azerbaijan seems unrealistic; UNESCO's IFAP Annual Report estimates penetration at 18 percent, which is supported by other sources.[209]

Despite this low penetration, Krikorian, among others, remains convinced that connectivity will rise and, along with it, the pivotal role for blogs and other social media in spanning fractured borders and transforming intergroup attitudes.[210] As Krikorian notes, low Internet penetration may imply a small audience, but it at least begins to "fill a gap long left vacant."[211] **Figure 5** shows the explosion of connectivity in the developing world since 2003. With a global Internet penetration growing at 444 percent per year,[212] this trend seems bound to continue, particularly as programs such as ICT4Peace highlight the symbiosis between peace and development and suggest that technology can play a critical role.

---

[207] Internet World Stats, June 30, 2010, http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm (accessed Dec. 19, 2010).
[208] Internet World Stats, http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm (accessed December 18, 2010).
[209] "Internet penetration level in Azerbaijan makes up 18%," http://www.news.az/articles/tech/9911 (accessed December 18, 2010).
[210] Ibid.
[211] Onnik Krikorian, *Caucasus Conflict Voices* 1 (December 2010), 3.
[212] Internet World Stats, June 30, 2010, http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm (accessed Dec. 19, 2010).

Figure 5: ITU Connectivity Statistics
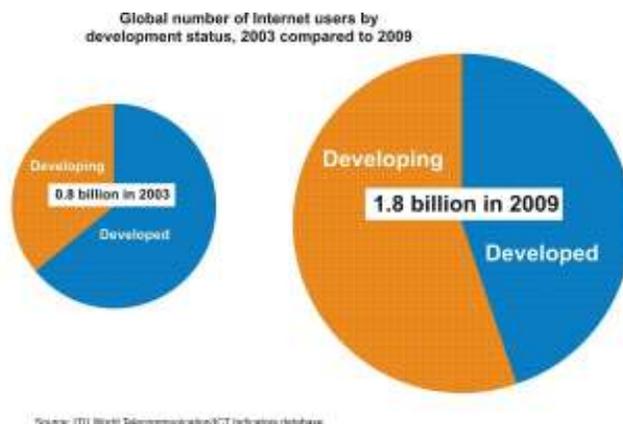
Social media are no panacea; the road toward attitude transformation is long and torturous, and CMC may never truly establish human connections capable of transcending intergroup prejudice. Malcolm Gladwell posits that such platforms as Facebook create weak ties that—devoid of human contact—provide merely the façade of connection and the appearance of participation.[213] Indeed, the paladins of Twitter and Flickr become tedious in their zeal; despite its immense power, new and social media are not a silver bullet. As State Department new media wunderkind Alec Ross says, we have to recognize the limits of technology and "veer away from utopianism."[214] Even Secretary of State Hillary Clinton—an ardent support of new media's role in diplomacy and conflict resolution—notes, "The technology itself is value neutral."[215] Ultimately, human input remains central to both technology and media tools and will largely determine their potential utility in improving intergroup relations.

Despite its limitations, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner calls the Internet "the most fantastic means of breaking down the walls that close us off from one another."[216] As

---

[213] Malcom Gladwell, "Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted*," New Yorker*, October 4, 2010, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell?currentPage=all (accessed on October 3, 2010).

[214] Alec Ross, lecture at The Fletcher School, November 2, 2010, Medford, MA.

[215] Ibid (Ross quoting Clinton).

[216] Bernard Koucher, "The Battle for the Internet," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/14/opinion/14iht-edkouchner.html (accessed December 20, 2010).

Yochai Benkler says, new communication technologies will not transform the world; "We continue to be complex beings, radically individual and self-interested at the same time that we are entwined with others who form the context out of which we take meaning, and in which we live our lives. However, we now have new scope for interaction with others."[217] Given the proliferation of Internet access and new technology tools that can help fill contact voids, social media *may* be a channel by which to encounter alternate perceptions of "the other" and, in due time, to affect meaningful social change.

APPENDIX 1: FULL TEXT CONVERSATIONS (COMMENTS ON ORIGINAL POSTS)

A. Between Amnesia and Vengeance: A Path to Reconciliation

George
Apr 18, 2010 13:16
and? what would the middle ground between 'forgetting and vengeance' look like?

Afa Alizada
Apr 23, 2010 13:49
Dear George,
Thank you for taking time to read and comment on my post. To me that middle ground would look something like this: people would remember the atrocities to honor the memories of those who fell victim and also to recognize the "early warning signs" and prevent such horrors from happening in the future. However, they would not harbor hatred and pass that hatred onto the next generations. It will require an understanding that barbaric actions of a few members of an ethnic/national/religious group do not necessarily reflect the values of the larger group.
It will also require an understanding that under even normal circumstances, the most ordinary or 'normal' people can be 'programmed' to carry out the most barbaric instructions. An example that comes to mind is Stanley Milgram's psychology experiment. In this experiment set up as a study of memory and learning, Professor Milgram of Yale asked his subjects (some ordinary people of New Haven, Connecticut) to act as teachers and if their learners

---

[217] Benkler 2006, 376-377.

did not respond correctly to the questions, the "teachers" would inflict the "learners" with increasing amount of electric shock (they did not know it was fake). Professor Milgram's findings were quite shocking:

"I set up a simple experiment at Yale University to test how much pain an ordinary citizen would inflict on another person simply because he was ordered to by an experimental scientist. The extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation. Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority." (Milgram, Stanley. 1974. "The Perils of Obedience." Harper's Magazine.)

My views may seem as naïveté or impractical idealism. However, the fact that Jews, for example, can live and work among Germans today, without fearing or hating Germans and at the same time, retain a strong memory of the Holocaust, gives me hope. As I mentioned in the post, however, the road to that middle ground is long and difficult…

John
Apr 29, 2010 6:14
The question for me that arises after your second comment is this: how do conceive of this process when the violations are between different states. I think you're quite right to note the reconciliation processes that occur that are somewhere between vengeance and forgetting, and we could provide further examples: South Africa, Argentina, Rwanda. But of course, all these are examples of reconciliation *within* societies that are forced to live in the same state in the future. How do we extend this process for societies of different *states* in the same *region*. It seems to me that this is a much, much more difficult task because nationalism and the ethnic cleansing of a country (something that occurred in both Azerbaijan and Armenia) have left two states in which the conflicting parties don't have to live together in the same country or empire (ala the Soviet Union), but they do have to share a border. How do we begin the process of creating a middle ground in this environment, or can we?

Afa Alizada
Apr 29, 2010 11:50
Dear John,
That is an excellent observation. I agree that separation of two people via an international border makes it difficult to reconcile differences/grievances, since they do not have to deal with each other on a daily basis. I think that is exactly the problem. I believe there is this notion among the Armenian and Azerbaijani populations that there is a magical solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, where they will be able to avoid contact with each other altogether. I think many Azerbaijanis contend that it is as easy as "getting our lands back" , in which case they expect Armenians to leave Nagorno-Karabakh. On the Armenian side, I sense that prevailing belief is that once the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh is secured, no Azerbaijani will dare to go back to Nagorno-Karabakh. This, however, is not a viable solution. There will be no peaceful or sustainable solution to the NK conflict, where either Armenians or Azerbaijanis are expected to "abandon" NK. Many Armenians as well as many Azerbaijanis rightfully call Nagorno-Karabakh their home. Regardless of the final status of the region, Azerbaijanis and Armenians who call Nagorno-Karabakh home will have to learn to live next to each other. This is exactly where the Armenian and Azerbaijani leadership is failing. They are not doing anything to close the gap between people's unrealistic expectations about the outcome of the NK resolution and the reality. For the reconciliation process to start, therefore, our leaders need to move away from their belligerent rhetoric, which fuels people's unrealistic expectations. I will discuss this issue in more detail in my next post.

Phil Gamaghelyan
Apr 29, 2010 12:06
Fully agree with Afa. Even if an agreement is signed, there will be no lasting solution, and the conflict will sooner or later escalate into a new cycle of violence, until and unless the societies are reconciled, and both have a chance to return and reclaim their homes. And reconciliation, indeed, is an aspect pretty much ignored in the peace process. Yet I strongly believe it is the reason why finding a solution so far proved to be impossible, and will remain impossible until we have a reconciliation process that goes parallel to the official negotiation process.
John, to your bigger question about within society reconciliation vs. reconciliation between people of two different states. I personally think there are cases of reconciliation of societies who experienced violence and ethnic cleansing, yet who live in different states. In fact I think these are typically more successful that the in-state ones.

Few major cases would be: French-German reconciliation, to a degree the Jewish-German one, the Greek-Turkish and many others. All of them have a very bloody past, numerous ethnic cleansing, long history of violence. All of them were 'resolved' as a result of a very conscious and a very concerted effort to reconcile and deal with the history of violence. I am sure 40 years back it would have been impossible to imagine that French-German relations could be where they are today. Yet here we are.

So it is possible. But not going to happen on its own. It is up to us

Phil

Edgar Khachatryan
Apr 30, 2010 4:16

This is a very interesting discussion and I wanted to add some thoughts. I agree with Afa and Phil that achieving peace for the Caucasus is still possible, but trying to look at Phil's example of France and Germany I have remembered a funny story told by my German colleague and friend.

About 30 or 35 years ago there was a joint German-French youth exchange program where students from a medium-sized school had the possibility to live for one month with families of the opposite country; the children of those host families would, in turn, send their kids to live in the family of the guest student. There was a stereotype told by Germans of French villages along the German-French border that if you went in the morning to get eggs from the hens, but there were none, that it meant the French had come across in the night and stolen the eggs. After one German student had lived with a French family for a month she came back and heard her friends in the village saying this one morning; immediately she told her friends that no, this just was not true, because she had lived with this French family and seen that this could never happen.

Every time I remember this story and understand for myself how important it is to organize such programs between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, I am trying to analyze for myself what are the obstacles to doing it. I see that the main obstacle is political will. Every time a peace activist is trying to organize such a program, either on the Armenian side or the Azerbaijani side, immediately they are criticized by the media, by their peers, and by society. Why don't peace activists try to unite and fight against this resistance within our societies? Only by achieving a relevant approach within the societies can we start the real process of reconciliation. And here I really agree with Phil that this is our task.

B. Warmongering as State Propaganda
Gayane Makhmourian
Jul 10, 2010 1:22

Mr.H.Gafarov, please be advised, that the nation-building of your neighbors is fait accomli long ago, and our myths are written 1500 years prior to ourdays. That's why we appreciate truth, when speak to ourselves and the society. It has its value, too.

And what you propose FOR US, what can you GIVE, besides the things, we have already got ourselves after you attack and a lot of ugly actions?

G.Makhmourian, Institute of History, Armenian Academy of Sciences

George
Jul 10, 2010 14:39

Dear Gayane Makhmourian (Doctor Makhmourian I presume?),

as I understood Mr. Gafarov's argument was the war rhetoric, as well as negative and manipulative interpretations of each other's actions. This then leads to a situation where the sides are not able to make any compromises and steps toward the resolution of the conflict, as instead of being interpreted as positive steps, any compromises are interpreted as defeatist moves. Consequently the conflict will remain frozen and there will be no progress made in the peace process until this pattern of behavior prevails.

What I can't understand is what is the relevance of your comment to the argument of the author. I read the first part of your comment the following way: 'we, Armenians, are ancient, therefore we are right. You, Azeris, are not ancient, therefore you are wrong.' And the second part of the comment states that Armenians are happy with the status quo of the conflict. Please correct me if I am reading you wrong.

I am aware that your line of reasoning is a commonplace among Armenians, and that every time we see an Azeri many of us feel an urge to mention 'we are ancient you are not', whether or not it is relevant to the topic of the conversation. But I sure hope that we can find a way to take the conversation to the next level. Whether we agree or disagree with the conclusions of the author, I think this is an interesting argument and worth a discussion. And I

hope that the representatives of our Academy of Sciences have thoughts to contribute to the conversation other than repeating same old cliches that are keeping us in this mess.
Sincerely yours,
George

Rashad
Jul 12, 2010 15:27
One should not overlook the simple fact that according to some statistics, there are at least 20 and by some estimates even 30,000 Armenians who currently live in Azerbaijan and are full-fledged citizens of this country, which is not and can not be the case for Armenia. There are only 2 or 3 Azeris who are presently in the territory of Armenia or the Azeri territories under occupation (although this number may sometimes go up to 4, when an Azeri delegate attends a conference in Yerevan). We have Azeri government officials whose wifes are Armenian (I know several such officials), not to mention others I have come accross as recently as a few months ago. This fact alone goes to show which nation has gone further in demonizing the other, what the prospects of any reconciliation efforts are and which country should these efforts be focused on.
Regards,
Rashad

Hashim Gafarov
Jul 12, 2010 15:36
Dear Ms. Makhmourian,
Thanks for your comments and taking time to read the article. I was surprised that you identified the date of myths only 1500 prior to nowadays (which comes to 510 A.C.). Usually historians from Academy of Sciences from post-Soviet area like to stretch it to 4000-5000 BC.
My main argument is that **we are victims of our own myths**. Myth means that they are legends that most probably never took place. But even if they did, as most "scholars" in those Academy of Sciences believe, they are not relevant anymore. We should understand that the status quo is not and can not be sustainable and we need to get out of this situation. And it will be really helpful, if we stop going around in vicious circle and for this we need to stop perpetuating the negative myths (there are good ones too) about each other. One efficient way of doing this would probably be shutting down all Academies of Sciences in all post-Soviet countries as no true academic benefit is coming out of them anyway other than being a crucial component of the **propaganda machine**.
Best,
Hashim.

George
Jul 13, 2010 0:21
Dear Rashad,
first, for the fairness sake as I asked this to Ms. Makhmourian, what is the relevance of your comment with either Mr. Gafarov's post, or with Ms. Makhmourian's comment? But as at this point I seem to be the only one who thinks that the comments have to be relevant to the conversation, I will drop my case. Especially because I find it interesting to discuss the point you bring up.
Rashad, I certainly do not want to defend the Armenian side and the ethnic cleansing commited by that side. But what you say contradicts not only what I know about a similar ethnic cleansing committed by Azerbaijan, but it also contradicts my own experience, so I would like to have more information. Few years ago a very close person to me wanted to visit Baku. He is a native of Canada, only partially of Armenian decent, a businessman, and had never anything to do with the war. He had friends in Baku in some high positions. So he asked them to inquire if he could get a visa to Azerbaijan. The answer was a non uncertain no. That despite the Canadian citizenship, because he had 'ian' in the end of the last name, this could not even be a consideration. They told him, that even if they managed to get him a visa, no one could guarangtee his safety or safety of any Armenian for that matter in Azerbaijan, for 'understandible reasons.'
This personal experience contradicts your suggestion that Armenians can freely live in Azerbaijan. I hope, very much hope! that my experience was wrong, and that you are right. So I am not trying to prove you wrong. But just inquiring to share your sources from where you get information about Armenians safely living in Azerbaijan. And also suggest whether our frinds in Baku were mistaken and Armenians can actually visit Azerbaijan.
Thanks much for your time
George

Marine Ejuryan
Jul 13, 2010 3:20
Dear Hashim Gafarov,
Thank you for your article. I completely agree that if we want to have ultimate peace, first of all we need to have trust towards each other. And this trust is a necessity not only for ensuring that compromises from one side are not interpreted as defeatist moves but, in my opinion, there is something even more important:
People in both societies should RE-learn to live next to each other. Yes, you are right, they used to live in peace and still live in other countries, but after the war and all the war rhetoric and propaganda Armenians and Azerbaijanis in our countries are not still ready to co-exist in peace, I think.
As you've mentioned in your article, conciliatory steps from both sides and **stop of war rhetoric** would be a very important and necessary measure towards trust-building. But I am not very optimistic about it as long as the governments in our countries get benefit from the current stalemate situation. In this case I believe civil society and individuals have an important role to play on the way of trust building.

Mariam
Jul 13, 2010 7:45
An interesting debate is going on under this post which reveals some stereotypes that the conflicting sides have. And it is really interesting that even educated and advanced representatives of both nations bear and spread those stereotypes. What I've noticed in the comments of both Mrs. Gayane Makhmourian and the author – Hashim Gafarov, is questioning the legitimacy of existence of respectively Azerbaijanis and Armenians…
In the first comment, when Mrs. Makhmouryan says that Armenians are an older nation that Azerbaijanis, in this particular context and in the way it is being said it implies that 'we are older than you, so don't tell us what to do' (I agree with George here).
In his response, Mr. Gafarov is actually mocking and questioning Mrs. Makhmourian's claim that Armenians are an old nation adding with irony something similar to 'ah, good you didn't say that you've been existing since 4000-5000 BC' …
So what I want to say is that even if educated and intellectual people like Mrs. Makhmouryan and Mr. Gafarov can't avoid stereotypical thinking, why would you expect ordinary people to do so?!
To me the only person who makes sense here is George.[218] Thank you.

Hashim Gafarov
Jul 13, 2010 13:08
Dear Mariam,
Thanks for your comment. I think you misinterpreted my comment. What I said is "Usually historians from Academy of Sciences from post-Soviet area like to stretch it to 4000-5000 BC" which obviously include both Azerbaijanis and Armenians. I did not say it is only Armenians who do that. It is enough to glimpse at the history books of any post-Soviet nation to see this obvious (and mostly unfortunate) fact.
Regards,
Hashim.

Rashad
Jul 14, 2010 11:08
Dear George,
I actually don't see how my comment side-tracks the discussion, when my point was to show how far the two countries have gone in demonizing each other. I don't think it would be prudent to even try to start explaining the background of the events in Armenia and Azerbaijan in the period right after the Azeri population of Armenia was forced to flee their homes and cross kilometers of mountaneous areas into Azerbaijan. As much as I don't want to go into this, I just want to mention one thing, which to me is very intuitive, about the so-called ethnic cleansing committed by Azerbaijan. What would you expect of a person, who has just fled a home and a country he has lived in for ages because he was forced to leave on the basis of his/her ethnic origin, had to leave everything behind, some of his relatives had been killed. If such person arrives in any region of Azerbaijan and finds an Armenian family living in peace and prosperity and commits a retaliative act and if such acts are randomly committed in various regions of the country why would we call it ethnic cleansing? The reason I say this is because I have lived in Baku

---

[218] Emphasis added.

for about 30 years now and the absolute majority of my neigbors were Armenian and even though it is beyond my ability to prove you otherwise, I can only assure you that to the best of my knowledge, none of my neighbors had to leave their homes. Believe it or not, but we bough a house from one such neighbor, and in the midst of all the chaos and conflict escalation, that neighbor took his time to negotiate, re-negotiate, look for other potential sellers and finally managed to sell his house at his own pace, not under duress. In contrast, I personally don't know of any Azerbaijani family that fled Armenia during this period (because there have been numerous other forced migrations of Azeris from Armenia before this conflict) who was able to sell his/her house or belongings. That is about it.

Going back to the question of Armenians living in Azerbaijan, again, I can't think of a way to prove it otherwise except by telling you about my personal experience. Between 2005-2009 I worked with a person in the heart of Baku whose mother was an Armenian woman who was still alive, as well as knew of at least 3 such people. There are many such people who have blended in and have not much problems. In fact, incidentally, a recent local newspaper article has revealed a case where a police officer has been involved in numerous cases of providing false IDs to Armenians living in Baku. Additionally, interestingly enough, there are several high-ranking officials who have armenian wifes and I know one such personally but can't give you any private details.

As for the complications with your friend's travel to Baku, I can't give you any definitive explanation, except that I personally have heard of such case, where an employee of an international organization was given a similar story and warned not to travel, did however travel and was allowed to enter the country, albeit some extra questions were asked of her by customs officials. Don't ask me if it is right to discriminate people on the basis of their last names, but that is what we have been seeing in the U.S. and some other countries following 9/11.

George
Jul 19, 2010 18:29
Rashad,

without arguing about the definition of ethnic cleansing: hundreds of thousands of Azeis were brutaly uprooted from Armenia, Karabakh and occupied territories, which I agree was a a terrible inhuman ethnic cleansing. And another few hindreds of thousands of Armenians were brutaly uprroted from Azerbaijan, and the accounts of how bad it was are many (and I would not want to go into stories of rapes and murders that we all know). I find it reprehensible when anyone is denying the ethinic cleansing of Azeris by Armenians. And I also find the attempt to justify or minimse the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians by the Azeris, something I see in your comments, just as insulting and reprehensible. You justify the Azeri ethnic cleansisng by saying the Azeris were cleansed first so had right to do the same. Armenians justify Xojali by saying Azeris did Sumgait so Armenians had the right to do the same. In the war each side killed tens of thousands of the others. So each side now has a right to kill another tens of thousands? How far can we go if we follow this logic and stay this inhumane.

And about the Armenian wifes: without going into fact-finding, just based on your own description: these people do not seem to be there because they are Armenian and because it is ok to be Armenian in Azerbaijan, which is what you are trying to prove. According to your own description they are there despite being Armenian, because they were able to hide who they are. You talk only about women and wifes, not men. Wifes in this context mean people who will have to change their last names, whose kids will carry the names of the fathers and will assimilate. Not only in our region, but everywhere where there are ethnic wars, part of the strategy of ethnic cleansing is to get rid of the men, and keep the women, make them change their names with undersanding that the kids already will be of the other ethnicity. So in the big scheme of things, what you are describing is a strategy of assimilation and finishing up the ethnic cleansing, not of tolerance.

At the same time, I do not want to diminish the good intentions of individuals who know they are Armenians among them and still have them in their families, among their friends. This is encouraging, and I appload and thank the Azeris who do that. **Perhaps these are the people who can show us the light in the end of our tunnel. As you mentioned, you yourself know Armenians. So then you might be one of them. In that case, happy to meet you and have a chance to exchange few thoughts**

Ayk Zakarian
Jul 21, 2010 9:22
Dear Hashim Gafarov,

It's always great to learn that there are still some **people who are unaffected by the state/party nationalist propaganda** and still believe in the importance of peaceful neighborly relations and the possibility of one day being able to peacefully co-exist and live side by side.

I do also agree with you that initial and even "baby" steps need to be taken by either side to demonstrate the willingness to compromise, and the willingness to peacefully end this conflict. Unfortunately, as logical and

theoretically-viable as your proposals sound, I don't believe such steps in reality would ever occur. You've already mentioned most of the reasons why they probably would never materialize; Governments on both sides are just too entrenched, pre-occupied, and under pressure from their constituencies and disaporas that they would never survive such a bump. The scary part is that such an initial "bump" could really have tremendous and catastrophic consequences, over the peace process as a whole (leaders in both countries have been overthrown as a consequence of the Nagorno-Karabakh war and peace process). A new government that would rise to power due to its nationalistic rhetoric will definitely not shy away from taking bolder steps, and even possibly resorting to military means, thus sending back the peace talks to square one.

The saddest thing however, is the state that the large chunks of the populations of both sides are in. No viable or real solution would ever materialize (even if the governments sign agreements and treaties) if the populations on both sides are in the state they are in today. After all, these are the people that are expected to be living next to each other, once the conflict is settled. And so I truly believe that the efforts of the international community is very much misguided. The key to settling this conflict, lies in settling the internal conflicts of as many Armenians and Azerbaijanis as possible. Concentration on Track II diplomacy should be among the main priorities of the international community. The leaders and governmental counterparts have already met each other numerous times over the years, its hard to imagine or even expect any new "magical" ideas or solutions to arise. But conducting track II diplomacy in parallel with having on-going negotiations (and also curbing down aggressive military nationalistic speeches) would at least "ensure" that in case an agreement is reached, realizing it and implementing it could be imagined and somehow realistic.

I feel really happy that there still are people who believe and consider co-existence as an option, and others who also have the ability to "politely" disagree. A quick visit to any online news website's comments section would give you a very realistic idea of the degree of hate to which today's youth and "literate" population from both sides are immersed in.

With such hatred instilled in the majority of both populations, no solution, no matter how viable, realistic, or fair, could ever be materialized.

C. Social Media for Social Lynching?

Armen Gakavian
Nov 1, 2010 8:10
Thanks, for writing this, Phil. I agree with you. Such a film festival might not be the wisest way to move towards reconciliation in th midst of so much hostility, but the organisers deserve our support for their courage and humanism.
But I must go further and say that this is not just about freedom of speech, but about the state of our heart – and I imagine you'd agree with me.

Afa Alizada
Nov 1, 2010 23:46
Thanks for sharing, Phil. The same thing (if not worse) would have happened in Azerbaijan, if anyone tried to organize an Armenian Film Festival in Baku. I also think this kind of "shock therapy" is not necessarily productive in trying to enhance cross-cultural dialogue (if that was the purpose). It only feeds into the radical rhetoric. Organizing a joint Armenian-Azerbaijani Film Festival in Tbilisi perhaps would be less explosive and more productive

Phil Gamaghelyan
Nov 2, 2010 6:27
Update: as of 2pm on November 4, 2010 – 2 hours before announced opening of the festival – I found out that the event has been postponed until Nov 12. No formal announcement has been made by the organizers and according the the official Facebook page of the Festival it is still scheduled for today.

Phil Gamaghelyan
Nov 3, 2010 4:18
Update: in the afternoon of Nov 2, 2010, the organizer – Georgy Vanyan – posted an update on the Facebook page of the Festival that said he was not the initiator of the invitation (despite his name and profile being listed as the 'creator') and that the date and time listed there were not correct.

[Armenia's Click-to-Share Democracy](#)
Nov 3, 2010 14:58
[...] time). For many, the Internet has become the only hope for pursuing justice. (Unfortunately, Facebook is also used for closed-minded purposes by some in [...]

Vahagn
Nov 5, 2010 13:30
I am sure the azerbaijani version would have not get the chance to be same or worse, because nobody would let it happen there!! This is my main concern in all the initiatives like this one, that there is no balance in the efforts of peacemaking! If someone (mostly the western wise experts with all their money and connections) is trying to make peace, they should really work hard to do it in exactly same way in Armenia and in Azerbaijan, no matter how hard it may appear. Or otherwise – do not peacify anybody, let them deal with their own issues! If you come and peacify only one side, and let the others fuel more hatred, what you will achieve at the end is another horrible war, and that war will be, started by those who hate more, I am sure. I myself am not a hater of any country, but I really dislike (softly to say) the professional western-style manipulations (that act as if they are just clumsy blah blah and donno what's happening) that claim to be "peace-making initiatives". I hope I am simple enough for you guys to get my point:)

Vahagn
Nov 5, 2010 14:21
do not label anybody guys, if you yourself are not close-minded, you should not see anybody expressing an opinion freely – as a closeminded person. If I dislike a manipulation done by people who either do not know whats happening or they pose if they do not know, it doesnt mean i dont think free enough. It just means i am not happy by one-sided efforts and i want to see the peacemaking in both countries but not only in mine. It is well-known that if a 3rd party tries to "make peace" in only one side of the conflict, there is something wrong with that process. Probably that 3rd party is in favor of the other (or you may have another option??:))

Phil Gamaghelyan
Nov 7, 2010 3:20
Dear Vahagn, thank you very much for your comments and for sharing your views.
Of course, your views and any other views expressed in a manner that you did, can not and should not be called 'xenophobia' and a dialogue and also a debate between as well as within each society on any topic is always great. If you read Armenian, however, you can see that the clear majority of the comments on the mentioned Festival Facebook page are not simply expressing opinion. A big number of comments, posted by dozens of people are resorting to insults and degrading comments expressed in worst possible words toward another ethnic group and its culture, crossing a line of a debate and, unfortunately, engaging into something that is hard to call anything else but racism or xenophobia. Moreover, many people who comment are openly threatening to engage the crowd of protesters to resort to violence in regards to organizers of the Festival, which again, in my book, is called 'lynching.' I fully respect everyone's opinion including those who disagree with me and am all in favor of freedom of speech, except, as I wrote above, if it promotes hatred and violence. Unfortunately a big number of posts on the mentioned page do precisely that.

Phil Gamaghelyan
Nov 9, 2010 5:30
Update: on Nov 9, 2010, Epress announced that the screening of the Films has been moved to Nov 12 4 pm, to a private apartment in Yerevan. You can see the full story at
http://www.epress.am/FNew.aspx?nid=8192

Phil Gamaghelyan
Nov 12, 2010 5:59

Update: as of Nov 12, 2010 the Azerbaijani Film festival was cancelled again. According to media reports undefined 'pressure' has been applied on everyone who considered providing venue to the festival and the organizers were not able to find a place for the screenings.
For more information see Tert.am (http://tert.am./en/news/2010/11/12/vanyan/) and Epress (http://www.epress.am/FNew.aspx?nid=8461)

Tamar
Nov 18, 2010 11:58
more details on the cancellation: http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62382

Tamar
Nov 19, 2010 16:09
and the UK ambassador to Armenia expressing the following
http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/roller/lonsdale/entry/a_stopped_film_festival#comment-form

Global Voices in English » Armenia-Azerbaijan: Does culture unite or divide?
Nov 25, 2010 15:40
[...] and also noting the role that social media played in mobilizing online opposition, Caucasus Edition was also concerned. One of the negative stereotypes about Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis that I often hear from Armenians [...]

Armenia-Azerbaijan: Does culture unite or divide? :: Elites TV
Nov 25, 2010 16:01
[...] and also noting the role that social media played in mobilizing online opposition, Caucasus Edition was also concerned. One of the negative stereotypes about Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis that I often hear from Armenians [...]

Armenia-Azerbaijan: Does culture unite or divide? @ Current Affairs
Nov 25, 2010 16:06
[...] and also noting the role that social media played in mobilizing online opposition, Caucasus Edition was also concerned. One of the negative stereotypes about Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis that I often hear from Armenians [...]

Global Voices na srpskom » Jermenija-Azerbejdžan: Da li kultura spaja ili razdvaja?
Nov 28, 2010 14:02
[...] ulogu koju su društveni mediji odigrali u mobilisanju opozicije, "Kavkasko izdanje" je takođe zabrinuto. Jedan od negativnih stereotipa o Azerbejdžanu i Azerbejdžancima koji često čujem od Jermena je [...]

Ерменија-Азербеjџан: Дали културата соединува или разединува? · Global Voices
Dec 15, 2010 17:32
[...] во мобилизирањето на онлајн опозиција, Кавказ Едишн исто така беше засегнат. Еден од негативните стереотипи за Азербеjџан и [...]

D. Time to Shine a Light on a Hidden Conflict
Mark
Feb 1, 2011 22:15
Any permanent peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan should consider these facts.
1. Until Stalin unilaterally handed over Nagorno Karapagh to Azerbaijan, the territory had been 85% Armenian, and had been so for centuries.
2. Although Nagorno Karapagh was "autonomous," Baku used every means to empty Nagorno Karapagh of Armenians as it it did in the other Azeri-occupied Armenian territory–Nakhichevan. It failed in Nagorno Karapagh but succeeded in Nakhichevan, where there isn't a single Armenian left. In fact, not finding Armenian to drive out or to slay, last year Azeris of Nakhichevan rampaged through Armenian cemetery khachkars, the Armenian crosses made of stone. They shattered into smithereens thousands of historic/artistic/religious khachkars, dating from the 13th century on. The video tape of their barbarity is available on Google.
3. After seven decades of oppression, persecution, Armenians of Nagorno Karapagh demanded equal rights. Baku's response was pogroms of Armenians in Sumgait and elsewhere, and attacks on Nagorno Karapagh Armenian civilians–both by the Azeri army and civilians.

4. Since they lost the war, Azeri leaders have endlessly threatened Nagorno Karapagh and Armenia.

5. Baku has never admitted its crimes or demonstrated that it was ready for a compromise.

6. Baku has not said or done anything which would inspire, among Armenians, a sense of confidence that there could be peace. Just the opposite, just as their cousins in Turkey have slain millions of Armenians over the centuries and deported or Turkified countless others, Azeris are sharpening their swords, claiming that Yerevan belonged to Azerbaijan!

7. I am surprised that the usually well-informed and impartial author of the article failed to mention Armenian refugees who fled Azerbaijan following the massacres, and still live in dire circumstances in impoverished Armenia.

Steve

Feb 2, 2011 12:27

Thomas de Waal writes, "Many [Azerbaijani refugees] still live on the margins of society. In common with, for example, Palestinians and Greek Cypriots, they still lack the basic right of not being able to return to their homes and see no prospect of that changing any time soon." How about writing "in common with Armenian refugees, hundreds of thousands of whom fled Azerbaijan?" De Waal's blind spot for Armenian refugees, while focusing an entire paragraph on Azerbaijani refugees is truly perplexing. It should give pause to all, who read his articles with the impression that it will be impartial.

The sooner third parties, who want to plunder Azerbaijan's oil, stop coddling Azerbaijan by giving them false hope that they could ever occupy and forcibly rule over the indigenous people of Karabakh, who want to have nothing to do with an Azerbaijan that attempted to murder and cleanse them from the lands, the sooner their will be stability in the region.

Armenia won the war and is willing to trade land for peace. Azerbaijan is willing to cede nothing and wants to force Armenians to revert back to Karabakh's status under the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan's position is completely unrealistic and the sooner third parties guide Azerbaijan to realize it, the better the region will be.

Tom de Waal

Feb 3, 2011 12:37

These are disappointing comments. They fail to engage with my argument and just repeat the Armenian position on the conflict. Believe me, we have heard Mark's list before! I could write the Azerbaijani response to Mark myself– and it would also be partially valid and unhelpful. If the endless repetition of positions were to achieve an effect, it would have done so by now. Armenians tell internationals, "Please tell Baku that they lost the war and Karabakh is ours now." And Azerbaijanis tell internationals, "Please remind Yerevan that Armenia is an international aggressor and Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan." Strangely enough, neither of these requests have any effect, because the mediators are dealing with a conflict with two sides.

Steve, do I need to repeat that I am highly critical of Azerbaijan's unstrategic and counter-productive position? It is playing with fire. But Armenians need to look at themselves too. Both sides in the conflict should take more responsibility and ask themselves what they can do to achieve peace. Otherwise they risk either a new war or an internationally imposed peace.

On refugees: I have written in the past a great deal about Armenian refugees. Most of the Armenian refugees date from 1988-90, when there were also about 200,000 Azerbaijani refugees who fled Armenia. It is to the credit of the Armenian side that those who came to Armenia then have been fully assimilated. Why when I talk about refugees, do I concentrate on Azerbaijani ones? Because 95 per cent of those from the 1991-4 war are Azerbaijani. But this is not an article about refugees: the point I was actually making in this article was they are not a powerful constituency and are also assimilating into society.

I welcome some responses to the article!

Janet

Feb 3, 2011 21:33

Arguing about whose land Karabagh really is or isn't (which is what the positions on both sides really comes down to) is like debating whose the Kochari is, or which culture can claim possession over Sayat Nova's songs – pointless and in vain. I agree with Mr. de Waal that these comments are disappointing because they don't even try to step out of the belligerent mindset that cripples both Armenians and Azerbaijanis. I visited Karabagh two summer ago and it disturbed me to see the hatred that is being imbued in the young generation of Karabakhi Armenians (as well as young Azerbaijanis). In order for peace to happen, there need to be real concessions made on both sides, and the international community needs to be wiling to substantively enforce the provisions of a peace plan (e.g. If Armenia frees the occupied lands, Azerbaijan must not attack). I also think the pressure to negotiate a fair peace plan needs to

be initiated by the international community because I doubt whether either side is sincerely interested in compromise.

Bjoern
Feb 10, 2011 5:42
I also would hope that the international community would play a greater role to "pressure" for substantial peace negotiations. But I wonder what leverage they have. Taken the realities on the ground I am not surprised about Russias (and other international mediators) failure to achieve any kind of progress.
And even if they had the leverage I had enourmous doubt that they would be willing to invest even 5% of the efforts nowadays spend on Afghanistan on Nagorny Karabakh. This is just not the world we are living in and I think we should base our strategies on the assumptions that the international preventive support to the peace process will stay the same at its best… (Playing an important role to keep the status quo and to discourage armed adventures.)
The key to real progress though stays with the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan. As long as there is no interest in peace, there will be no peace (period).
And I am afraid we, local and international friends of peace in NK, can't do much more either, but trying to stabilize the status quo and at the same time working to increase the longing for peace in Azerbaijan and Armenia…

Bjoern
Feb 10, 2011 6:10
On second thought, I guess we should also prepare for the worst moment and develop ideas, programs and networks to use any crisis for a new launch of peace-negotiations. If Thomas de Waals analysis is right (and I think it is) and we have only limited power to prevent it, then we are obliged to prepare for crisis.
Its just an idea, **but why not organize a series of round tables and conferences to develop ideas and plans for the outbreak of larger hostilities, why not offer trainings to local peace actors how to approach hateful crowds or how to organize underground peace-media, how to keep contact to peace groups in the neighbouring country, how to support each other, how to verify rumours on atrocities, how to help conscientious objectors and draft dodgers etc.**
We all would be in a much better position, when the crisis started,
and maybe, maybe our preparations would even be loud enough to prevent it …
PS.: I am no expert on the Caucasus, but we gathered a fair amount of experience in the support of peace groups during the Yugoslav wars. Maybe you will find this an inspiring reading:
http://www.ifgk.de/download/CSchweitzer_ThesisYU-final.pdf

Phil Gamaghelyan
Feb 10, 2011 8:31
Thank you, Bjoern, for a very thoughtful comment. I personally find your idea of increasing crisis management skills and development of strategies for turning crisis into opportunity is quite brilliant. All the peace-building initiatives I can think of are now operating on an assumption that we are in post-conflict phase, I would say. Anything specific you have in mind?

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR *CAUCASUS EDITION* PARTICIPANTS

1. Do you write from within or outside of your home country?
2. How did you first get involved in the project of communicating across borders?
3. What is your highest level of education and do you have any journalism training?
4. Did you have any training in blogging or using other kinds of social media?
5. Do you maintain your own blog?
6. Do you know of other sites like these that attempt to bring together Azerbaijani and Armenian voices?
7. Do you write more about political topics or about cultural and relatively "soft," humanistic issues? If the latter, what do you see as the benefit of writing about softer topics?
8. If you post anonymously, why do you choose to do so?
9. If you do maintain your own blog, do you require readers to register before commenting or do you allow anonymous comments? How do you respond to comments on your posts?
10. Has this communication made you view the other side any differently than before you began participating? Have any of your peers criticized you for engaging with "the other"?

11. How optimistic are you about the future of social media in bridging communication gaps in divided societies or across conflict lines? Why?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"A cyber-house divided." *The Economist*. September 4, 2010. Print edition, pp. 61-62.

Aday, Sean, Henry Farrell, Marc Lynch, & John Sides. "Advancing New Media Research." United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 250 (September 2010).

Aday, Sean, Henry Farrell, Marc Lynch, John Sides, John Kelly, & Ethan Zuckerman. "Blogs and Bullets: New Media in Contentious Politics." United States Institute of Peace, *Peaceworks* 65 (2010).

Albeck, Joseph H. et al. "Dialogue Groups: TRT's Guidelines for Working Through Intractable Conflicts by Personal Story Telling.*" Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 8:4 (2002), 301-322.

Allen, Tim & Jean Seaton, eds. *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence.* London: Zed Books, 1999.

Allport, Gordon W. *The Nature of Prejudice.* Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co, 1954.

Amichai-Hamburger, Yair & Katelyn Y.A. McKenna. "The Contact Hypothesis Reconsidered: Interacting via the Internet." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11.3 (2006): 825-843.

Amichai-Hamburger, Yair. "Personality and the Internet." In *The Social Net: Human behavior in Cyberspace*, ed. Yair Amichai-Hamburger, 27-56. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Amir, Yehuda. "Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations." In *The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence*, ed. Eugene Weiner, 162-181. New York: Continuum, 2002.

Babbitt, Eileen F. & Pamela Steiner, et al. "Combining Empathy with Problem-Solving: The Tamra Model of Facilitation in Israel." In *Building Peace: Practical Lessons from the Field*, eds. Zelizer, Craig and Robert Rubenstein. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2009.

Babbitt, Eileen. "Healing and Reconciliation: Narrative Processes" Lecture, The Fletcher School, Medford, MA, March 11, 2010.

Barak, Azy, ed. *Psychological Aspects of Cyberspace: Theory, Research, Applications*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008

Barak, Azy & John Suler. "Reflections on the Psychology and Social Science of Cyberspace." In Barak, 1-12.

Bargh, John A. "Beyond Simple Truths: The Human-Internet Interaction." *Journal of Social Issues, 58*.1 (2002): 1-8.

Bargh, John A., Katelyn Y. A. McKenna & G.M. Fitzimons, "Can You See the Real Me? Activation and Expression of the "True Self" on the Internet." *Journal of Social Issues 58*.1 (2002): 33-48.

Bar-On, Daniel, ed. *Bridging the Gap: Storytelling as a Way to Work Through Political and Collective Hostilities*. Hamburg: edition Korber-Stiftung, 2000

Baumann, Melissa, and Hannes Siebert. "Journalists as Mediators." In *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, eds. Luc Reychler and Thania Paffenholz, 319-321. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2001.

Bayramov, Ayaz. Email interview with author. November 18, 2010, Somerville, MA.

Benkler, Yochai. The *Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom.* New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006.

Berger, R. & R.J. Calabrese. "Some Explorations in Initial Interaction and Beyond: Toward a Developmental Theory of Interpersonal Communication." *Human Communication Theory* 1 (1975): 99-112.

Boulding, Elise. *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000.

Bratic, Vladimir. "Examining Peace-Oriented Media in Areas of Violent Conflict." *International Communication Gazette* 70:6 (2008), 487-503.

Brewer, John D. *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach.* Cambridge, UK, and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010.

Brewer, Marilynn B., & Samuel L. Gaertner, "Toward Reduction of Prejudice: Intergroup Contact and Social Categorization." In *Self and Social Identity*, eds. M.L. Brewer and M. Hewstone, 298-318. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Brewer, Marilynn B. "Reducing prejudice through cross-categorization: Effects of multiple social identities." In Oskamp, 165-183.

_____. "The Psychology of Prejudice: Ingroup Love or Outgroup Hate?" *Journal of Social Issues* 55.3 (1999), 429-444.

Burton, John W. *Conflict and communication: The use of controlled communication in international relations*. London: MacMillan, 1969.

Carpignano, Paolo , R. Anderson, S. Aronowitz, & W. Difazio. "Chatter in the age of electronic reproduction: talk television and the 'public mind.'" *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 33-55.

Castells, Manuel. *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

_____. "Crisis, Planning, and the Quality of Life: Managing the New Historical Relationships between Space and Society." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 1 (1983), 3-21.

Chorbaijan, Levon, Patrick Donabedian, and Claude Mutafian. *The Caucasian Knot: the history and geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabagh*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1994.

Cox, Michaelene, ed. *Social Capital and Peace-Building: Creating and Resolving Conflict with Trust and Social Networks*. New York and London: Routledge, 2009.

Cronin, Robert. Phone interview by author. October 5, 2010, Somerville, MA.

Dadaoui, Mohamed. Phone interview by author. September 9, 2010, Medford, MA.

De Waal, Thomas. "Moving Beyond Mirages: A New Paradigm for Foreign Intervention in the South Caucasus." *The Fletcher Forum* 35.1 (2011): 17-23.

Duckitt, John. "Prejudice and Intergroup Hostility." In *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, eds. David O. Sears et al., 559-600. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Ejuryan, Marine. "Letter From Yerevan: Thoughts on the Ultimate Peace," *Caucasus Conflict Voices* 1 (December 2010), 28-30.

Ellis, Donald. *Transforming Conflict: Communication and Ethnopolitical Conflict.* New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006.

Fitzroy, Sean. Phone interview by author. May 3, 2010, Somerville, MA.

Galtung, Johan & R.C. Vincent. *Global Glasnost*. Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1995.

Galtung, Johan. "High Road, Low Road: Charting the Course for Peace Journalism." *Track Two* 7.4 (1998). Accessed December 20, 2010. http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/7_4/p07 _highroad_lowroad.html.

_____. "Introduction: peace by peaceful conflict transformation—the TRANSCEND approach," In *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, eds. Charles Webel & Johan Galtung, 14-34. New York: Routledge, 2007.

_____. "The Task of Peace Journalism," *Ethical Perspectives* 7.2-3 (2000), 162-167.

Gamaghelyan, Phil. Phone interview by author. October 14, 2010, Somerville, MA.

Gardner, Ellen. "The Role of Media in Conflicts." In *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, eds. Luc Reychler and Thania Paffenholz, 301-311. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000.

Gec, Jovana. "Young People From Serbia, Kosovo Meet for a Rare Chance to Talk." Associated Press story in *Winnipeg Free Press*, Oct. 27, 2010. Accessed November 1, 2010. http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/world/breakingnews/young-people-from-serbia-kosovo-meet-for-a-rare-chance-to-talk-105855613.html.

Gellabuyeva, Arzu. Phone interview by author. October 11, 2010, Somerville, MA.

Gladwell, Malcom. "Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted.*" New Yorker*, October 4, 2010. Accessed October 3, 2010. http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/ 10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell?currentPage=all

Glaser, Jack & Kimberly Kahn. "Prejudice, Discrimination, and the Internet." In *The Social Net: Human behavior in Cyberspace*, ed. Yair Amichai-Hamburger, 247-274. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Goldstein, Joshua & Juliana Rotich. "Digitally Networked Technology in Kenya's 2007-2008 Post-Election Crisis." The Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard University: September 2008.

Hattotuwa, Sanjana. "New Media and Conflict Transformation in Sri Lanka." *IDS Bulletin* 40: 2 (2009), 28-35.

_____. "To Live in Hope—and Risk Disappointment." Ashoka Foundation. January 4, 2010.

_____. Personal interview by author. October 1, 2010, Medford, MA

_____. Personal interview by author. December 4, 2010, New York, NY

Hewamanne, Sandya. "The Color of Tears is the Same Everywhere: Inter-ethnic networking and grassroots organizing among women workers in conflict-ridden Sri Lanka." In Cox, 95-106.

Himmelfarb, Sheldon. Personal interview by author. August 5, 2010, Washington, DC.

Howard, Ross, Francis Rolt, Hans van de Veen, and Juliette Verhoeven, eds. The *Power of the Media: A Handbook for Peacebuilders*. Utrecht, the Netherlands, European Centre for Conflict Prevention: 2003.

Hsiung, Robert C. "The Best of Both Worlds: An Online Self-Help Group Hosted by a Mental Health Professional." *CyberPsychology and Behavior* 3.6 (2000), 935-950.

International Crisis Group. "Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War." *Europe Briefing* No. 60. February 8, 2011. Accessed February 9, 2011. http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/caucasus/B60-armenia-and-azerbaijan-preventing-war.aspx

Ismailov, Famil. Phone interview by author. October 26, 2010, Somerville, MA.

Jazeel, Tariq. "Sri Lanka inside-out: cyberspace and the mediated geographies of political engagement." *Contemporary South Asia* 18.4 (2010): 443-449.

Joinson, Adam N. "Self-Disclosure in Computer-Mediated Communication: The Role of Self-Awareness and Visual Anonymity." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 31 (2001): 177-192.

Karim, K. "From Ethnic Media to Global Media: Transnational Communication Networks Among Diasporic Communities." International Comparative Research Group: 1998. Accessed October 7, 2010. www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/karim.pdf.

Keenan, Alan. "Human Rights in Sri Lanka in the Post-Conflict Period." *International Crisis Group*. December 6, 2010. Accessed February 9, 2011. http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/speeches/2010/human-rights-in-sri-lanka-in-the-post-conflict-period.aspx

Khribchi, Hisham. "Blogs Create Common Ground." *CGNews*, April 13, 2010. Accessed December 19, 2010. http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=27616&lan=en&sid=1&sp=0.

Korac, Maja. "Gender, Conflict, and Social Capital: Bonding and bridging in war in the former Yugoslavia." In *Social Capital and Peace-Building: Creating and Resolving Conflict with Trust and Social Networks*, ed. Michaelene Cox, 107-121. New York and London: Routledge, 2009.

Koucher, Bernard. "The Battle for the Internet." *The New York Times*, May 13, 2010. Accessed December 20, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/14/opinion/14iht-edkouchner.html.

Krikorian, Onnik. "Internet in Armenia: Slow, Expensive, but Increasingly Important." *Caucasus Analytical Digest* 15 (April 2010).

_____. *Caucasus Conflict Voices* 1 (December 2010).

LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Landis, Joshua. Phone interview by author. October 15, 2010, Somerville, MA.

Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997.

_____. "Building Mediative Capacity in Deep-Rooted Conflict." *The Fletcher Forum* 26.1 (2002).

Mammadov, Vugar. Email interview by author. September 21-22, 2010, Somerville, MA.

Mayton, Joseph. "New, independent media empowering women." *Common Ground News Service*. December 14, 2011. Accessed January 13, 2011. http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id= 28961&lan= en&sp=0.

McKenna, Katelyn Y. A., A. S. Green, & M. Gleason. "Relationship formation on the Internet: What's the big attraction?" *Journal of Social Issues, 58*.1 (2002): 9-31.

Mythen, Gabe. "Reframing risk? Citizen Journalism and the Transformation of News." *Journal of Risk Research* 13:1 (2010).

Nan, Susan Allen. "Social Capital in Exclusive and Inclusive Networks: Satisfying human needs through conflict and conflict resolution." In Cox, 172-185.

Oskamp, Stuart, ed. *Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination: Social Psychological Perspective*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2000.

Paffenholz, Thania. "Exploring Opportunities and Obstacles for a Constructive Role of Social Capital in Peacebuilding: A framework for analysis." In Cox, 186-201.

Peleg, Samuel. "Peace Journalism through the Lens of Conflict Theory: Analysis and Practice." *Conflict and Communication Online*, 5.2 (2006). Accessed October 25, 2010. www.cco.regener-online.de.

Thomas Pettigrew & L.R. Tropp. "Does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Recent meta analytic findings." In Oskamp, 93-114.

Pettigrew, Thomas. "Generalized intergroup contact effects on prejudice." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23 (1997).

_____. "Intergroup contact theory." *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49.1 (1998), 65-85.

Porsughyan, Arpineh. "The Media in Armenia and Azerbaijan: Effective or Affective?" *Caucasus Conflict Voices* 1 (December 2010), 6-7.

Reardon, Betty A. "Towards a Paradigm of Peace." In *Peace: Meanings, Politics, Strategies*, ed. Linda Rennie Forcey. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989.

Reuben, Richard C. "The Impact of News Coverage on Conflict: Toward Greater Understanding." *Marquette Law Review* 93 (2009), 45-85.

Ross, Alec. Lecture at The Fletcher School, November 2, 2010, Medford, MA.

Ross, Gina. *Beyond the Trauma Vortex: The Media's Role in Healing Fear, Terror, and Violence*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2003.

Scary Azeri. "A View from the Diaspora: Sometime in my Lifetime." *Caucasus Conflict Voices* 1 (December 2010), 48-51.

Schmidt, Eric & Jared Cohen. "The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Diffusion of Power." *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2010. Accessed October 30, 2010. http://www.foreignaffairs.com/print/66765?page=show.

Schofield, Carina B. Paine & Adam N. Joinson. "Privacy, Trust, and Disclosure Online." In Barak, 13-31.

Shaw, Martin. *Civil Society and Media in Global Crises: Representing Distant Violence*. London: Pinter, 1996.

Sigal, Ivan. Personal interview by author. August 9, 2010, Washington, DC.

Spencer, Graham. *The Media and Peace: From Vietnam to the "War on Terror."* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Stratfor Global Intelligence. "Azerbaijan, Armenia: Clashes Risk Escalation." September 8, 2010. Accessed February 25, 2011. http://www.stratfor.com/sitrep/20100908_azerbaijan_armenia_clashes_risk_escalation.

Stauffacher, Daniel, William Drake, Paul Currion, & Julia Steinberger. *Information and*

Communication Technology for Peace: The Role of ICT in Preventing, Responding to and Recovering from Conflict. New York: United Nations ICT Task Force, 2005.

Stephan, Walter G. & Cookie White Stephan. "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice." In Oskamp, 23-45.

Thibaut, John & Harold Kelley. *The Social Psychology of Groups*. New York: Wiley, 1959.

UNESCO. *Many Voices, One World*: The MacBride Report. Paris: UNESCO, 1984.

Wanis-St. John, Anthony & Darren Kew. "Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion." *International Negotiation* 13 (2008), 11-36.

Whitty, Monica T. & Adam N. Joinson. *Truth, Lies and Trust on the Internet.* London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

Wolfsfeld, Gadi. *Media and the Path to Peace*. Cambridge: University Press, 2004.

Wright, Stephen C. and Stacy A. Ropp. "The extended contact effect: Knowledge of cross-group friendships and prejudice." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73 (1997), 73-90.

Zuckerman, Ethan. Personal interview by author. September 14, 2010, Cambridge, MA.

_____. "Does Facebook unite us or divide us? *CNN Opinion*, August 3, 2010. Accessed December 14, 2010. http://articles.cnn.com/2010-08-03/opinion/zuckerman.facebook.global_1_ facebook-users-service-friends/2?s=PM:OPINION.