

# **The Role of Grassroots Peacebuilding Initiatives in Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict**

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## **Abstract**

The dynamics of conflict formation and resolution usually follow a trajectory from the clash of interests to the escalation and then from violence to an agreement. According to a number of conflict theories and models, after a formal agreement, the conflict resolution process is usually supported by the grassroots peacebuilding activities, which are supposed to lead to the reconciliation and social change. However peacebuilding on a grassroots level is mostly considered as a weak tool to overcome stereotypes and hostility unless the elites did not come to the consensus and started full-scale reintegration. This thesis argues that Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as a frozen dispute, differs from the aforementioned ones due to the lack of interaction between the two societies and unprecedented level of hostility between them fed by the official rhetoric and preserved for almost two decades after the ceasefire. Therefore, this research aims to reveal whether in these circumstances grassroots peacebuilding efforts can stimulate a dialogue between Azerbaijani and Armenian young people both on the conflict resolution and other political issues.

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## Introduction

### *Peacebuilding in the Post-Conflict and Frozen Conflict Societies*

In the conflict resolution models and theories grassroots organizations are usually considered as a complementary tool in the process of the conflict transformation. Grassroots leaders usually represent the lowest part in the pyramid of the key actors, being mostly associated with the local level of the peacebuilding activities.<sup>1</sup> There seems to be no need to prove that any political conflict resolution takes place within the decisions made on the level of high elites and international mediators. Therefore, some authors argue that in the conditions when neither political leaders of the conflicting sides, nor the mediators demonstrate a strong political will for both the peaceful resolution of the conflict and the following reintegration, grassroots initiatives are unlikely to achieve any significant progress towards reconciliation. Besides, in the literature the main criticism of the grassroots organizations is based on the common fact that they often serve as the advocates of powerful external actors or the same political elites of the conflicting sides.<sup>2</sup> However, there are several cases which some scholars turn to, trying to show that depending on the circumstances the conflicting sides are involved in, grassroots organizations might play an important role for the conflict transformation. Post-war reconciliation in Bosnia, Croatia, and Rwanda are usually brought as good examples. Lederach also mentions Somali case as a bottom-up initiative driven by society.<sup>3</sup> Being created in 1990 a grassroots initiative of Somali intellectuals for peace “Ergada” was later on rearticulated to advise the United Nations in its reconciliation work in Somalia between 1991 and 1993.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall (2011): Contemporary Conflict Resolution. Third Edition, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, p.27

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> John Paul Lederach (1997): Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC, p. 52

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

In one of the working papers of the Centre for Conflict Resolution at Department of Peace Studies in University of Bradford, Fetherston describes the post-war activity of Volunteer Project Pakrac (VPP) in Croatia, aiming at establishing a social reintegration between Croatian and Serbian communities living on different sides of the line and having very low opportunity for any interaction. Apart from the physical reconstruction of the 75% destroyed town, there was also a strong necessity in the social reconstruction. With time not only did VPP succeed in it but also expanded and established Center for Peace Studies Pakrac and kept on growing.<sup>5</sup> Important to note, according to the author, being even largely expanded the project did not aim at resolution, but something far more radical – “to build a broader peace constituency than currently exists in the region, which provides a counter-discourse to violent nationalism and opens space in civil society for diversity and difference”.<sup>6</sup>

Kaufman notices that there are several ways to restrain extremist politics depending on the features and the stage of the conflict. If there is no consensus between the conflicting sides, they should hold intergroup negotiations and build consociation institutions – this is peacemaking. If the parties could basically come to the consensus, but remain reluctant to eventually agree due to the lack of trust to each other, then they need reassurance, which very often includes also a peacekeeping. However, neither peacemaking nor reassurance can provide a solution, if the conflict is rooted in the deep hostility and people’s fears of extinction. In this case people have to be brought together in order to change their hostile perception of each other – and this is called peacebuilding.<sup>7</sup> Kaufman’s final remark stresses that underestimation of peacebuilding undermines the conflict resolution efforts. In Nagorno-Karabakh conflict peacemaking implemented throughout the period of ceasefire did not lead to any shift in the bilateral relations yet. Therefore, the reassurance cannot be a solution

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<sup>5</sup> A. B. Fetherston (2000): From Conflict Resolution to Transformative Peacebuilding: Reflections from Croatia. *Centre for Conflict Resolution, Department of Peace Studies*, p.18

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 21

<sup>7</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman (2001): *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. Cornell University Press, p.40

without a consensus reached between the sides. This is why it is necessary to look at the alternative mechanisms compensating to the process of the conflict transformation. Thus, the thesis revealing non-functionality of peacemaking between Azerbaijan and Armenia, will investigate the role and impact of the grassroots peacebuilding initiatives.

Making an assessment of grassroots activities, it is also important to emphasize that it is connected with the correlation of their involvement in the conflict transformation and the phase of the latter's development. Describing conflict dynamics, some literature suggests four phases of the gradual development from *conflict formation* followed by *violent conflict*, then *conflict transformation* and, finally, *social change*. In a more detailed format the same logics is reflected in an hourglass model, pointing out *difference-contradiction-polarization-violence-war-ceasefire-agreement-normalization-reconciliation*.<sup>8</sup> Grassroots initiatives usually become active at the stage between *conflict transformation* and *social change* and, in the hourglass model correspondingly, after *agreement* and throughout *normalization* and *reconciliation*. In other words, without elites' legal agreement on the new post-war order, bottom up initiatives are unlikely to have a big impact on the process. It means that for the conflicting sides the way from negative peace, in Galtung's terms, to a positive one lays through the justice, where negative peace is characterized by the absence of violence, positive peace implies a long-term reconciliation and justice is that legal agreement which the sides came to the consensus about.<sup>9</sup> Thus, as Ramsbotham et al. mention, an important condition for reconciliation is to reach the point when a return to the escalation is not possible. It has a simple explanation that if it is hard to forgive a defeated enemy and harder to forgive a victorious enemy, then it is much harder to forgive an enemy who still represents threat.

The described model of grassroots peacebuilding efforts is widely used and analyzed in the literature based on the cases of Bosnia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala and a

<sup>8</sup> Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall (2011): Contemporary Conflict Resolution. Third Edition, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK p. 251

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, see "From negative to positive peace via justice" table

number of other post-conflict societies.<sup>10</sup> However, it is well-known that post-war period is not always the same as a post-conflict one. In many conflicts parties even after the ceasefire still represent threat to each other. A number of ethnic tensions in the post-Soviet space created a phenomenon of a frozen conflict when the results of its violent escalation did not bring to any legally recognized political change either within one state or in the relations between two. The defeated side did not adjust to the loss, while the winner was not either magnanimous or persistent enough to push the settlement of legal issues between the parties. Therefore, a post-war period was prolonged for decades making peace, reached by a ceasefire, more fragile because of the great deal of reluctance of political elites and international mediators to put efforts for the normalization of relations.

Given this difference between post-conflict societies and the ones involved in a frozen conflict, it is interesting to analyze whether the peacebuilding activities for the latter should follow the same logics as they do in the case of the former. This question becomes even more essential when the aforementioned peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts do not lead to any radical shift towards the frozen conflict either resolution or transformation. Moreover, the mediation sometimes makes the things even more complicated, when a broker directly involves in the conflict and promotes its own interests, as Russia did and keeps on doing in cases with Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>11</sup> In the case with Nagorno-Karabakh regardless of the number of meetings between the two presidents initiated by the third party, there is no progress in bilateral relations for almost two decades. The official mediator, OSCE Minsk Group, insists on the peaceful resolution of the conflict, but so far did not suggest a proposal acceptable for both sides. However, as Lederach puts it, we shall not see the “setting and people in it as the ‘problem’, and the outsider as the ‘answer’”. Rather we understand the long-term goal of transformation as validating and building on people and resources within

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<sup>10</sup> For more cases see “Civil Society and Peacebuilding: a critical assessment”, edited by Thania Paffenholz

<sup>11</sup> Abkhazia and South Ossetia are considered as frozen conflicts before Russian-Georgian war in 2008

the setting”<sup>12</sup> This approach is reflected in my thesis as an attempt to analyze the role of Azerbaijani and Armenian society, instead of external actors, in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict transformation.

### ***Case Study: Why Nagorno-Karabakh?***

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is one of the bloodiest and most destructive ones in the former Soviet Union. Being deeply rooted in the contradictory historical facts, the conflict entered a new stage with the Josef Stalin’s decision to place a mostly Armenian-populated region within the frontiers of Azerbaijani SSR. Constant complains of the former about the suppressions from the latter gradually evolved in the mass demonstrations, demanding the unification with Armenia, and finally resulted in the violent escalation in 1988-1994. The ceasefire signed between the conflicting sides put an end to the war and engaged Azerbaijan and Armenia into the frozen conflict over the currently non-recognized and de-facto independent Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and the seven surrounding its districts, remaining under Armenia’s military control. Due to the peculiarities of the conflict in terms of the sides involved, Azerbaijani border is closed both with Armenia and NKR. 17 years of the post-war frozen conflict keep total lack of interaction between two states and societies. Rare meetings between the sides take place only on the level of high elites, creating the room for sharp discussions and literally no development towards conflict resolution. Therefore, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is totally different from all the similar ones precisely in terms of the lack of any kind of interaction between the sides. In the circumstance of the information and communication void, both sides conduct extremist propaganda against each other. Therefore, ordinary people’s perception of the closest neighbor is based mostly on the nationalist propaganda circulated on TV and in other mass media.

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<sup>12</sup> John Paul Lederach (1995): *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*, Syracuse University Press



Both sides use wide variety of tools (from anecdotes to official declarations) to illustrate a dehumanized image of the enemy, which becomes an essential part of the news coverage, educational system and ordinary talks in the every-day life. Each side demands consideration of their interpretation of the historical facts and insists that their own is true and just.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, in the conditions of the negative peace one of the sources of hostility is the dispute over the territory and all the myths built on the sides' incompatible believes. This aspect usually characterizes the relations between the states involved in a frozen conflict. Another source of vengeance is the losses of the war. Carter mentions that it is difficult for adversaries to negotiate: each side is likely to claim that the opposite killed their children, raped their women and devastated their villages.<sup>14</sup> The violent escalation of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resulted in 20 000 deaths<sup>15</sup> and more than one million refugees: 200,000 Azerbaijanis from Armenia and 600,000 from Nagorno-Karabakh<sup>16</sup> as well as 360,000 Armenians from Azerbaijan<sup>17</sup>. Thus, war as a physical and psychological trauma left deep traces on people's hostile perception of the out-group. This source of hatred can be possibly applied to any conflicts reached the violent escalation. However, as it was mentioned above, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict differs from the similar ones in terms of the void in the communication between the two societies. This is why it is important to analyze the role of this factor and its impact on the hostility preservation and the groups' unwillingness to overcome the negative prejudices.

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<sup>13</sup> There are such popular claims made by Azerbaijanis as "Justice for Khojaly", while Armenians publicly commemorate the victims of Sumgayit pogroms.

<sup>14</sup> Carter (1992): "Human Rights: The Real Cost of War", in *Security Dialogue*, 23 (4), p. 24

<sup>15</sup> Report on the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Doc. 7182, *Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe*, 17 Oct, 1994

<sup>16</sup> Azerbaijan: Analysis of Gaps in the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). *UNHCR*, Convention and Protocol, October 2009

<sup>17</sup> Feature: Ethnic Armenian refugees face challenge of integration. *UNHCR*, May 2003

### ***Debate in the Literature and Research Question***

The research questions addressed in this thesis will be placed into the theoretical framework based on the two debates. First of all, applying peacebuilding and reconciliation theories to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the thesis will examine whether the stages of the conflict development and resolution should preserve the chronological order suggested by the hourglass model<sup>18</sup>, when they are applied to the frozen conflict circumstances and not the post-conflict ones. As it was mentioned above, according to the model, peacebuilding and reconciliation processes logically start only when the sides come to an official agreement about the dispute they have been involved in. However, the authors like Kaufman, claim that peacebuilding is not always the tool to reconcile after the conflict resolution, but the way towards conflict transformation. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict the sides did not come to an agreement yet. Therefore, it is important to reveal whether or not peacebuilding efforts might be efficient while the sides preserve the status quo and conduct extremist policies against each other. In order to evaluate the efficiency of the peacebuilding efforts, the thesis will discuss another theoretical debate and place Nagorno-Karabakh case within it.

The second debate is based on a particular theory named Intergroup Contact Theory suggested by an American psychologist Gordon W. Allport. According to Allport, in case of the fulfillment of the certain conditions, the contact between intergroup members is likely to change their hostile prejudice. At the same time there are theories supporting the slogan “good fences make good neighbors”, which emphasizes the negative outcomes of the close interaction between two or more ethnic groups. Considering that Azerbaijani and Armenian young people, unlike older generation, never had a chance for the peaceful coexistence with each other, it is interesting to apply Allport’s theory to Nagorno-Karabakh case in order to

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<sup>18</sup> The hourglass model is based mostly on Galtung’s ideas

reveal whether the communication opportunity provided by the peacebuilding programs might play negative or positive (if any) role in the participants' perception of each other.

Therefore, the research question addressed in my thesis is whether the contact between Azerbaijani and Armenian youth during the peacebuilding is able to make any difference in their initial perception of each other. In order to narrow down the framework of my research I will reveal the role of peacebuilding grassroots initiatives in the process of creating familiarity between the two groups. I do not aim at providing an answer how this shift in some young people's perception of an "enemy" might influence the conflict resolution, but rather conflict transformation. At the same time, since the conflict transformation, as the same hourglass model suggests, follows the conflict settlement, I will reveal whether peacebuilding can lead to the conflict transformation without having the conflict settled. In other words, my intention is to find out whether in the conditions of total anti-Azerbaijani in Armenia and anti-Armenian in Azerbaijan propaganda, grassroots organizations are able to make a positive a shift towards negative stereotypes overcoming. My hunch is that for people who were ready (for different reasons) to participate in a peacebuilding program, the latter should have provoked or reinforced a peace-oriented shift in their perception of the out-group members. If my research proves this hunch I will conclude that peacebuilding activities are not only possible in the circumstances of a frozen conflict, but might be also necessary to be implemented throughout the period of ceasefire, and not necessarily only after the agreement reached by the officials. In other words, some elements of positive peace can be reached in the condition of the negative peace without solving a problem of justice.

There is a relevant amount of literature devoted to the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh, most if it is focused on the issue of the conflict roots, grievances and mythmaking; other deals with historical investigation whether Nagorno-Karabakh was Azerbaijani or Armenian territory before the establishment of the Soviet Union. Some researchers connect the conflict

with the state-building processes in Azerbaijan and Armenia, while others are interested in the role of mediators. However, there was no detailed investigation into the role and impact of the grassroots peacebuilding attempts, which recently started taking place with the more frequency between the disintegrated Azerbaijani and Armenian societies. Besides, frozen disputes described as no war no peace dilemma, should represent a separate category in the ethno-territorial conflicts studies, since they can be analyzed neither as post-conflict (rather post-war) nor as the violent conflict cases. The lack of a separate approach to the frozen conflicts in the literature makes it difficult to place the peacebuilding within it. Therefore, this thesis aims at attempting to revise the theoretical approaches to the stages of the conflict transformation distinguishing it from the conflict resolution.

### ***Methodology***

For the purpose to reveal whether the contact hypothesis theory can be proved being applied to Azerbaijani and Armenian societies, I created the questionnaire for the moderators and participants of the two grassroots projects with different goals and methodology. The first project aims at bringing young people together in order to provide them with an opportunity to discuss the common issues and the possible perspectives of the conflict resolution in the well-moderated circumstances. The second one is not about conflict settlement but a broader context of political views of the participants and their ability to cooperate in order to create political parties and fractions through lobbying. The questions for the interview aim at revealing 1) whether an interaction under the certain, moderated circumstances might result in a positive shift in young people's perception of the "other" and provoke the re-humanization of the "enemy" through the reduction of fears, hostility and negative stereotypes; 2) whether given the same questions there will be tangible difference in participants' evaluation of the project in the context of the latter's goals and methodology.

## ***Thesis Outline***

In the first part of my research (Chapter 1) I will provide a theoretical and empirical background of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict dwelling on the main stages of conflict development and proposals for its resolution. In order to describe the complexity of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations I will turn to the obstacles depriving the parties from coming to an agreement: incompatibility of sides' interests, fears, hostility dissemination and, finally, mismanaging policy of the third party.

My research is placed in the constructivist framework, and built on the assumption that perceptions can be shaped under the certain circumstances. Based on the Kaufman's symbolic politics, Petersen's emotion-based and Allport's contact hypothesis theories, the theoretical part (Chapter 2) of the thesis will focus on two dichotomies: 1. whether contact between out-group members leads to the tensions or stereotypes overcoming; 2. whether it is possible to move towards positive peace without resolving the problem of "justice". Analysis of the peacebuilding tendencies and their impact will be built on data derived from the interviews and official information of the peacebuilding organizations (Chapter 3). While the respondents' experience of participation will help to understand the impact of peacebuilding projects on the society in Azerbaijan and Armenia, the analysis of the goals and achievements of those projects will help to draw a broader picture of the role and place of peacebuilding . At the same time, in order to see how the similar initiatives brought to any evident positive results in other ethnic or civil conflicts, the chapter will turn to the brief description of the successful cases.

## Chapter 1: Background of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh

The literature devoted to ethnic conflicts involves the discourse around such basic phenomenon as security dilemma, incompatibility of interests, mutual hatred, fears, rage, revenge and similar elements leading to the escalation of ethnic tensions. Kaufman focuses on three of them - mass hostility, extremist politics and security dilemma, and suggests that in order to build a comprehensive approach to the conflict resolution, the mentioned three causes of ethnic war should be prevented before or after the violence breaks out.<sup>19</sup> In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict not only did these three factors lead to the violent escalation, but also determined the frames of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia throughout the whole period of ceasefire up till now, which has been keeping the possibility of a new war rather high.

Within the scope of this thesis it is important to mention that the ways to decrease the aforementioned ingredients of the conflict depend on the peculiarities of the latter. In the Nagorno-Karabakh case peacebuilding efforts are determined by the roots of the dispute, the causes of the conflict violent escalation, the sources of the current hostility dissemination and reasons of the mediation failure. The chapter will provide a summary of these aspects in the corresponding order in order to build a background revealing the necessity of the analysis of the role and impact of the grassroots peacebuilding initiatives between Azerbaijani and Armenian youth.

### *1.1. Endless Controversy: Historical Overview of the Conflict Roots*

Azerbaijani and Armenian positions on the conflict resolution clashes due to the contradiction of the two principles of international law: territorial integrity and people's right for self-determination<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman (2001): *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. Cornell University Press, p. 40

<sup>20</sup> See Charter of the United Nations: Charter 1: Purposes and Principles, Art 1 (2) and Art. 2 (4) (source: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.shtml>)

Azerbaijan insists on the restoration of its territorial integrity and withdrawal of Armenian forces from its occupied regions: Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts. Armenians, in their turn, claim that they liberated historically Armenian territories. Incompatibility of the approaches to the conflict solution and irreconcilability of the two societies' positions was once again confirmed in the result of the opinion poll held in February 2009. It revealed that 70 percent of respondents in Azerbaijan opposed any kind of compromise: only 0, 1 percent supported the option of independence for Nagorny Karabakh, while only 1 percent of respondents in Armenia favored an option of putting Karabakh under Azerbaijani sovereignty.

As any territorial dispute this conflict has to do a lot with the history. As De Waal emphasizes, ordinary Armenians and Azerbaijanis, discussing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, tend to talk about the historical past rather than international law, and argue over the question "who was there first".<sup>21</sup> In order to support their positions, each side develops numerous arguments denying the opposite side's presence in the region in the past. For instance, Armenians, dwelling on the claim that the word "Azerbaijan" was not commonly used before the twentieth century, consider the surviving mosque in Karabakhian Shusha to be Persian, denying, therefore, its link with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijanis, in their turn, develop the theory of the Christian Caucasian Albanians, who mostly live in what is now Azerbaijan. According to this theory, Armenian Apostolic Church in Karabakh was called "Albanian" until the nineteenth century, and, all the monuments of Karabakh were Caucasian Albanian, as well as Nagorno-Karabakh itself, this is why Armenians do not have claim to it.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, although the conflict escalated only in 1988 with the establishment of Karabakh movement for the independence from Azerbaijani SSR, the dispute indeed dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, while the grounds of each side's positions are rooted even deeper in the historiography. Armenians claim that Karabakh was a part of Armenian Kingdom already in the fourth century Before Christ, while Azerbaijanis usually stress more recent facts, such the Karabakh belonging to Azerbaijan SSR. The complexity of the dispute and the knot of controversial historical facts are reflected even in the name of the area. Armenians term it "Artsakh" pointing out its belonging to the Great Armenia founded by

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas De Waal (2010): *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, USA, p.106

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

Artaxis Dynasty.<sup>23</sup> Azerbaijanis use the term *Daglıq Qarabag*, which is translated as Nagorno-Karabakh. The latter being also an internationally used term is consisted of the words from different languages. “Kara” means black in Turkish, “Bao” is garden in Persian and vine in Turkish. “Nagorno” means mountainous in Russian. Linguistic combinations and transformations indicate the presence of the powers which have dominated in the history of the region.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, external powers and, particularly, Russian presence in the region<sup>25</sup>, have always played a significant role in Nagorno-Karabakh dispute throughout the modern history of the conflict<sup>26</sup> and till nowadays. Some scholars even argue that during the Soviet time, Josef Stalin, placing the majority Armenian-populated region within the boundaries of the new Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, predicted that the region would forever remain a source of controversy between the two republics that would ensure Moscow's position as power broker.<sup>27</sup> It is debatable whether the current level of the conflict and Moscow's role in it was predicted in the early 1920, but obviously, 1921 decision of the Caucasus Bureau of CP to place Karabakh within Azerbaijani boundaries and grant it with the status of autonomous region became, as De Waal terms it, a touchstone in the historical debate over the issue. Some scholars argue that there were economic reasons behind this decision, such as making Azerbaijan a single economic unit for farmers' easier move between the plains and highlands of Karabakh.<sup>28</sup> Others highlight the importance for the Soviet Union of its potential alliance with Kemalist Turkey, which was hostile to any territorial arrangements favoring Soviet Armenia.<sup>29</sup>

There are also the facts certifying earlier, pre-Soviet (late nineteenth) clashes over Zangezur, Nakhichevan and Karabakh regions between Azerbaijanis and Armenians as an outcome of the decline of Tsarist Russian Empire and rise of national movements on the both sides.<sup>30</sup> However within the

<sup>23</sup> See David M. Lang (1988): *The Armenians: a People in Exile*. Unwin Hyman, London

<sup>24</sup> Svante E. Cornell (1999): *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*. Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, p. 3

<sup>25</sup> See Stuart J. Kaufman, John P. LeDonne and Christopher J. Walker for the description of Persian cession of what is called today Azerbaijan and Karabakh to Russia in 1813 and Russia's annexation of the Nakhichevan and Erevan in 1828

<sup>26</sup> According to Kaufman the modern history of the conflict starts from the 1813 Treaty of Gulistan

<sup>27</sup> Patricia Carley (1998): *Nagorno-Karabakh: Searching for a Solution*, Peaceworks No. 25, United States Institute of Peace, (source: <http://www.usip.org/publications/nagorno-karabakh-searching-solution-0#sources>)

<sup>28</sup> Thomas De Waal (2010): *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, USA, p. 105

<sup>29</sup> Svante E. Cornell (1999): *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*. Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, p. 8

<sup>30</sup> Thomas De Waal (2010): *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, USA, p. 102



scope of this chapter, it is important to look how the relations between two nations were developing during the Soviet time, when the regime was strictly suppressing any rebellious attempts.

Thus, throughout the whole Soviet period Armenians remained dissatisfied with the 1921 decision. In addition, Karabakh Armenians were complaining about the limited educational materials in Armenian language, lack of television programmes broadcast from Yerevan, and the amount of received public investment compared to other regions of Azerbaijan.<sup>31</sup> As a result of a continuous dissatisfaction, in 1945, 1965, 1977 Karabakh Armenians sent petitions to Moscow with the demand to be united with Soviet Armenia. However Soviet authorities were not going to make any changes in the existing boundaries within the USSR itself. Although throughout the Soviet rule, the demographic picture in Karabakh changed in favor of Azerbaijanis,<sup>32</sup> Karabakh was still mostly Armenian-populated.<sup>33</sup> However, by the end of 1980s, as Cheterian puts it, Armenians feared that the demographic situation in Karabakh would repeat Nakhichevan's case, where the percentage of ethnic Armenians was reduced "from a substantial 40% at the time of the Sovietization of the region to a mere 2%."<sup>34</sup> This reason along with the aforementioned prolonged dissatisfaction from the Armenian side of the situation in Karabakh built a background for the significant escalation of the tensions between two groups by the end of 1980s. De Waal cites the observation of a Moscow official travelling between Azerbaijan and Armenia, when the latter stated that he did not meet an Azerbaijani or Armenian from shepherd to academicians who would be ready for any compromise. Both sides expected that Moscow would rule decisively for one side or another.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, when Moscow did not demonstrate any certain position on the issue, nor could handle it, both sides started openly defying the central authorities. From February 1988 massive turmoil, street violations and the first victims during the stand-off between Armenian and Azerbaijani demonstrators were followed by the Sumgayit pogroms and rapidly led to the conflict militarization.

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<sup>31</sup> Vicken Cheterian (2008): *War and Peace in the Caucasus: ethnic conflict and the new geopolitics*. Columbia University Press, p. 90

<sup>32</sup> From 117,000 Armenians and 13,000 Azerbaijanis in 1926 to the groups numbered 123,000 and 37,000 respectively in 1979

<sup>33</sup> Thomas De Waal (2010): *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, USA, p. 105

<sup>34</sup> Vicken Cheterian (2008): *War and Peace in the Caucasus: ethnic conflict and the new geopolitics*. Columbia University Press, p.91

<sup>35</sup> Thomas De Waal (2010): *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, USA, p. 110

According to Cornell, whereas the Armenians were ready to handle the war by themselves, the Azeris expected Moscow's intervention to the conflict with the desired for Azerbaijan consequences. Therefore, the collapse of the Soviet Union was a catastrophe for Azerbaijan, whose army was much stronger than the Armenian one.<sup>36</sup> The war resulted in 20 000 deaths, more than one million refugees; establishment of the de facto independent but hitherto non-recognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and Armenia's control over the seven surrounding districts. Thus, although never accepting its direct involvement into the conflict the Republic of Armenia, in fact, was one of the conflicting parties. This position was reinforced when Robert Kocharyan entered office as the President of Armenia in 1998<sup>37</sup> and proclaimed that henceforth Nagorno-Karabakh interests would be represented by republic of Armenia.

Before turning to the question of the politics of the both states in the post-war period and the failure of the conflict settlement, also taking into account that this paper has much to do with ordinary people's perception and attitude to this dispute, it is important to touch upon the existing fears of the both groups feeding the continuous hostility between them. For Armenians, as Kaufman puts it, the main fear was being majority in Nagorno-Karabakh but a small minority in Azerbaijan. The similar status of Armenians in Turkey in the beginning of the twentieth century led to the 1, 5 million ethnic Armenians genocide committed by Ottoman Empire. Thus, they feared that the same might happen with them in Karabakh.<sup>38</sup> For Azerbaijanis, as much as for the Armenians, fears were determined by the problem of ethnic domination. Azerbaijanis, again according to Kaufman, were threatened by the relative weakness of their identity as compared to the Armenian one, which represented a direct challenge to their statehood.<sup>39</sup> Even if not precisely in the way Kaufman described it, the deep fears underlying both groups' perception of each other are indeed closely interconnected with their threats to weaken or lose their national identities. These fears along with the memories of the devastating war were to become strong basis for the future hostility and the enemy image formation. At the same time,

<sup>36</sup> Svante E. Cornell (1999): *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*. Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, p. 27

<sup>37</sup> From 1994 till 1997 Kocharyan was the President of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic

<sup>38</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman (2001): *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. Cornell University Press, p. 55

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p.58

it should be mentioned that the 17 years passed so far from the end of the war might be enough to overcome at least part of them, if the elites of two states came to an agreement and started reconciliation politics. However, instead, as the following chapter will indicate, official politics conducted by both states develop nationalist propaganda and this way only feed the hostility preservation.

### ***1.2. Fragile Status Quo and Hostility Dissemination***

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict gradually shifted from intrastate into the interstate, becoming the only Caucasian ethnopolitical conflict, which involves two internationally recognized states as parties. The ceasefire signed between them in 1994 led to the state of a frozen conflict which the parties preserved so far. Diplomatic relations between the two states have not been established, nor has the border been opened. The relations between two states revealed that even in the epoch of globalization lack of any interaction between two closest neighboring societies for almost two decades is absolutely possible. Despite the mediators' constant attempts to settle the scope for the peaceful negotiations, the parties remain highly reluctant to come to some consensus. The information and communication void serves as a good possibility for the interested groups to create and uphold inhuman image of the enemy. In this regard, there are several factors which play the crucial role in the process of the enemy image reinforcement and, correspondingly, deprive the two sides from the efficient peaceful negotiations.

First of all, the military situation on the frontier between Azerbaijan and Armenia remains rather far from stability and security for either side. Observers note the regular breach of the ceasefire on the border. It has been taking place since 1994 and continues to be common regardless of the level of the negotiation process and the number of joint statements signed by the conflicting sides and mediators. International Boundaries Research Unit of the Durham University mentions that skirmishes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces did not decrease even at the time of an advanced stage of negotiations between them, which only derails a potential settlement.<sup>40</sup> In total, 3,000 people have

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<sup>40</sup> "Skirmishes between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops threatens talks on Nagorno Karabakh settlement", *International Boundaries Research Unit, Durham University*, 9 December 2009, (source: [http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/news/boundary\\_news/?itemno=9143&rehref=%2Fibru%2Fnews%2F&resubj=Boundary+news%20Headlines](http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/news/boundary_news/?itemno=9143&rehref=%2Fibru%2Fnews%2F&resubj=Boundary+news%20Headlines), accessed 02.05.2011)

been killed in skirmishes along the boundary line since the May 1994 ceasefire took effect.<sup>41</sup> In February 2011, International Crisis Group released a policy brief named “Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War”. The alarming paper, analyzing the recent development in the relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, indicates that estimation of the both sides’ armed forces reveals their capability of sustaining a protracted war. Evaluating the possibility of easy and quick defeat of any of the sides as unlikely to happen, the paper alerts that constant skirmishes, weapons purchases, belligerent rhetoric and offensive posturing could easily spiral out of control, while it remains unclear whether the parties’ elites thoroughly calculate the potential consequences of a new round of tit-for-tat attacks.<sup>42</sup>

Leaders in Baku and Yerevan indeed seem to fail to realize not only the possible destroying consequences in case of a new war, but also the disadvantages of the current status quo. Armenia finds itself in a geopolitical two-side blockade with the negative economic consequences, having closed borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey.<sup>43</sup> According to Azerbaijani statements, 20% of the country is occupied by Armenian forces, which keeps Azerbaijani authorities highly displeased with the current situation as well.<sup>44</sup> Security dilemma and lack of sustainability deprive the region of the rapid economic development and gradual European integration. In addition, the conflict itself is a ground for the political maneuvers of the world powers and, in particular, Russia, whose presence in and impact on the region can be hardly overestimated. At the same time, both leaders also realize that the existence of the conflict serves as a good excuse to switch society’s attention and mobilization from inner social and economic issues to an external one. In this regard nationalist propaganda and hate speeches by both countries elites play an essential role in keeping the society mobilized against an

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<sup>41</sup> “The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: Still just about frozen”, *The Economist*, March 7, 2011 (source: [http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/03/nagorno-karabakh\\_conflict](http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/03/nagorno-karabakh_conflict), accessed 02.05.2011)

<sup>42</sup> “Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War”, *International Crisis Group*, Europe Briefing # 60, February 8, 2011 (source: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/caucasus/B60-armenia-and-azerbaijan-preventing-war.aspx>, accessed 02.05.2011)

<sup>43</sup> In 1994 in solidarity with Azerbaijan Turkey closed the border with Armenia because of the latter’s control of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding districts.

<sup>44</sup> See Azerbaijani president's speech (source: <http://www.news.az/articles/politics/27561>, accessed 20.04.2011)

“external enemy” and not the government. Since there are numerous cases of hate dissemination driven by both sides, this part of the chapter will analyze the ones which were mostly discussed and widely condemned by international society.

In the 2003 ReliefWeb report, Council of Europe Secretary General Walter Schwimmer called both Azerbaijan and Armenia to refrain from bellicose or hate rhetoric. Reflecting on the former Armenian President, Robert Kocharyan’s statement that Armenians and Azerbaijanis are ethnically incompatible, Schwimmer emphasized that “recalling dark pages of European history will never be a good electoral strategy”, pointing out Kocharyan’s candidacy for the second term presidency.<sup>45</sup> In 2010 the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, Agshin Mehdiyev, addressed to the Secretary-General a letter in which he refers to the aforementioned Kocharyan’s statement and points out the “consistency of the official Yerevan line in conveying the odious ideas of racial superiority and hatred laid down in the State policy of the Republic of Armenia”.<sup>46</sup> The main purpose of the letter was to draw attention of the General Assembly Security Council to the incumbent Armenian President, Serzh Sargsyan’s speech at his meeting with the journalists from Diaspora in October, 2010. In his speech the President emphasized that Azerbaijani “academic humanitarian sciences have become the generators of bellicose proclamations”, while it is getting hard to distinguish “where science ends and puppet show starts”.<sup>47</sup> Touching upon the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh belonging, and deepening into historiography Serzh Sargsyan put a rhetorical question, how “a settlement could have an Azerbaijani name 200-300 years ago?”<sup>48</sup> Such further phrases as “sick fantasies”, “to save their faces, Azeris are

<sup>45</sup> CoE Secretary General warns against hate speech between Armenia and Azerbaijan, ReliefWeb report (source: [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/reliefweb\\_pdf/node-118228.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/reliefweb_pdf/node-118228.pdf), accessed 30.04.2011)

<sup>46</sup> General Assembly Security Council, A/65/534-S/2010/547, 22 October 2010 (source: <http://www.un.int/azerbaijan/pdf/Updates/Letter%20dated%2020%20October%202010%20from%20the%20Permanent%20Representative.pdf>, accessed 10.05.2011)

<sup>47</sup> Remarks by President Serzh Sargsyan at the meeting with journalists from Diaspora, The Official Website of the President of the Republic of Armenia, October 16, 2010 (source: <http://www.president.am/events/news/eng/?id=1252>, accessed 30.04.2011)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

resorting to quasi-rhetoric”, “they feed themselves with these fairytales” are some of the numerous examples of claims, based on hostility and vengeance.

In October 2008 OSCE released a report which states that “Azerbaijan disseminates anti-Armenian propaganda through all possible means – abusing its human and financial resources”.<sup>49</sup> In the paper with the reference to the President Aliyev’s 2008 speech before the Cabinet of Ministers, it is stated that the main concerns are raised by the fact that with time the anti-Armenian propaganda becomes the essential part of Azerbaijan’s official policy.<sup>50</sup> Referring to the 2007 report of CoE Commissioner for Human Rights, the paper cites that “authorities should raise awareness campaigns to avoid social prejudice against Armenians. They should provide proper training for law enforcement agents to avoid any tendency towards discriminatory conduct”.<sup>51</sup> However, Azerbaijani authorities do not seem to follow these recommendations. Moreover, full-scale anti-Armenian propaganda is indeed implemented on all the possible levels. The homepage of the official website of the Embassy of Azerbaijan to the United Mexican States provides a separate section called “Armenian Terror” linking to the page with the description of the conflict and negotiation details.<sup>52</sup> The “Armenian terrorism” section is a also part of the official website of the Azerbaijani Embassy in Poland.<sup>53</sup> In the National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan approximately 9 times (out of 16) the word Armenia has been mentioned in the combination with such expressions as “aggression”, “ethnic cleansing” and “expansionism”. Reuters report, that in May 2009 forty-three Azerbaijanis voted for an Armenian song at the “Eurovision” song contest. One of them, Rovshan Nasirli, said that had been asked by the authorities to explain

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<sup>49</sup> “Anti – Armenian propaganda and hate dissemination carried out by Azerbaijan as a serious obstacle to the negotiation process”, *OSCE*, October 7, 2008, p. 2 (source: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/34195> accessed 20.04.2011)

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4

<sup>52</sup> See official website of the Embassy of Azerbaijan to the United Mexican States: [http://azembassy.mx/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=127&Itemid=155&lang=en](http://azembassy.mx/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=127&Itemid=155&lang=en) (accessed 20.05.2011)

<sup>53</sup> See official website of the Embassy of the republic of Azerbaijan in Poland: <http://azembassy.pl/index.php?section=53> (accessed 20.05.2011)

why he voted for the entry of arch-rival Armenia, while the National Security Ministry blamed him for being unpatriotic.<sup>54</sup>

Along with the claims about “stolen” territories, both sides develop also the idea of the “stolen” music and literature. As it was already mentioned, according to the Azerbaijani interpretation of the conflict, Armenians occupied their territories, while Armenians claim that they liberated historically Armenian territories. The same way each side claims that opposite side stole their culture. In Kaufman’s term, mythmakers create an image of the “other” granting it with the features of a dehumanized offender, which infringed upon the territorial question as well as the cultural heritage. In January 2011 “The Neutral Zone” blog platform of Caucasus Edition: Journal of Conflict Transformation held the interviews with young people in Azerbaijan and Armenia. In Baku respondents were asked two simple questions what they know about Armenian music and literature. The same questions about Azerbaijani music and literature were addressed to the young people in Yerevan. The results revealed that, first, they do not have any idea about the closest neighbor’s culture; second, many respondents from both sides are convinced that the culture of the opposite side is built on the music and literature stolen from them.<sup>55</sup> The presidents of the two states did not hesitate to raise this kind of issues even at the 2010 OSCE Summit in Astana, which aimed at bringing the sides together for a constructive dialogue. Instead, both leaders demonstrate the continuation of the same nationalist policies, traditionally referring to historical events and trying to illustrate each other as the cruel aggressors.<sup>56</sup> In this regard, discussing Mark Saroyan’s term “Karabakh Syndrome”, Cornell mentions that the way in which mirroring nationalism

<sup>54</sup> “Azeri out of tune with Eurovision vote for Armenia”, *Reuters*, August 18, 2008 (source: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/08/18/us-azerbaijan-armenia-eurovision-idUSTRE57H41C20090818>, accessed 23.05.2011)

<sup>55</sup> See Video Survey Part 2: What do you know about Azerbaijani/Armenian literature and music? (source: <http://caucasuseditionblog.wordpress.com/2011/01/01/241/>, accessed 23.05.2011)

<sup>56</sup> See Serzh Sargsyan's speech at <http://www.alplus.am/en/official/2010/12/2/sargsyan> and Full text of Azerbaijani president's OSCE speech at <http://www.news.az/articles/politics/27561> (accessed 23.05.2011)

developed in Azerbaijan and Armenia can be assessed as pathological, as are the atrocities committed during all the stages of the conflict.<sup>57</sup>

It is important to note that hate propaganda leads to the new wave of hostility in both societies, which causes the cases of extremist violence between Azerbaijani and Armenians. As OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights reports, the constant hate dissemination has already resulted in the brutal slaughter of an Armenian officer Gurgen Margaryan during the NATO's Partnership-for-Peace program in Budapest in 2004. He was hacked to death while asleep with an axe by a fellow participant from Azerbaijan Ramil Safarov.<sup>58</sup> Azerbaijani side claimed that the murder was the response to what they call "Genocide of Azerbaijanis in Khojaly" during the conflict escalation in 1990s. Armenians are frustrated with the fact that such officials as an Ombudsman of Azerbaijan, the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe and businessmen treated the murder as the heroic deed and claimed that Ramil Safarov should serve as an example for the Azerbaijani youth.<sup>59</sup>

In the conclusion of the mentioned OSCE report it is stated that "the other regrettable "achievement" of hate dissemination" is the lack of interaction between two societies. In one of his interviews, an Azerbaijani writer Alekper Aliyev has mentioned that German culture was represented in the Soviet Union even during the German classical music concerts and the studies on German philosophers were carried out. Comparing it with Azerbaijani-Armenian relations he put a rhetorical question whether one could imagine Kara Karayev to be

<sup>57</sup> Svante E. Cornell (1999): *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*. Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, p. 29

<sup>58</sup> "Anti – Armenian propaganda and hate dissemination carried out by Azerbaijan as a serious obstacle to the negotiation process", *OSCE*, October 7, 2008, p. 2 (source: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/34195> accessed 20.04.2011)

<sup>59</sup> Responses from Azerbaijani and Armenian sides with the corresponding references are available at Budapest Case: <http://budapest.sumgait.info/responses.htm>, (accessed 24.05.2011)



performed in Armenia, or Aram Khachatryan – in Azerbaijan, and concluded that it is completely impossible.<sup>60</sup>

One of the recent attempts to make a step towards promotion of Azerbaijani-Armenian reconciliation was the initiative of the Yerevan-based Caucasus Center for Peace Initiatives (CCPR) to organize the Azerbaijani films screening in Yerevan. However, the festival called “Stop!” in reference to its attempt to stop ethnic intolerance, failed in the face of strong opposition in the Armenian society. For instance, the youth wing of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutjun declared that the festival is a sign of “disrespect for Armenia and the Armenian people.”<sup>61</sup> The director of the CCPR said to the EurasiaNet the failure happened due to the festival’s venue last-minute refusal to cooperate, but added that “everything is much more deeply-rooted and complicated”<sup>62</sup> It is also interesting to consider a former Armenian ambassador to Canada, Ara Papian’s note that this kind of events have to take place simultaneously on both sides, otherwise the outside world might perceive this initiative as a struggle against existing only in Armenia ethnic intolerance, while it is obviously also the case in Azerbaijan.<sup>63</sup> Putting aside the international perception of the underlying idea of this kind of initiatives, it should be stressed that reconciliation or, at least, the first steps towards it, can be possible in case of both sides’ willingness to support it. The failed film screening in Yerevan might have had a different outcome should a similar one be organized in Baku. Therefore, it is important to look at the problem from the perspective of an assessment of the goals and achievements of those projects which equally involve both sides.

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<sup>60</sup> “Azerbaijan: Artush and Zaur, New Book by Alekper Aliyev, a Gay Love Story Between Armenian and Azerbaijani Published in Baku”(source: <http://gayswithoutborders.wordpress.com/2009/02/19/azerbaijan-artush-and-zaur-new-book-by-alekper-aliyev-a-gay-love-story-between-armenian-and-azerbaijani-published-in-baku/>, accessed 22.05.2011)

<sup>61</sup> “Armenia: Azerbaijani Film Festival Cancellation Doesn’t Stop Controversy in Yerevan”, *EurasiaNet* (source: <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62382>, accessed 24.05.2011)

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

### 1.3. OSCE Minsk Group and Failed Attempts to the Conflict Settlement

According to the number of scholars, such as Jeffrey Z. Rubin, Dean G. Pruitt, and Sung Hee Kim, when the conflicting sides do not demonstrate willingness to move toward an agreement on their own, they can appeal to the third parties, which in their turn might also intervene without a request from the former.<sup>64</sup> In particular, when the sides, like Azerbaijan and Armenia, tend to perceive the conflict through the prism of zero-sum game, when the absolute victory of one side is considered as an absolute loss of the opposite one, third parties, according to Terrence Hopmann, can transform the negotiations from a zero-sum approach toward a problem-solving oriented one.<sup>65</sup> Turning to the issue of mediation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict many analysts compare it to a number of successful cases of mediation around the world, trying to find out the causes which led to the failure of the efficient mediation in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution. De Waal emphasizes that Balkan peace process benefited from a much stronger mediation efforts, while due to the absence of full-fledged Western peacekeepers in any of the Caucasian conflict zone, mediation process in Nagorno-Karabakh faced a number of issues, such as the pure coordination during the war, rivalry between Russian and Western diplomats and Russia's unbalanced excessive involvement into negotiations between the sides, as well as limited resources of the OSCE as the main mediator in this conflict.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, it is important to understand whether the hitherto preserved and extremely unsecured status quo is the result of the conflicting sides' irreconcilable positions or the fault of mediators, which are either not as persistent as they should be, or pursuing their own interests contradicting conflict gradual and peaceful resolution.

<sup>64</sup> Wendy Betts (1999): "Third Party Mediation: An Obstacle to Peace in Nagorno Karabakh", in *SAIS Review* 19 (2), pp. 161-183, p. 167

<sup>65</sup> P. Terrence Hopmann (1998): *The Negotiation Process and the Resolution of International Conflicts*. Columbia, SC, University of South Carolina Press, p. 242.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas De Waal (2010): *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, USA, p. 124

The core mediator of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, OSCE Minsk Group was formatted in the result of the meeting in Helsinki on 24 March 1992 by the forty-nine states of CSCE (now OSCE) and then Budapest Summit of Heads of State or Government, when it was decided to establish a co-chairmanship of Russia, France and USA for the peaceful negotiations. Although the Final Document of the OSCE Budapest Summit outlined Nagorno-Karabakh as a party to the conflict, and a legitimate participant of the negotiations, Karabakh has not been formally presented at those since 1997. A Washington-based political analyst, Armen Kharazian, assessed it as the former Armenian President Robert Kocharyan's long-standing effort to drive Nagorno Karabakh out of the peace talks, while the benefit for either Armenia or Nagorno-Karabakh from this arrangement is unclear.<sup>67</sup> Edward Walker of Stanford University also considers it as an obstacle to the resolution of dispute.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, all the talks and the essential meetings have been taking place according to the Yerevan-Baku negotiations format.

The major meetings throughout 1990s, such as OSCE Lisbon (1996) and Istanbul (1999) were followed by the Minsk Group co-chairs' new two-stage settlement implying demilitarization on the border, military force withdrawals, deployment of international peacekeepers, return of refugees, and the normalization of communications throughout the region.<sup>69</sup> November 1998 agreement for the comprehensive settlement of the conflict and December 1999 co-chairmen's visit to Baku, Stepanakert, and Yerevan likewise the aforementioned efforts did not bring to any agreement between the sides. However, there were several cases when the possibility of a consensus was rather high. In one of his recent interviews to the BBC Russian Service, the first Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan

<sup>67</sup> "The Meyendorff Declaration on Nagorno Karabakh, Interview to Zhamanak Daily", November, 2008 (source: <http://sites.google.com/site/armenkhazian/commentary/the-meyendorff-declaration-on-nagorno-karabakh>, accessed 27.05.2011)

<sup>68</sup> Patricia Carley (1998): Nagorno-Karabakh: Searching for a Solution, Peaceworks No. 25, United States Institute of Peace, (source: <http://www.usip.org/publications/nagorno-karabakh-searching-solution-0#sources>)

<sup>69</sup> "The Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis: A Blueprint for Resolution", A Memorandum Prepared by the Public International Law and Policy Group, May, 2000 (source: <http://www.armeniaforeignministry.com/fr/nk/blueprint.html>, accessed 27.05.2011)

said that in 1997 he and Heydar Aliyev were actually very close to coming to an agreement. However “maximalist” political elites in Armenia insisted that Armenia, as the winning side in the war, should not make any concession. Thus, the proposal, implying the wide authority for Nagorno-Karabakh within the Republic of Azerbaijan was not signed.<sup>70</sup>

In 2000 Aliyev and Kocharyan put forward a new plan, implying the sovereignty of Nagorno-Karabakh in return for big concessions on other issues. It led to the well-known peace conference in Key West, Florida, in April 2001 when the Minsk Group mediators tried to take the plan to a new level. However this time Aliyev face strong opposition in his inner circle; and this plan faded away as well.<sup>71</sup> After the failed negotiations over the “Prague Principles” new framework plan, which the two foreign ministers put forward in 2004, OSCE Madrid Summit has finally took place in 2007, giving the shape to a new peace settlement of the conflict and defining the framework of negotiations up till now. Updated in 2009 the Madrid Principles imply such main provisions as security and self-governance guarantee during the interim status of Nagorno-Karabakh, determination of its final status through the legally-binding expression of will, return of refugees, and return of the surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh districts from Armenian to Azerbaijani control.<sup>72</sup> The principles are still strongly criticized by both sides due to the sides’ perception of the conflict through the prism of zero-sum game. Serzh Sargsyan, emphasizing the precedents of the new states recognition, has recently declared that one of the underlying in the Madrid Principles provision about territorial integrity does not mean the inviolability of borders; otherwise a dozen of new states would not have appeared in the world over the past 20–30 years.<sup>73</sup> Ilham Aliyev seems to

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<sup>70</sup> Perviy Prezident Armenii o raspade SSSR i Karabakhe//The First President of Armenia about the collapse of the Soviet Union and Karabakh, *BBC Russian Service*, April 18, 2011 (source: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/multimedia/2011/04/110415\\_v\\_terpetrosyan\\_int.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/multimedia/2011/04/110415_v_terpetrosyan_int.shtml), accessed 20.05.2011)

<sup>71</sup> Thomas De Waal (2010): *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, USA, p.118

<sup>72</sup> Artak Ayunts (2010): “Madrid Principles: Basis for Conflict Settlement or War?”, in *Caucasus Edition*, August, 2010 (accessed 10.04.2011)

<sup>73</sup> “Territorial Integrity Doesn’t Mean Inviolability of Borders: Sargsyan”, *Epress.am* (source: <http://www.epress.am/en/2011/05/17/territorial-integrity-doesnt-mean-inviolability-of-borders-sargsyan/>, accessed 20.05.2011)

demonstrate willingness to move towards resolution based on the Madrid Principles, however still emphasizes a high possibility of military solution of the conflict, if Minsk Group does not urge Armenia to admit the revised version of the document.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to the complex situation, when the sides preserve their initial positions, the third party mediation remains highly ineffective due to the competition between Russian and Western mediators, “which reduced the amount of leverage that the mediators wielded for moving the parties toward a settlement.”<sup>75</sup> In addition, Russia pursues its own interests and this is why considered to be, in Cornell’s term, a “dishonest broker”.<sup>76</sup> With the return of Russian imperial ambitions during the second term of Putin’s era, Russia started reinforcing its positions in the South Caucasus. Its foreign policy in the South Caucasus aims at intervening into the internal affairs of the South Caucasian states.<sup>77</sup> On the one hand, Russia’s significant presence in Armenian economic, political and military sectors are considered to be a prove of strategic partnership between the two. At the same time, Russia’s relations with Azerbaijan’s biggest ally, Turkey, are rapidly developing. Besides, Russia has close ties with Azerbaijan, especially considering the latter’s development in the energy sector. Finally Russia is obviously not favoring unavoidable deployment of international peacekeeping forces in case of conflict resolution. Thus, on the one hand Russia takes responsibility of the core broker in the conflict, being absolutely reluctant to push any progress towards its resolution.

As a result of the mentioned factors, the situation remains far from any signs of improvement or move towards peaceful resolution. OSCE Minsk Group proved its unwillingness to push the productive peaceful negotiations, while as the International Crisis Group Europe Program Director Sabine Freizer mentioned, any changes in the format of the

<sup>74</sup> “Aliyev urges OSCE MG to make Armenia admit revised Madrid Principles”, *PanArmenian Network* (source: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/49828/>, accessed 20.05.2011)

<sup>75</sup> Wendy Betts (1999): “Third Party Mediation: An Obstacle to Peace in Nagorno Karabakh”, in *SAIS Review* 19 (2), pp. 161-183, 174

<sup>76</sup> Svante E. Cornell (1999): *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*. Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, p. 45

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58

co-chairmanship is unlikely to be changed, at least now.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, despite of a number of meetings hold between the sides, a number of joint statements and declarations, condemnation of the sides' violent rhetoric by international community, there are literally no changes in the relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia since the war ended. What is the most alarming is that the new generation which has never lived peacefully with the current “enemy” is unlikely to imagine that it was and might be possible. While the hostility is fed by nationalist politics of the states, there is a growing possibility of a new mass-led violent escalation of a currently frozen conflict. This is why it is important to look at the alternative methods of the normalization of relations between the two societies, namely grassroots peacebuilding initiatives. For this purpose the next chapter will provide a theoretical framework of the peacebuilding activities on the civil society level in the circumstances of ethnic conflicts and mass hostility.

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<sup>78</sup> “Now Not the Time to Change Karabakh Negotiating Format: Sabine Freizer”, Epress.am, April, 2011 (source: <http://www.epress.am/en/2011/05/30/now-not-the-time-to-change-karabakh-negotiating-format-sabine-freizer/>, accessed 20.05.2011)

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Theoretical Background of Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

A number of the theories explaining the causes of the ethnic violence investigate “fear”, “resentment”, “hatred”, “revenge” and other concepts dealing with the human dimension in the ethnic conflicts. One of them, an emotion-based theory, developed by Roger D. Petersen, provides a comprehensive approach to the analysis of the emotions begetting human beings to fight against each other. The main negative emotions identified in the theory - fear, hatred and resentment are presented as the result of the structural change such as the war<sup>79</sup>. The link between the structural change and emotion formation is characterized by the individual’s conceptualization and evaluation of the constructed reality. It leads to the belief-formation, which in its turn is highly influenced by the information stream.<sup>80</sup> The essential point of the theory is that the emotion, once generated, influences the formation of the information and belief.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, instrumental emotions under the impact of the circling interaction with the belief-formation get reinforced by the selective information. In other words, the group’s fear makes its members to force out any information, but the one about danger or threat. Likewise, hatred begets the group to recall historical facts during discussions.<sup>82</sup> Emotion-based theory explains the causes and phases of the ethnic tensions leading to the violent escalation.

The violent conflict in the “Conflict Dynamic and Conflict Resolution” model (See Figure 1) is placed after the conflict formation and followed by conflict transformation and then social change. However, this is not the only possible path. This sequence, as Ramsbotham et al. mention, can go from the violent conflict not to the conflict

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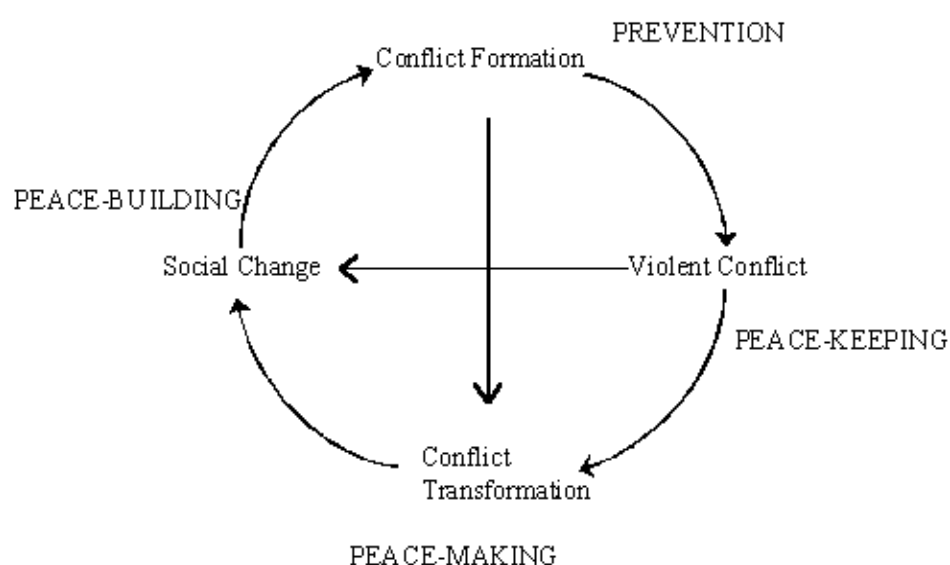
<sup>79</sup> Petersen distinguishes between slow (modernization) and rapid (collapse of Empire, war/occupation, collapse of Social federative State) structural

<sup>80</sup> Roger G. Petersen (2002): *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*. Cambridge University Press, p.22

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

transformation, but back to the creation of a fresh conflict.<sup>83</sup> Connecting this point with the emotion-based theory, it is important to mention that, if in the circumstance of a frozen conflict there is no move to the conflict transformation, then fears, hatred and resentment, caused by and causing hostility dissemination, can lead to the new violent escalation. Therefore, the role of the conflict resolution measures: prevention, peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding becomes decisive in the frozen conflicts, when the sides involved find themselves in a so-called no peace no war state.



**Figure 1.** Conflict dynamic and conflict resolution. Derived from Ramsbotham et al. () Contemporary Conflict Resolution, p. 26

In the light of the conflict resolution efforts, it is first of all important to analyze the role of mediators. Delving into the ways to reduce ethnic tensions, Kaufman suggests a critical analysis of peacemaking, reassurance and peacebuilding. Scholars such as Jacob Bercovitch, Stephen Saideman, John Paul Lederach, Patrick M. Regan, Natalie Tocci and many others researched the conditions of successful and failed mediations, emphasizing the

<sup>83</sup> Ibid



problem of timing and costs of the intervention, the level of democracy in the conflicting states and other objectives determining the process of mediation. Various outcomes of the intervention reveal that there can hardly be a generalized assessment of the third party intervention. However, based on some common features of the mediation for a number of cases, Kaufman claims that ordinary mediation, which he places within the frames of peacemaking, is unlikely to be able to resolve ethnic wars.<sup>84</sup> Referring to Roy Licklider, he argues that in two-thirds of the cases when the settlement was reached through negotiations, the latter collapsed and war resumed.<sup>85</sup> With the reference to a number of scholars Ramsbotham et al. also mention that in the contemporary conflict resolution theories third-party intervention is not as appreciated as the indigenous peacemakers' efforts.<sup>86</sup>

Reassurance is another way to contribute to conflict resolution, which is used only in those cases when the conflicting sides have compatible goals and lack only mutual trust to start reconciliation process. The most popular way to intervene for the third party is through the peacekeeping mission. Kaufman's skepticism about peacekeeping is that it can work only when the parties are ready for the conflict resolution, otherwise they can just ignore the peacekeepers.<sup>87</sup> The key solution to the problem how to make parties ready for the resolution Kaufman sees in the peacebuilding, which he characterizes as an attempt to bring people from opposite sides together in order to overcome negative stereotypes. The main peacebuilding activities add up to providing ordinary people with an opportunity to live together for a certain period of time and discuss the issues which keep them divided.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman (2001): *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. Cornell University Press, p. 41

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall (2011): *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Third Edition, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, p. 28

<sup>87</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman (2001): *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. Cornell University Press, p. 42

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p.43

## 2.2. Sustainable Peacebuilding

For the purpose of a deeper understanding of the mission of peace builders, it is important to elaborate on the interconnection of the concepts “conflict transformation”, “conflict resolution”, as well as “peacebuilding” and “peacemaking”. The Figure 1 above suggests that at the level of the violent conflict there is a need in peacekeeping, while peacemaking is used during/for the conflict transformation and social change, which in its turn, is a result of the peacebuilding. However, as Reyhler puts it, the overall aim of *peacebuilding* is to *transform* conflict constructively which goes beyond a conflict management or settlement.<sup>89</sup> Ho-Won Jeong argues that peacebuilding process should go wider and deeper than such operations as demobilization of armed groups, refugee resettlement, development assistance, and institutional reform; peacebuilding is more about rebuilding a post-conflict society.<sup>90</sup> Paffenholz suggests that “peacebuilding should create conducive conditions for economic reconstruction, development, and democratization as preconditions for legitimate democratic order, but should not be equated and thus confused with these concepts.”<sup>91</sup> Being oriented on the achievement of long-term goals, peacebuilding is often called sustainable. Luc Reyhler et al. explain the sustainable peace not only as the absence of physical violence, but also elimination of any possible forms of discrimination and self-sustainability.<sup>92</sup>

Scholars as Rupesinghe, Francis and Lederach claim that conflict resolution and conflict transformation are separate fields to investigate. Lederach mentions that the former is content-centered, while the latter is focused on the transformation of relations. Comparing the two, he claims that conflict transformation is more valuable, since it aims at long-term

<sup>89</sup> Luc Reyhler “Conceptual Framework” in *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide* (2000) edited by Luc Reyhler and Tania Paffenholz. Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 12

<sup>90</sup> Ho-Won Jeong (2005): *Peacebuilding in Postconflict Societies*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.13

<sup>91</sup> Tania Paffenholz “Civil Society and Peacebuilding” in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: a critical assessment*, edited by Tania Paffenholz. Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 44

<sup>92</sup> Luc Reyhler “Conceptual Framework” in *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide* (2000) edited by Luc Reyhler and Tania Paffenholz. Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 12

settlement.<sup>93</sup> Ramsbotham et al. highlight that despite there is no clear distinction in the literature between the two terms, it still usually addresses the problem of placing conflict resolution within the conflict transformation, since the latter is supposed to be wider and deeper.<sup>94</sup> There is also another approach to the distinction between conflict transformation and conflict resolution. Among the schools within the middle-level theories of peacebuilding Paffenholz suggests that 1) conflict management uses the tool of diplomatic initiatives and aims at bringing the leaders of the conflict parties to negotiation table in order to end the war (this approach is an “outcome-oriented”); 2) conflict resolution aims at revealing and solving the causes of the war and implies the contact between both leaders and societies; 3) complementary school tries to put together the elements of conflict management and conflict resolution schools and stresses that peacebuilding is needed both from the bottom and the top; 4) conflict transformation school recognizes that some conflicts are not resolvable, thus, conflict resolution should be replaced by the term conflict transformation, which, in its turn, aims at transforming deep-rooted armed conflicts into peaceful ones.<sup>95</sup>

However, even given the opposite approaches to the description of the conflict transformation, linking the discourse with the one about peacebuilding characteristics, it might be concluded that while peacemaking is relevant within the scope of conflict resolution, peacebuilding contributes to the conflict transformation and, therefore, should not be assessed by the presence or absence of the violence only. Instead, it should be investigated on the ground of different aspects, such as the groups’ change of attitudes to each other, readiness to overcome the prejudices and willingness to contribute to either reconciliation (if the conflict is formally resolved) or conflict resolution (if it is not resolved on the legal level). The third chapter will describe the cases of peacebuilding initiatives in the circumstances of a formally

<sup>93</sup> John Paul Lederach (2003): *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*. Good Books, p.33

<sup>94</sup> Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall (2011): *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Third Edition, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, p. 28

<sup>95</sup> See *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: a critical assessment*, edited by Tania Paffenholz. Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 51-52

non-resolved conflict. However, before turning to the empirical part of the thesis, it is important to raise other theoretical debates relevant for the scope of this paper.

### **2.3. Contact Hypothesis Theory**

Taking into account that even resolved conflicts leave deep negative traces on the groups' perception of each other, it is important to delve into the debate concerning the conditions and timing best suitable for bringing the groups together. Moreover, since this thesis is based on the research of the unresolved frozen conflict, this question takes an essential place within the framework of peacebuilding efforts discussed above.

One of the approaches to the necessity of the interaction between the parties is supported by a number of scholars, such as Hewstone and Brown, Allport, Saenger and many others. This approach is called "contact hypothesis", which has been developed into the theory by Gordon W. Allport in his famous book "The Nature of Prejudice". Irvin Katz referred to it as to the landmark book which "defined the field of intergroup relations for social psychologists as the study of prejudice and its effects on group interactions."<sup>96</sup> The theory is based on the development of the four necessary conditions for the optimal intergroup interaction: "equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and authority support"<sup>97</sup>. Cook and Seltiz state that in 30 cases of studies almost half of them demonstrated a positive shift of individuals' perception of the out-group members, at the same time in 3 cases there was no significant change in the attitudes.<sup>98</sup> Although many studies proved the contact hypothesis theory to be positive, there are scholars who mentioned that "indiscriminative generalizations may be misleading" and warned against "drawing hasty

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<sup>96</sup> Irvin Katz (1991): Gordon Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* in *Political Psychology*, 12 (12) p. 125

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Pettigrew (1998): "Intergroup Contact Theory" in *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 49, 65-68

<sup>98</sup> Cook and Seltiz (1955): "Some factors which influence the attitudinal outcomes of personal contacts", in *International Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 7, p. 52

conclusions from the available evidence.”<sup>99</sup> More critical approach not only to the theory but the very idea of the necessity of the interaction between the fractured groups is reflected in a statement “good fences make good neighbors”, which basically means that the contact, on the contrary, causes ethnic tensions and leads to violent escalations. As for the reconciliation, through the establishment of the contact, many insist that the attempts to reconcile on the early post-conflict stages might have a directly opposite effect, because deeply traumatized groups are not ready for the peaceful co-existence.<sup>100</sup>

Based on the arguments both supporting and denying the contact hypothesis theory, it should be mentioned that in case with the frozen conflict, both positive and negative effects can be highly expected. The negative outcomes are possible because the sides did not solve the issues of disputed territories, refugees return, mutual grievances are still rooted rather deep in peoples’ memory, while the fears and hostility are constantly fed by extremist politics. On the other hand, 17 years after the war passed, and the generation which usually gets involved in grassroots activities hardly remembers the time of war. In addition, with the developing pace of democracy promotion in the post-Soviet states, more young people get involved in NGO sector, obtain high education abroad and, as a result, get eager to contribute to the democratic peace, regionalization and sustainability values, promoted by the Western soft power. Moreover, exactly for the reason that the agreement between the sides was not reached on the official level, it is important to find out how grassroots peacebuilding initiatives work in the conditions of lack of support from the governments. This question is also strongly connected with the dispute over the peace and justice in the literature.

<sup>99</sup> Yehuda Amir (1969): “Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations” in *Psychological Bulletin*, 71 (5), p. 321

<sup>100</sup> Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall (2011): *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Third Edition, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, p. 248

#### **2.4. *Eternal Debate: Peace or Justice***

In the Journal of Peace research Johan Galtung for the first time introduced the distinction between negative and positive peace. He described negative peace as the absence of violence and absence of war, while positive peace means the high level of integration and interaction between the groups.<sup>101</sup> As Ramsbotham et al. mention this distinction is connected with the relationship between justice and peace.<sup>102</sup> There is a contradiction between peace and justice in terms of the dichotomy whether to deal with the past and let the justice triumph or work towards peace and reconciliation putting aside the grievances and historical facts. Given the fact that the very concepts “peace” and “justice” are rather arguable, the question becomes even more complicated when the sides still have incompatible interests after the war and represent threat to each other. In this case, each of the parties is highly likely to have their own “justice” and a way to prove it. In order to make the achievement of positive peace realistic, the sides should agree on a number of formal/legal issues. Therefore, if the frozen conflict might be described as a negative peace, the shift towards positive one is unlikely without settlement of the “justice” questions. In the hourglass model the same approach is reflected in placing peacebuilding after the agreement and along with such processes as normalization and reconciliation. However, given the framework for peacebuilding and conflict transformation above, this thesis will turn to empirical case in order to find out whether peacebuilding as a long-term fundamental process can lead to the conflict transformation, considering that the latter supposes not only official agreement, but also the change in the attitudes of the conflict sides to each other.

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<sup>101</sup> Johan Galtung (1964): An Editorial. *Journal of Peace Research*, 1 (1), 1-4, p. 2

<sup>102</sup> Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall (2011): *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Third Edition, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, p. 249

## CHAPTER 3: TINY PATH TOWARDS REINTEGRATION

### *3.1. Peacebuilding in the Contemporary Conflict Resolution*

The sustained development of peace research and, correspondingly, peacebuilding was not widely used until the post-World War II, when the first institutions dealing with the conflict and peace issues were established and started flourishing after the end of Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Being first introduced by Joham Galtung 1975, the term “peacebuilding” started proliferating with its rebirth in 1992 UN Secretary-General report, titled “An Agenda for Peace”, which was supposed to define a framework for the international armed conflicts resolution.<sup>103</sup> The fields related to the conflict prevention and resolution varies from the local grassroots efforts up to the world powers’ direct intervention to the conflict zones. It represents such a huge field of study and activity that one could hardly evaluate comprehensively the general tendency in terms of failures and successes. Ho-Won Jeong mentions that the scope of change, as a measure of success or failure, is affected by the diverse peace approaches and criteria. The latter might vary from restoration of a strong government to the reduction of the everyday violence.<sup>104</sup>

Preparation for multicultural environment, trainings on conflict resolution for the young people, cultural exchange programs, human rights and social media seminars are all the activities organized by the civil society and, precisely those organizations which deal with peacebuilding. These and similar peacebuilding efforts have been implemented in a number of civil and ethnic war cases around the world. Kaufman notices that “if ethnic hostility and fear, harnessed by political symbols, are what keep the conflict going, conflict resolution is possible only if those problems are addressed.”<sup>105</sup> And peacebuilders, as it was mentioned in

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<sup>103</sup> Tania Paffenholz “Civil Society and Peacebuilding” in Civil Society and Peacebuilding: a critical assessment, edited by Tania Paffenholz. Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 44

<sup>104</sup> Ho-Won Jeong (2005): Peacebuilding in Postconflict Societies. Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.22

<sup>105</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman (2000): Peace-Building and Conflict Resolution in Nagorno-Karabakh. PONARS Policy Memo 164, p. 2

the previous chapters, bring together the conflicting sides to replace the myths, stereotypes and prejudices about the other side with better information. Despite the fact that peacebuilding activities are still often considered to be ineffective, there are a number of cases which prove the opposite.

Lederach brings an example of Somaliland 1991, when the northwestern part of the country announced its secession. Numerous local peace conferences culminated in the Grand Borama Peace Conference. Throughout the six months of its activity it established a framework for peace, which played a significant role in diminishing the level of violence in Somaliland, as compared to other parts of Somali, where the similar initiatives were not organized.<sup>106</sup>

After the escalation of the separatist conflict in Mali in 1990-1996 a number of agreements signed between Mali government and the two separatist movements revealed they were incapable to resolve the conflict and put an end to the violence. Despite the obstacles and indiscipline of the national army and the armed movements, local peacemaking efforts continued. The reconciliation meetings aimed to meet the needs of communities characterized by levels of interdependence with regard to territory, natural resources and trading venues. The practical results of those and similar meetings included “the re-opening of markets, reduction in armed robbery and greater willingness among ex-combatants to join demobilization camps and turn in their weapons.”<sup>107</sup>

Because most of the literature suggests, that it is easier and more realistic to start peacebuilding activities in the post-conflict societies when the question of “justice” is

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<sup>106</sup> John Paul Lederach (1997): *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC, p.53

<sup>107</sup> Celia McKeon, October (2003) *From the ground up: exploring dichotomies in grassroots peacebuilding*, Conciliation Resources, Paper presented at an international conference on 'Post-conflict, development and peace', organized by the Department of Political Science at the Javeriana University in Bogota, Colombia in November 2003 (source: <http://www.c-r.org/resources/occasional-papers/dichotomies-peacebuilding.php>)



resolved, for the scope of this paper it is important to turn to the examples of the grassroots peacebuilding efforts before the formal settlement of the conflict.

Mozambican organizations, which played a significant role in safeguarding the peace after the peace agreements, are usually brought as one of the bright example of the success of grassroots efforts before the formal peace was established. FOMICRES (Mozambican Force for Crime Investigation and Social Reinsertion) is an NGO which was formally authorized “to collect and destroy weapons after the war, engaged and managed the whole process from beginning to end, including the physical destruction of the weapons”.<sup>108</sup> Mozambique is an example of locally-led disarmament that was both cheaper and larger-scale than the UN-led process that preceded it.<sup>109</sup> Lederach also describes the efforts of the Christian Health Association of Liberia which combined public health programs and postwar trauma activities. This and similar grassroots programs led to the establishment of the environment when people “live in close proximity and continued interdependency with those who were once, and may still be, perceived as enemies.”<sup>110</sup>

Many scholars and politicians still remain rather skeptical to the peacebuilding efforts, however, as shown above, in a number of cases they brought to the positive shift not only in the people’s perception of the former enemy, but also to the practical contribution to the broader context of a conflict resolution. These examples demonstrate the possibility of a shift from nationalistic prejudices to the more peace-oriented environment in the societies which still remain in the frozen conflict circumstances and fed by extremist propaganda.

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<sup>108</sup> Ripples into Waves: locally led peacebuilding on a national scale, Peace Direct and QUNO , p.3

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p.3

<sup>110</sup> John Paul Lederach (1997): Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC, p.55

### ***3.2. Grassroots Peacebuilding Initiatives in the South Caucasus: goals and impact***

Grassroots peacebuilding efforts in the South Caucasus started flourishing along with the development of civil society and NGOs sector in the post-Soviet Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. Armenian UN Association, which involves young people from Azerbaijan and Armenia in different peacebuilding projects, reports:

Currently, young people in both countries lack the communication space to formulate their attitudes towards the NK conflict and its implications, as well as to systematize and discuss the impact of the country-specific and regional contexts on their own lives. Without this opportunity, youth from both sides are unable to fully influence regional development within a conflict sensitive environment where different actors and stakeholder perspectives are allowed.<sup>111</sup>

Many activists involved in peacebuilding initiatives between Azerbaijan and Armenia note that outside the conflict zone, Armenians and Azerbaijanis still peacefully coexist and even speak each other's languages. The interview in Georgian village Mirzoevka with the local inhabitants of Armenian and Azerbaijani ethnicity showed that their children go to the same school, adults help each other with the domestic issues and they barely distinguish each other by ethnicity.<sup>112</sup> Mirzoevka case was investigated by an Armenian peacebuilding activist and posted in the blog of a newly established online journal of conflict transformation "Caucasus Edition" provoked the feedbacks demonstrating that people get inspired by this kind of examples which directly contradict cited in this thesis expression by the former Armenian President, Robert Kocharyan about incompatibility of Azerbaijani and Armenian nations. Interviews with the participants of the grassroots peacebuilding initiatives revealed that numerous analytical and reflective articles posted in the Caucasus Edition is the result of the peacebuilding projects for Armenian and Azerbaijanis, where they share their vision of the

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<sup>111</sup> Armenian UN Association Official Website:

[http://www.auna.am/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=25&Itemid=34&lang=en](http://www.auna.am/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=25&Itemid=34&lang=en)

<sup>112</sup> See Armenia-Azeri Coexistence: The Mirzoevka Phenomenon (source:

<http://caucasuseditionblog.wordpress.com/2011/04/15/armenia-azeri-coexistence-the-mirzoevka-phenomenon/>)

global challenges in the world and approaches to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution. Some respondents mentioned that not only were they positively influenced by an explored possibility of cooperating with the ethnic out-group members, but also posted some joint articles either about their own experience of the participation or the vision of the conflict resolution.<sup>113</sup> What is important to mention as well is that according to some of the respondents, they get inspired by these projects or the posts, some of which in their turn are also a positive outcome of the joint projects on the conflict resolution or the political issues discussions. In 2010 a UK journalist and blogger prepared the project called “Conflict Voices” with the several publications by Azerbaijani and Armenian young people on such issues as the problems with media in both countries, the perspectives of a peaceful coexistence, personal reflections about displacement and similar ones.<sup>114</sup> The author mentions that since the media does not report on such stories either in Azerbaijan or Armenia, the role of the social media and blogosphere rises significantly.<sup>115</sup>

The interviews were held with the organizers and participants of the two projects between Azerbaijan and Armenia: Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation and Model Caucasus Parliament. The participants of the first conflict resolution-oriented project faced more challenges in overcoming the stereotypes when they were supposed to talk about historical past and the conflict itself.<sup>116</sup> However despite some tensions, participants were ready to listen to each other, without blaming and offending, but trying to explain own position.<sup>117</sup> The director of the project, Philip Gamaghelyan, emphasizes that the mission of

<sup>113</sup> See examples at Caucasus Edition, , Vol. 9 (1), December 1, 2010 (source: <http://caucasusedition.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Volume-9-Issue-1--December1-2010.pdf>)

<sup>114</sup> See Conflict Voices, Volume 1, December 2010 ([http://issuu.com/onewmphoto/docs/conflict\\_voices\\_december\\_2010?mode=a\\_p&wmode=0](http://issuu.com/onewmphoto/docs/conflict_voices_december_2010?mode=a_p&wmode=0))

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p.3

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Armenian resident Karapet Muradyan

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Azerbaijani resident Rashad Aliyev

the Imagine Center is to positively transform inter-societal relations and lay foundations for lasting and sustainable peace in conflict-torn societies.<sup>118</sup>

In the second project participants were supposed to model the parliament which would consist of the representatives of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. Many participants mentioned also purely individual reasons of some tensions, while the whole atmosphere in both projects supposed dialogue and cooperation. The director of the program, Gayane Sargsyan mentions that although MCP is not about conflict resolution, it's about cooperation, developing common skills/values that could transform the conflict due to time. The project does not directly address Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and reconciliation, but focuses on the regional cooperation.<sup>119</sup> Some participants of this program mention, that they realized that can work together and even cooperate.<sup>120</sup>

The organizers of both projects elaborated that the four conditions of the Allport's contact hypothesis theory were fulfilled. It means that given the well-moderated environment and selection of motivated young people to cooperate bring to the fulfillment of the goals of the program.

Being put in a broad context of conflict resolution, these projects do not seem to provide any significant shift in both societies' perception of each other. However, it should be considered that these projects are rather new and already show a spill-over effect in terms of successful cases reflection in social media, creation of new projects and that former participants start initiating and developing their own projects.

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<sup>118</sup> Interview with Philip Gamaghelyan, Co-Director of "Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation"

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Gayane Sargsyan, MCP Co-Director

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Emin Mammadli, resident of Azerbaijan

## Conclusion

Grassroots peacebuilding initiatives take either the lower or the medium place in the hierarchy of the conflict resolution actors and institutions. They are not that powerful as the governmental organizations and often lack resources and face the opposition from the governmental structures. Many scholars usually mention these efforts as the complementary but never decisive in the process of the conflict resolution. When it comes to the South Caucasus, where the clan politics, corruption as well as not free and not fair elections still play the key role in politics and social life of the state, it becomes clear why people do not believe in the success of the peacebuilding on the grassroots level. At the same time, in the conditions of a frozen conflict, when the hostility dissemination is conducted by the authorities both in Azerbaijan and Armenia, there is a growing need of putting the problem of conflict resolution in a broader context. It means that putting aside the problem that “negative peace” does not seem to be pushed towards a “positive” one, there are also concerns about Azerbaijani and Armenian nations being able to peacefully coexist again. Considering the cases of violent accidents between Azerbaijanis and Armenians as a result of mass hostility and extremist propaganda in both countries, it is important to look at the problem from the perspective of conflict transformation, which is, according to a number of scholars, wider and deeper than the conflict resolution. While the latter is more about legal settlements, which have to be implemented on the elites’ level, the former is about transforming people’s attitude towards each other as the basis for any further structural social changes.

Therefore, given the fact that elites remain reluctant to come to an agreement and main broker, Russia, pursues own interests in the region and precisely is interested in the status quo preservation, it is important to look at the alternative ways of making the positive shift in people’s perception of each other and societies’ peace orientation.

In this regard, the interviews with the organizers and participants of the two projects organized for Armenian and Azerbaijani youth revealed that under the conditions suggested by Allport's theory, groups can become ready to cooperate, and the ability to cooperate provokes the positive shift in their perception that, first, the cooperation is possible and, second that the opposite side is not that cruel and dehumanized as it is described in the both countries.

## APENDIXES

### *Appendix 1. Questionnaire 1*

*This questionnaire is created to serve as a data for the analysis of the role of grassroots programmes between Azerbaijani and Armenian youth. It will be used in MA thesis at International Relations and European Studies Department at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary.*

*Please reply the questions below. There is no word limit for any of the questions, and detailed answers are appreciated. Should you have anything to add please feel free to use the space below your answers. Thank you.*

Full Name:

Occupation:

Name of the Programme:

1. How did you come to the idea of initiating this programme?
2. What is the global goal of the initiative in the perspective? How do you see your mission?
3. What is the key difference (if any) between this project and the similar ones held for Azerbaijani and Armenian youth?
4. How many workshops did you already have with the participation of Azerbaijani and Armenian youth?
5. Which are the main achievements and remained difficulties so far? What were the “lessons” of the first project? Did you succeed to fulfill the gaps (if any) in the next programme(s)? How did you do that?
6. Do you think that the following criteria were fulfilled during the programme? Please specify which ones (if any). Which one do you think played the most important role?
  - a) All the conditions throughout the programme were equal for delegations from both countries
  - b) There were tasks for the groups comprised of participants from both delegations, so that each group had a common goal which they had to achieve together
  - c) Besides the tasks they could work on together, there were also opportunities for interpersonal interaction

- d) There was some regulation or authority which is recognized by both delegations (maybe, sponsor institution; some international law provisions; distinguished trainers, etc.)<sup>121</sup>

Please indicate also those factors which you consider to be important during the programme but not listed or being slightly different from the ones above.

7. How do you think this project might contribute to the global process of reconciliation and conflict resolution?

Please indicate if you would prefer to have not mentioned your full name in the written work.

Thank you for your time!

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<sup>121</sup> These are the four principles suggested by Gordon Allport in his contact hypothesis theory



## Appendix 2. Questionnaire 2

*This questionnaire is created to serve as a data for the analysis of the role of grassroots programs between Azerbaijani and Armenian youth. It will be used in MA thesis at International Relations and European Studies Department at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary.*

*Please reply the questions below. There is no word limit for any of the questions, and detailed answers are appreciated. Should you have anything to add please feel free to use the space below your answers.*

Full Name:

Age:

Country:

1. What is the name of the programme you participated in?
2. Why did you decide to participate in it; what was your motivation?
3. What were the negative and positive aspects/outcomes of the programme in general (for example: weak moderation or any accidents between young people? productive communication/efficient team work during the workshop?)
4. Did you learn anything about Armenian culture? Do you think that awareness of the culture of any country plays any role in the perception of the nationals of that country?
5. Do you think that without having the conflict resolved these programs might produce any shift in young people's perception of each other? If yes, how do you see this shift's influence on the conflict resolution?
6. If there was any positive shift in yourself, please specify as detailed as you can what exactly provoked it (for example: somebody's speech, any task you had to work on, informal talk to someone, overall observation of the process, etc.)
7. Do you keep any connection with the participants from Armenia/Azerbaijan?

Please indicate if you would prefer to have not mentioned your full name in the written work.

Please also mention whether you will be available for any additional questions/clarifications via email or Skype.

Thank you for your time!

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