

Challenges and opportunities for peacemaking in the

Nagorno Karabakh conflict

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Abstract

Nagorno Karabakh conflict is an ethno-territorial conflict between Azerbaijan and an Armenian populated region on Nagorno Karabakh. Often described as a frozen conflict it can explode any second. Although a cease-fire was signed in 1994 and negotiations held ever since the conflict is not yet solved and moreover it is in the worst state since the signing of the ceasefire agreement. The recent 4-day war in the beginning of April 2016 changed the dynamics and importance of the conflict. By using several conflict analysis tools and theories the paper will discuss the conflict in details, particularly from the geopolitical, political and socio-cultural aspects. And by using interviews with former and current peacemakers I will evaluate the current state of the conflict and point out peacemaking opportunities as well as the challenges to overcome in order to achieve peace.

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Introduction

Nagorno Karabakh used to be an autonomous region within the territory of Azerbaijani SSR with ethnic Armenians as the majority of the population. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the conflict transformed into a full-scale war between Azerbaijan and local Armenian forces supported by the Republic of Armenia. After 3 years of fighting, a cease-fire agreement was reached in 1994 in Bishkek, leaving Nagorno Karabakh and surrounding territories under the control of Armenian forces. A negotiation process started to solve the issue with peaceful measures. Since 1992 the OSCE (CSCE at the time) Minsk Group was established to mediate peace and promote peaceful solution of the conflict. The three co-chairs of the Minsk Group US, Russia and France (representing EU) are trying to negotiate peace for over 20 years. So far there were no any positive breakthroughs in the negotiation process. Over the past decade the situation got worse. If 20 years ago cease-fire violations were a rarity, then now it is a daily routine. Many possible scenarios of development are on the table, including the restart of a full-scale war. One thing is clear: the government of Armenia and Azerbaijan are not ready and capable to solve the issue. Thus the only segment that still can influence the peaceful solution is the Track 2 or Civil society.

One of the main aims of this paper is to evaluate the current situation with regard to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict on political and social levels. And by doing so to assess the obstacles and the opportunities for peacemaking, peace building or confidence building initiatives.

The thesis will start with a background on the Nagorno Karabakh issue. Looking back to the history will help to find several deeply rooted issues in the context.

The second chapter of the research will be the assessment of the negotiation process. At times seemingly optimistic the negotiation process could not succeed for more than 20 years. By

analyzing the reasons behind the failure of the process I would assess the main obstacles for the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Third chapter would have a detailed look at one of the main obstacles – public opinion. The analysis of the changes in the public opinion will give us an idea about the main threats as well as opportunities.

The fourth part of the research will concentrate on the opportunities that can be used in order to achieve peace. By using the theory of violence triangle by Johan Galtung I will try to identify the roots of the violence in the conflict and based on that I will assess the democratic peace theory as a possible step forward for the peace process and reduction of violence.

Lastly, I will use all the information above to assess the current situation with peacemaking and to shed light on the challenges and opportunities for further peace initiatives, I will also make some suggestions for the future projects.

Literature Review

Often overlooked and forgotten the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh is still an unresolved issue near the boundaries of Europe, a ticking bomb that can explode every minute. The cease-fire agreement signed in 1994 and further mediation and negotiations did not solve the conflict and did not end up with a signed peace agreement between the parties involved. Growing tensions and impatience from both sides as well as the lack of breakthrough in negotiations and mediation, can make the Nagorno Karabakh conflict explode every second. In this circumstances the need for peacemaking and conflict resolution is priceless and should be carried by the society as the governments and mediators do not give any results.

History and the reasons of the conflict

There is a big number of literature devoted to the history of Nagorno Karabakh and of the conflict itself. I am not going to present the many versions of the history of the region. In a nutshell the main debate in the historical perspective is the one between Armenians and Azerbaijanis who raise the question of who was there first, whose land Nagorno Karabakh is?¹

There are many suggestions on the reasons that led to the outbreak of this violent conflict. Many scholars discuss the USSR decision to transfer the Nagorno Karabakh region to Azerbaijani SSR as an Autonomous oblast. Vicken Cheterian argues that this decision was seen as an injustice by the Armenians, the latter would complain about the lack of educational materials in Armenian, lack of Armenian TV and radio broadcast from Yerevan and the less amount of public investment to NKAO (Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous oblast) compared to other parts of Azerbaijani SSR.²

Stuart J. Kaufman suggests that fear was one of the driving factors of the outbreak and the violence. The fear of Armenians of being a majority in NK but a minority in Azerbaijan. In this situation Armenians were afraid that there can be another Armenian Genocide. While the Azerbaijani fear was the relative weakness of the Azerbaijani identity compared to the Armenian one.³

In the current thesis I will discuss the reasons of the conflict more thoroughly. The war took lives of more than 25.000 people and left almost 1 million refugees and IDPs. After

¹Thomas De Waal, *The Caucasus an Introduction* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=578795>.

²Vicken Cheterian, *War and Peace in the Caucasus: Ethnic Conflict and the New Geopolitics* (New York: Columbia University, 2008).

³Stuart J Kaufman, *Ethnic Fears and Ethnic War in Karabagh* (Cambridge, MA: Program on New Approaches to Russian Security, Davis Center for Russian Studies, Harvard University, 1998).

the Bishkek protocols on cease-fire were signed international mediators tried to mediate a peace agreement. The main mediator was the OSCE Minsk Group, which is the only internationally mandated and approved format by all the sides.

There is a big debate whether mediation was/is helpful in the context of Nagorno Karabakh. In theory, as Terrence Hopmann suggests, third parties involved can be very helpful in a case if the government and officials play a zero-sum game, where the total loss of one side means a total win for the other side (that is the case with Nagorno Karabakh conflict). The third side intervention can help to transform the zero-sum game into a problem solving prism.⁴ However, Lederach suggests that most often the people in the setting are not the problem and the outsider and mediation is not the answer. In order to transform the conflict in a long term we need to build on the people within the setting.⁵

All this in theory, but the practice in Nagorno Karabakh is a bit different. Thomas de Waal suggests that the third party intervention does not help the mediation. Comparing the NK with Bosnia, he says that the lack of western peacekeepers and the over involvement of Russia, as well as the clash of west and Russia hinders the mediation and peace process.⁶

All in all it is evident that the mediation efforts did not give any positive results so far. Moreover, after the signing of the cease-fire the continuing cease fire violations on the border make it hard for the peacemakers and mediators to work on the issue. According to the report by International Crisis Group over 3000 people were killed on the contact line between Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan after the Bishkek protocols were signed. And the situation and the frequency of cease fire violation is getting worse. The recent outbreak in the

⁴P. Terrence Hopmann, *The Negotiation Process and the Resolution of International Conflicts* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

⁵John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1995).

⁶Thomas De Waal, *Black Garden Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York; London: New York University Press, 2013), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10700276>.

beginning of April, which was labelled a “4-day war”, took lives of more than 200 servicemen and dozens of civilians from both sides.

There are many reasons why the conflict is not solved yet and why there is no peace agreement after more than 20 years of negotiation and mediation. Some suggest that prolonging the conflict is a self-lying mechanism from the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Armenian officials hope that by prolonging the status quo would lead to recognition of Nagorno Karabakh, while Azerbaijanis believe that the oil money would help them to achieve military superiority and strike when the moment is right.⁷ Others suggest that the elites in both countries have great economic benefits from the conflict and they use the status quo to stay in power.⁸ Some suggest that the Minsk Group is not courageous enough to point out the obvious non-constructive approach of the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan.⁹ The alliances in the region such as Russian support for Armenia and Turkish support for Azerbaijan, as well as other countries interests in the region is also seen as a factor of polarization and further movement away from peace.¹⁰

However the peacemaking initiatives were always there, not always effective but still important. There are many approaches on peacemaking and many suggestions on how to carry on and make it more effective. Many prominent peacemakers working on the issue had their vision on the process. For example, ArzuGeybullayeva suggests that the usage of media and new technologies can help the isolated societies come together and make contact which

⁷Anar Valiyev, “Nagorno Karabakh: Twenty Years under Damocles Sword,” n.d.

⁸Behlül Özkan, “Who Gains from the ‘No War No Peace’ Situation? A Critical Analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict,” *Geopolitics* 13, no. 3 (August 18, 2008): 572–99, doi:10.1080/14650040802203919.

⁹Thomas de Waal, “Remaking the Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Process,” *Survival* 52, no. 4 (September 2010): 159–76, doi:10.1080/00396338.2010.506830.

¹⁰Tracey German, “The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia: Security Issues in the Caucasus,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 32, no. 2 (June 2012): 216–29, doi:10.1080/13602004.2012.694666.

will help the confidence building.¹¹ While others like Phil Gamaghelyan suggest that the aspect of identity, politics and scholarship should be examined more in search of the way out.¹² Irina Ghaplanyan suggests that the only way to make the elites break the deadlock is to engage and empower the civil society and to put pressure on the officials.¹³ Many other suggestions were made, including the engagement of the journalists to objectively cover the conflict, the common work of historians to establish the objective history, cross-cultural exchanges etc.¹⁴

Some scholars suggest the change of the role of OSCE Minsk Group. Ruben Harutunian suggests, that the role should be changed and the Minsk Group should become the co-signers of the negotiated agreement in order to ensure a long lasting peace development.¹⁵

Whatever the approaches are, two things are evident. First, that on the official level the peace agreement is unachievable at the moment. Second, the engagement of society/ societies is crucial in terms of achieving peace and preventing an outbreak of another bloody war.

There are several misconceptions about Nagorno Karabakh war. First, it is seen as a “frozen conflict”.¹⁶ The recent escalation in April 2016 showed that the conflict is nowhere

¹¹Arzu Geybullayeva, “Nagorno Karabakh 2.0: How New Media and Track Two Diplomacy Initiatives Are Fostering Change,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 32, no. 2 (June 2012): 176–85, doi:10.1080/13602004.2012.694663.

¹²Phil Gamaghelyan, “Rethinking the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Identity, Politics, Scholarship,” *International Negotiation* 15, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 33–56, doi:10.1163/157180610X488173.

¹³Irina Ghaplanyan, “Empowering and Engaging Civil Society in Conflict Resolution: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh,” *International Negotiation* 15, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 81–106, doi:10.1163/157180610X488191.

¹⁴Gayane Novikova, *The Nagorno Karabakh Conflict : In Search of the Way out* (Yerevan : Amrots Group, 2004, n.d.).

¹⁵Ruben Harutunian, “The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Moving from Power Brokerage to Relationship Restructuring,” *International Negotiation* 15, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 57–80, doi:10.1163/157180610X488182.

near to be classified as frozen. Second it should not be discussed and seen as a simple “clash of civilizations”.¹⁷ Although the war is between Muslim Azerbaijan and Christian Armenians, this is not a clash of civilizations, as neither Nagorno Karabakh, nor Azerbaijan put religion as a pillar of their politics. Also the stance of some regional actors of the conflict show the opposite. For example Iran’s more or less pro-Armenian stance shows that the “civilization” aspect is out of this conflict. Moreover the recent attempts of peacemaking were aimed at inclusion of religious leaders from both sides. The third misconception is the fact that some scholars argue that “Elite manipulation” has become a myth and is not existent in this world anymore.¹⁸ Nagorno Karabakh conflict is the evidence that elite manipulation is still functional in the modern world. Although the conflict started and escalated mostly with bottom up approach, later developments proved the opposite, especially after the election of Ilham Aliyev as a president of Azerbaijan, the elite manipulation factor cannot be overlooked. The Ramil Safarov case and the media freedom downfall that I will discuss later in the paper are just some examples of elite manipulation presence in the conflict.

Theoretical approaches to peacebuilding and conflict resolution

In academia there is a clear distinction between peacebuilding and conflict resolution. With most scholars arguing that peacebuilding goes beyond conflict management or settlement as it is a constructive transformation of a given conflict.¹⁹ Ho-Won Jeong suggests that peacebuilding goes beyond demobilization, resettlement of refugees,

¹⁶Elena Pokalova, “Conflict Resolution in Frozen Conflicts: Timing in Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Journal of Balkan & Near Eastern Studies* 17, no. 1 (March 2015): 68–85, doi:10.1080/19448953.2014.986378.

¹⁷Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Penguin Books India, 1997).

¹⁸John A. Hall, *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹⁹Luc Reyhler and Thania Paffenholz, *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).

institutional reforms, it is more about rebuilding the post-conflict society.²⁰ And sustainable peace is not only about the absence of violence but also a presence of non-discriminatory relations and self-sustainability.²¹ And in these circumstances conflict transformation is much more valuable than the conflict resolution, as it is aimed to a long term resettlement of the conflict and post conflict societies.²²

As established above, the engagement of society is crucial for the resolution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict. But first, let us discuss some theoretical approach to peacemaking on the societal or so called grassroots level.

In the theory of conflict resolution there are many discussions on grassroots politics, the assumption that grassroots and especially grassroots leaders can be a key tool to conflict resolution is widely discussed in conflict resolution literature. Scholars like Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, Hugh Miall and others suggest that these efforts can only be successful if there is a support from government officials and there are negotiations on the official level, and if there are no elements of these the grassroots politics will fail.²³ However the proponents of the theory, like John Paul Lederach, say that this approach can indeed be successful, bringing the examples of Bosnia, Croatia, Rwanda and Somali Lederach shows the efficiency of grassroots conflict resolution.²⁴

²⁰Ho-Won Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Postconflict Societies: Strategy and Process* (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner, 2005).

²¹Thania Paffenholz, *Civil Society & Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010).

²²John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2003).

²³Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary conflict resolution: the prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2011).

²⁴John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace : Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C. : United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997, n.d.).

In addition to Lederach's theory Stuart Kaufmann suggests that even when there is no interaction on official level and no consensus between sides, the contact should be maintained, the intergroup negotiations and confidence building should always exist and always reassure that there is a possible for peace. This kind of contact and people to people interaction should help the groups get rid of prejudice toward one another.²⁵

Talking about prejudice Gordon Allport mentions that the contact between groups are likely to change their hostile prejudice toward each other. The proponents of this so called "contact hypothesis" – Brown, Hewstone, Allport, Saenger – suggest to bring the groups together and maintaining the necessary conditions in/for interaction, which are a) equal status between group b) common goals c) intergroup cooperation and d) authority support would help to get rid of prejudice.²⁶ In the meantime the opponents, such as Woodhouse and Ramsbotham, suggest that this generalization is misleading and making the groups meet each other just after a war or large-scale violence, when members of the groups are still traumatized, can be destructive to further peace processes and conflict resolution.²⁷

Having all the above in mind, I will evaluate the current situation in Nagorno Karabakh context and will try to find the gaps where peacemaking on the grassroots level can be effective and crucial for the settlement of Nagorno Karabakh issue.

²⁵Stuart J Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001).

²⁶Gordon W Allport and Mazal Holocaust Collection, *The Nature of Prejudice*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1954).

²⁷Tom Woodhouse and Oliver Ramsbotham, *Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution* (London; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2000).

Chapter one: Conflict Background

Nagorno Karabakh issue before “Perestroika”

The modern history of Nagorno Karabakh conflict starts in 1918. In May 1918 a Transcaucasian Federation which was established five weeks earlier collapsed, and as a result of that the three republics of the – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were established. After the establishment of the independent republics Armenia and Azerbaijan a war started, which despite the diplomatic intervention from Britain lasted up until 1920. Most of the territorial clashes were for the regions of Syunik (Zangezur), Nakhichevan and Nagorno Karabakh. In May 1919 Dro (Drastamat Kanayan) had several victories in Nakhichevan and established Armenian control.²⁸ While the highlight of Azerbaijani victory was the capture of Nagorno Karabakh's center of Shushi in March 1920. After capturing the city the Azerbaijani forces expelled or killed all the Armenians living in the city.²⁹ After a rather short independent existence of the two republics Soviet forces established its control first in Azerbaijan in April, then in Armenia in November of 1920. Following the establishment of the Soviet power in the region several questions arose concerning the territories of future Soviet Republics. The territories in question included Zangezur, Nakhichevan and Nagorno Karabakh. With a decision mainly influenced by Stalin, Nakhichevan went under the control of Azerbaijani SSR, while Zangezur or Syunik was left under the control of Armenian SSR. However the issue of Nagorno Karabakh was more complicated. There were several decisions concerning the status of NK. Firstly, on 4 July 1921 the Caucasian Bureau of Russian Communist Party made a decision to transfer the NK region under the control of Armenian SSR, but a day later influenced by Joseph Stalin's intervention and Moscow's immediate pressure the decision

²⁸Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia: The First Year, 1918-1919* (University of California Press, 1971).

²⁹Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia and Karabagh : The Struggle for Unity*, Minority Rights Publications (London : Minority Rights Group, c1991, n.d.).

was altered and Nagorno Karabakh region was transferred to Azerbaijani SSR control as an autonomous region. On 7 July 1923 the Central Executive Committee of Soviet Azerbaijan published a decree on the establishment of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) with Khankendi (Stepanakert) as its capital and declared it as a constituent part of the Soviet Azerbaijan.³⁰ The territory of NKAO was consciously separated from the territory of Armenian SSR by so-called Lachin corridor. The geographical and political status of Nagorno Karabakh never changed up until the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is important to note that the composition of the population of Nagorno Karabakh did not change significantly during this period and the Armenians remained the predominant majority of Karabakh's population.³¹

Armenians were devastated by the decision as they saw it as an unjust act by the Soviet leadership, which basically gave the Armenian populated territory to Azerbaijani SSR on the grounds of economic connection of NK region to Azerbaijani SSR. In these circumstances Armenians and Armenian SSR tried to raise the question of re-evaluation of the status of Nagorno Karabakh. Even under the iron rule of Joseph Stalin attempts were made to raise this question. In 1926-1927 Armenian emigres circulated leaflets in Karabakh demanding the Armenian leadership to address the issue.³² In 1936 Armenian Communist Party First Secretary Aghasi Khanjyan raised the issue again and was assassinated after that.³³ There were several other attempts in 1945 and 1949 with no results. After the death of Stalin came the era of dissident nationalism in Soviet Union. Within the acceptable rules Armenians raised the question of Nagorno Karabagh again and again. The first wave of petitions and letters to

³⁰Dr Ohannes Geukjian, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabagh and the Legacy of Soviet Nationalities Policy* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2013).

³¹“Демоскоп Weekly - Приложение. Справочник статистических показателей,” accessed November 30, 2015, http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_26.php?reg=2304.

³²Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*.

³³Mark Malkasian, *“Gha-Ra-Bagh!”: The Emergence of the National Democratic Movement in Armenia* (Detroit, Mich: Wayne State University Press, 1996).

Moscow started in the 1960s. One of those petitions sent by the Armenian population of NK sparked a violent demonstration in 1963.³⁴ After that in 1965 while Armenians were commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the demonstrators were shouting “Our land” referring to NK.³⁵

The next wave of petitions and letters came in 1970s. The endorsement of the 1977 federal constitution was seen as an opportunity to change the decision of 1923 and a petition was signed by 100.000 Armenians asking Leonid Brezhnev to change the decision and attach NK to Armenia. This petition was also denied in the name of socialism, indivisibility and the “rights” of the autonomous regions.³⁶

The demonstrations and demands of NK transfer was not only based on the unjust decision made in 1923, but also by the fact that Armenian of Nagorno Karabakh lived in a more or less oppressed state. Education in Armenian language was not available in NK and Armenian history was not taught at all. Armenians of the region had to live it to get an education in Armenian and upon returning were discriminated against in job market, as every hiring decision was made by Baku.³⁷ Not only culturally but also economically NK was discriminated, it was the most underdeveloped region of Azerbaijan with the poorest infrastructure.

³⁴Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*.

³⁵Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

³⁶Malkasian, *Gha-Ra-Bagh!*

³⁷Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*.

“The Karabakhi Movement”

In 1985-1986 Mikhail Gorbachev launched his politics of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness). This gave more opportunities for expression and demands. Throughout 1987 several protests started in Yerevan concerning the work of the Nuclear reactor functioning in Armenia. But what started as an environmental movement soon became a movement for demanding the transfer of NKAO to Armenian SSR. The first outbreak of violence started around this period. In October 1987 in an Armenian populated village of Chardakhlu, the local Azerbaijani party boss decided to punish the Armenian population of the village with a “punitive raid”. As a reaction to this incident Armenians began driving Azerbaijanis from Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, as a result hundreds of Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia went to Azerbaijan and became a catalyst for deadly violence.³⁸

One of the turning points of these movements and demonstrations was the session held by the Regional Soviet of NKAO on 20 February 1988. 110 out of total 140 deputies voted for the adoption of a resolution demanding “the transfer of NKAO from Azerbaijani SSR to Armenian SSR.”³⁹ This demand was quickly rejected by the Politburo. The rejection drew more people to the streets of Yerevan: up to one million people took part in demonstrations.

The escalation of the deadly violence started immediately after the NKAO Regional Soviet decision. On February 22nd thousand Azerbaijanis in Aghdam organized and started to march toward the Askeran district of NK. The violent march and the intervention of the Soviet Police resulted in clashes that left 2 Azerbaijanis dead and 50 Armenian villagers, as well as number of Azerbaijanis and police injured.⁴⁰

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Robert Krikorian and Joseph Masih, *Armenia: At the Crossroads* (Routledge, 2013).

⁴⁰*Report on the USSR*. (RFE/RL, Incorporated, 1989).

As a result of these escalating ethnic tensions on 27 February 1988 in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait ethnic cleansings against the city's Armenian inhabitants were carried out by Azerbaijanis, resulting in the death of more than 30 Armenians.⁴¹ The clashes involved the Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia who were the ones to spark the hatred. Armenians were dragged out from their homes, killed and burned alive.⁴² All these happened with the silent agreement of the local officials, who did nothing to stop the violence. The Sumgait events left a big scar in Armenian memory. Following these events European Parliament issued a resolution condemning the massacres against Armenians living in Sumgait and recognized the illegal annexation of Nagorno Karabakh to Azerbaijan in 1923.⁴³ After the Sumgait events, it was obvious that it will be hard to stop ethnic clashes, so both Armenians from Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis from Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh started to flee.

Trying to solve the growing tensions and satisfy the demands of Karabakh population, The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union rejected the unification of NK and Armenian SSR, but admitted that many cultural and economic reforms need to be done/should be carried out in NK.⁴⁴ But this decision was not helpful at all, as the money that had to be transferred to Nagorno Karabakh was to be channeled by Baku, which was notoriously corrupt and biased toward Armenians.⁴⁵ Not satisfied with the decision and with the lack of real steps Armenians went protesting again. On June 15 1988 falling under the pressure of 700.000 people, who gathered in Yerevan for protests, The Armenian Supreme Soviet endorsed the decision of 20 February 1988. This decision was based on the 1977 Soviet

⁴¹David Remnick, "Hate Runs High in Soviet Union's Most Explosive Ethnic Feud," *The Washington Post*, September 6, 1989, <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-1210234.html>.

⁴²De Waal, *Black Garden Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*.

⁴³"Official Journal of the European Communities No C235. 12.09.1988," n.d.

⁴⁴Dr Ohannes Geukjian, *Negotiating Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace: Opportunities, Obstacles, Prospects* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014).

⁴⁵Malkasian, *Gha-Ra-Bagh!*

Constitution guaranteeing the right of Soviet people to self-determination. On 17 June the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet rejected the decision, calling it “undesirable.”⁴⁶

After these decision and the fact that there were ethnic clashes in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh, Moscow decided to take direct control of Nagorno Karabakh. On 12 January 1989 a nine-member Special Administrative Committee was created with Arkady Volsky in charge. After several failed attempts to calm the population of the region and to settle the issues and tensions Volsky Committee was abolished and Nagorno Karabakh was returned under the direct control of Baku. Gorbachev mentioned that Azerbaijan should do steps to grant the region real autonomous status.⁴⁷

After the Volskiy Committee was dissolved, the tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis escalated to a new level. Armenian National Movement, a newly emerged political force, started the creation of self-defense units to protect the NK Armenians, Azerbaijanis on the other hand created the “Azerbaijani voluntary militia”, which further escalated the clashes between the nations.

On 1 December 1989 Armenian Supreme Soviet and the newly created Armenian National Council of Nagorno Karabakh agreed on a decision to annex NK into Armenia and extend Armenian citizenship rights to the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh.⁴⁸ As a response to this act Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet declared that Armenia’s resolution was an act of interference to Azerbaijani SSR’s internal affairs.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Arsen Melik-Shakhnazarov, *Nagornyi Karabakh : Fakty Protiv Lzhi : Informatsionno-Ideologicheskie Aspekty Nagorno-Karabakhskogo Konflikt* (Moskva : Volshebnyi fonar, 2009, 2009).

⁴⁷Geukjian, *Negotiating Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace*.

⁴⁸Malkasian, *Gha-Ra-Bagh!*

⁴⁹Michael P. Croissant, *The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict: Causes and Implications* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998).

Meanwhile in response to all the political decision a new wave of violence broke out. On 9 January 1990 Azerbaijani protests started against Armenia in Baku. What started as a peaceful demonstration soon escalated into a violent massacre. A seven day pogroms started in Baku targeting the local Armenian population. Armenians were killed, tortured, beaten and expelled from the Azerbaijani capital. As a result around 90 Armenians were killed during the pogroms.⁵⁰ A very slow but brutal response followed from Moscow. On January 19th The Soviet Red Army entered Baku to stop the violence against Armenians. In doing so new clashes and skirmishes were triggered between the Red Army and Azerbaijani protesters. As a result nearly 100 Azerbaijanis and 25 soldiers were killed during these events, which will later be known as the Black January.⁵¹

The next year was full of inter-ethnic clashes, which was mainly led by guerilla groups on both sides. The clashes spread from Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia and Azerbaijan. Although no official announcement of war was declared, but both sides used guerilla warfare to attack their “neighbors”. In the beginning of 1991 Azerbaijani authorities backed by Soviet Army started to deport Armenians from the northern villages of Nagorno Karabakh, mainly from the Shahumyan region. The campaign was called “Operation Ring”. In the first half of 1991 at least 24 Armenian villages were emptied in the northern part of Nagorno Karabakh.⁵²

The year 1991 was decisive for the USSR. The Soviet Union was crumbling and the countries within it started to declare independence and use their right to self-determination. In line with these tendency and after months of tensions and clashes the Armenian National Council called for a referendum on Nagorno Karabakh’s independence. The ANC declared

⁵⁰De Waal, *Black Garden Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*.

⁵¹De Waal, *The Caucasus an Introduction*.

⁵²Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*.

that this was the only democratic solution they could envisage.⁵³ The referendum was held on 10 December 1991. 99.8% of voters voted for the independence. The Azerbaijani minority of Karabakh, which composed under 25% of the population of the region decided to boycott the referendum.⁵⁴

On 6 January 1992 Nagorno Karabakh Supreme Soviet declared its independence in accordance with the law regulating the “Procedure for Decisions about Union Republics leaving the USSR” adopted on 3 April 1990, the 3rd article of which authorized the initiation of own procedure of independence for the autonomous regions within the territory of a constituent Republic in case the latter decides to secede from the Union.⁵⁵ Shortly after the full-scale war started between Azerbaijan and Armenian forces of Nagorno Karabakh.

The War

With USSR coming to collapse the army divisions of USSR located in the Nagorno Karabakh region and in Azerbaijan, which consisted mostly of military personnel from other Soviet republics started to sell or exchange the weapons they had to the local Armenian and Azerbaijani militia.⁵⁶ The emergence of black markets and new weaponry intensified the escalation and it led to a full-scale war. During January-February 1992 clashes with back and forth success started in Nagorno Karabakh.

One of the first main events during the war was the Khojaly massacre that occurred in February 26-27 in the town with the same name. In the beginning of February the Azerbaijani forces started to use heavy artillery to bombard the capital of Nagorno Karabakh - Stepanakert. The missile stations – GRAD were used from the city of Shushi which overlooks

⁵³Caroline Cox, John Eibner, and Elena Bonner, *Ethnic Cleansing in Progress: War in Nagorno Karabakh* (Institute for Religious Minorities in the Islamic World, 1993).

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵“Закон о порядке решения вопросов, связанных с выходом союзной республики из СССР,” accessed November 30, 2015, <http://constitutions.ru/?p=2973>.

⁵⁶De Waal, *Black Garden Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*.

Stepanakert and Khojaly. Not only military but also civilian objects were targeted. Most of the cities multi-stored building were bombarded by those stations. As many as 400 GRAD were shot from Khojaly on Stepanakert every day.⁵⁷ The local Armenian forces warned the Azerbaijani side about the possible counterattack on the town of Khojaly if the shelling would not stop.⁵⁸ Allegedly the Armenian side gave an ultimatum to the citizens of Khojaly and left a corridor for the civilians to flee, but the civilians never fled the town.⁵⁹ A week later after the warning Armenian offensive started against Khojaly and the civilian population of the city was massacred by Armenians. There are two sides of this story with Armenians claiming that they gave the chance for the civilians to escape by opening the corridor, but the Azerbaijani military did not let the civilians escape. Moreover, in an interview to Czech journalist Dana Mazalova the first president of Azerbaijan AyazMusalibov claimed that the Khojaly massacre was staged by Azerbaijani opposition to force his resignation.⁶⁰ While Azerbaijani side claims that there was no corridor opened and civilians were killed while trying to flee the town. The numbers of killed civilians vary 480 to the Azerbaijani official number of 685. The Khojaly massacre would later become an important issue in Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and would contribute to the so-called chosen trauma formation of the Azerbaijani society.

Next major event came on 8 May 1992 with the capture of Shushi. As mentioned above Stepanakert was shelled not only from Khojaly but also from Shushi. Shushi was the last stronghold in Nagorno Karabakh controlled by Azerbaijani forces, part of which was led by famous Chechen mercenary ShamilBasayev who was fighting on the side of Azerbaijan. After the capture of Khojaly the Azerbaijani shelling of Stepanakert intensified. 50.000 civilians of Stepanakert had to hide in underground bunkers most of the days. Although outnumbered and

⁵⁷Walker, *Armenia and Karabagh*.

⁵⁸Markar Melkonian, *My Brother's Road: An American's Fateful Journey to Armenia* (London ; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008).

⁵⁹De Waal, *Black Garden Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*.

⁶⁰"Khojaly: The Chronicle of Unseen Forgery and Falsifications," accessed June 5, 2016, <http://www.xocali.net/en/p07.html>.

outgunned Armenian forces launched an offensive against Shushi on May 8th and after heavy fighting in the city Azerbaijani side retreated with ShamilBasayev being the last one to leave the city.⁶¹

After losing Khojaly and Shushi Azerbaijani president AyazMusalibov resigned and fled to Moscow. On May 15th elections were held and AbulfazElchibey the representative of Azerbaijan popular Front became the new president. At the same time the Russian Defense Minister Boris Grachev organized a meeting between representatives of former Soviet republics in Tashkent to divide the armaments of the Soviet army between the former republics. The heavy armaments, including tanks and helicopters were divided between sides and that led to even fiercer fighting. In this events a new face emerged on the political arena, a black marketer Surat Huseynov has raised his own militia in the Azerbaijani city of Ganje. His troops were consisted mostly of Soviet Fourth Army weaponry, he managed to gain those weapons as he was openly supporting Russia and was in good relations with the Russians.⁶² In June 1992 armed with the Fourth Army weaponry the Azerbaijani forces started the Goranboy Operation - offensive against Mardakert region on the north of Nagorno Karabakh. Before being stopped by Armenian forces Azerbaijanis managed to capture the city of Mardakert on July 4th.⁶³

In September of 1992 Boris Grachev the Russian Defense Minister organized a meeting in Sochi with his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts Rahim Gaziyeu and VazgenSargsyan. Given his influence and connection in post-Soviet military he managed to convince both sides to agree on a ceasefire. The ceasefire lasted for two months, but there wasno progress during these two months.

⁶¹Melkonian, *My Brother's Road*.

⁶²De Waal, *The Caucasus an Introduction*.

⁶³Philip Remler, "Chained to the Caucasus: Peacemaking in Karabakh, 1987–2012," *IPI - International Peace Institute*, accessed May 22, 2016, <https://www.ipinst.org/2016/05/peacemaking-in-karabakh>.

The winter of 1992-1993 was rough for both countries. The population of both countries suffered the effects of war and economic hardship, most of the trees were cut down to heat apartments during the freezing winter. But the societies reacted differently to the hardship. While Armenians were collective and unified inside the country, hoping the situation will improve with collaboration, Azerbaijanis were seeking change in the government and disagreements led to the collapse of the Azerbaijani Popular Front.

In February 1993 Surat Huseynov decided not to collaborate with the government in Baku and left Mardakert for Ganje taking his army with himself. Using this opportunity Armenians took Mardakert back, while Huseynov resided in Ganje and got involved in narco-trafficking from Afghanistan to the West.⁶⁴

After returning Mardakert Armenian forces launched another offensive against the District of Kelbajar located north of Lachin corridor and captured it. This led to the first United Nations Security Council resolution adopted in the context of Nagorno Karabakh. The Resolution No 822 stated to establish ceasefire, carry on negotiations, open all the communication links and remove Armenian forces from Kelbajar and “other occupied territories of Azerbaijan”.⁶⁵ While supporting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan the resolution neglected the self-determination right of Armenians.

After suffering heavy military defeats loss of Kelbajar was the final blow to the Azerbaijani Popular Front. Surat Huseynov gathered his army and headed east from Ganje to Baku. With the help of Huseynov’s army a new leader emerged in Azerbaijan. Abulfaz Elchibey had to flee the country and Heydar Aliyev came to power and officially

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, “1993 UN Security Council Resolutions on Nagorno-Karabakh,” accessed May 24, 2016, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/or/13508.htm>.

started his presidency in October 1993. Huseynov was appointed as prime minister, but Aliyev made him flee the country next year.

With the political turmoil in Azerbaijan, Armenian forces continued to break through. In July 1993 they captured the province of Agdam. Agdam was a major communication hub in NKAO, most of the main highways and roads connecting the cities of NKAO would pass through Agdam. This action led to an adoption of another UN Security Council Resolution No 853. The latter once again called for ceasefire, negotiations and withdrawal of Armenian forces from the newly gained territories. However the resolutions did not have any effect as Armenians continued their offensive and captured the districts of Jebrayil, Fizuli and Kubatlu which are located between NKAO and Iranian border. These offensive led the Azerbaijani population of the provinces flee. Another UN SC resolution was adopted after these events, Resolution No 874, which basically repeated the text of previous resolutions and urged to “create a timetable for the settlement of the conflict.”⁶⁶

The last offensive saw Armenians capturing the province of Zangelan, which led yet to another UN SC Resolution No 884, which repeated the texts of the previously adopted resolutions. Meanwhile the Azerbaijani army tried to regroup and with the help of several hundred Afghani mujahidin tried to counterattack.⁶⁷ The counterattacks in Fizuli and Kelbajar turned into a disastrous defeats for the Azerbaijani armies. With the Azerbaijanis defeated and Armenians reaching the logistical peak of their advancement Russia decided to intervene as a mediator in the conflict once again.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Hayk Demoyan, *Mercenaries, Extremists and Islamist Fighters in the Karabakh War: How International Terrorist Networks Penetrated Post-Soviet Azerbaijan* (Armenian Genocide Museum, 2010).

⁶⁸Remler, “Chained to the Caucasus.”

Vladimir Kazimirov who was appointed as the head of the “Mediation Mission of Russia for Nagorno Karabakh” several years ago by Russian president became the main mediator. The main document in question was the Bishkek protocols, which were developed back in February during the meeting of Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev and his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts in Moscow.⁶⁹ The main aim of Russians was to send peacekeeping presence to the region, which was opposed by Azerbaijan. After several months of negotiations the Bishkek protocols were signed on May 12th. The protocols stated:

- Parties express the intention to end the conflict with a role for the CIS and in accordance with relevant UN and CSCE decisions;
- Parties will observe a cease-fire from the agreed time and work on “a durable, legally binding agreement mandating a mechanism to ensure the non-resumption of military and hostile activities, withdrawal of troops from occupied territories and restoration of communication, [and] return of refugees”;
- Parties “agree to suggest that Parliaments of the CIS member states discuss...creating a CIS peacemaking force”;
- Parties agree to continue meeting as appropriate.⁷⁰

The peacekeeping forces never came to be deployed in Nagorno Karabakh region, but the protocols established the ceasefire in the conflict, which was violated many times with the most notable violation taking place in the beginning of April 2016, which led to a so called “4-day war” that took lives of more than 200 soldiers from both sides.

⁶⁹De Waal, *Black Garden Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*.

⁷⁰Владимир Николаевич Казимиров, *Мир Карабаху: посредничество России в урегулировании нагорно-карабахского конфликта* (Международные отношения, 2009).

Chapter 2: Peacemaking and negotiations

Peace initiatives by external actors

First Peace initiatives started before the conflict escalated into a full-scale war. In September 1991, when USSR still existed but it was obvious that its days of existence were counted, Russia and Kazakhstan offered a peace package to Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russian president Boris Yeltsin and Kazakhstani president NursultanNazarbayev saw the peaceful settlement of the conflict as a good opportunity to gain international prestige and influence. Thus on 23 September 1991, the representatives of Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh met in the Russian town of Zheleznovodsk. The aims of the meeting were the establishment of a basis for negotiation and the peaceful settlement of the conflict and de-escalation of the conflict. The main points of the talks were:

- To repeal all “unconstitutional” legislation concerning the autonomous region of Nagorno Karabakh
- Recognize authority of the “legitimate organs of power”
- Withdrawal of all armed forces from the conflict zone by January 1, 1992
- Ensure the eventual return to their homes of all deported persons, and the release of all hostages
- Normalization of transport and impartial flow of information
- Set up a mechanism for permanent bilateral negotiations between delegations from the parliaments of Armenia and Azerbaijan.⁷¹

Apparently both parties agreed to the terms of Zheleznovodsk meeting. But the situation on the ground did not give opportunity for further development of the peace plan. Nor LevonTer-Petrosyan neither AyazMutalibov were able to convince their societies to accept

⁷¹Cox, Eibner, and Bonner, *Ethnic Cleansing in Progress*.

this terms. Driven by fear and hatred and very fresh memories of ethnic clashes Armenians and Azerbaijanis would rather continue fighting and reach a definitive victory than agree on compromise. Another factor was the fact that neither Yeltsin nor Nazarbayev had control over the Soviet military units in Nagorno Karabakh. By this period the Soviet army on the ground had already turned into merchants, smugglers and arms dealers who were selling weapons to local militias.⁷² On 20 November 1991 a military helicopter carrying officials from Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan was hit over Martuni district killing the officials and dooming this initiative completely.

Another initiative to establish peace came from the Islamic Republic of Iran in February-May 1992. Several aspects drew Iran's attention to the Caucasus. Firstly Iran had established economic connections with both Armenia and Azerbaijan and was determined to maintain and straighten them. Secondly, Iran as well as Armenia were afraid of the "Pan-Turanism" perspectives in the Caucasus and the former was determined to keep Armenia as stable as possible in order not to let Turkey and Azerbaijan connect together on its Northern boundaries. Moreover the image of Turkey as a NATO member and a US proxy and kinship between Turkey and Azerbaijan was seen by Iran as a danger and the latter tried to establish much stronger and better connections with Azerbaijan. But in the meantime Iran had its internal issue connected with ethnic Azerbaijanis on the north of the country. Iran's northern parts are inhabited by approximately 30 mln. ethnic Azerbaijanis. The fear that Azerbaijan would make territorial claims over its northern territories and a possible chance to separate these territories from Azerbaijan by Karabakhi Armenians were one of several factors of Iran's involvement.

Seeing the potential to straighten connections with both Transcaucasian countries by mediating peace, Iran's president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani invited the leaders of Armenia

⁷²Geukjian, *Negotiating Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace*.

Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Yaqub Mammadov to Tehran to negotiate an agreement. The points of the agreement signed by Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, and Iranian representatives on 7 May 1992 stated:

- Establishment of ceasefire within a week
- Lifting of the economic blockade of Armenia
- Admission of international observers to the area
- Exchange of prisoners and coming to a joint agreement on the problem of refugees.⁷³

But once again just after one day of the signature of the agreement the local Armenian forces in Karabakh launched an offensive on the stronghold of Shushi and captured the city to prevent further bombardment of the capital Stepanakert. Hence yet again an international mediation failed as the leaders of the countries did not consider the realities on the ground.

After the failure of Iran's mediation no peacemaking initiative was successful except a brief ceasefire agreement initiated by Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev which lasted only two months. However after the signature of Bishkek protocols and the establishment of ceasefire, the mediation and negotiations carried on with new players and new pace.

The Minsk Group

In December 1994, during the Budapest Summit the CSCE made major changes in its structure. This summit not only changed the structure of Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe which now transformed from CSCE into OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, it also passed some decisions regarding the mediation of Nagorno Karabakh issue. Decisions to create the Minsk Conference and the Minsk group

⁷³A. S Abasov and Arutiun Khachatrian, *Karabakh conflict: variants of settlement : concepts and reality* (Baku; Erevan: Areat ; Noyan tapan, 2006).

were made. The Conference was designed to consist of two chairs – Russia and Sweden, and three sides of the conflict – Armenia, Azerbaijan and unrecognized Republic of Nagorno Karabakh, with Robert Kocharyan as the president of the Republic.⁷⁴ However the conference never happened and the only actor involved in negotiations became and still is the OSCE Minsk Group.

The OSCE Minsk group chairmanship was switched from Sweden to Finland alongside Russia. During the 1995-1996 period the Minsk group managed to organize several meetings between the presidents of the countries involved in the conflict. There were several meetings of Minsk Group before the Lisbon Summit on 6December1996. During the summit the chair offered several points based on which the conflict should be solved. The points were:

- Territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijan Republic;
- Legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh defined in an agreement based on self-determination which confers on Nagorno Karabakh the highest degree of self-rule within Azerbaijan;
- guaranteed security for Nagorno-Karabakh and its whole population, including mutual obligations to ensure compliance by all the Parties with the provisions of the settlement.

These points were the first principles offered by the Minsk Group for the settlement of the conflict. Meanwhile new developments took place in Armenia. The presidential elections of 1996 saw LevonTer-Petrosyan re-elected as the president, however the opposition accused him of fraud and election falsification. Although Ter-Petrosyan managed to establish control after protests and attack on the parliamentary building by the protesters his reputation was

⁷⁴Ibid.

damaged badly. To regain some legitimacy LevonTer-Petrosyan was forced to appoint the president of Nagorno Karabakh Robert Kocharyan as prime-minister.

Later that year significant changes happened to the OSCE Minsk Group. It was changed from a two co-chair system to a tri-chair system with United States, France and Russia sharing the co-chairmanship. This chairmanship was established on 17 January 1997. This structure of OSCE Minsk Group remains unchanged up until this day. The establishment of this format was supported by Armenia and Azerbaijan, with LevonTer-Petrosyan saying that now the OSCE takes the Nagorno Karabakh conflict seriously.⁷⁵

After the establishment of the current format of OSCE Minsk Group the latter started to develop a plan to solve the issue. Based on mostly US proposals 2 Agreements were developed. The main points of Agreement No 1 stated:

- Armed hostilities would be ended permanently and the use of force renounced. Military forces would be withdrawn: the Republic of Armenia forces to Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh forces to the 1988 boundary of the NKAO with certain exceptions, and Azerbaijani forces to lines that would facilitate the operation of an OSCE peacekeeping force.

- A Permanent Mixed Commission (PMC) would “supervise and implement” the cease-fire with respect to Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh; this would be run jointly by Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh, and the OSCE, with the latter providing mediation and arbitration.

- The resultant demilitarized zone would be a “zone of separation,” with a buffer zone in which the OSCE would operate in cooperation with the PMC. Displaced persons would return to their homes in the zone of separation. Detained persons would be released and returned. The parties would work through the PMC to open transportation, communication,

⁷⁵De Waal, *Black Garden Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*.

power, trade, and other links. All blockades would be lifted, with free rail communication between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

- The Lachin corridor would be demilitarized and leased from Azerbaijan by the OSCE, which would facilitate Karabakh's exclusive use of the corridor. Displaced persons would return to Shushi and the Shahumyan district.

- Azerbaijan and Armenia would establish diplomatic relations and create a binational commission to prevent border incidents.⁷⁶

The main points of the Agreement No 2 were:

- All parties would recognize the territorial integrity and inviolability of borders of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

- Nagorno Karabakh would be "a state and territorial formation, within the borders of Azerbaijan, whose self-determination shall include the rights and privileges listed below...." Its borders would be those of the former NKAO. Its constitution would incorporate a formal agreement between the Karabakh authorities and Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan would likewise amend its constitution.

- Karabakh and Nakhichevan would have free access to both Armenia and Azerbaijan; Karabakh would be a free economic zone with free circulation of currencies. Karabakh would have its own budget. It would be multiethnic, with each citizen having the right to use his or her native tongue in all official contexts.

- Nagorno Karabakh would be governed by its constitution and laws; Azerbaijani laws would be in effect if they did not contradict that constitution and those laws. Karabakh would be represented in Azerbaijan's Parliament and presidential elections. Karabakh citizens would

⁷⁶Abasov and Khachatryan, *Karabakh conflict*.

carry specially notated Azerbaijani passports but would not be considered foreigners in Armenia.

- Karabakh would have its own security forces; Azerbaijan's security and police forces would have no right to enter except by permission of the Karabakh authorities.

- The UN Security Council would guarantee the agreement.⁷⁷

With this agreements the OSCE co-chairs travelled to Yerevan, Baku and Stepanakert. Both Aliyev and Ter-Petrosyan decided to concentrate more on the first agreement, as it basically was a compromise with Karabakh getting an interim status, security and a corridor with Armenia in exchange of the territories surrounding Nagorno Karabakh.⁷⁸ Also the two presidents agreed to transfer the question of Shushi to Agreement No 2. But Nagorno Karabakh rejected this proposals. First reason was that no one prepared the population for the compromise and secondly Karabakhis did not trust LevonTer-Petrosyan whatsoever.

Both Aliyev and Ter-Petrosyan tried to convince their respective populations that compromise was the only way. Aliyev gave a speech in Georgetown University revealing the Minsk Group proposals and undermining that Azerbaijan would not get Lachin or Shushi in the near future.⁷⁹ While LevonTer-Petrosyan published an article entitled "War and peace: time for reflection."

After the rejection of the proposals from Nagorno Karabakh the Minsk Group came up with an updated version of the agreements. But it was too late for LevonTer-Petrosyan, he was completely distrusted and seen as an illegitimate president by the public. And the opposition led by the prime-minister Robert Kocharyan and Defense Minister VazgenSargsyan gave the president an ultimatum in February of 1998. Shortly after

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Remler, "Chained to the Caucasus."

⁷⁹Geukjian, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus*.

Levon Ter-Petrosyan resigned and new presidential elections on 3 March 1998 saw Robert Kocharyan, the former president of Nagorno Karabakh Republic, become the president of the Republic of Armenia.

One on One

After becoming president first thing Robert Kocharyan did was re-evaluation of Lisbon documents. Armenia claimed that Lisbon principles were against Armenia's will and they disregard the position and opinion of Nagorno Karabakh as a side of negotiations, moreover the documents did not address the roots of the conflict. With these reasons behind Nagorno Karabakh rejected the principles and this was one of the reasons of the change of the president.

But neither Kocharyan nor Aliyev saw the status quo as a solution. As a result they met in April 1999 during a NATO summit in Washington, DC which later led to a chain of one-on-one meetings between presidents. First two happened in Geneva in July and August later that year. The third one took place during Baltic-Black Sea Cooperation summit in Yalta in September 1999. And the fourth one took place on the border of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey and the enclave of Nachijevan in a city called Sadarak in October. It is important to notice that the subject of the talks were kept secret from public, from the Minsk Group and even from the foreign ministers of both countries.

After the meeting in Sadarak both presidents gave a press conference during which they touched upon rather eccentric and bold compromise they were working toward. The plan was to have a territorial swap which would give Armenia sovereignty over Nagorno Karabakh and Lachin corridor and in exchange Azerbaijan would get the southern province of Armenia Meghri therefore creating a corridor between the enclave of Nachijevan and Azerbaijan.⁸⁰ This

⁸⁰Remler, "Chained to the Caucasus."

was a recreation of the Goble plan suggested by US special advisor at the State Department Paul Goble in 1992.

This time both presidents knew that the public opinion toward the word “compromise” needed to be changed. Both Kocharyan and Aliyev talked about reaching a compromise in order to solve the issue. But in the land swap issue it was not only the public opinion that had to be changed. The territorial swap would change the geopolitical situation in the region. The main flaw of the Goble plan was the fact that Armenia would lose its border with Iran and would basically be surrounded with Turkey and Azerbaijan both of which had closed their borders with Armenia, thus the public was distrustful of Turkey and Azerbaijan and thought it would lead to even more severe economic blockade with only one open border with Georgia. There were other problems with this agreement. Firstly, the Russian 2000 men base located in Meghri had to be dissolved. Secondly Armenia would lose its common border with Iran, thus creating a full border between northern Iran populated by ethnic Azerbaijanis and Azerbaijan. Thirdly the opposition leaders in both countries would not likely agree to this plan.

Aliyev's opposition was not strong enough, it became even weaker when several authorities including the foreign minister Tofik Zulfuganov left or were released from their posts. Other potential opponents fled the country or were imprisoned by that time. Kocharyan did not have that luxury. The newly appointed prime-minister, a military strongman Vazgen Sargsyan and former First secretary of Armenian SSR Karen Demirchyan formed an alliance capable of changing the government, as Sargsyan helped Kocharyan to do it a year ago.

On 27 October 1999 a group of armed people led by Nairi Hunanyan entered the parliament of Armenia and killed eight officials including Vazgen Sargsyan and Karen Demirchyan. The reasons and motives of the terrorists were never established and whether it

was somehow connected with Nagorno Karabakh issue or not still remains a secret. But after this incident Robert Kocharyan announced that the territorial swap would not work and yet another plan to achieve peace was abandoned.

After the terrorist attack negotiations stalled for more than a year. This was influenced by many factors, firstly Armenia was recovering from the October 27 attacks, Heydar Aliyev's health was deteriorating and USA and Russia were going through a transitional period. The next chance for negotiations and peaceful settlement came in the form of the Key West agreements in April 2001.

USA was getting more and more interested in the Caspian oil and were developing a plan to construct a pipeline from the Caspian Sea to the Turkish port of Ceyhan and in order to do so they tried to negotiate a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.⁸¹ This led to a meeting between the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the co-chairs of the Minsk group at Key West, Florida in the beginning of April 2001. Although not everything is revealed about the Key West agreements up to this day, some points were clarified by Vardan Oskanian, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia. The points were:

- Nagorno Karabakh will nominally remain within Azerbaijan but would have all attributes of statehood, NK would have its anthem, coat of arms and flag
- Nagorno Karabakh would preserve all the branches of power, i.e. executive, legislative and judicial
- All economic and foreign policy problems would be Karabakh's prerogative
- Lachin, together with corridor, would come under the control of Armenians in exchange for a corridor linking Azerbaijan with Nachijevan, which would remain under Armenia's full control

⁸¹Geukjian, *Negotiating Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace*.

• Security issues also would remain under the jurisdiction of Karabakh's power-wielding structures. However citizens of Karabakh, who were not considered foreigners in Armenia, could participate in parliamentary and presidential elections in Azerbaijan.⁸²

Yet again an agreement that was reached on the presidential level had to be explained to population of Armenia and Azerbaijan. And as previously this time the public opinion stood against the peaceful resolution. But unlike the situation in 1998 when Armenian population was against the solution, which brought to the resignation of Levon Ter-Petrosyan, this time it was Aliyev's presidency that was endangered. The Azerbaijani population as well as many political figures saw the agreement as a capitulation to Armenia and started to question Aliyev's capability to solve the issue. Zulfuganov, the former prime minister and Namazov, the former head of Aliyev's secretariat, claimed that if Aliyev is incapable of solving the issue by peaceful means then Azerbaijan can do it by war.⁸³ Aliyev's pragmatic approach was countered by military enthusiasts. Names like "a humanitarian operation", "an anti-terrorist operation in Nagorno Karabakh" were given to the potential renewal of the war. Crumbling under the public pressure in March 2001 during a press conference Aliyev for the first time stated that military solution can't be excluded.⁸⁴ Hence yet again the public opinion and the inability and unpreparedness of population to compromise led to a dead-end.

After the failure of Key West talks the spiral of the conflict went only downward. Heydar Aliyev died in 2003 unable to convince his public that the peaceful solution is the only way. Shortly after his death his son Ilham Aliyev was elected as the new president of Azerbaijan in a highly corrupted elections. This election led to a new stage of the conflict, which alienated the two nations even more.

⁸²Geukjian, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus*.

⁸³"War-Mongers Blight Peace Talks," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, accessed May 26, 2016, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/war-mongers-blight-peace-talks>.

⁸⁴Ibid.

The Madrid Principles

After the 2003 elections IlhamAliyev took his time to reassess and re-evaluate his stance on the Nagorno Karabakh issue, also he had internal problems to deal with, as the population of Azerbaijan was not happy with the results of the election fraud. This led to a time-out in the negotiations for more than two years. Meanwhile Aliyev junior took into consideration the military solution of the conflict and started to raise the military spending of the country. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute the military spending of Azerbaijan rose for 117 million USD in 2003 to 3.8 billion USD in 2016.⁸⁵ Another significant character of IlhamAliyev's rule was the astonishing decline in freedom of media and human rights in general. While the country was characterized as partly free by freedom house in 2003 the freedom significantly went down under Aliyev's rule. In 2016 press freedom was the 164th worst among 180 countries way behind Russia, Belarus and just above Saudi Arabia and Libya.⁸⁶ These two factors will affect the violence in the conflict significantly.

After several meeting in 2005-2006 the Minsk co-chairs came up with "principles" that will be a basis for the solution of the conflict. On 22 June 2006 the co-chairs suggested this principles as a part of the report to the OSCE Permanent Council. The principles were as follows:

- Phased redeployment of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territories, with special modalities for Kelbajar and Lachin;
- Demilitarization of those territories;

⁸⁵“5 Apr. 2016: World Military Spending Resumes Upward Course, Says SIPRI — Wwww.sipri.org,” Page, accessed May 27, 2016, <http://www.sipri.org/media/pressreleases/2016/milex-apr-2016>.

⁸⁶“2016 World Press Freedom Index | Reporters Without Borders,” *RSF*, accessed May 27, 2016, <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>.

- A referendum or population vote, to be held at a date and in a manner to be decided through further negotiations, to determine the final legal status of Nagorno Karabakh;
- Deployment of an international peacekeeping force;
- Establishment of a joint commission for the implementation of the agreement;
- Provision of international assistance for demining, reconstruction, and resettlement of internally displaced persons, with interim arrangements to allow Nagorno Karabakh to maintain direct relations with assistance providers;
- Renunciation of the threat or use of force; and
- International and bilateral security guarantees and assurances.⁸⁷

The report also stated that the co-chairs reached the limits of the creativity and it is up to Armenia's and Azerbaijan's leader to go forward based on this principles.⁸⁸

The emergence of these principles led to another stoppage in negotiations as the leaders of the countries decided to wait and see the reaction of the public to the newly established principles. In Armenian officials were the circulating news that two presidents agreed that a corridor would be established between Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh and also the latter would hold a referendum on its status. Meanwhile in Azerbaijan this report on the referendum was denied by officials, who stated that the referendum should be held throughout Azerbaijan.⁸⁹ With this discussions and an upcoming presidential elections in both countries the negotiations were in a limbo, with co-chairs not managing to bring together not only the presidents but also the foreign ministers of the countries.

⁸⁷“Statement by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to the OSCE Permanent Council,” OSCE Doc. CIO.GAL/117/06, June 22, 2006,” n.d.

⁸⁸Esmira Jafarova, *Conflict Resolution in South Caucasus: Challenges to International Efforts* (Lexington Books, 2014).

⁸⁹Remler, “Chained to the Caucasus.”

The elections in Azerbaijan saw IlhamAliyev elected as president once again while in Armenia a new president was elected – former prime-minister SerzhSargsyan. Both elections were corrupt, but unlike in Azerbaijan the fraud led to a mass demonstrations on 1 March 2008 organized by the supporters of former president LevonTer-Petrosyan. Moreover between March 4 and March 7 massive military clashes happened on the border of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. This was the first time the sides used heavy weapons. A tendency that was to intensify later on.

As a result the new principles were suggested to the foreign ministers Mammedyarov and Oskanian separately during OSCE summit in Madrid. The principles were not too different from the ones listed above, but were slightly changed in 2009. The newly established “Madrid Principles” were:

- Return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control
- An interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance
- A corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh
- Future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will
- The right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence
- International security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation.⁹⁰

⁹⁰Caucasus Edition, “A New Look at Old Principles: Making the Madrid Document Work,” *Caucasus Edition*, April 1, 2011, <http://caucasusedition.net/analysis/why-nagorno-karabakh%e2%80%99s-status-must-be-addressed-first/>.

However after the elections in both countries no significant breakthrough happened in the negotiations. Several attempts were made to negotiate peace by the Minsk Group co-chairs and by Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, but the attempts failed. The Madrid principles were renewed in 2010 with no significant changes.

At the same time the military clashes intensified every year, in total the clashes took lives of more than 3000 people after the Bishkek protocols. The most violent clashes happened during the so called “4-day war” that took place on 1-5 April 2016. This was the worst and most violent ceasefire violation since 1994. It took more than 250 soldiers’ lives from both sides.

There is no proven reasons behind the clashes and it is still not established who attacked first, but it is more or less obvious that the Azerbaijani forces attacked first. Firstly, Armenia’s leadership is content with the status-quo, Azerbaijan’s leadership and population are not. The timing of the clashes was also significant. With dropping oil prices and worsening economic situation in Azerbaijan, people started to protest against the government and there were massive protests in March 2016.⁹¹ Secondly, with the deteriorating economic conditions the Panama Papers were released right after the clashes started. The papers revealed the hidden wealth of the Azerbaijani president and his family.⁹² Consequently the plan to distract people from internal problems by unleashing an external conflict worked for Ilham Aliyev.

The 4-day war was stopped by a Russia-brokered a verbal agreement on ceasefire between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan on April 6th. The clashes changed the negotiation process and subject of the negotiations. Now the issue is not the resettlement of

⁹¹“What’s Behind the Flare-up in Nagorno-Karabakh? | Crisis Group,” accessed May 27, 2016, <http://blog.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/2016/04/03/whats-behind-the-flare-up-in-nagorno-karabakh/>.

⁹²“How Family That Runs Azerbaijan Built an Empire of Hidden Wealth,” accessed May 27, 2016, <https://panamapapers.icij.org/20160404-azerbaijan-hidden-wealth.html>.

the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, but the main goal for the negotiations is to stop the violation of ceasefire on the border and prevent another war. An agreement was reached in Vienna on May 16 during the meeting of SerzhSargsyan and IlhamAliyev to establish an incident investigation and robust monitoring mechanism for Nagorno Karabakh.⁹³ It will take several months if not years to agree on the mechanism itself, if before that Azerbaijan will not opt out from the agreement like it did before. Hence now the Nagorno Karabakh conflict enters a new stage where the priority is not the peaceful solution and agreement but is to prevent and investigate ceasefire violations.

⁹³Helix Consulting LLC, "Incident Investigation and Robust Monitoring for Nagorno Karabakh Agreed in Vienna," accessed May 27, 2016, <http://www.panorama.am/en/news/2016/05/17/Incident-investigation-Nagorno-Karabakh/1580617>.

CHAPTER 3: Challenges for Peacemaking

Ethnic fear and public opinion in Armenia

The history of negotiations shows several clear patterns. One and the most obvious is the public opinion and the inability of the population of Armenia and Azerbaijan to accept any sort of compromise. The opinion that forced Levon Ter-Petrosyan to leave his post and the very same opinion who made Robert Kocharyan and Heydar Aliyev opt out from the agreements they reached in at various points. But why are the populations of the countries so reluctant to compromise? In this chapter I will concentrate on several aspects that created the public opinion that we have now.

Let's start with Armenia. One of the main pillars of Armenian identity alongside with the language and the Christian faith is probably the most tragic event in Armenian history – the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The Genocide committed by the Turkish authorities took lives of more than 1.5 million Armenians in the nowadays Anatolia, which was the home of Armenians for many centuries and was called Western Armenia. As a result of the Genocide Armenians lost not only a significant number of population but also the entire Western Armenia. This ethnic fear of elimination still stays with Armenians and the distrust towards Turks is high.⁹⁴ Azerbaijanis are identified by Armenians as almost identical to Turks and identify Nagorno Karabakh as the lost Western Armenia.

There were many external and internal factors to back up this fear and identification. Firstly, Azeris were called Turks in Armenia for many decades. This is due to the Turkic language they use and also the fact that even in official documents the words Azeri or Azerbaijani were used only in 1926. Before that according to Russian empire and Soviet

⁹⁴Stuart J Kaufman, *Ethnic Fears and Ethnic War in Karabagh* (Cambridge, MA: Program on New Approaches to Russian Security, Davis Center for Russian Studies, Harvard University, 1998).

Union population censuses the population living on that territory were called Azerbaijani Turks, Tatars and later Muslims. Even today in most of the villages they are called Turks. Moreover in the villages or the cities where there was an Azerbaijani population prior to the war, most of which fled or emigrated during the war, the parts Azerbaijanis used to live are still called “Turkish parts”, “Turkish yards” or “Turkish quarters”. These names of course are not the official names of the parts, but population still uses them.

After Sumgait events a lot changed in the rhetoric of the speakers during the demonstration. Speakers would push all the emotional buttons, by pointing out the glorious past of Karabakh, “the persecution under the Turkish yoke, and longing for the snow-capped peaks of Ararat.”⁹⁵

Of course these speeches did not go unnoticed in the Armenian Diaspora. The Genocide is deeply rooted in the Armenian Diaspora, even more than the language or the faith. In the Armenian Diaspora the Genocide is the reason of scattered Armenians all over the world, hence the identity connected with it is much stronger. After putting similarities between Karabakh and Genocide the Diaspora mobilized and supported and helped Armenia throughout the war with manpower and resources. Many Armenians who lived abroad came back to Karabakh to fight.

One of the most famous of these soldiers was the Californian born Armenian Monte Melkonyan. A veteran of the Libanese civil war, he and his counterparts came to Artsakh (the Armenian name of Nagorno Karabakh) to defend their homeland and the Armenians living there. Monte, being a descendant of the Genocide survivor, whose grandparents had to flee the Ottoman massacres of Armenians, had his own vision of the conflict. Probably Monte’s

⁹⁵Mark Malkasian, “*Gha-Ra-Bagh!*”: *The Emergence of the National Democratic Movement in Armenia* (Detroit, Mich: Wayne State University Press, 1996).

famous phrase “if we lose Artsakh, we will close the last page of the history of Armenia”⁹⁶ sums up the way Armenians and especially the Diaspora saw and sees the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

All these internal factors were also backed up by external ones. One of the most blatant examples was the emergence of the second president of Azerbaijan – Abulfaz Elchibey.

The leader of the Azerbaijani National Front, Elchibey was elected as a president on 7 June 1992 and shifted the Azerbaijani politics. Calling himself a “grey wolf” he started talking about the revival of the pan Turkic world. Blaming Russia for collapsing the pan Turkic ambitions and exposing Armenia as an obstacle for the achievement of the pan Turkic ambitions he started identifying the Azerbaijani nation as the same nation as the Turkish, phrases like “two countries, one nation” were present in almost every single one of his emotional and nationalistic speeches.⁹⁷ In June 1992 in one of his speeches Elchibey declared: “If there is a single Armenian left in Karabakh by October of this year, the people of Azerbaijan can hang me in the central square of Baku.”⁹⁸

The consequent replacement of Elchibey by Heydar Aliyev did not change the dynamics of Azerbaijani-Turkish friendship. As a response to Armenian offensive in Kelbajar, Turkish government closed the border with Armenia. The economic blockade by Turkey is still in action.

Another event that triggered the ethnic fear of Armenians. And event that basically stopped all the peacemaking initiative at least for a year was the case of Ramil Safarov. In 2004 during a NATO organized language courses in Hungary an Azerbaijani officer

⁹⁶Melkonian, *My Brother's Road*.

⁹⁷Дмитрий Фурман, Али Абасов “Азербайджанская революция,” accessed December 30, 2015, <http://archive.org/details/AzeriRevolutsia>.

⁹⁸“Lords Hansard Text for 1 Jul 1997 (170701-19),” accessed April 16, 2016, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199798/ldhansrd/vo970701/text/70701-19.htm>.

RamilSafarov beheaded an Armenian officer GurgenMargaryanwith an axe, while the latter was sleeping. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in Hungary, but after spending around eight years in Hungarian jail, he was extradited to Azerbaijan to serve his sentence there. However that was not something Azerbaijani government did. Instead the murderer was pardoned by Azerbaijani president, granted a promotion to the rank of major, given an apartment and his salary for the last eight years.⁹⁹ This triggered a huge reaction in Armenian society. Armenia broke it diplomatic ties with Hungary. International community, including, US, Russia, EU, NATO condemned this act.¹⁰⁰

This unprecedented event had a massive outcry in Armenia. For Armenians it was clear that Azerbaijani president is calling for elimination of an Armenian, just because he is an Armenian. Moreover the killing of an Armenian was promoted. This blatant racist and xenophobic rhetoric hardened the sneaky Turkic murderer stereotype of Azerbaijanis.

The recent events in Nagorno Karabakh, the April 1-5 war in 2016 backed up the Armenian narrative of Turkish-Azerbaijani sameness. With all the leaders in the world calling for ceasefire only the Turkish president RecepTayyip Erdogan declared that they were backing Azerbaijan “to the end.”¹⁰¹ Which led to the speculation in the Armenian press about Erdogan hinting to “the end of Armenians.” Another incident like this took place in Stockholm during the demonstration of Azerbaijanis and Turks on 10April 2016. During his speech BarbarosLeylani, the vice president of the Turkish National Association of Sweden,

⁹⁹“The Axe Murderer Who Became a Facebook Hero - Al Jazeera English,” accessed December 1, 2015,

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/09/201293953565974.html>.

¹⁰⁰“Pardoning of Azeri Axe Murderer Raises Tensions in the Caucasus | Simon Tisdall | Comment Is Free | The Guardian,” accessed December 1, 2015,

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/sep/06/azeri-axe-murderer-caucasus>.

¹⁰¹“Nagorno-Karabakh Clash: Turkey Backs Azeris ‘to the End’ against Armenia,” *BBC News*, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35953358>.

called for “the killing of Armenian dogs.”¹⁰² Although he had to resign afterwards, it became a fact that even in the most democratic state the Turks and Azerbaijanis express and support these kind of claims. This is not a new phenomenon in Nagorno Karabakh issue. Current president IlhamAliyev uses the same rhetoric via his Twitter account. His twitter account is full of racist and xenophobic comments against Armenians as well as constant threats of war.¹⁰³

Elite Manipulation and public opinion in Azerbaijan

While the Armenians’ fears and stereotypes have not changed significantly throughout the modern history of the conflict, the dynamic of the Azerbaijani public changed to the worse over the time. Heydar Aliyev tried to convince his public that the peaceful solution was the only way out, but after Key West talks failed the military rhetoric activated. With the election of IlhamAliyev the alienation and hatred between the two nations constantly grew to a new level.

One of the events that triggered the hatred and alienation to a new level was the events of Black January in 1990. The Soviet tanks and Red Army that entered Baku and killed around hundred people were seen as a pro-Armenian force. The blame for the Russian massacre went to Armenians, as Armenians were seen as the reason of Russian

¹⁰²““Death to Armenian Dogs:’ Turkish Leader in Sweden Steps down after Call for Killings,” *RT International*, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.rt.com/news/339418-sweden-turkey-armenia-scandal/>.

¹⁰³Enjoli Liston, “Azerbaijan’s President Threatens War with Armenia via Twitter,” *The Guardian*, August 7, 2014, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/azerbaijan-president-threatens-war-armenia-twitter>.

intervention.¹⁰⁴ Another event that fired up this hatred was the Khojaly massacre. While Heydar Aliyev tried not to dwell on this issues his son did the opposite.

After being elected in falsified elections IlhamAliyev tried to cement his place as the head of the state. The military rhetoric that started after Key West went to another level. The main characteristics of IlhamAliyev rule became the military rhetoric, the human rights violations, corruption and isolation and extreme alienation of the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies.

Firstly Aliyev started an arms race which was meant to solve the Nagorno Karabakh issue if no progress is seen in the negotiations. As a result of this arms race the military spending of Azerbaijan rose from 117 million USD in 2003 to 3.8 billion USD in 2016.¹⁰⁵ Yet with the military budget the corruption in the country was rising as well. In order to justify the military spending the Azerbaijani government started the anti-Armenian rhetoric which was later on so obvious that the Minsk co-chairs and International Crisis Group saw as one of the main obstacles.¹⁰⁶

The rhetoric and hatred spreading gave results almost immediately. The beheading of the sleeping Armenian officer GurgenMargaryan during the NATO organized language course in Budapest in 2004 by Azerbaijani officer RamilSafarov¹⁰⁷ led to destructive consequences. The Armenians and Azerbaijanis were no longer allowed to visit each other's countries. This slowly led to an isolation of both societies. The peak of this rhetoric was the pardoning of RamilSafarov by Aliyev in 2012. The axe-murderer was pardoned, given a salary of the last 8

¹⁰⁴Ceylan Tokluoglu, "The Political Discourse of the Azerbaijani Elite on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (1991–2009)," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 7 (September 1, 2011): 1223–52, doi:10.1080/09668136.2011.592272.

¹⁰⁵"5 Apr. 2016."

¹⁰⁶"Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War - International Crisis Group," accessed May 28, 2016, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/south-caucasus/B60-armenia-and-azerbaijan-preventing-war.aspx>.

¹⁰⁷"The Axe Murderer Who Became a Facebook Hero - Al Jazeera English."

years he spent in prison, an apartment and promoted to the rank of a major by the Azerbaijani president.¹⁰⁸ Basically Aliyev gave a green light to kill Armenians wherever and whenever the Azerbaijanis meet them.

The alienation and xenophobic rhetoric had its goals. This way the Azerbaijani president distracted and still distracts its population from the issues grooving in the country. The war was an easy distraction from internal issues. By pointing out “the enemy” IlhamAliyev could justify any policy making. For example by pointing out the threat of Armenians Azerbaijani government passed a new constitution in 2009, according to which the president can be elected unlimited number of times.¹⁰⁹ Hence the war was used to guarantee the unlimited presidency of IlhamAliyev.

Another significant character of IlhamAliyev’s rule was the astonishing decline in freedom of media and human rights in general. While the country was characterized as partly free by freedom house in 2003 the freedom significantly went down under Aliyev’s rule. One of the most blatant examples was the imprisonment of Khadija Ismailova, an investigative journalist in Azerbaijan. Ismailova started an investigation on the corruption of Aliyev’s family. As a result IlhamAliyev was named the Corruption person of the year in 2012.¹¹⁰ Shortly after that Ismailova was arrested.¹¹¹ But yet again in order to distract the population Aliyev raised the military rhetoric bar even higher. This time using social media and mainly

¹⁰⁸“Pardoning of Azeri Axe Murderer Raises Tensions in the Caucasus | Simon Tisdall | Comment Is Free | The Guardian.”

¹⁰⁹“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN,” accessed May 28, 2016, http://azerbaijan.az/portal/General/Constitution/constitution_01_e.html.

¹¹⁰Robert Coalson, “Azerbaijani President Aliyev Named Corruption’s ‘Person Of The Year,’” *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, January 2, 2013, sec. Azerbaijan, <http://www.rferl.org/content/azerbaijan-ilham-aliyev-corruption-person-of-the-year/24814209.html>.

¹¹¹“Khadija Ismayilova, Investigative Journalist, Arrested,” *Azadlıq Radiosu*, May 12, 2014, sec. in English, <http://www.azadliq.org/content/article/26727471.html>.

his twitter account to call for war and elimination of the “Armenian threat.”¹¹² The distraction worked again and the press freedom declined to the 164th worst among 180 countries way behind Russia, Belarus and just above Saudi Arabia and Libya.¹¹³ Khadija Ismailova was released on 25 May 2016. But one of the reasons of her release was the fact that Amal Clooney, who alongside with her husband famous actor George Clooney, is an advocate for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, took Khajida’s case to the European Court of Human Rights. In this circumstances the Azerbaijani government could not afford to lose the case to a “pro-Armenian” lawyer.¹¹⁴

This elite manipulation and military rhetoric put Aliyev in a trap. The Azerbaijani population now influenced by the rhetoric and military spending grows impatient and wants a military solution to the conflict. The demands to justify the deteriorating economic conditions and rising military spending grow higher. The result of this growing impatience was the “4-day war” in the beginning of April in 2016. The war happened at the same time as Panama papers revealed the financial empire built by the president’s family.¹¹⁵ And yet again the population was distracted by the war and major financial fraud went unnoticed.

¹¹²Liston, “Azerbaijan’s President Threatens War with Armenia via Twitter.”

¹¹³“2016 World Press Freedom Index | Reporters Without Borders.”

¹¹⁴Michael Weiss, “Dissident Backed by Amal Clooney Is Finally Free,” *The Daily Beast*, May 25, 2016, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/05/25/dissident-backed-by-amal-clooney-is-finally-free.html>.

¹¹⁵“How Family That Runs Azerbaijan Built an Empire of Hidden Wealth,” accessed May 27, 2016, <https://panamapapers.icij.org/20160404-azerbaijan-hidden-wealth.html>.

Other obstacles and challenges

Within the main and most evident obstacles and challenges there are less visible ones. To determine this I conducted several interviews with Armenians and Azerbaijanis who were and are involved in peacemaking process on all the levels. Yet again we can put these obstacles in the categories of the violence triangle.

ZardushtAlizadeh, one of the founders of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan back in 1988, who later left the party to establish Azerbaijan Social Democratic Party alongside Leyla Yunus and ArzuAbdullayeva, points out that one of the main challenges is the lack of contact between the societies. As an example he mentions the fact that with very few exceptions no Armenian peacemaker was allowed to Azerbaijan in the recent 15 years, yet also pointing out that travelling to Armenia for an Azerbaijani peacemaker can be a physical threat.

The director of “Peace Dialogue” NGO based in Vanadzor, Armenia Edgar Khachatryan points out other challenges. Firstly, he mentions the presence of the IDP and refugee camps in Azerbaijan, saying that while this issue could be solved within 5-10 years the Azerbaijani government elected not to do so in order to show its own population and international community what Armenians have done to Azerbaijanis. It is also done to hide the human rights, corruption and other issues in the country. Likewise, the Armenian government blames Azerbaijan for the instability of the region and hides its own internal issues with the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Phil Gamaghelyan, the co-founder and the director of programs of Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation, who works in peacemaking in the context of the NK conflict for almost ten years, points out another anomaly. He mentions the marginalization of peacemakers and peace initiatives by the governments. Phil says, that because the governments and certain international NGOs have the monopoly of peacemaking in the

conflict the resources are mismanaged and the peacemakers outside of this monopoly are marginalized and stamped as traitors.

With the idea of the mismanagement of resources and marginalization of the peacemakers, agrees TevanPoghosyan, the MP in the Armenian Parliament and the director of the International Center for Human Development was one of the few people who was allowed to go to Baku in recent years. But T. Poghosyan mentions another problem, the problem of the choice of the peacemakers, he claims that more often the international NGOs would choose people who are already not trusted and not credible for the society in Armenia. Concluding that this unthoughtful choices lead to the negative image of the peacemaker in the country.

ArzuAbdullayeva, the co-chair of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly and the laureate of the OlofPalme Peace prize alongside with Anahit Bayandour, points out the limited recourses that are given to the peacemaking and the fact that these recourses are incomparable to the ones that the governments use for the anti-peace propaganda. She also mentions the very small number of joint projects which include Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

All the peacemakers that I interviewed pointed out the hatred and war propaganda and the ceasefire violation resulting in a death of soldiers are the imminent and the most influential factors.

Chapter 4: Opportunities for Peacemaking

The Violence triangle and Democracy

The history of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict shows two clear patterns. Firstly, the closest the conflict got to resolution was when the two presidents tried to negotiate peace one on one without mediation. Secondly, the establishment of any agreement was refused by the public. Hence the problem and the solution are within the countries.

Based on the history of the conflict and current situation it is obvious that the main obstacle was and still remains the public opinion and stereotypes by Armenian and Azerbaijani societies. Yet I argued in the previous chapter that the antagonizing of the other side happened in different ways. The current stage of the conflict reflects the harsh reality of isolation and inability to make contact with each other. Hence the opportunities should lie inside the problem. By using Johan Galtung's violence triangle and the term structural violence I will argue that in the current stage the structural violence is the first thing to tackle in order to have a breakthrough in the peacemaking.

According to Galtung the violence triangle has three points "cultural violence", "structural violence" and "direct violence". Galtung argues that cultural and structural violence can be a justifier for direct violence, while in reverse the direct violence can feed structural and cultural violence. Defining "cultural violence" Galtung says that by that we mean the aspects of a culture - exemplified in religion and ideology, art, science etc. – that are used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence.¹¹⁶ However it is important to mention that it is not the culture itself but some aspects of it. In the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan the cultural violence exists everywhere.

¹¹⁶Johan Galtung and Dietrich Fischer, *Johan Galtung: Pioneer of Peace Research* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013).

In the schools we read the tales of glorious warriors of the past. Most of the Armenian and Azerbaijani schools have a wall dedicated to the soldiers who died during the Kharabakhi war. Another example of cultural violence is the Armenian genocide symbolic in the schools of Armenia and the Khojaly massacre symbolic in the schools of Azerbaijan. As Galtung mentions, in order to not to have a cultural violence, the children must have the choice from the birth.¹¹⁷ Yet the photos and pictures on the school walls do not give that choice. Another blatant example in the context of Nagorno Karabakh would be the glorification of RamilSafarov by Azerbaijani president or the military rhetoric of the president. In this case the Armenian government does not have to bother to come up with anything, it just shows the news from Azerbaijan hinting once again that there is a culture of violence on the other side.

Talking about the cultural violence we also need to talk about the structural violence. Structural violence exists when a group, class etc. has more access to recourses, goods and opportunities. And this unequal situation becomes a basis for the political, social and economic system that exists in a country.¹¹⁸ Taking this into consideration we can say that the elite manipulation in Azerbaijan is a form of structural violence against both Armenia and Azerbaijan. In the previous chapter I pointed out several ways the Azerbaijani government used the war to stay in power and oppress its own society. It is obvious that the Azerbaijani government, as well as the Armenian government use the war to their own benefit. Aliyev can do everything and stay in power as much as he wants just by pointing out the Armenian threat, likewise the Armenian Republican party can avoid internal turmoil by just pointing the external threat.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (SAGE, 1996).

¹¹⁹Behlül Özkan, "Who Gains from the 'No War No Peace' Situation? A Critical Analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," *Geopolitics* 13, no. 3 (August 18, 2008): 572–99, doi:10.1080/14650040802203919.

Among those many ways of usage of the conflict, one is the isolation and restriction of the contact between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis, mainly by Azerbaijani government. A perfect example of this is the case of Sarsang Water reservoir. The reservoir is built on river Tartar and is situated in Karabakh. It is providing irrigation water and electricity to Nagorno Karabakh Republic. Built in 1976 it used to provide irrigation water to the population of Terter region, which is controlled by Azerbaijan. Now the Sarsang reservoir floodgate schedule is adapted to the electricity needs of NKR. And this adaptation leaves Terter's population without irrigation water from time to time. In 2013 the Karabakhi government suggested to the Azerbaijani leadership to discuss and negotiate a schedule that will work for both sides. But the Azerbaijani government refused to cooperate, claiming that they don't negotiate with separatists.¹²⁰ By refusing to cooperate the Azerbaijani government basically committed a violence against its own people. This is just one example of structural violence feeding the cultural violence which eventually led to a direct violence against its own people. What could be a great chance for both societies to cooperate became another depiction of violence.

Hence in the case of Nagorno Karabakh the three sides of the violence triangle are intertwined. Yet it is obvious that until the structural damage exists no advancement is possible toward the peaceful solution, as the structural violence is the main feeder of both cultural and direct violence.

Based on everything said/ the abovementioned we can assume that the structural violence can be changed by promoting and establishing functioning and healthy democratic systems both in Armenia and Azerbaijan. This argument can be backed up by the theory of democratic peace. A theory that evolved from the 18th century enlightenment thinkers and

¹²⁰Islam Shikhali and Durna Safarova, "Azerbaijan: Can a Water Reservoir Help Resolve the Karabakh Conflict?," *EurasiaNet*, March 22, 2016, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/77876>.

mainly from Emmanuel Kant has been researched more and more in the recent decades. The theory suggests that democracies are less likely to engage in a violent conflict with each other and the fact that no two modern democracies fought in a war against each other gives a solid ground to the theory. By connecting this theory to the violence triangle theory we can assume that the establishment of democracies in the region can result in reduction of the structural violence, hence it will lead to the reduction of direct violence and more importantly the cultural violence. Reduction and eventually elimination of the three peaks of the violence can open a ground for a peace agreement and conflict resolution.

The grassroots initiatives

In the context of democratic peace we need to look at the ways democracy and reduction of the violence triangle can work. As the Sarsang reservoir and many other examples show the leaders of the countries are not ready to solve the issue, hence we need to look for a spark on different levels.

Looking at the conflict pyramid developed by John Paul Lederach we distinguish three levels of the conflict. On the top level are the government officials, political, military, religious leaders, international organizations etc. The second level consists of ethnic and religious leaders, NGO heads, Academics and in the case of NK conflict the war heroes and the third level or so-called grassroots consists of local leaders, NGOs, social workers, peace activists etc.¹²¹

Based on the triangle model and assumption that the level 1 of the parties involved in the conflict are not interested in peace and especially in democracy we need to mobilize bottom up approach or so-called grassroots peacemaking. There are opponents of the idea of grassroots politics. Scholars like Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, Hugh Miall and

¹²¹John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2003).

others suggest that these efforts can only be successful if there is a support from government officials and there are negotiations on the official level, and if there are no elements of these the grassroots politics will fail.¹²² While others like John Paul Lederach or Stuart Kaufmann suggests that even when there is no interaction on official level and no consensus between sides, the contact should be maintained, the intergroup negotiations and confidence building should always exist and always reassure that there is a possible for peace. This kind of contact and people to people interaction should help the groups get rid of prejudice toward one another.¹²³

In the case of NK conflict there are several examples of grassroots peacemaking at work. One example is an exchange between two villages that happened in the late 1980s. During the escalation of the conflict and violence, Azerbaijani residents of Kyzyl-Shafag, a village in northern Armenia, and Armenian residents of Kerkenj, a village in central Azerbaijan, negotiated an agreement to swap villages with each other.¹²⁴ Without an approval from the above the head of the villages met and agreed to exchange houses in the villages, thus giving a chance for Armenians to go to Armenia and Azerbaijanis to go to Azerbaijan.

Another case would be the POW exchange that happened in 1993 in the middle of war. The chairwomen of the National Committees of the Helsinki Citizens' Assemblies of Azerbaijan and Armenia, ArzuAbdullayeva and Anahit Bayandour initiated and organized the exchange of at least 500 hostages and POWs. Consequently they won the Olaf Palme Peace

¹²²Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary conflict resolution: the prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2011).

¹²³Stuart J Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001).

¹²⁴“Beyond the Karabakh Conflict: The Story of Village Exchange | Böll SOUTH CAUCASUS,” accessed May 30, 2016, <https://ge.boell.org/en/2014/02/07/beyond-karabakh-conflict-story-village-exchange>.

Prize for their outstanding activities towards the establishment of peace in the region by the power of grassroots diplomacy.

Abovementioned examples are couple of many grassroots initiative proving that it still can work without the government's intervention. However one important thing must be mentioned. The grassroots peace initiatives are not empowered enough and most of the time are marginalized by the nationalistic rhetoric. To solve this issue the promotion of democracy should be prioritized and NGOs should be empowered. Thus in order to empower them the mediators and international organization should become an umbrella and a protective shield for the rare peacemakers and peacemaking initiatives to function and give results.

Other opportunities for peace

To be more specific on the opportunities I interviewed people who were and are part of the various grassroots initiatives done in the context of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Below are some opportunities and suggestions that were determined during these interviews.

IsmayilAbdullayev, a consultant on the European Partnership for the Peaceful Resolution¹²⁵ of the Conflict over Nagorno Karabakh, points out that openness and constant presence of the negotiation process on the governmental level can be an opportunity to discuss the negotiations on the societal level. The importance of social media as a tool for healthy conversations between Armenians and Azerbaijanis is also emphasized by him. Underlining the importance of the peacemaking initiatives, I. Abdullayev points out that these initiatives help the participants, especially the young ones who never met a person from the

¹²⁵EPNK is funded by the European Union and includes five member organizations - Conciliation Resources (based in the UK), Crisis Management Initiative (Finland), International Alert (lead agency, UK), the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (Sweden) and LINKS (UK). They closely with multiple local partners across the region. EPNK activities started in 2010. The activities focus on the following key themes: Dialogue, Research & analysis, Film & media, Inclusivity & participation and Training & capacity building.

“other side”, to overcome the stereotypes and become more immune to governmental propaganda.

Another member of the EPNK team, the head of the “Institute for Democracy and Peace” NGO Hayk Minasyan emphasizes the importance of joint peacemaking initiatives. He mentions, that if at some point the governments reach an agreement over the conflict, the members of these initiatives will be a great asset to prepare the population for the resolution of the conflict. H. Minasyan mentions that the youth that is now engaged in this kind of processes are marginalized in a sense, but when the time comes they will be the most effective ones to contribute to the peaceful resolution.

Talking about joint projects, Tevan Poghosyan says that there is no trust between peacemakers on all the levels. He mentions that more often these initiatives include youngsters on a voluntary basis and most of the time these youngsters leave the initiatives to build their own life. In these circumstances a creation of a permanent and professional team of peacemakers who will work as “full-time peacemakers” and would be fully committed to the peaceful resolution is crucial.

Arzu Abdullayeva agrees with T. Poghosyan in terms of the creation of a permanent team that will work for peace. She also emphasizes the importance of social media and a permanent dialogue. In addition to this Zardusht Alizadeh mentions the creative aspect of peacemaking process and underlines the importance of media projects, cultural and art projects.

Phil Gamaghelyan and all the above mentioned people emphasize commitment to peace as the “usage” of committed individuals to their full potential as one of the most important things in nowadays circumstances. While Veronika Aghajanyan, a project manager at the Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation, sees an opportunity in educational reforms,

arguing that the change in the educational systems of the countries can lead to a positive change in societies.

One more thing every single individual I interviewed mentioned is the establishment and development of democracy in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Arguing that if democracy would not help peacemaking initiatives at least it would not harm the peace process the way the governments do now.

Conclusion

In general the Nagorno Karabakh stays one of the most intractable and dangerous conflicts on the borders of Europe. The overview and analysis of the history of the conflict shows several deep-rooted aspects of the conflict, the main being ethnic fear and hatred developed throughout years.

The interethnic violence in the beginning of the conflict and failure of the authorities to stop the violence led to a bloody war which created new stereotypes and new reasons for hatred. This led to an establishment of a public opinion that was and is not ready for compromise.

The long history of negotiations shows the missed opportunities for the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The analysis of the negotiation process clearly shows that every third party intervention to the peace process ended up with nothing. Examples of this are the Russian, Kazakhstani and Iranian mediations of the conflict during the war and later mediation by the OSCE Minsk Group.

The most probable solutions came only at the times when the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents met and discussed the issue one on one. But every time the agreement was reached between the authorities the public opinion stood against the resolution. The governments failed to convince its population to compromise. Thus, the public opinion became one of the main obstacles of the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Although it would be logical to take steps to change the public opinion, the newly elected president of Azerbaijan – IlhamAliyev decided to go the opposite direction. The elite manipulation, the military propaganda, the restriction of cross border initiatives and media freedom led to a new era in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. An era where inter-ethnichatred escalated to a new level. The military rhetoric and elite manipulation led to constant ceasefire violations taking more and more lives and taking the peaceful solution further away. The governments entrapped themselves even more than before. Nowadays any unpopular and compromised decision about peaceful resolution can end up in upheaval in the countries.

This situation partially created and triggered by the governments led to the entrapment of authorities. Nowadays governments have to follow the popular opinion which is not ready to compromise. Hence to solve the issue firstly a change is needed on structural level. The development of democracy can lead to less structural violence which in its turn can stop the cultural violence by stopping the military and nationalistic propaganda.

One thing is clear, whenever the governments want and are ready to solve the issue they need to restore the structural damage they have done. Especially in the case of Azerbaijan, as the media and freedom restrictions, the inability to have a dialogue on the grassroots level and the non-stop military rhetoric and hate speech contribute to nothing but the escalation of cultural and direct violence.

In these circumstances the main thing the peacemakers can do is to develop democratic movements on the grassroots level in order to change the system. And by changing the system and establishing healthy democracy in the countries the restrictions on dialogue and peacemaking can be altered thus giving a chance for conflict resolution, peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives to prepare the populations of the countries for a dialogue and compromise which eventually can lead to the settlement of the conflict.

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