



# Working Paper

**Peace strategies in “frozen” ethno-territorial conflicts: integrating reconciliation into conflict management**

The case of Nagorno-Karabakh

Aytan Gahramanova

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Abstract

The working paper argues for the need of a re-conceptualization of the peace building approach in the context of the South Caucasus. In this regard, using the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a case study, it is argued that peace strategies based on a sequential approach (i.e., conflict settlement followed by peacebuilding) is harmful for positive conflict transformation, both in terms of sustainability of the settlement and long- term structural change especially in protracted conflict settlement.

Therefore, peacebuilding should take place in accordance with concrete and feasible goals to be achieved; this implies that peacebuilding can be supportive in a protracted, or “frozen,” pre-settlement phase (“no peace, no war”) and can facilitate the peacemaking/conflict settlement process through positive transformation. Hence, peace building is suggested to be linked to conflict management and reconciliation goals.

By analysing the nature of conflict transformation in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict the corresponding entry points for peacebuilding activities with a special focus on socio-cultural and political aspects are recommended by the author.

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## Introduction

The recent Human Security Report 2005 demonstrated that over the past twenty years, the number of armed conflicts has declined sharply and the global security climate has actually changed positively.<sup>1</sup> However, the fact that after the end of Cold War international organizations got a chance to act according to their original mission (the number of UN peacekeeping operations between 1987 and 1999 increased fourfold) enhanced a widely held belief that the post-cold war period was accompanied by an increase in armed conflicts, civilian victims and genocides. At the same time, international community faced a challenge of updating the conflict management and peace strategies to respond to the intra-state conflicts, the number of which outnumbered the inter-state wars. New missions were far larger, more complex than before in comprising military and civil components. In this context, the traditional peacekeeping concept was expanded into "peacebuilding" in the early 1990s that enlarged also the mandates. At the same time, with 40% of post-conflict countries relapsing into war again within five years, the importance of not only post-war activities but also preventing activities became obvious.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, the past ten years of more or less successful practice in reducing armed conflicts despite inadequate resources, ad hoc planning, lack of support from the world's richest countries, has not led to the agreed concept of peacebuilding. On the other hand, elimination and prevention of political violence as greatest risk factor for armed conflict has led to an alternative interpretation of decrease in armed conflict, which some experts attribute to "containment, rather than resolution".<sup>3</sup> Obviously, effective policy depends not only on resources and political will, but also on "better understanding of global and regional security trends" and lessons learned about "why some conflict prevention strategies succeed while others fail"<sup>4</sup>.

This problem is closely linked to an issue of timing of interventions which deserves more attention by conflict and peace experts since certain recent developments suggest that the progress of the past years now may be at risk of future massacres.

In this context, the working paper argues for the change of approach on peace strategies specifically in the context of protracted conflict settlement in South Caucasus. On the case of peace process in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which involves Azerbaijan and Armenia, the author argues that a sequential approach in relation to peacebuilding is especially harmful for effecting positive conflict transformations of so-called "frozen conflicts" (i.e. "no peace no war" situation), and does not contribute to conflict settlement. Therefore, peacebuilding timing should be defined according to the concrete and feasible goals to be achieved, that implies that besides the post-settlement phase, peacebuilding can be also facilitating in situations of pre-conflict settlement phase by creating an environment for positive transformation.

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<sup>1</sup> The number of armed conflicts around the world has declined by more than 40% since the early 1990s; between 1991 and 2004 28 armed secessionist conflicts started, while 43 were contained; international crises declined by more than 70% between 1981 and 2001. See: Human Security Center (2005) "Human Security Report 2005: War and peace in the 21 st century", University of British Columbia, Canada, Oxford University Press

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> UK Prime Minister's Strategy Unit "Investing in Prevention: an International Strategy to Mangle Risks and improve Crisis Response " [http://www.strategy.gov.uk/downloads/work\\_areas/countries\\_at\\_risk/report/pdf/Investing.pdf](http://www.strategy.gov.uk/downloads/work_areas/countries_at_risk/report/pdf/Investing.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> "Human Security Report 2005...", op cit.

This argument is based on the assumption of complexity of contemporary ethnic conflict, which has the features and the implications of both intra- and inter-state conflict as well as those of interest and identity conflict. All together, economic, political, and ideological dimensions at local and international levels interact with each other and reinforce ethnic identity aspects. These characteristics of ethnic violent conflict together with a protracted period of frozen conflict settlement undermine linear understanding of conflict by its high possibility of recurrence of violence unless the appropriate positive conflict transformation measures are implemented.

Therefore, the nature of contemporary conflicts has certain implications for conflict management and peacebuilding experts and requires more than a formal conflict settlement by top (political) leaders, but also involvement at the middle and grassroots levels, speaking in terms of Lederach, who theorized the importance of involvement of all levels of the society into the peace process.

The choice of Nagorno-Karabakh case in Azerbaijan for the study is explained by the consideration of this conflict as the most complicated involving irredentist and secessionist aspects, several actors, and a resolution of which would contribute to the environment of settlement of the other two conflicts in South Caucasus: Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. By dealing with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict case, we are able to demonstrate that: a) a twofold nature of ethnic conflict - identity and territory - exists; and b) an "only-post-political settlement-peacebuilding" approach in timing has harmful implications for the conflict transformation overall, especially in a stage of protracted conflict settlement.

The goal of the paper is to analyse five types of transformations in the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict (context, structure, actors, personal, and issue) and to suggest the corresponding entry points for peacebuilding activities with a special focus on socio-cultural and political aspects in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The paper is divided into five chapters. The aim of the first chapter is to provide a brief overview of the factors of the outbreak of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, its history as well as positions of the sides. The goal of the second chapter is to provide a theoretical framework and to establish a working definition of peacebuilding in the context of peculiarities of the "frozen conflict".<sup>5</sup> The aim of the third and fourth chapter is to provide patterns of the relevant international and local peace activities in the Nagorno-Karabakh case and identify the general impact of such involvement on two dimensions of the ethno-territorial conflict - political and identity – in order to serve the final purpose of the study, addressed in the fifth chapter, which is to highlight the entry points for peacebuilding in ethno-territorial conflicts in their "frozen" pre-settlement phase.

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<sup>5</sup> The term is widely used in the conflict management literature especially regarding the South Caucasus conflicts despite the term reflects the "frozen" nature of the conflict settlement phase rather than the conflict itself. In the paper, "frozen conflict" and "frozen settlement" terms are used interchangeably.

## 1. Nagorno-Karabakh: a case of ethno-territorial conflict

Serving the final purpose of the study to highlight the entry points for peacebuilding, the aim of the chapter is to provide a brief overview of the factors for the outbreak of the conflict, its history as well as positions of the sides in Nagorno-Karabakh. Experts of conflict management and peacebuilding, especially of inductive approach, stress that those approaches should be different according to the various parameters considered (e.g. participants or issues involved). In our case, we deal with the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which is defined as an ethno-territorial conflict, the first to erupt within the former Soviet Union in its waning days in the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic – namely in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (region) (NKAO) predominated by Armenian population (Azerbaijanis comprised 21.5%<sup>6</sup>).

Nagorno-Karabakh differs from the other conflicts in the region by two main factors. One is that it can be characterized as having both international and internal dimensions: it involves two independent states, Armenia, the kin state, and Azerbaijan, the host state, both have participated in the violent phase of the conflict and in the current negotiation phase; and the object of the conflict: Nagorno-Karabakh with its Armenian community. Second, it is the only conflict zone in South Caucasus where peacekeeping forces have not been deployed and ceasefire is self-sustained while in the two other cases (South Ossetia and Abkhazia conflicts in Georgia), Russian units lead the peacekeeping operations.

### 1.1. Background factors and history of the conflict

Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast is a region of 4,400 sq km within Azerbaijan with a total population of 187 000 of which 73.4% were ethnic Armenians who fled into the armed conflict with the demands for independence and/or unification with Armenia. The conflict began in late 1987 comprising both irredentist and separatist elements: irredentist claims of Armenia and separatists demands of its ethnic kin in Nagorno-Karabakh for unification with Armenia

Why did the Caucasus region become a vanguard of ethno-political conflicts in USSR? Few explanatory factors are most frequently suggested by the experts. The Caucasus region is characterized by a number of features which can partially explain a higher level of ethnic tensions here. Firstly, geographical factors explain the low mobility of the population that leads to the perseverance of a strong ethnic identity. The second factor is what Tom de Waal called "divergent national narratives"<sup>7</sup> i.e. contradictory interpretations of history. The third factor is connected with the availability of weaponry during the proneness of the USSR in the late 1980s to secessionist movements and paramilitary organizations, which was not the case in other parts of the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> Fourthly, perestroika made available various political opportunities structures which facilitated a large social mobilization in the society, which, however, did not have clear channels of mediation or mechanism of dialogue among the conflicting parties.

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<sup>6</sup> 145,500 Armenians and 46, 347 ethnic Azerbaijanis, see references in International Crisis Group European Report No. 166

<sup>7</sup> De Waal, Thomas "The Nagorny Karabakh conflict: origins, dynamics and misperceptions" In: Laurence Broers (ed) (2005) *The limits of leadership: Elites and societies in the Nagorny Karabakh peace process*. Conciliation Resources, ACCORD



Up to 1991 Armenia and Azerbaijan were a part of the south east of the Soviet Union. These states were included into the Russian Empire for 100 years and got a history of independent statehood only in a short two-year period between 1918 -1920 before they were occupied by the Red Army and were incorporated two years later into the USSR. Following the controversial nationality policy in the Soviet - "razsvet i sliyaniye naziy" (prosperity and mergence of nations) - Soviet territory was divided into various ethnic units and structures reflecting a certain hierarchy - republics, autonomous republics (within a Union republic), and autonomous oblast (districts). It must be noted that the composition of the ethnic population of South Caucasus is extremely diverse which is not a facilitating factor for the stability of the region: the only mono-ethnic country in South Caucasus is Armenia (since 1988-89), while Azerbaijan and Georgia accommodate large ethnic groups from neighbouring republics and a number of other indigenous ethnic groups.

The above stated factors together with a "poor reporting and inadequate mass communication forced people to rely on hearsay, while the lack of democratic means of public debate facilitated the rapid growth of stereotypes, prejudice, narrow vision and hostility."<sup>9</sup> Conflicting beliefs were generated on both sides in "ancient ethnic hatred" discourse which in the absence of corrective interpretation grew into "truth".

Some scholars are of the opinion that in Nagorno-Karabakh it is an issue of territory rather than national identity which pushes the differences between ethnic groups into hatred and violence.<sup>10</sup> Other scholars emphasize economically motivated grounds or cultural suppression as the most probable sources of the ethnic conflict.<sup>11</sup> However, the facts are that the province was not substantially poorer than many other parts of the Soviet Union, having indicators higher than average economic indicators for Azerbaijan SSR: while the industrial output of the whole Azerbaijan SSR rose by a factor of 3 (1970-86), for Nagorno-Karabakh the figure was 3.3; capital investments rose by factor of 3.1 (1970-86), while in whole Azerbaijan by factor 2.5; the housing space available to each inhabitant of the NKAO was nearly 1/3 greater than average for Azerbaijan.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, even a big influx of investment from Moscow in 1988-89 did not convince the leaders of the Armenian community of Nagorno-Karabakh to stay within Azerbaijan SSR.

Both sides, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, perceive possession of Nagorno-Karabakh as a cornerstone of their national identity which is linked to the khanate (principality) of Karabakh in XVIII-XIX cc ruled by Azerbaijani khans and Armenian Meliks (princes) who ruled together (through marriages) or separately for centuries until the khanate under Ibrahim khan was incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1801. After the collapse of the Empire, throughout an independent state-building period of 1918-1920 in the South Caucasus, interethnic clashes took place between Azerbaijanis and Armenians over territories with mixed population, including the Karabakh region where the mountainous part was populated predominantly by Armenians and the plain part by Azerbaijanis. The region's geographical peculiarity was also reflected in

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<sup>8</sup> Svante E. Cornel (2002) *The South Caucasus: A regional overview and conflict assessment*. SIDA/Cornell Caspian Consulting

<sup>9</sup> Kurkchiyan Marina "The Karabakh Conflict" p. 151, in: Herzig e. and M. Kurkchiyan (ed) (2005) *The Armenians: Past and Present in the making of national identity*, pp. 147-165

<sup>10</sup> Milanova, Nadia "The Territory-Identity Nexus in the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Implications for OSCE Peace Efforts" *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Issue 2/2003

<sup>11</sup> See for example a "human needs" concept of Azar in: Edward, J. Burton (1986): *International Conflict Resolution; Theory and Practice*. Boulder, Co: Lynner Rienner

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Republic Bulletin: "Concise Historical Information on Azerbaijan and the roots of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict", INF/192/96. October 16, 1996 p. 13

the agriculture type: the population raising livestock used pastures for grazing in the mountains and on the plains in the summer and winter months, respectively.

With the arrival of communist rule, a sort of territory exchange was carried out. On July 5, 1921 The Caucasus Committee ("Kavburo"), the highest communist authority in Caucasus, voted to keep Karabakh within Azerbaijan borders due to the linkage of the backward region to the industrial Baku, but another region also mixed populated, Zangezur, was incorporated into the borders of the Armenian SSR leaving the Nakhichevan region of Azerbaijan as an exclave surrounded by Armenia. At the same time, following an advice of Stalin on granting Armenian minority autonomy, on July 7, 1923 the Central Executive Committee of the Azerbaijani SSR issued a decree «On the establishment of the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh" (NKAO)<sup>13</sup>, setting administrative borders which cut the mountainous part with the predominately Armenian villages from the rest of Karabakh with predominately Azerbaijani villages.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, as a result of further border drawing, a large Azerbaijani community of about 200 000 which formed a regional compact majority found itself in Armenia but was not granted autonomy.

The decision of 1921 is perceived by Armenians as a historical error committed by the communist ruler Stalin. At the same time Azerbaijan takes it as a legal action by the highest authority of that time, pointing to other territories with mixed population, as well as a number of Azerbaijani villages incorporated into Armenia by Stalin in the years 1922, 1929, and by his successors in 1969.<sup>15</sup> The decrees of the USSR Council of Ministers, dated 23 December 1947 (No. 4083) and 10 March 1948 (No. 754), signed by Stalin, ordering a forced "resettlement" of more than 100,000 Azerbaijanis from the Armenian SSR to the Azerbaijani SSR in the period of 1948-1951 and the resettlement of Armenians from abroad at their place, are referred by Azerbaijanis as another proof of the anti-Azerbaijani policy of Stalin.<sup>16</sup>

The decision of the local NKAO authority in 1988 about the transference of the region to Armenia is perceived by the Armenian side as an expression of the right for self-determination. The perceptions of the Armenian side are as follows. Azerbaijani authorities operated a policy of socio-economic and cultural discrimination which led to the decrease of the Armenian proportion from 95% (in 1921) to 75% (in 1988); financial resources were put into the development of villages with predominant Azerbaijani population; few books were published in Armenian language; appointments to professional positions were to be approved by Baku. At the background of such perceptions, the conclusion made by Armenians looking back at the pogroms of Armenians in Sumgait (Feb. 1988) and Baku (Jan. 1990), is that in case of Nagorno-Karabakh would have stayed in Azerbaijan, an ethnic cleansing would have been effectively implemented, and the region would be a part of Pan-Turkism designed to rebuild a vast Turkish state.<sup>17</sup> Briefly, the main concern

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<sup>13</sup> Bakinsky rabochi newspaper, July 9, 1923 / Id. In: History of Nagorno-Karabakh. Available from <<http://www.karabakh.org/?id=3051&item=5>>

<sup>14</sup> Altstadt A. L. "O Patria Mia: National Conflict in Mountainous Karabakh". In: Duncan W.R. and G. Paul Holman G.P. (eds) (1994).: Ethnic Nationalism and Regional Conflict: The Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

<sup>15</sup> MFA of Azerbaijan Republic Bulletin, op cit.

<sup>16</sup> Baguirov Adil "Top 5 Myths Circulating about the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict" Azerbaijan International Magazine, Spring 1998, No. 6.1; updated version is also available from BakuToday.Net Available from: <<http://www.bakutoday.net/view.php?d=4400>>

<sup>17</sup> Kurkchivan, Marina (2005) op. cit p. 152

of Armenians is Armenia's demographic marginalization in the region, which can be prevented by resorting to the right of self-determination.<sup>18</sup>

Contrary to this view, Azerbaijanis perceive the events of 1988 as a manipulation by an external intervention, namely by the Armenian diaspora and by Armenia backed up by Russia with the final goal to restore "Great Armenia" which existed for 30 years and was divided in IV c AD between Sassanid Empire and Byzantium. While Azerbaijan behaves as a side whose position is supported by international law, it points out that the ethnic composition and generally the ethnic factor cannot be a sufficient motivation for the changing of contemporary borders of any state (they point out to large Azerbaijani populations in Georgia, Dagestan, Iran and Turkey). According to the Azerbaijani position there is no objective reason to suspect the existence of a deliberate policy of discrimination against Armenians in Azerbaijan. The region contained Armenian schools, publishing houses, theatres, local self-governance bodies, and was represented by 12 representatives in the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan SSR. As far as the few books published in Armenian is concerned, that was part of a general Russification policy of Kremlin, the victim of which was also the Azerbaijani language. As for immigration which affected ethnic proportions in the region, it is believed to be a normal tendency of migration from provinces to the capital, so Armenians were moving to the capital Baku or Moscow to get advantages in employment and education. In fact, a 250,000-Armenian community of Baku was the most advantageous, having influential position, housing in the prestigious quarters of the city, and the newly arrived Armenians from the provinces set up their new neighbourhoods in Baku suburbs. At the same time, there was urgency to support financially Azerbaijani rural areas in the region since they were comparatively the poorest while Armenian predominated in urban areas and villages and were better-off in the region. As for control of Baku on professional appointments, this can be attributed to the general authoritarian governance style throughout the USSR. Therefore, based on these arguments, the whole "Karabakh problem" is perceived by the Azerbaijanis as made up by the "Armenian chauvinists" led by the Armenian fundamentalist party Dashnakzutiun, who wants to re-conquer the territories held by their ancestors two thousand years ago to restore a legendary "Greater Armenia from Sea to Sea"<sup>19</sup> the goal confirmed by the political agenda of Dashnakzutiun party, re-legalized by R. Kocharian, which is the head of a governmental coalition in Armenia since 1998.

Conflict passed some stages in its development. A quarrel resulted from hard public debates in 1986 (for example the book of the Armenian writer Zori Balayan "Otag" (Home)) flew into the political dispute in late 1987. Armenian rallies in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and the first groups of Azerbaijani refugees escaping from Armenia in winter 1987–1988 caused the Sumgait pogroms of Armenians in Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani pogroms in Guzdek and Spitak in Armenia, followed by Armenian refugees fleeing from Azerbaijan. In the middle of 1988, the Supreme Soviet of Armenia passed a resolution on joining Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, and the Regional Soviet of Nagorno-Karabakh passed a resolution for the unilateral

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<sup>18</sup> Hunter, 1993: *The Transcaucasia in Transition*. Washington DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies p. 105

<sup>19</sup> Kurkchian, Marina (2005) op. cit p.153; also see the references to the interviews with IDPs in International Crisis Group's "Nagorno-Karabakh: Viewing the Conflict from the Ground" Europe report No. 166, September 2005

secession from Azerbaijan and the renaming of Nagorno-Karabakh into "the Artsakh Armenian Autonomous Region."<sup>20</sup> Thus, we can see that the conflict has features of both irredentism and separatism.

Anti-Armenian pogroms in Sumgait and Baku on February 18, 1988 and January 13-14, 1991, which resulted in approximately 150 deaths, opened a full fledged violent page of the conflict. By the time Azerbaijan declared independence from the USSR at the end of 1991, it was already at war with Armenia and the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, a conflict in which both sides deported thousands and engaged in brutal acts of ethnic cleansing; about 30,000 Armenians and Azerbaijanis perished, approximately 300,000 Armenians were expelled from Azerbaijan, while 200,000 Azerbaijanis were forced to abandon their homes in Armenia; the entire Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh and of the seven adjacent regions were expelled; 613 Azerbaijani civilians from the Karabakh city of Khojaly were massacred while escaping from the city on February 26, 1992 by Armenian forces with the alleged support of the Russian military, an act that prompted Azerbaijan to accuse Armenia of "genocide" of the Azerbaijani population in Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>21</sup> For their part, the shelling of the main cities of Nagorno-Karabakh by the Azerbaijani forces is hard for Armenians to forgive. Brutal war continued until 1994 when a cease-fire was signed on the basis of the gains for the Armenians who occupied seven provinces of Azerbaijan (two of them partially) beyond Nagorno-Karabakh making approximately 16% of the whole territory of Azerbaijan.<sup>22</sup> (see Annex 1)

The "Minsk Group" of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) with the United States, France, and Russia as co-chairs, as the main institution of the peace process began talks in 1992. The Russian-mediated cease-fire agreement was signed by the ministers of Defence of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the commander of Nagorno-Karabakh military forces in July 27, 1994.

Today, Nagorno-Karabakh is a case of a de facto secession and far-reaching integration with Armenia, a situation often described by the term "frozen conflict". It means that neither the central state nor the international community recognized the secession and there is no agreed political settlement.

## 1.2. Implication of the causes of conflict for peace strategies

From the beginning almost rapidly the conflict has transformed into an Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, i.e. an international conflict with both irredentist and separatist components, and despite having four actors (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh), is approached as a conflict with two sides (Armenia and Azerbaijan). This fact complicates the whole conflict management and a range of peace strategies applicable to the case, as we will see in the following chapters.

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<sup>20</sup> According to Constitution of USSR secessions and change of internal borders is possible only with the consent of the Union Republic

<sup>21</sup> For further information see Goltz, Thomas, A Decade of Useless War Remembered. Azerbaijan International Magazine. Spring 2002 (10.1). Available from: <[http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai101\\_folder/101\\_articles/101\\_goltz\\_speech.html](http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai101_folder/101_articles/101_goltz_speech.html)> and Goltz, Thomas, Khojali: Eyewitness Account From the Following Day. Azerbaijan International Magazine. Spring 2002 (10.1). Available from: <[http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai101\\_folder/101\\_articles/101\\_goltz\\_article.html](http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai101_folder/101_articles/101_goltz_article.html)>

Answering the question on the causes of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict a plausible hypothesis would be that historic conditions (background context) have created a situation in which ethno-territorial identity achieves greater political importance, and provides grounds for a mass mobilization to pursue various interests to maximize the privilege of its position. This phenomenon demonstrates itself especially in the period of weakening of the central state, in our case, the USSR, which aggravated the perception of grievances. Informed by the principle of self-determination, ethno-nationalist movements make claims on behalf of people, yet the implication of these claims are of territorial nature in terms of internal or external self-determination, depending on the opportunities and threats negatively or positively related to the preservation and development of the group's ethnic identity.<sup>23</sup>

Inspired by modernity the "rules of game" (with Nation-State as a main goal and actor of international arena) and appealed to the ontological component, a conflict discourse ("ancient ethnic hatred" discourse) provides the ground for a so called "identity conflict", which under the conditions of lack of mediation channels but availability of other opportunities flows into a violent conflict. Insecurity feeling pushes individuals into "us" against "them" groups while national grievances drawn from the history become the focal point of national identity and strengthen the in-group solidarity. The role of both elite and mass is prominent in this process: they are mutually triggered. Thus, we come up with a two-level framework for understanding ethnic conflict: level of background context (political context; opportunities available; lack of mediation channels); and level of the "ancient ethnic hatred" discourse (heavily based on ontological and security dilemma), which through reinforcing each other produce a risk of violent conflict.<sup>24</sup>

In this context, it seems that cultural self-determination as conflict prevention does not work automatically as a conflict preventer. At the same time, practice shows that although possession of cultural rights and wide autonomy may stimulate aspirations for getting more and more autonomy (as in the case of the Basque Country and Catalonia) it is also true that outbreaks of violence decrease in those cases. In other words, conflict acquires more mediation channels. The evidence suggests that the nature of political decentralisation, governing institutions, especially the party system, may indeed mute, if not inhibit, ethno-nationalist conflict. Possible reconciliation of these controversial opinions suggested by Hechter is that although decentralisation may lead to rise in protest events, at the same time it may erode the demand for sovereignty.<sup>25</sup>

Referring to the ethnic conflicts in the South Caucasus, some experts express their motivation in more determined way: "the secessionist movements were driven by the interests of group elites seeking to take advantage of a collapsing Soviet State and to redraw borders according to their perceived political preferences."<sup>26</sup> In addition, the failure of the international community to express its clear-cut position on internal/external self-determination, the politicisation of its approach (in case of Kosovo and East Timor) and its ambivalent statements inspire the autonomous districts to fight for secession while prioritizing group

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<sup>22</sup> Azerbaijan. CIA-The World Factbook 2004. Available from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/aj.html>

<sup>23</sup> Wolf, Stefan (2003) *Disputed Territories*. Berghen Books, New York, p. 7

<sup>24</sup> Gahramanova Aytan (2006) "Identity Conflict and its Implications for Conflict Management" UNISCI Discussions Papers, Vol. 11, May, 2006

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

rights before human rights values. For the South Caucasus, with traditionally strong ethnic communitarian affiliations, this behaviour of the international community became critical: while civic and individual rights components are lacking in the region, attempts to re-draw ethnic boundaries created fundamentalist and antagonistic ethnic communities that demonstrate its devotion to homogenization via ethnic cleansing as alternative to accommodation of its own minority. A Georgian expert, Nino Sabanadze, notes on the causality of ethnic exclusivity policy in the region and the role of the international community's approach: "...Such an approach also carries the danger of buying into nationalistic rhetoric of different ethnic groups and acknowledging their value as a group, while downplaying the individual significance of group members...Under such circumstances, greater emphasis on ethnic distinctiveness and group differentiation... may significantly undermine civic cohesion and impede the development of a multiethnic citizenry loyal to the state and its constitution."<sup>27</sup>

Summing up, there are reasons to believe that inter- and intra-group interactions are linked to the larger strategic calculus with rational and irrational components: as with any other violence, ethnic violence is produced from deep-seated emotions (i.e. irrational), but it is initiated by the concrete rational actions to produce desired outcomes.<sup>28</sup> Some authors even go as far as to argue that there is little meaningful action that can be done to prevent ethnic conflict or manage it constructively.<sup>29</sup> The author of the given paper makes a more optimistic, but nevertheless, pragmatic assumption that conflict management is able to manage conflict to prevent it from transforming into violence by reframing the conflict issues.

A thirteen-year peacemaking process, a lack of political agreement (serving as a framework for peacebuilding) suggests reconsidering of the logic of timing of peace strategies, at least for the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. It is widely held that reconciliation follows conflict resolution. However, in the case of "frozen" conflicts, where the negotiation process is protracted and reconciliation is postponed for years, negative transformations take root. In our case study, it will be demonstrated that a lack of peacebuilding in "frozen" peace settlements does not contribute to nurturing positive transformations for a peacemaking process.

To transform ethno-nationalism, "conflict resolution must satisfy the need for recognition of collective identities without threatening the other group."<sup>30</sup> In other words, for reconciliation is important that both communities of Nagorno-Karabakh start to accept the legitimacy of grievances of each other<sup>31</sup>, which is important for an attitude transformation.

The South Caucasus's highly mythologized societies require an approach which first of all transforms the war and ethnic hatred discourse into a peace discourse. However, taking a development approach, donors often focus on socio-economic inequalities resulting in livelihood programmes focused on agricultural

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<sup>26</sup> Sabanadze, N. (2002) "International Involvement in South Caucasus" ESMI Working papers

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 32

<sup>28</sup> Hechter, M. "Containing Ethnonationalist violence" in: A. Wimmer, R.J. Goldstone, Horowitz, U. Joras, C. Schetter (2004) *Facing Ethnic Conflicts. Towards a new Realism*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. pp. 283-300

<sup>29</sup> Kaplan, (1993), referenced in: Hechter M., op.cit.

<sup>30</sup> Ropers, (1995) "Peaceful Intervention: structure, process, and strategies for the constructive regulation of ethno political conflicts", Berghof report No.1., Berlin, Germany: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, p.25

development and income generation. While these issues are significant for war-torn societies, they are frequently overshadowed by an urgent need to target violence outbreak mechanisms such as war discourse and other mechanisms of politicisation of the perceived or real inequalities and fears. In this context, the challenge for peacebuilding actors is to diversify their peacebuilding programmes by combining aid programmes with those addressing the political nature of ethnic conflicts, and to gain wider impact by influencing a war discourse.

Loss of trust among ethnic groups is one of the central issues, especially for those who have experienced violent attacks. In such situations, if left unaddressed, intergenerational transmission of trauma and grievances may result in perpetuating revenge taking. This has happened in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh ethno-territorial conflict. The reservoir of traumatic memory of the atrocities committed against each other by the parties of the conflict fuelled the war in 1989-94 and, since the ceasefire 13 years ago, has continued to prevent fruitful negotiation. In turn, the "collection" of new memories has already formed (this time, in the form of Armenian pogroms in Baku and Sumgait in 1988, 1990; and massacres and ethnic cleansing of the Azerbaijani minority in Nagorno-Karabakh), providing new ground for further grievance nurturing. Speaking in the words of peace activist Prof. Vesua Pesic from Belgrade University, "...Ethnic conflicts [are] caused by the fear of the future, lived through the past." This "fear of the future" needs to be understood by conflict management experts both at micro and macro levels.<sup>32</sup> Left unattended, it continues forming potentiality for the outbreak of violence in the future, and a lack of reconciliation-oriented peacebuilding activities makes perspective of sustainable peace agreement vague.

## 2. The concept of peacebuilding

An elaboration of the problems of modern peacebuilding suggests that the development of peacebuilding in practice lags behind the extensive use of the concept.<sup>33</sup> It is at risk of comprising all good things of human security and of being overburdened. This, in turn, may result in unfeasible disperse of peacebuilding funds. Resources are allocated for programs on various sectors in compliance with menus of the tasks inspired by normative liberalism, but with little attention to how such activities should be aimed at preventing violent conflicts. While the majority of literature prescribes certain post-conflict peacebuilding activities, it offers little analysis of situational specific activities.<sup>34</sup> This results in an inability to adapt the external assistance to the domestic dynamics of the war-torn societies.<sup>35</sup>

The purpose of the chapter is to provide a working concept of peacebuilding with a special focus on the problem of timing of peacebuilding in the situation of a "frozen conflict" (i.e. "no peace no war").

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<sup>31</sup> Rabie, Mohamed (1994) *Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity*, Westport, CT: Praeger Publisher, p..134

<sup>32</sup> Prof. Vesua Pesic quoted in: Singh, Maheshwar (2002) "Ethnic Conflict and International Security: Theoretical Considerations". *World Affairs* (Online Journal), vol 6, Number 4, October -December 2002

<sup>33</sup> Jeroen de Zeeuw (2001) "Building Peace in War-torn Societies: From Concept to strategy." Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, Conflict Research Unit, August 2001

<sup>34</sup> Neclá Tschirgi, *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Achievements, Limitations, Challenges* WSP International/IPA Peacebuilding Forum Conference, 7 OCTOBER 2004 NEW YORK

<sup>35</sup> Lund, (2004). "What kind of Peace is Being Built? Taking Stock of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Charting Future Directions". A Discussion Paper for the tenth anniversary of Agenda for Peace for the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada. January, 2003

## 2.1. Timing and approaches of peacebuilding

There are three types of UN mandates for peace support operations: (i) Chapter VI mandates are the traditional peacekeeping mandates, that require the consent of all parties involved, and prevent the use of force in anything but a self-defence role; (ii) Chapter VII mandates are more robust mandates that do not require the consent of all parties, and therefore allow for peace enforcement functions. Such mandates have become more common in recent years (e.g., Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi) following the increased use of peace support operation troops in environments where a peace agreement was not fully agreed or adhered to; and finally (iii) Chapter VIII mandates allows the UN to devolve the implementation of Chapter VI or Chapter VII actions to regional bodies or other organisations (also known as track-sharing approach). However, in-country situations are rarely so clear-cut and therefore, may require a mixture of mandates.

Despite ten years of practice, a commonly agreed upon post-conflict peacebuilding doctrine has not been developed, and frequently a definition refers to simply non-military dimensions of efforts to support post-war societies.<sup>36</sup> This partially is explained by the rapidly changing environment within which the idea of peacebuilding came out in the 1990s. In other words, before the agenda of peacebuilding was consolidated, it has been considerably changed by the post-9/11 security agenda of the powerful states. A new discourse on “regime change,” “stabilization and reconstruction” was downloaded into post-conflict peacebuilding<sup>37</sup> with a further re-conceptualization of peacebuilding into de-facto “nation-building.”<sup>38</sup> Such far-reaching ingredients of peacebuilding imposed two-fold risk of discrediting peacebuilding: a.) motivation behind the intervention; b.) unreasonable overburdening the peacebuilding programme by unfeasible goals.<sup>39</sup> Another important point of discussion about peacebuilding is at the operational level: who should intervene at what time and with which tools in an intra-state conflict? In other words, the problem is the lack of systematization of conditions for peacebuilding strategies.

In this context, on the one hand, it is not clear that international actors have developed effective strategies in response to the new peacebuilding agenda in respect of general political goals and of assessing local needs, setting priorities, allocating resources and establishing accountability. On the other hand, it is essential to understand, how the “internationals” interact with national or sub-national actors including governments, communities, NGOs, other social or political groups in the definition and implementation of a peacebuilding agenda.

Generally, the field of peacebuilding has arrived at an operating concept that calls for addressing all the main sources of conflicts, from their structural sources to their immediate manifestations, and at all stages in their “life-cycle.”<sup>40</sup> This debate on timing of peacebuilding is associated with the linear perception of the phases of conflict (pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict phases). The idea that conflicts evolve through a “life-cycle” was long implied in the UN Charter’s Chapters VI and VII. This produced a linear understanding of the complex of post-war activities which are distinguished by the phases: relief (provision of primary

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<sup>36</sup> Neclă Tschirgi. (2004), op cit.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Lund, “What kind of Peace is Being Built? Op cit

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



goods), development (long term activities directed at structural changes in institutions) and rehabilitation (placed in between comprising short-to-medium term reconstruction activity and in the field of demobilization, disarmament, reintegration, political reform).<sup>41</sup> However, as the continuum model "relief-development" was discredited, peacebuilding concept is increasingly used as a more incorporated approach for relief (urgent aid), rehabilitation (mid-term reconstruction) and development (long-term institutional), taking into account the overlapping aspects of these three assistance categories.<sup>42</sup>

In most cases, peace strategies based on the sequential model are carried out in practice. A post-conflict peacebuilding, introduced by B. Ghali in his "Agenda for Peace 1992" as directly related to the presence of a peace agreement, was evolved in the 1995 Supplement to An Agenda for Peace, where peacebuilding was defined as instrumental not only in a post-war phase but also in preventive diplomacy as well. However, in practice, peace agreement continues to remain a determining parameter for peacebuilding.

This situation evolved a debate about the most favourable combination of peace strategies; opinions of scholars vary and differ from what was suggested by Boutros-Ghali (1992 and 1995) who stressed that different intervening strategies must correspond to stages of conflict. In the same way, Fisher and Kishley<sup>43</sup> argue that intervention should be matched to the stage of the conflict: at early stage, facilitation may be appropriate, whereas at a later stage, power-based mediation is required. Glasl also argues that different types of intervention might be appropriate at different times.<sup>44</sup> M. Lund suggested that some policy goals and corresponding policy tools are more appropriate at given stages than others.<sup>45</sup> However, these understandings presuppose a linear understanding of conflict, which oversees that the conflict stages may not be necessarily sequential (ceasefires were broken hundreds of times on the Balkans and in the South Caucasus). On the other hand, a number of scholars argue for simultaneous deployment of peacebuilding actors at several conflict levels<sup>46</sup> and sustainable conflict transformation as a result of multidimensional interventions<sup>47</sup>. A third group of scholars believes that sequence of transformations may vary with each peace process.<sup>48</sup>

Lederach proposes a time frame for peacebuilding depending on the goals where immediate action of 2-6 months is targeted at crisis itself, short-range planning of 1-2 years is aimed at training and preparing, decade thinking of 5-10 years is aimed at the designing of social change and generational vision of more than 20 years targets a desired future.

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<sup>41</sup> Jeron Zueww, op cit.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Fisher, R. and J.Kishley, L.: The potential Complementarity of Mediation and Consultation within a contingency Models of Third. *Journal of Peace Research* 28 (1/1991), pp. 29-42

<sup>44</sup> Glasl, Friedrich: The process of conflict escalation and Roles of Third Parties, in: Bomers, Gerard B. J. (eds) *Conflict management and industrial relations*, Boston 1982, pp. 119-14

<sup>45</sup> Michael Lund, et.al., (1997) *Preventing and Mitigating Violent Conflicts: A Guide for Practitioners* Creative Associates International, Inc.,

<sup>46</sup> Bloomfield, David and Reilly, Ben "The changing nature of conflict and conflict management" in: Peter Harris and Reilly, Ben (ed.) *Democracy and deep-rooted conflict*, Stockholm 1998, pp. 1-28

<sup>47</sup> Reyhler, Luc and Thania Paffenholz (2001) *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, Boulder - London

<sup>48</sup> Miall, Hugh: *Transforming Ethnic Conflict: Theories and Practice*, in: Wimmer, Andreas u.a. (ed.): *Facing ethnic conflicts: toward a new realism*, Lanham u.a. 2004, pp. 160-173

Most multilateral and bilateral peacebuilding assistance follows the phase of peace agreement signing the approach which is not facilitating under the condition of protracted peacemaking phase. The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is an example where all peacebuilding activities have been pending for 13 years in a protracted conflict settlement phase. The reality of the frozen conflict shows that while peace agreement provides a mandate for peacebuilding, if appropriately coordinated, peacebuilding can also effectively contribute to peacemaking and facilitate the peacekeeping process. The urgency of peacebuilding, especially in its reconciliation task, is especially vital in protracted ethno-territorial conflicts in which a conflict was violent and costly in both human and material terms, but perceived by the parties as zero-sum and irreconcilable.

The reason for the urgency of peacebuilding, and reconciliation in particular, lies in the peculiarities of ethnic conflicts. The basis of such conflict lies in the organisation of certain societal beliefs around collective memories and is formed by the shared cognitions on topics and issues that are important for the uniqueness of one's own society, ideologies, goals, and myths. Selective and biased interpretations of information construct societal beliefs which are aimed at de-legitimation of the opponent, creation of positive self-image, and victimization of one's own. In all societies, there are proponents of war and peace discourses. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, the proponents of negative discourse for both sides have more access to the appropriate discourse sites, and the voice of the peace proponents is not well articulated. In such an environment of non-attendance, a self-perpetuating cycle of non-constructive conflict is formed.

This happened in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh ethno-territorial conflict in Azerbaijan. The reservoir of traumatic memory of the atrocities committed towards each other by the parties of the conflict fuelled the war in 1989-94 and prevents fruitful negotiation since 13 years of ceasefire. In turn, "collection" of new fresh memories left unattended, continues forming the potentiality for an outbreak of violence in the future and a lack of reconciliation oriented activities makes perspective of sustainable peace agreement vague. It seems that this "fear of future" requires looking into the past to create opportunities for people to see the past in terms of shared suffering and collective responsibility".<sup>49</sup> In this respect, attention to the past cannot be overestimated: the nature of dealing with the past, how the past is framed in the domestic public sphere, is an indicator for the potentiality of positive or negative transformation.

In order to cope with such conflict, at least in its relational aspect, the whole discourse infrastructure must be transformed; this involves a process of changing attitudes, shaping new beliefs, motivations, goals, and images of themselves and the other. In this context, transformation-oriented projects must be launched even if the peace process is protracted over years. This implies that peacebuilding should be defined by its objectives rather than by its sequencing in a peace process, because interchangeable and interdependent quality of various peace strategies refers to the notion that peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding can be both mutually facilitating and destructive.

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<sup>49</sup> Bloomfield, David; Teresa Barnes & Luc Huyse, (eds). (2003). *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict. A Handbook*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, p. 21

In practice, however, most multilateral and bilateral peacebuilding assistance programs follow the signing of a peace agreement. Nevertheless, what if a conflict settlement phase is protracted like in the case of the South Caucasus?

## **2.2. The role of conflict management and reconciliation in peacebuilding**

It is argued in this section that it is important that while internalizing various approaches of short, medium and long-term nature, peacebuilding should not lose its peace building spirit. For this purpose, it must be linked to conflict management and reconciliation (as a process and a goal). Practice and lessons learned from up-to-date peacebuilding efforts show that there are at least two principle features that should be attributed to peacebuilding if the international community wants to be effective.

First, practice shows that what are frequently perceived as peacebuilding activities – demobilization, economic reconstruction, refugee return, democratization - are not automatically equivalent to peacebuilding unless they are designed to be such. In this context, it's reasonable to suggest that these activities must be seen through a conflict management perspective, and prioritization of activities must be goal sensitive. This argument echoes that of Cousens and Kumar, who argue that at least partly, assistance in conflict societies should be viewed through a political lens focused on internal conflict management.<sup>50</sup>

The second feature of peacebuilding to be kept in mind is that all components of the peacebuilding framework reflecting problem areas (security, governance, economic, psychological) are interconnected, and, therefore, need to be addressed in an integrative manner to contribute to peacebuilding. For example, the Balkans experience shows that failure to provide security and an economic context hampers the repatriation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). However, this should be done without overburdening peacebuilding tasks and without putting it at risk of losing its peacebuilding spirit. That means that peacebuilding must be linked to reconciliation goals and processes on the one hand, and conflict management, on the other.

### **2.2.1. Reconciliation in post-war peacebuilding**

Contrary to the more or less agreed concepts of the conflict-handling mechanism, reconciliation is the least conceptualized term. The key element, in our view, which contributes to the spirit of the post-war peacebuilding process, is a notion of reconciliation as *a goal* and *a process* (or mechanism) of peacebuilding. The definition of reconciliation is crucial in terms of providing guidance for reconciliation initiatives undertaken within the framework of third-party assistance to conflicted societies, and in terms of outlining a strategic peacebuilding framework. The below submitted outline of understanding of reconciliation has the purpose to inform the empirical examination of transformations in our study and to elaborate the mechanisms for promotion of reconciliation in post-war societies.

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<sup>50</sup> Cousens E.M. and Kumar (eds) (2001), *Peacebuilding as Politics: Cultivating Peace in Fragile societies*. Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc

This task requires identification of the problems that reconciliation as a process needs to address, as well as an evaluation of the potentiality of reconciliation as a feasible goal. The goals of reconciliation must be feasible and realistic.

Lederach, for example, distinguishes four components as critical for reconciliation – truth, justice, mercy and peace. However, as we can see below not all components are contributing to reconciliation. The assumption of the author is that in certain situations peace (here in the sense of lack of physical violence) is more important than justice, truth or forgiveness. While, in some cases, justice is used as an instrument of reconciliation for removing blame from the society and placing it on a small group of people, this instrument is irrelevant in cases where the “war party” is in power, as we have in Armenia’s case. Rama Mani, of the Geneva Centre for Security Studies, argues that while fulfilling certain needs, justice measures do not necessarily fulfil the specific need of delivering reconciliation or helping to rebuild inclusive societies. Instead, the measures could paradoxically deepen divisions within society.<sup>51</sup> While prosecution of all prosecutors is not feasible, selective prosecution will undermine fairness of the process.

In the same way, forgiveness/mercy and reconciliation should be regarded as two separate processes, because the former presupposes victim-murder attitudes, i.e. a one-way process, while reconciliation is a two-way process emphasizing a mutual process<sup>52</sup> emphasizing a victim-victim formula. Therefore, it is not effective to consider forgiveness as a precondition for reconciliation.

As for truth, empirical studies show in many cases reconciliation and truth are perceived as separate values. While we can assume that during a conflict each community has developed its own “truth” which forms an “ancient hatred” discourse, it would be valuable for reconciliation purposes to concentrate on the positive transformation of the negative discourse into a positive one and emphasize “reconciliation-friendly truths”. At the same time, this should not be about a policy of “national amnesia,” like the one followed by Tito when he came to power in Yugoslavia torn by internal vendettas during WW II. In this case, a devastating blow to the people’s sense of identity led to their transformation into “chosen traumas”<sup>53</sup>. Contrary to the “national amnesia” approach, the one proposed in this study is a “reconciliation friendly truth” approach, which is transformation-oriented and leads ideally to a discourse about the grievances of each other and the recognition of the legitimacy of identity, the mutual acknowledgement of past sufferings and the transformation of its destructive components.

Reconciliation is multifaceted and includes socio-cultural, economic, political, psychological, and juridical aspects.<sup>54</sup> We will focus in our study on socio-cultural and political aspects of reconciliation as the most dependent ones on each other. While various ingredients of reconciliation may have various degrees of peacebuilding nature, it seems reasonable to associate reconciliation with interaction and cooperation

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<sup>51</sup> Rama Mani “Rebuilding an Inclusive Political Community After War” Security Dialogue, Vol. 36, No.4, pp. 511-526, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, 2005

<sup>52</sup> Karen Brouneus (2003) Reconciliation Theory and Practice for Development Cooperation (September, 2003) SIDA

<sup>53</sup> Culberg Weston Marta (2001): “A psychological Model of Healing from the Traumas of ethnic cleansing: The case of Bosnia”, The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, p. 14

<sup>54</sup> Karen Brouneus (2003), op cit

projects as a mechanism.<sup>55</sup> To achieve mutual participation, both parties must be equally interested and participate intensively in the resolution process.<sup>56</sup>

Social distancing and interethnic segregation arising from a loss of trust are the most common effects of violent conflict. Under such circumstances, most probably - if deliberate efforts are not taken to create contact opportunities - contact will be avoided by the contending communities. The absence of contact, in turn, creates an environment that reinforces and perpetuates negative group attitudes, stereotypes and polarised images of each other. Under such conditions, as studies show, territorial separation further reinforces group segregation and does not contribute to learning for peaceful coexistence.<sup>57</sup> In the same way, isolation of separatist constituencies contributes to the 'freezing' of negative inter-group relationships.

In this context, contact and cooperation theories provide explanations for inter-group behaviour by focusing on various aspects. Contact theory argues for qualitative aspects, i.e. those which positively transform the attitudes, and are encouraged by support of local authorities. In this case, changes in attitude and de-categorisation occur, members of the other community are perceived as individuals rather than as belonging to a monolithic entity.<sup>58</sup> Cooperation theory suggests that inter-group behaviour is not mainly determined by socio-psychological elements, such as attitudes, stereotypes, as emphasised by contact theory, but by conflict of interests.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, existence of common goals stimulates cooperation via common efforts. Usually it is more feasible to start with politically neutral problems.

Apparently, the proponents of both theories implicitly refer both to primordial and constructivist explanations of the ethnic conflict. Since the assumption of the author of the current study is that both explanations play a prominent role in the formation of attitudes, interests and the outbreak of violence, incompatibility of interests is also a perceived category and, therefore, both cooperation and contact approaches have their major role in reconciliation; both must be realized and supported through international projects.

For the purpose of the current study, reconciliation is considered as a socio-political long-term process involving constructive communication building, transformation of destructive attitudes, and mutual acknowledgement of grievances.

In other words, going through the stages of reconciliation offered by Lederach, a process of transformation will influence patterns of beliefs, images and attitudes. Reconciliation in this process may thus require the building of a bridge between the past and the future and helping to rebuild inclusive society.

In this understanding of reconciliation, it's important to analyse the potentiality of reconciliation: a.) quality of relationship prior to a violent conflict; b) up-to-date discourse and its impact on people's opinions. First, a

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<sup>55</sup> Ann-Sofi Jakobsson Hatay (2005) *Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia 1995–2004*. Department of Peace and Conflict Research Uppsala University. Uppsala, Sweden

<sup>56</sup> H. Assefa, "The Meaning of Reconciliation," in: *European Platform for conflict prevention and transformation.*, Part 1. Available from <[http://www.gppac.net/documents/pbp\\_f/](http://www.gppac.net/documents/pbp_f/)>

<sup>57</sup> Kumar Radha "The Troubled History of Partition" *Foreign Affairs*, January/February, 1997

<sup>58</sup> Hewstone and Cairns, "Social Psychology and Intergroup Conflict", pp. 319–342 in Daniel Chirof & Martin E.P. Seligman eds. (2001) *Ethnopolitical Warfare. Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

community that has never had positive memories or intercourse experience would hardly be able to embrace the idea of closer relationships after a conflict; second, people tend post-factum to absorb new “truths” and visions under the influence of war discourse during and after war time, and tend to re-interpret the past experience (for example, the ideologue of the Nagorno-Karabakh movement tends to say: “Yes, we lived peacefully with Azerbaijani neighbours, but it was artificial reality. In fact they always were the violent instrument of the governments”<sup>60</sup>)

Apart from different aspects that reconciliation embraces (such as political, cultural, economic), a process of reconciliation can also be seen from various levels: top level, mid-level and grassroots- each with its own actors and methods. For example, the top level, represented by military and political leaders with high visibility, focuses on negotiation and ceasefire; the mid-level, represented by sector leaders, academics, and NGOs, is the most important for reconciliation, as it influences both the top-level and grassroots level and uses problem solving workshops, trainings on conflict resolution; the grassroots level, represented by local leaders, indigenous organisations, refugees representatives uses local methods of reconciliation such as prejudice reduction, trainings, and psychosocial work. Obviously, not all levels of society will be inclined to redefine national identity and readily accept narratives of reconciliation. In this context, it can be assumed that the very highest level may be, for specific reasons, the least responsive, while the grassroots level, the most responsive, and the mid-level, a locomotive for the transformation of the hatred discourse.

At the same time, even successful reconciliation cannot guarantee complete prevention of the outbreak of new violence, because the “raw material” for “ancient-hatred” discourse exists almost everywhere. Yet conflicts do not erupt in every region; and, vice versa, even in places where positive interaction exists, background conflicts break out. Therefore, ethnicity itself is not a cause of violent conflict, but when ethnicity gets linked in a problematic way to contextual factors, it comes as one of the major fault lines along which societies fracture.<sup>61</sup> Further shaped by current behaviour and policies of local elites and regional powers<sup>62</sup>, ‘ancient hatred’ is re-framed and reinforced by certain groups. To prevent that, a conflict management perspective in peacebuilding is needed.

### **2.2.2. Conflict management vs. conflict transformation?**

Another crucial element in the conceptualization of peacebuilding is the notion of conflict management. It must be noted that many terms from the field of conflict management and peace strategies can appear to overlap. In this way, the task of peacemaking is actually political settlement, and the task of peacebuilding – reconciliation and conflict management.

In this paper we tend to use conflict management as an umbrella term in its positive managing and coping sense. Yet, in academic circles, there is a tradition to distinguish three schools in dealing with conflict: conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation. Conflict management theorists see

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<sup>59</sup> Taylor and Moghaddam, (1994) *Theories of Intergroup Relations*. International Social Psychological Perspectives. Westport: Praeger.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas De Waal, (2003) *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through peace and war*. New York University

<sup>61</sup> Singh Maheshwar, op cit

<sup>62</sup> Brenda Shaffer (2003) “USA policy” In : Lynch D. (ed): *The South Caucasus: A challenge for the EU*. Chaillot Papers, No. 65, Paris, EU.

violent conflicts as permanent consequences of contradictory interests and values within a group. The tendency to violence in such societies arises from certain conflict patterns of history, institutions and power relationships, which are impossible to solve, but possible to contain by pressure, powerful actors, as well as by designing appropriate institutions of channelling the conflict into a constructive way.<sup>63</sup> Conflict resolution scholars argue that identity conflicts imply the existence of group specific interests, which are uncompromising and it is possible to redress the interests. In other words, this group of theorists advocate for creative solutions by powerless third parties with the aim to foster new thinking among the conflicting parties to move from zero-sum to positive-sum outcomes.<sup>64</sup> Finally, conflict transformation proponents argue for finding win-win outcomes in conflict since conflict relationships may be structurally embedded in a contextual pattern. Such a vision of the conflict, therefore, presupposes an emphasis on long term peacebuilding, involving complementary roles of human and material resources within the various levels of society rather than mediation of external actors.<sup>65</sup> Those levels are represented by a pyramid of the affected population, a wider part of which is represented by grassroots leaders (community leaders, leaders of local NGOs, refugees camp leaders), followed by a narrower part of middle-range leaders (ethnic, religious leaders, academics, experts, leaders of humanitarian NGOs), and a country's political and military top leaders.<sup>66</sup>

While in academic debate conflict resolution and conflict transformation come as mutually exclusive instruments, this debate contributed to the tendency to consider conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation in terms of "either...or". Moreover, the notion of "management" is presented as suggesting that people can be controlled as though they were physical objects.<sup>67</sup>

Contrary to the line of argumentation which emphasizes the exclusiveness of both approaches, the concept of conflict management is seen in the given study as more comprehensive. Because various aspects of conflict can have various destructive consequences, it should be effectively managed through the appropriate approaches - conflict transformation and conflict resolution – each as appropriate to the various dimensions of ethno-territorial conflict. An example is the ethno-territorial conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which has two dimensions - identity/ontological and political/territorial – each of which requires different approaches.

In other words, conflict resolution and conflict transformation must not exclude each other. In fact they are mutually interdependent instruments of conflict management. For example, while negotiation (resolution approach) is supposed to produce specific results in the form of political agreement, it may fail or not even initiated. In this case, activities towards a positive transformation process are the only option, although an outcome is indeterminate. Väyrynen argues that conflicts are continuously transformed even if efforts to

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<sup>63</sup> Bloomfield, David and Reilly, Ben (1998): The changing nature of conflict and conflict management, in: Peter Harris and Reilly, Ben (ed.): Democracy and deep-rooted conflict, Stockholm

<sup>64</sup> Azar Edaward, J. Burton (1986): op.cit

<sup>65</sup> Lederach, John Paul. (1995) Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures. Syracuse University Press

<sup>66</sup> Lederach, John Paul (1997): Building Peace: Sustainable reconstruction in divided societies, Washington D.C.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

resolve them explicitly have not made any visible progress.<sup>68</sup> While Lederach uses transformation in an exclusively positive sense, as we will see from the Azerbaijani-Armenian case, conflict transformations can be positive and negative; mutually supportive or corrosive.

Thus, conflict resolution and positive conflict transformation approaches can be seen as complementary. The complementarities are also reflected in the fact that a transformation perspective implies that conflict resolution takes place in "broader historical changes transforming the scope, nature, and function of collective violence".<sup>69</sup> In other words, the process of negotiation (represented by the resolution approach) is influenced by various positive and negative external and internal transformations, which with time change the function of violence.

### **2.2.3. Peacebuilding: balancing reconciliation and conflict resolution**

Thus, conceptualising peacebuilding for the study we come up with a suggestion to link conflict management and reconciliation as both mechanism and goal of peacebuilding, by which the very spirit of peacebuilding will be preserved, preventing it from flowing into exclusively development projects.

Such an understanding of peacebuilding is especially instrumental in the context of the ethno-territorial conflicts faced in the South Caucasus. They are closely linked to the identity-ontological component framed by "ancient-ethnic hatred" discourse and the political component linked to territorial claims and framed by "self-determination" principle.

These two aspects of the conflict make conflict resolution and conflict transformation mutually interdependent instruments of conflict management, mainly referring to various dimensions of the conflict: in order to achieve sustainability in political settlement via conflict resolution some aspects of national identity and the whole ancient hatred discourse must be transformed via conflict transformation approach.

At the same time, there are differences between reconciliation and traditional conflict management tools such as negotiation, mediation, arbitration where an accent is made on mutual accusation and defence among the parties. However, reconciliation goes beyond accusations and involves acknowledgement of responsibility for mutual grievances requiring reflection of one's own guilt.<sup>70</sup>

Compared with the conflict resolution approach, reconciliation is frequently seen to differ primarily regarding focus and time. For example, Ohlson and Söderberg argue for three phases of conflict resolution: the dialogue phase, the implementation phase, and the consolidation phase.<sup>71</sup> The first two phases focus on the elites to produce clear-cut outcomes: ceasefire, a peace agreement and the implementation of this agreement, where the consolidation phase is concluded a few years after the peace agreement is signed.

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<sup>68</sup> Väyrynen "To settle or Transform?" In: Väyrynen (ed) *New directions in conflict theory*, ISSC, Sage Publications, pp. 4-5

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p.6

<sup>70</sup> Assefa, "The Meaning of Reconciliation," European Platform for conflict prevention and transformation. Available from <[http://www.gppac.net/documents/pbp\\_f/](http://www.gppac.net/documents/pbp_f/)>

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Ohlson and Mimmi Söderberg (2002) "From Intra-State War to Democratic Peace in Weak States" Uppsala: Department of Peace and Conflict Research, p. 15



In other words, as we can see from this concept, many think of reconciliation as following conflict resolution.

However, while negotiating and implementing a peace agreement frequently triggers reconciliation process in society, in case of “frozen” conflicts, where the negotiation process is protracted, reconciliation is postponed for years, and negative transformations take place instead as will be demonstrated in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh in the following chapter. In our case-study we will see that a lack of reconciliation process and a lack of positive transformations are mutually triggering processes: positive transformations are not possible without a reconciliation process, especially in its socio-cultural and political aspects.

To sum up the conceptualisation adopted for the study, the peace strategies - peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding - are interdependent and, therefore, can be mutually supportive (or destructive unless goals, methods, capacities and actors involved are not seen in a coercive way). Conceptualisation of peacebuilding for our study represents a twofold task: to form the conflict management mechanism of redressing the causes of conflicts; and reconciliation process linked to improving quality of inter-group relations. Thus, it is important that transformation is be carried out at all levels of society involving “networking” categories of population across the levels of societies and prioritizing the projects according to its impact (for example pushing mass media projects).

In the next chapter, we will look at the pattern of international involvement in Nagorno-Karabakh to elaborate further on the impact it has on transformation of socio-cultural and political aspects of reconciliation.

### **3. Conflict settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh: power mediation approach and track sharing**

In the case of all conflicts in the South Caucasus, we are dealing with violent conflicts over secession in the first part of the 1990s (while the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh also carries an irredentist component). The secessionist parties being militarily successful, have established effective control over specific territories and set up de facto state institutions. The status quo is often described by the term “frozen conflict”, which means that neither the central state nor the international community recognizes it, nor there is an agreed political settlement. Such a “no peace no war” situation leads to negative transformations complicating both conflict settlement and reconciliation processes. In such a situation, the region is crowded with different kinds of international actors, ranging from international organizations and states to multinational corporations with various motives.

The aim of the chapter is to look into the pattern of international and local peace activities in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh (power-based mediation, track-sharing and multi-level approaches) and to identify the general impact of such involvement on the political and identity dimensions of the ethno-territorial conflict.

### 3.1. Power mediation approach

A peculiarity of the South Caucasian countries is that they rely mainly on bilateral assistance from bigger neighbouring powers like Russia, Turkey, Iran and the world power United States, to enhance their national security. Therefore, power mediation in the conflicts of the South Caucasus has acquired features of a "great powers game".

Power-based mediation is a traditional tool for peacemaking in dealing with interstate conflicts. It involves mainly states, and the conflicting parties' search for mutually satisfactory solutions is assisted by a third party, the role of which is to minimize obstacles to the negotiation process, including those that come from power imbalance.

At the same time, this conflict-handling mechanism is widely resorted to in contemporary intra-state conflict, when it overlaps with the features of that of an inter-state conflict, which is the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. So far, attempts of international mediation have failed to do more than 'freeze' these and the other ethno-territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus. All conflicts in the region show similar patterns of the three distinct phases formulated by Nino Sabanadze as first, Russian involvement and international neglect; second, increasing activity by international organizations; and third, counterbalance of Russian influence by increasing US involvement.<sup>72</sup>

Russia's policy in the Caucasus has mainly been driven by an attempt to retain influence and by the concerns for its own security with the increasing influence of other actors in the region. While Russian-Azerbaijani relations were very cold before 2000 and marked by personal dislike between the Presidents Yeltsin and Aliyev, since 2001 the two countries have become closer on such questions as Caspian sea energy reserves and the Russian military campaign in Chechnya. At the same time, Russia's alliance with Armenia has deepened in economic and military terms (a 5,000-Russian contingent base located in Armenia, and large-scale weaponry provision), and is based mainly on the traditional assumption that Armenia is the only true ally of Russia in the Caucasus. In all cases of conflict in the South Caucasus, Russia has been the only mediator allowed to broker cease-fire agreements: in Nagorno-Karabakh a ceasefire was mediated in 1994 with the active participation of the Minister of Defence of Russia. Moscow's influence in Azerbaijan is focused mainly on political factors; Azerbaijan does not receive Russian state investment, loans or grants, and Russian capital does not play a major role in the Azerbaijani economy. However, the Kremlin has a strong political standing in Azerbaijan notably in settling the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. So far, experts are uniting in the opinion that Russia today, along with other players in the region, is in favour of the status quo, i.e., "no war, no peace."

Armenia's intensive economic relationship with Iran has caused the latter to become alienated from Azerbaijan, since Tehran did not join the trade embargo (as Turkey did) imposed by Azerbaijan on Armenia. Another reason is that, on the one hand, Iranian influence has always been regarded in Azerbaijan as adversarial to the very existence of the democratic, secular, pro-Western Azerbaijani state. The enmity between Turks and Armenians may indeed give Iran the opportunity to oppose Turkish and

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<sup>72</sup> Sabanadze, 2002, op cit

U.S. policies in the region.<sup>73</sup> Iran actively provided economic support to Armenia during the Nagorno-Karabakh war and now is one of its main trade partners.

Armenia's military offensive and subsequent occupation of Shusha (the main Azerbaijani populated city in Nagorno-Karabakh) during the ceasefire undermined credibility of Iran as mediator in March 1992. On the other hand, Iran is interested in keeping a balance of power in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict: neither powerful Christian Armenia, nor powerful Azerbaijan, which might cherish territorial claims on the 20 million compact populated Azerbaijani minority in the contiguous northern provinces of Iran, the separatist stirrings of which are a constant headache for the Iranian authorities.

U.S. foreign policy in the region has been contradictory through time. Generally, domestic interest groups, especially the influence of the Armenian-American lobby on Congress decisions have had a large impact on the formation of current U.S. policy towards the region, often in contradiction to policies articulated by the U.S. executive branch.<sup>74</sup> One of the most obvious examples of incoherent politics of the U.S. was Section 907 of the Freedom Act introduced in 1992 prohibiting all U.S. government aid to the government of Azerbaijan until the president determines that Azerbaijan has taken "demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh". As a result of Section 907, which was waved only at the end of 2001, in the period 1992-2003, Azerbaijan (with a population of 8 million) received \$ 335 million in U.S. aid, while Armenia was one of the highest per-capita recipients of U.S. assistance in the world, receiving a total of \$ 1,336 billion for 3 million people (i.e., four times more).<sup>75</sup>

Turkey, another regional power, from the very beginning of the conflict was consistent in its diplomatic support of Azerbaijan, and has provided counselling and training services to Azerbaijani soldiers. Turkey closed its borders with Armenia (although charter flights are permitted) in 1992 until Armenia ends occupation of Azerbaijan or at least mutual satisfactory political agreement is achieved. Such a position is attributed to the ethnic relationship of Turks and Azerbaijanis and complicated diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia. These complications are connected with the Armenian's pursuing Turkey and various parliaments for recognizing the events of 1915 in the World War I as "genocide" committed by the Ottoman government and not as death in military actions as Turkey perceives those events. At the same time, the Turkish leaders took into account not only the factors of cultural relations. First, Turkey tried to maintain good relations with Russia. Second, the large Armenian diaspora in France and the U.S. exerted pressure on those countries' domestic decision making in favour of Armenia hindered Turkey in its diplomatic efforts to help Azerbaijan. Third, NATO partners were reluctant to take a risk involving Turkey in military actions in the region.<sup>76</sup> In other words, "Turkey's reaction to Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan was strong but

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<sup>73</sup> Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, "Iran's role as Mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis" in: B. Copitters (ed.) (1999): *Contested Borders in Caucasus*,

<sup>74</sup> Brenda Shaffer (2003) *op.cit*

<sup>75</sup> Economical embargo was imposed by Azerbaijan due to the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia and also by Turkey as a solidarity gesture; the front line border around Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied territories is believed to be one of the most fortified in the world.

<sup>76</sup> Freddy De Pauw: "Turkey's Policies in Transcaucasia" in: Bruno Coppieters (ed.) 1996: *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, Chapter VIII, VUB University Press

only verbal.”<sup>77</sup> Thus, Turkey failed to play a leading role in Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and now, according to some experts, shows signs of rapprochement with Russia in its shared desire to maintain the status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.<sup>78</sup>

While any third-party intervention concerns mainly issues of neutrality and impartiality, some scholars question impartiality as an indispensable condition of the intermediary and argue that the results of the intermediary are more successful when at least one mediator is biased.<sup>79</sup> In the case of Russia, the reality is that it actively supports separatist regimes in the South Caucasus by following a self-interest strategy by keeping all sides dependent on Moscow.<sup>80</sup> In this case, we see, that, first, the bias nature of one mediator is completely destructive for any perspective of conflict resolution, but effective in preserving post-war status quo, i.e., military gains and losses of the sides. Second, in the case of bias mediation, the conflict is more likely to be settled in favour of the victor. Third, usually the conflict is settled in favour of self-interest of the mediator. Fourth, even if the political settlement is achieved as a result of such mediation, it carries temporary character.

In this respect, the complicated context in which the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (and the other conflicts in the South Caucasus) cannot find its settlement is another example confirming the argument of Fen Osler Hampson that conflict settlement needs consistent and constant nurturing by a third party to be successful.<sup>81</sup> Otherwise, in a situation like that of the South Caucasus where the activity of international actors differs in their intentions, goals, capacity, priorities and motivations, conflict settlement is difficult to achieve.

### **3.2. Track sharing approach by international organizations**

Since the UN was not created to deal with internal conflicts, it still relies on mainly traditional peacekeeping (separation of conflicting sides, monitoring, and observation). Therefore, the urgency of the escalating situation in 1990s compelled the international community to transfer some of the functions of peacekeeping to regional organizations, such as NATO, EU, OSCE and CIS. This approach is called track-sharing. Below, we will see the advantages and disadvantages of the so-called track sharing approach, which is based on the roles of regional organizations in conflict management. Despite the United Nations Security Council’s demand for immediate and complete "withdrawal of all occupying forces" (UN Security Council resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884), it distanced itself from the peacemaking process passing it to the CSCE, which in 1994 became the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>78</sup> Fiona Hill, Taspinar, Russia and Turkey in the Caucasus: Moving Together to Preserve the Status Quo, IFRI Research Programme, 2006

<sup>79</sup> Touval, Saadia, Biased Intermediaries: Theoretical and Historical Considerations. The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations, Vol.1, No.1, Fall 1975

<sup>80</sup> Mackedon J.and Molly Corso. Little Optimism for Georgia’s Abkhasia Peace Plan. 21.I.2005, Eurasianet. Available from <<http://www.eurasianet.org/eurasianet/russian/departments/insight/articles/eav012105ru.shtml>>

<sup>81</sup> Hapson, Fen Osler (1996) Nurturing peace: why peace settlements succeed or fail. Washington; US Institute of Peace press.

On March 1992, CSCE became the first international organisation to assist in the resolution of military conflict in the former Soviet Union and, since 1994, (the organization's) Minsk Group has been the official international peacemaking institution involved in brokering a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, with Russia, France and the U.S. serving as the group's co-chairs. While the co-chairs were initially supposed to rotate, this never happened and in 1998, Russia and the U.S. were given permanent chairs. Furthermore, France recently opposed a proposal that it should be replaced as co-chair by the EU. The problem with the Minsk Group is that all of its members represent and serve, above all, their own governments. Moreover, they are the interested parties to the conflict and, most important, biased in favour of Armenia (Russia is the most obvious case, France and USA have Armenian lobbies as a strong factor in their domestic policy.)<sup>82</sup>

In 1994, the High Level Planning Group (HLPG) was established with the aim of intensifying action in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and to make recommendations on establishing a multinational OSCE peacekeeping force. However, the peacekeepers have not been deployed (since there is no peace agreement), and Karabakh remains the only conflict in the South Caucasus where neither Russian nor international peacekeeping operations are conducted.

While by 1994, the OSCE had a task of mediating a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, they faced an urgency to settle tension among the mediator-states in the Minsk Group, where unilateral actions of Russia (without consultation with the others) caused frictions between the key OSCE players. In addition, during the initial phase of OSCE involvement (from 1992-1996), the organization's effectiveness was hampered by the lack of knowledge, expertise and interest of Western countries in the region and the fact that major Western resources were concentrated in the Balkans, and at the Horn of Africa.

Within the period of 1994 -2001, four resolution proposals were discussed with the focus on Nagorno-Karabakh's status and security, as well as refugees and IDPs and the problem of the once Azerbaijani-dominated Nagorno-Karabakh city of Shusha.<sup>83</sup>

The first so-called "package solution" (July 1997) is more of a compromise and consists of two agendas: 1. troop withdrawal is followed by deployment of peacekeepers, security guarantees provision and return of displaced persons; 2. Karabakh's final status would be defined. Since the "package" proposal determined Nagorno-Karabakh as "a territorial formation within Azerbaijan", reaction in Baku was encouraging, but Nagorno-Karabakh leaders rejected it.

The second "step-by-step" proposal (September 1997) focused first on military aspects and then on conflict settlement, with its more complex political issues. The status of Nagorno-Karabakh was to be postponed until the last phase of the peace process, and meanwhile it would enjoy internationally recognized "interim status". While Azerbaijan has accepted the proposal, the Karabakh Armenians did not agree to withdraw

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<sup>82</sup> Wayne Merry, "Diplomacy and War in Karabakh: An Unofficial American Perspective" , Public Lecture, October, 25, 2006

<sup>83</sup> Volker Jacoby "The role of the OSCE: an assessment of international mediation efforts" In: Laurence Broers (ed), op.cit.

from the occupied regions of Azerbaijan adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh not willing to lose its main source of advantage in pursuing independence status.

Finally, in November 1998, the third proposal (formulated by the Russian Minsk group co-chair) - 'common state' between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh - was presented. Stressing 'horizontal' relations between Baku and Stepanakert/Khankendi, the proposal was rejected by Azerbaijan on grounds of the violation of its territorial integrity.<sup>84</sup>

Domestic political turmoil in Armenia followed by the resignation of President Ter-Petrosian and the assassination of the Armenian prime minister and other members of government in the Parliament in 1999 stopped negotiations for a while. In the spring of 2001, following the Paris meeting, a US-mediated negotiation between Presidents H. Aliev and R. Kocharian held at Key West in Florida allegedly was most acceptable for the parties. Although the content of the outline of an agreement was not published, unofficial sources reported that the issues at stake were<sup>85</sup>: return of a part of the districts surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan accompanied by the withdrawal of the Nagorno-Karabakh armed forces. This would allow the return of Azerbaijani IDPs to these lands; a deal over land corridors for both Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan; re-opening of the Armenian borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey; and -- according to unofficial sources -- incorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia and territorial compensation to Azerbaijan (territory presently separating Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan).<sup>86</sup> However, upon return to Azerbaijan, President Aliev was forced to withdraw the provisional agreement under pressure of public opinion. At the same time, according to the opinion of experts, the Armenian side's favouring of the "Paris principles" were pre-determined by the refusal of those by H. Aliyev and not by the desire to compromise.<sup>87</sup>

Another issue is the format of the official negotiations: the leaders of Azerbaijani ("in-exile") and Armenian communities of Nagorno-Karabakh are not involved in the negotiations. Seemingly, this situation is favourable for both sides; Azerbaijan avers that it is ready to negotiate with Nagorno-Karabakh directly, but only if Armenia leaves the negotiation process, while the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh recognize that they are Azerbaijani citizens and the expelled Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh will be included in the negotiations. Despite dissatisfaction of the Nagorno-Karabakh leaders for being excluded from negotiation, Armenia justifies its exclusive participation in the negotiations that "Armenia has more advantages and opportunities to defend effectively the interests of Nagorno-Karabakh in front of the international community".<sup>88</sup>

In January 2003, the President of Armenia, Robert Kocharyan, proclaimed that Armenia's peace policy rested on three pillars: a "horizontal" — instead of hierarchical — relationship between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan; a secure land corridor between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh; and security guarantees

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> M. Emerson, *Caucasus Revisited*. CEPS POLICY BRIEF NO. 34, JUNE 2003, pp.1-23

<sup>86</sup> Ibid p. 9; see also David Shakhnazaryan's report in the conference 'South Caucasus - unstable region of the frozen conflicts', Berlin, 26-27 November, 2001, Tbilisi, Fridrich Ebert Stiftung, p..56

<sup>87</sup> David Shakhnazaryan's report op.cit.

<sup>88</sup> "Karabakh: Na kogo robotayet vremya? Interview of R. Kocharian", published 03.03.2006 at REGNUM news agency, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/599743.html>

for Nagorno-Karabakh's population. Azerbaijan's position is "...We have never been against Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh. We think they must have social-political freedoms...the Armenian community must be provided with self-governance... the Azerbaijani community has to return to Nagorno-Karabakh and we must provide an opportunity for both communities to enjoy the same model of self-government within the framework of Azerbaijani legislation."<sup>89</sup> At the same time, international mediators understand that "there is a need to find balance between both principles [territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and self-determination of Nagorno-Karabakh – A.G.] – as said the ex-co-chair of Minsk Group and the ex-Special Representative of EU in the South Caucasus, Heikki Talvittie.<sup>90</sup>

In August 2004, the co-chairs initiated a series of meetings in Prague between the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Prague Process was designed to reinvigorate dialogue between the sides, focusing on advancing negotiations towards a settlement. At the time this paper has been published, top-level meetings in France in February 2006 and those that followed brought no results, raising speculation among experts that Russia had encouraged Armenian President Robert Kocharyan to harden his position in the February 2006 peace negotiations, thereby devastating a long-expected framework agreement.

Meanwhile, the parties to the conflict accuse each other using maximalist rhetoric. While the Azerbaijani government is not compromising on its territorial integrity but ready to discuss any form of the "highest possible autonomy" for Nagorno-Karabakh based on international experience (basically that was articulated in the Minsk Group's first step-by-step proposal of 1997), Armenian Foreign Minister V. Oskanyan in October 2004 stated that there could be no compromise on the independence status of Nagorno-Karabakh, since "every inch of Armenia is priceless, including Karabakh."<sup>91</sup> While declaring its readiness to grant "the highest possible" autonomy to Nagorno-Karabakh, the Azerbaijani leaders do not go into detail of this formula.

Thus, despite 12 years of negotiations since the cease fire, the positions of the parties are the same, giving the impression of bargaining rather than a search for a compromise: one side (Armenia) considers as a compromise the formula of return of five of seven<sup>92</sup> occupied territories "in exchange for independence status"; Azerbaijan promises a "lifting of the economic and transportation embargo in exchange for all territories." In other words, there are different positions on what is considered the subject of a compromise. Moreover, appealing to the various subjects of the compromise, Armenia seeks to make the negotiation process dependent on the *fait accompli* by appealing to Armenia's past military success, while the other side, Azerbaijan, to its future military power and capacity for revenge. As a result, none of the proposals could bring the sides closer to the agreement by reconciling the needs of self-determination with territorial integrity to the satisfaction of all parties.

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<sup>89</sup> Statement of Araz Azimov, Azerbaijan Deputy of Foreign Minister, TURAN information Agency, Baku, 01.04.06

<sup>90</sup> Interview of Heikki Talvittie to "Voice of Armenia", quoted In: Day.az press review of 12-16 March, 2006, Available from: <http://www.day.az/news/review/43708.html>

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Jim Nichol "Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests" CRS Issue Brief for Congress, 2005

<sup>92</sup> The rest two are Lachin and Kelbajar provinces linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh since the secessionist region does not have common border with its ethnic kin Armenia

Meanwhile, local experts articulate the opinion on the peace process in Nagorno-Karabakh case as nothing more than an imitation of negotiations by both sides with the single purpose to soften militaristic expectations of the peoples which would be radicalized in the situation of a lack of the negotiation process.

In turn, the OSCE as an organization failed to become a decision making organ, lacked the necessary political and military tools to compel the parties to reach compromise and settlement. Its main concern became to preserve the post-war status quo as such, instead of a political resolution of the conflict. Speaking in the words of Kazimirov, a former Russian co-chair of Minsk group, OSCE “not so much leads to the peace but rather follows the conflict sides...”<sup>93</sup> In other words, relying too much on the will of the parties to a compromise, OSCE is not consistent in opposing everything what is contradictory to the peace process or in supporting even its own resolutions and those of the other international and European institutions such as UN and PA of CoE (for example, implementation of four resolutions of the Security Council of UN on Nagorno-Karabakh adopted in 1993); it does not press the sides to follow the commitments they undertook; finally sometimes even the mediators in the Minsk Group lack a basic knowledge about the history of the conflict. Speaking of the effectiveness of any organization such as OSCE, obviously it cannot be more efficient and willing to solve the problem than the participating states’ decision to do that. Unwillingness of most OSCE member states at the CSCE Budapest summit in December 1994 to transform the OSCE into the major security organization of Europe prevented the OSCE becoming the main security provider in the South Caucasus. Under the conditions of the inconsistent and weak international institutions where the member states represent and pursue first of all their state interests, the conflict parties naturally follow their maximalist demands and military rhetoric undermines mutual trust. All these factors reduce the chance of achieving political settlement.

On the other hand, a positive aspect is that the institutionalization of peacemaking was produced due to Minsk Group formation which keeps the process active up to know. Besides conflict settlement, the OSCE initiated confidence building measures to involve various joint projects (e.g. establishing water sharing structures at the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia, facilitation cross border consultations). OSCE also regularly conducts observation of a cease-fire line, which contributes to communication between the militaries from both sides.<sup>94</sup>

### **3.3. The role of other international and regional organisations: EU, NATO, UN, CoE**

UN, NATO, CoE and EU made it clear repeatedly that they will not be involved into the conflict resolution process or negotiations leaving that to the OSCE Minsk Group. Apart from mediation efforts, international involvement also consisted of more general assistance schemes to Armenia and Azerbaijan aimed at democratization, economic restructuring and the successful transition of these countries from centrally planned authoritarian regimes to market democracies. Even though most of these assistance programmes did not target the conflict zone specifically, the general understanding was that efforts at democratization and the development of the rule of law and civil society would eventually contribute to the peaceful

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<sup>93</sup> Kazimirov Vladimir “Pobeda razuma nad siloy” Realniy Azerbaijan, No. 25, June 23, 2006 (“A win of the ratio over the power”)



settlement of the conflict. However, as we will see further in the analysis of the nature of transformation in both societies, these efforts were undermined by more or less tolerant attitude of the same international community towards the semi-authoritarian regimes in the region.

The radical expansion of UN operations and its role worldwide contrast sharply with the UN's limited involvement in the area of the former Soviet Union, and in South Caucasus in particular. The United Nations took a very cautious stand towards the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and first paid attention only in 1992 after the Armenian offensive. Fact-finding missions were sent to Karabakh with the aim of collecting information and supporting the CSCE efforts on the ground. Four resolutions were passed by the Security Council in 1993 with the call to stop the offensive and withdraw all military forces from the occupied territories. However, generally Western institutions were tolerant to the involvement of Armenia into the military activities in Nagorno-Karabakh and did not officially note Armenia as a side in the conflict in those resolutions, let alone recognizing Armenia as an aggressor despite of the occupation of almost seven regions of Azerbaijan.

A more pronounced role of the UN are its assistance programmes (UNDP, UNHCR, UNOCHA). The UNHCR has played a particularly important role in managing the refugee crisis in Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, UNCHR is also involved with 570 000 Azeri IDPs from Nagorno-Karabakh, 188,000 refugees from Armenia, 10 000 Chechnyians and 50 000 Meskhetian Turks from Uzbekistan, and provides shelter and food, healthcare, develops income generation activity. Since 1992, UNCHR has been helping the Armenian government to address the needs of 280,500 Armenian refugees who fled from Azerbaijan.

NATO has also become increasingly present in the South Caucasus by launching the Partnership for Peace programme (PfP), and even recently offered its troops for a peacekeeping force to be deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh. NATO is clear about territorial integrity of the South Caucasian states, although refrained from direct involvement in conflict resolution. While Georgia and Azerbaijan fully embraced the opportunities provided by PfP, and focused primary on civil emergency planning, civil-military relations, defence policy and reform, Armenia's cooperation with NATO remained more limited partially because of its reliance on Russia for military assistance and poor relations with Turkey.

Although these days the NATO Parliamentary Assembly has prepared new proposals concerning settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, generally NATO member states have been unable so far to develop a clear strategy, with well-defined objectives towards the South Caucasus.

Despite a tendency towards the determination of the policy contours on South Caucasus countries, EU policy is not clearly pronounced and mainly limited to specific programmes such as TACIS, PCA, and ENP. Regarding the regional conflicts, EU clearly limits its role to a post-conflict reconstruction after agreements

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<sup>94</sup> Lynch D. (ed): *The South Caucasus: A challenge for the EU*. Chailott Papers, No. 65, Paris, EU

are reached, i.e. EU has decided not to intervene directly in the negotiation mechanism of the conflict so as to leave this to the UN and the OSCE.<sup>95</sup>

While the European Parliament has been hoping for years for a common and more committed policy, this issue is debatable first of all between the member states: some states are in favour of a much more committed policy, notably Germany and some Nordic countries, the others already committed in the region are not sure about the necessity of adopting a strategy at the regional level questioning the added value that EU might bring. However, in 2002 those countries started to realize that a European policy might succeed where national policies had reached their limits.<sup>96</sup> In December 2003, EU CFSP HR Javier Solana worked out and European Council adopted the European Security Strategy recognizing the promotion of a ring of countries of good governance to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean, with whom the EU has close cooperative relations. In this context, it underlines that the EU should now have a more active participation in the problems of the South Caucasus, as a neighbouring region. In July 2003 a European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus was appointed for the first time with innovative mandate with no office in Brussels and a reduced budget financed by Finland and little technical support. At the same time, with the appointment of a new EU SR in South Caucasus in March 2006, his mandate was expanded to the "promotion of conflict resolution" and a headquarter established in Brussels. As the International Crisis Group stressed in its last report on the role of the EU in the South Caucasus, the mandate of the SR should at least allow him to participate as observer during the negotiations.<sup>97</sup> Another sign of activation of European structures in South Caucasian affairs is connected with the newly set up commission on the South Caucasus in PACE. Despite of all these changes, they play only a marginal role on impacting conflict resolution in the region and are limited to the promises for a post-conflict settlement phase.<sup>98</sup>

As for the role of the Council of Europe, it also limits its role to a forum for the provision of dialogue. PACE adopted Resolutions 1119 (1997), 1690 (2005), and recently 1 416 (2005) which once again urging "the parties concerned to comply with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), in particular by refraining from any armed hostilities and by withdrawing military forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan"<sup>99</sup>. At the same time, CoE is clear that it is not going to change the structure and the work principles of the Minsk group of the OSCE. The Political Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of CoE set up ad hoc a Sub-commission on Nagorno-Karabakh with the goal of promoting a dialogue between the parliaments of Armenia and Azerbaijan but distancing itself from the resolution process. At the same time, a suggestion has been recently articulated for the change of France's co-chairmanship in the Minsk Group of the OSCE into one of the EU, which faced protest by France.

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with Dov Lynch, in: "Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia : the workings of the European policy on South Caucasus", published in 28/11/2004 Issue of Caucaz.com

<sup>96</sup> M. Emerson, Caucasus Revisited. CEPS POLICY BRIEF NO. 34, JUNE 2003, pp.1-23

<sup>97</sup> International Crisis Group report No. 164, p. 11

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Dov Lynch, The workings of the European policy on South Caucasus, published in 28/11/2004 Issue of Caucaz.com

<sup>99</sup> The conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference Recommendation 1690 (2005)

Summing up, ethno-political problems in our case are closely tangled with the shortage of democracy, legal state in Azerbaijan and Armenia and geopolitical contemplations. These factors are likely to have a significant impact on the process and outcome of settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In other words, the pattern of relationship between the great powers in the region (to be considered as a part of international peace strategies) still reminds of the Cold War rules of game. For the UN, NATO and the EU, as well as regional powers such as Russia, Iran, USA, Turkey the South Caucasus is an area of opportunity, in terms of the exploitation of the region's energy reserves, its geo-strategic position, and a presence of a moderate Muslim state of Azerbaijan. All the above mentioned great powers as well as the leadership of the two conflicting states seem to be satisfied with the status quo: neither aggravation of the situation is in interest of any party, nor a resolution based on compromise. Therefore, as regards to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, international community has limited its role to post-settlement reconstruction after an agreement will be reached.

While the involvement of the interested mediators so far obstructed the resolution of the conflict, the non-involvement of the neutral and, therefore, non-interested parties, is also not contributing to the peace process. Thus, the South Caucasus and Nagorno-Karabakh, in particular, face a situation where mediation efforts of the track-sharing approach of international organizations seems to be ineffective precisely due to the lack of interest and commitment of mediators that might be able to persuade the parties to compromise.<sup>100</sup>

All these factors imply that external parties are present but not in a manner that would clarify the strategic future of the region.<sup>101</sup> As D. Lynch put it, "the international community is sufficiently present to create misperceptions and misunderstandings but not enough to dissolve them".<sup>102</sup> As a result the region is divided by external actors, whose actions and intentions remain uncertain.

Meanwhile, the fact that an ethno-territorial conflict such as in Nagorno-Karabakh has two dimensions - political and identity/ontological - requires adequate strategies for the conflict and peace management. However, what we observe is that a dramatic politicization of the ethnic conflict together with a discourse of nationalism and ethnicity leads to a deadlock situation in terms of a conflict resolution since matters of national identity, sovereignty, ethnic or national affiliation are perceived as non-tradable concepts that can hardly be bargained and compromised at the negotiation table. At the same time, any outcome imposed by force will only last until the defeated is able to accumulate sufficient force to reverse the situation.

However, it is not the ethnic but the political aspect of an ethno-political conflict that makes a rational compromise solution possible that is at stake of conflict resolution. At the same time, the transformation of the war and "ancient ethnic hatred" discourse to a peace discourse is mainly a function of a wider society than just of its elite and is at stake of the conflict transformation approach.

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<sup>100</sup> Sabanadze (2002), op cit.

<sup>101</sup> D. Lynch "A regional Insecurity dynamic" In: Lynch D. (ed): The South Caucasus: A challenge for the EU. Chaillot Papers, No. 65, Paris, EU

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

The next chapter will look at the operational context of the multilevel societal approach and its impact on transformation process.

## **4. The role and impact of the multi-level approach in the transformation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict**

As was mentioned any process of reconciliation supposes mutual participation in the search for a solution. Obviously, to achieve mutual participation, both parties must equally participate intensively in the resolution process. The major focus of the analysis on the peace process in Nagorno-Karabakh is concentrated on top-level negotiations and power mediation, paying only minor attention to the potential capacity of the II-nd (academician and mid level leaders, NGOs) and III-rd levels (grass roots level leaders and organizations) of the society.

In this chapter, without claiming to assess a preventing impact of the local capacities on the conflict management, an outline of the political and operational context under which the local actors operate and the constraints they experience is given. Further it is followed by an overview of the types of the activities of the local NGOs in partnership with the international actors and the lessons that can be learnt.

### **4.1. Operational context of NGOs**

The ignorance to the capacity of levels II and III activities can be explained by the general shortage of democracy in the South Caucasian countries that undermine viability and impact of any civil society action and frequently II and III level activities are limited to expressing the official positions or are concentrated on confronting the governments. Civic actors whose proponents for a peaceful solution are generally politically weak and their capacity to address the issue are far from developed.

Speaking about the political and operational context under which the local actors operate and the constraints they experience, two major groups of reasons including external and domestic factors can be emphasized. The group of domestic reasons is distinguished by three main factors widely acknowledged as not favourable for a development of the II and III levels involvement: semi-authoritarian political environment, deficit of resources, and patriarchal mentality of the societies. External factors mainly refer to local and international NGO interaction and the fact that Western aid targets the development area and marginalizes attention to conflict management.

In the early 1990s, the development of civil society and NGOs in the whole Caucasus was highly politicized and was created with a human rights and democratization agenda acting as the opponents of the establishment, and the states regarded NGOs with suspicion. In comparison with Armenia and Georgia in Azerbaijan the peace or conflict transformation agenda oriented NGO spectre is narrower and limited to Helsinki Assembly-92, and the Institute of Peace and Democracy in Baku, and few local NGOs working with IDPs. Generally, the limited scope of operations of most of the local NGOs leads to the problem of low public awareness of the activities of NGOs and an overall cynical attitude of the officials towards the very notion of civil society, as well as to the local NGOs sustained with foreign grants. Such a situation is

aggravated by the lack and non-transparency of information and the high prices for printed media. The primary source of information is TV, the only more or less accessible media to the public. In Armenia the number of internet users is very low, 50 users per 1,000 people, the situation is worse in the regions which have access only to a very limited number of TV channels, mainly pro-governmental.<sup>103</sup>

Another characteristic feature of the civil societies is that major NGO associations are polarized: either pro-governmental (National NGO Forum in Azerbaijan, for example) or clear-cut oppositional (HI-92, Institute of Peace and Democracy in Baku). As a result, the former are instrumentalized in expressing their solidarity with the official position of the state by the government and the latter becomes marginalised from the mainstream political process. In Armenia, despite the large number of NGOs - officially, there are 4434 registered NGOs - among which approximately 10-15% is operable. Most of the NGOs are born with the only motivation to get grants from international organizations and they are most of the time not active. After the failed elections in 2003 in Armenia, the number of NGOs in particular those involving the young generation increased. The NGOs such as YERITAC, the Civil Society Institute, Solidarity of Students-S.O.S., the Research Center of Political Developments, the Armenian PR Association etc., are very active in the field of the promotion of the ideas of freedom, human rights, the rule of law, pluralistic democracy among youth.<sup>104</sup>

Undoubtedly, the growth of the NGO sector often occurs due to the presence of international organisations. Similarly, the emergence of conflict resolution promoting NGOs is closely related to the activities of the international organisations in the region. One of the implications of this fact is that international organisations are in the position to emphasize to further affirmative policy towards encouraging conflict management and reconciliation oriented activities of the local NGOs. Although this may create a clientalistic orientation of the local NGOs, i.e. they that create projects which they think international organisations and donors would fund, the surplus from such projects can be significant in terms of both consolidation of their capacities (money and skills) and being instrumental in the peace building process.

As for the zone of the conflict, Nagorno-Karabakh's status as a de-jure territory of Azerbaijan but de-facto uncontrolled by it discourages most donors and international organizations from operating there. Their operational mandate depends on the approval of Azerbaijan. The International Committee of the Red Cross, Medecins Sans Frontieres, and diaspora groups are the main international NGOs with a permanent field presence in Nagorno-Karabakh tending to focus on humanitarian assistance or rehabilitation rather than development or democratisation,<sup>105</sup> let alone reconciliation or conflict management. There are also no donor-supported projects in the occupied territories outside Nagorno-Karabakh, except demining activities implemented by the Halo Trust NGO.

Although about a hundred local NGOs are registered in Nagorno-Karabakh, only about 10 % are noteworthy. A number of local NGOs such as HI-92, Stepanakert Press Club, Center of Civilian Initiatives, Institute of people diplomacy are active. There is no joint project between Azerbaijani and Armenian NGOs

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<sup>103</sup> Interview with Gevorg Manukian, Chairmen of the Yerevan based NGO "Solidarity of Students-S.O.S."

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> International Crisis Group report No. 164, p. 11

of Nagorno-Karabakh. The passivity of the non-for-profit sector is explained by the shortage of funding; the overwhelming influence of diaspora groups; and Nagorno-Karabakh society's low level of civic and political activism", unawareness of the population with the nature and concept of NGOs.<sup>106</sup> In addition, due to the small size of Nagorno-Karabakh, and therefore far more restricted resources, in order to survive, NGOs are made to act in rapprochement with the local authority, and on the contrary, any critical movements are perceived as undermining the very coherence of the society mobilized against its enemy.

In the context of a high political nature of humanitarian action in the region, especially in Nagorno-Karabakh, domestic politics, especially the activity of diaspora groups affect humanitarian responses in particular. In this respect, the study of MacFarlane on the effects and the damages of various political agendas on politicization of humanitarian responses to the conflict, is remarkable. He showed that in all conflict parties, political factors undercut effective humanitarian action by the United Nations, governments, and private relief groups, and hamper political settlement.<sup>107</sup>

Although the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan encouraged contacts of civil societies in his statement of June 2005, later on the statement of another high official, Head of Press and Information Policy Department of MFA of Azerbaijan makes it clear:

"We think that it is more reasonable for Azerbaijani journalists to travel to Nagorno-Karabakh after our lands occupied by the Armenians will be liberated, communication restored, peacekeeping forced deployed, the question of Azerbaijanis return to Nagorno-Karabakh, the question of co-existence of Azerbaijani and Armenian communities, and the issue of security is discussed. At that stage, the trips of our journalists to Nagorno-Karabakh is not only possible but also necessary."<sup>108</sup>

In other words, the top level is reluctant to loose its monopoly in the peace process. Such unfavourable operational and political context has consequently resulted in a marginal impact of the grassroots level, its limited level of participation in the peace process and a very low sense of ownership of it.

The fact that the conflict on Nagorno-Karabakh is characterized with a comparatively low level of academic interest and an insignificant level of conflict management oriented efforts by both international and local NGOs can be partially explained by the fact that neither scholars nor international organizations believe in the transformation capacity of those levels due to a number of reasons.

Firstly, the non-peace oriented situation is formed not so much because of the lack of will of the contending communities to be involved in the process, but by the unfavourable environment created by the semi-authoritarian leaders who monopolized the conflict management and peace process. Under such conditions, representatives of the grassroots and middle levels do not risk to confront the official position. In other words, semi-authoritarian control does not leave manoeuvre space for NGOs' independent initiative

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> MacFarlane S. Neil and Minear Larry (1997) *Humanitarian Action and Politics: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh*, Occasional Paper #25 The Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, p. ix

<sup>108</sup> translated by the author from Russian) interview of Tair Tagizadeh, Head of Press and Information Policy Department of MFA of Azerbaijan, Day.Az, April 07, 2006, URL: <http://www.day.az/news/politics/45901.html>

towards conflict management: to survive they concentrated on the struggle for human rights and internal democracy problems.

Secondly, reluctance to be involved in the bilateral dialogue can be explained by the Armenian cemented position in regards to the conflict fuelled by the Armenian diaspora who financed the fighting in the 1990s<sup>109</sup>. The military success contributed to the healing of the victim complex in the national identity of Armenians. The occupied territory is called 'liberated territories' and the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh is believed (or presented) of having been solved. The fact that Nagorno-Karabakh problem was not even mentioned during the last pre-election phase in Armenia may speak for the overall public support of the governmental policy in this respect. In its turn, a hard-liner position of the leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians can be also explained by the fact that they are not totally blockaded actually but obtained territorial link with Armenia and they travel with Armenian passports, and are generally almost entirely integrated into Armenia.<sup>110</sup>

Thirdly, while it is obvious that an international component is vital for any bi- or multilateral contact, international NGOs also accept the "rules of game" established by local officials, and are reluctant to damage the relationship with the local governments. While the only issue that is officially approved by the top level is an exchange of war prisoners and missing persons, international NGOs are reluctant to launch any major visual initiative toward conflict transformation.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, a cross level relationship is not well developed in the region, in other words, the middle level has marginal links with the grassroots, and only few of them (usually ex-state officials) have access to the top level. At the same time, the relationship between top and grassroots levels (via local executive power representatives) carries the character of top-bottom subordination.<sup>112</sup>

Fourthly, conflict prevention/resolution oriented NGOs also reflect their own societies and carry the same societal grievances, concerns and cultural sensitivities since their members are also objects of propaganda and some of them are directly affected by the conflict. In other words local NGOs are at the same time the subject and target of conflict resolution and reconciliation.

However, despite of all unfavourable contextual factors described, reality is that while regimes are perhaps more reluctant than ever to loosen their monopoly on peacemaking, the need for movement in the peace process creates openings for new forms of civic contact across the conflict divide.<sup>113</sup>

## 4.2. Overview of the types of activities of the local and international NGOs

The main categories of activities of the NGO sector in the field of conflict transformation involves bilateral, multilateral contacts, and pan-regional contacts as well in the areas of humanitarian assistance, training,

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<sup>109</sup> Matveeva, Anna "Nagorno-Karabakh: A straightforward territorial conflict " In: Tongeren P., van de Veen H. and Verhoeven J. (ed.) (2002) Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia, An overview of Conflict Prevention and peacebuilding Activities, London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, p. 460

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. p.461; also see ICG Europe report No 166, op.cit, pp. 9-10

<sup>111</sup> Matveeva, Anna, op. Cit p. 460

<sup>112</sup> Stewart (2005) Conflict Transformation in Georgia

mass media and information exchange, prisoners of war exchange, women rights, youth activity, enhancing civilian security, research and public debate.<sup>114</sup> Below without pretending to compile the list of all undertaken initiatives, examples are presented to create a picture of most typical conflict and peace oriented activities of local and international NGOs.

Bilateral contacts occurred mainly on the initiatives of international NGOs such as Helsinki Initiative; Swiss based Caucasus Media Support Project, LINKS, and International Alert. Helsinki Initiative (HI-92) in the year 1994 and 1995 brought representatives of Azerbaijani NGOs to the main city of Nagorno-Karabakh - Stepanakert/Khankendi<sup>115</sup>.

Working with the IDPs is one of the principle fields of work for NGOs. While in Armenia about 300 000 refugees from Azerbaijan were subject to integration from the beginning, in Azerbaijan IDPs (approx. 550 000) are not integrated and still hope for return to the currently occupied areas. Norwegian and Danish Refugee Councils, the Migration Sector Development project funded by IOM involve various regional NGOs, conducting research, providing capacity building seminars, trainings for the perspective returnees. In Azerbaijan, IDPs are characterized by a low level of organization and political mobilization, especially among women, who often bear the major burden of survival of the household. In this context, some peace initiatives were taken under the auspices of women rights defence organizations, which united in regional efforts such as Transcaucasian Women's Dialogue, regional coalition Women for Peace. In 2002, UNIFEM started a 2-year-regional project "Women for peace and conflict prevention in South Caucasus", which initiated and supported certain organizational arrangements among women. In the end of 2002, the same project suggested to set up a new women association called 'Coalition of Women-1325' in Azerbaijan. The coalition consisting of 25 women from government, NGOs, oppositional political parties undertook the commitments to provide involvement of women into conflict resolution in the national and regional institutes; networking with the women organizations abroad; to involve women refugees and IDPs into the work on conflict prevention; to raise public awareness on peace ideas. The Coalition suggests to acknowledge gender equality in peacebuilding processes and involve women in peace negotiations, and that agreement must include the gender perspective despite of the traditionally patriarchal model of the society which is a clear obstacle.<sup>116</sup>

In 2004, within the framework of UNIFE the project was realized on "Supporting local initiatives in maintaining trans-border communication between women of Azerbaijan and Armenia", which is directed to the mobilization of efforts of women in trust building between the divided societies. Women of the IDPs were trained in self-empowerment and activists were selected to set up 4 branches to make a network. UNIFEM is also engaged in long term education: a manual was compiled, published and introduced for a conflict and peace studies course in the three countries of South Caucasus).

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<sup>113</sup> Laurence Broers (ed)(2005) op.cit

<sup>114</sup> Matveeva, Anna op cit and Anna Matveeva (2001) "Local Non-Governmental Organisations" In: Conflict Prevention in the Caucasus: Actors, Response capacities and planning process. East West Institute. Forum on Early Warning and early Response: London

<sup>115</sup> In 1923 the city Khankendi was renamed to "Stepanakert" after famous Armenian Bolshevik Stepan Shaumian, and then re-named into its original Turkic name during the conflict.

<sup>116</sup> Azerbaijan Gender Information Centre. Newsletter No. 3, 2004. Available from <[http://www.gender-az.org/shablon\\_ru.shtml?doc/ru/pacebuild/1325/1](http://www.gender-az.org/shablon_ru.shtml?doc/ru/pacebuild/1325/1)>



Another important field of the activity of the international NGOs is the development of mass media and contacts between the journalists. Caucasus Media Support Project organized 12 conferences and trainings for 200 participants within 1997-2000. In May 2001 the Minsk Group organized a trip of seven journalists who for the first time crossed a line between Azerbaijanis and Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. At the same time the Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) published the periodical War Report 1995-98 in an attempt to incorporate local voices into the English-language publication. National Press clubs in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh act as forums for debate. In another regional project, CIPDD, together with the Committee to Protect Journalists in Azerbaijan "Ruh" (Azerbaijan) and the Association of Investigative Journalists of Armenia, worked to create a common information space in the South Caucasus. For that end, the partner organisations set up a joint web-site (address: [www.caucasusjournalists.org](http://www.caucasusjournalists.org)) as a tool for networking, cooperation and gathering and exchanging information for journalists in the three countries of the South Caucasus. About 145 journalists and 22 publishers became members of the South Caucasus Network through this project. The network provided specific services to participating journalists: for instance, it arranged online interviews with important public figures that answered questions to journalists from all three countries.<sup>117</sup>

As for pan-Caucasian dialogue, the role of international NGOs in the support of multilateral contacts and regional approaches is necessary given the constraints imposed by authorities on meetings with the representatives of the other side. In November 2002 the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung organized an international conference with the participation of politicians and middle-level representatives from the both sides – "South Caucasus- Unstable region of 'frozen conflicts'." CIPDD among other activities cooperates on peacebuilding in the South Caucasus region with the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR). In May 2002 and November 2003, a two-week dialogue-workshop was held in Gudauri (Georgia). A group of about 30 people – mainly politicians and NGO-leaders from three countries of the South Caucasus as well as unrecognised entities participated in both Gudauri meetings. The workshops exposed influential local actors to modern methods of conflict resolution. The working groups were created to develop specific recommendations for different aspects of conflict resolution.<sup>118</sup> Among other initiatives held in the context of pan-Caucasian dialogue is an ongoing civilian initiative "South Caucasus Integration: Alternative Start"<sup>119</sup> supported by Caritas France involves NGOs such as Caucasian Center of Peacebuilding Initiatives (Armenia), and independent individuals from South Caucasian states and unrecognised constituencies. The aim of the project is to pinpoint the problems of peacebuilding in the region and their discussion in conferences and working groups of peacebuilding and human rights NGOs of the region. The results of the work and reports are submitted to the public discussion.

The Eurasia Foundation's South Caucasus Cooperation Program (SCCP) funded by USAID supports cross-border cooperation between the region's leading media outlets, advocacy organizations and university journalism departments through a targeted grants competition. SCCP recently awarded contact grants to support five trilateral partnerships between media organizations from Armenia, Azerbaijan and

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<sup>117</sup> <http://www.cipdd.org/uploaded/Anual.pdf>

<sup>118</sup> <http://www.cipdd.org/uploaded/Anual.pdf>

Georgia. The partners develop linkage projects covering the following areas: strengthening links between the journalism departments of three prominent universities through student and faculty exchanges; monitoring television news coverage of events in the neighbouring countries, including a focus on stereotypical language; creating a joint newspaper for the border areas of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; developing a region-wide network of analytical journalists; and monitoring and assessing media coverage of law enforcement issues in the South Caucasus countries.<sup>120</sup>

More recently the Consortium Initiative, implemented by a coalition of international non-governmental organizations made up of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Conciliation Resources (CR), International Alert (IA), and the London Information Network on Conflicts and State-building (LINKS) represents a UK government-funded initiative to bring up a more comprehensive approach. With the concentration of work on civil society (IA), work on media (CR), work on consolidation or work of international development organizations functioning in the region (CRS), the initiative attempts to involve intersecting threads into political and civil society dialogue, conflict-sensitive development and public awareness of the conflict and peace process at all levels. Having its headquarters in all three constituencies - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh - it is also aimed at including displaced communities with a role in the resolution of the conflict. Different Consortium members coordinate their work through the Executive Steering Committee (ESC), which meets regularly to discuss the project strategy. Both governments are being kept informed about the project and have been consulted from the early stages of the project's development.

Another example of the attempt to involve the middle level into the conflict resolution process is the Dortmund Conference. Starting from 2001, representatives of the society of Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia (NGO activists, resigned high officials, businessmen, academicians, political parties' representatives) held nine meetings with Russian and American members of the working group. Finally, in May 2006, the working group produced a document, the matrix of a framework agreement, suggesting a step-by-step approach consisting of two phases. The formula can be put as "Peace and intermediate status in exchange for the occupied territories," which differs from the mutually excluding principles of the Azerbaijani and Armenian sides – "peace in exchange for territories" and "territories in exchange for status". The document was submitted for consideration to the leaders of the conflicting sides as well as to the Minsk Group.

As we can see from the above review of the types of activities of NGOs in the region, the role, initiative and support of a wide range of international humanitarian and development organisations operating in the South Caucasus are crucial at all levels of the society. Below, we pinpoint major problems and gaps that the international organisations face, based on semi-standardized interview conducted with the representatives of some of them, namely, Norwegian Refugee Council, Mercy Corps, and Catholic Relief Services functioning in Baku, and which are engaged in humanitarian, development sector, and conflict transformation correspondingly.

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<sup>119</sup> South Caucasian Integration: Alternative Start: Available from <<http://www.southcaucasus.com>>

<sup>120</sup> Eurasia Foundation's South Caucasus Cooperation Program. Available from <[http://www.efscpc.org/pdf/SCCP%20Media%20competition%20announcement\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.efscpc.org/pdf/SCCP%20Media%20competition%20announcement_FINAL.pdf)>

Although emergency organisations and their status impose limitations in their activity, in the reality of the region they function in a regime of a so called "chronicle instability". That is the case of the Norwegian Refugee Council which is involved in four areas of activity: sheltering; food distribution; education; legal counselling. In cooperation with Save the Children they are working out the Children Tolerance Education programme in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia counter partners. It is expected the return of a part of IDPs to 31 villages of Fizuli and part of Agdam, but ANAMA (responsible for demining operations) lacks funding so NRC cannot start developing the "return package".<sup>121</sup>

Another group of organisations plays the function of a re-distributor of funding such as Mercy Corps for example, which is engaged in the distribution of funds from USAID to partner organisations such as World Vision, IRS. They are engaged in work with IDPs, community development, infrastructure, municipality skills trainings (out of the candidates elected for municipality administration, 400 received trainings before).

As a rule, state executive power representatives are neutral and generally do not impede the activity of the international organisations. Humanitarian relief tends to turn into development activities and despite the will of IDPs to meet their own Armenian neighbours, NGOs refused to be involved in any peacebuilding project if it involves the Armenian part. At the same time, headquarters of those organisations do not allocate funds for specific peacebuilding activities.

Another problem is a lack of coordination among the various international organisations acting in Baku, although the Interagency Community Development Meeting was established a couple of years ago among a few organisations, which involves also meetings with governmental and international organisations and local NGOs. At the same time it seems that not all major international organisations functioning in the region understand the necessity of such a coordinating and consultative body.

The lack of Lessons Learned units and impact assessment mechanism because of a shortage of resources, together with the lack of policy papers (only general outlines for orientation like improving economical opportunities, conflict resolution, community development, food security and etc.) are also not facilitating factors.<sup>122</sup>

Noteworthy is that not all international programmes recognize benefits from the coordinating association among the international organisations and the taking into account the conflict sensitive components of the project. Only few, such as Catholic Relief, Oxfam, or GTZ for example have just started integrating a conflict sensitive approach into their work. Catholic Relief Services and Oxfam collaborate on the level of programme officers on developing a strategy and policy planning. They are working out a conflict sensitivity questionnaire which will be used as a guide in the prioritizing of conflict sensitive projects.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless it seems to be more at the level of local employees of the organisations rather than a top-down policy of the donors.

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with the officer of Norwegian Refugee Council in Baku, September 30, 2005

<sup>122</sup> Interview with the officer of Mercy Corps, Baku, September 27-30, 2005

<sup>123</sup> Interview with the officers in GTZ, Oxfam and CR, Baku, September 27-30, 2005

Summing up, in the context of lacking a clear peacebuilding component in the policy programmes of most international organisations as well as conflict sensitivity indicators of the projects, the focus of the projects is frequently inadequate and has only marginal reconciliation or conflict management impact. These activities are not well-known to the rest of the society; they are rather isolated and have not formed a viable voiced active minority of a civil society.

### 4.3. Nature of transformation processes

Are the transformations formed under the conditions of 12 years of negotiation without a sound peacebuilding able to provide a favourable context for a sustainable political settlement of the conflict and for a process of reconciliation? As we mentioned earlier, transformations take place permanently, but the question is: what is the nature of those transformations? So far, reality demonstrates that while the top level peace process has not led to any conflict settlement so far the activity of NGOs has only marginal impact on positive conflict transformation and the shortage of such activity has stimulating effect on the negative transformations in the region.

On the one hand, the answer to this question will contribute to the argument on the logic of sequence of peace strategies in the conflict situation; on the other hand, a review of the nature of the transformations in the region will help us to pinpoint the entry points for the reconciliation activities. Below based on the theoretical transformation types elaborated by Miall Hugh<sup>124</sup> and Raimo Väyrynen we will look at the transformations at the levels of international context, actor, issue, structure, and person in our case. The goal is to evaluate the quality of transformations that took place and to elaborate possible entry points for positive transformations in the final chapter.

Context transformation is represented by certain "rules of game" in the region formed by the position of third sides (in our case these are Russia, USA, Turkey, Iran and international organizations), effectiveness of their conflict management and ideological influence. Any transformation in this category may radically change the conflict situation, behaviour of the parties and their motives by changing the very "rules of game". For example, high level of economic and political dependence of Armenia on Russia does not allow a clear cut judgement: does behaviour of Armenia correspond to its own national interests or does its foreign policy reflect ad hoc interests of Russia as the major part of the geopolitical context. This type of transformation is absent in case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The context could have been changed by the realization of a so called "peace pipeline" which would be laid from Baku via Armenia to Ceyhan.<sup>125</sup> In 1993, the President of Azerbaijan, Elchibey, and Western companies favoured the "peace pipeline" project. They were hoping in this way, to regulate the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and free Armenia from Russia's influence. However, Yerevan told Elchibey that neither Azerbaijan nor Turkey would be allowed to

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<sup>124</sup> H. Miall "Transforming Ethnic Conflicts: Theories and Practices " In: A. Wimmer, R.J. Goldstone, Horowitz, U. Joras, C. Schetter (2004) Facing Ethnic Conflicts. Towards a new Realism, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. pp.160-173

<sup>125</sup> Dadash Alishov (2001): "The Role of Caspian Oil in Maintaining Stability in the Caucasus Region: In the Case Mountainous Karabakh Conflict" VAR

run a pipeline through Armenian territory.<sup>126</sup> The proposal was repeated also by the successor of Elchibey, Heydar Aliyev soon after the signing of the "Contract of the century" with international corporations. The West has also made it clear, that Armenia can receive the pipeline, if it concedes on the Karabakh issue. However, according to Gerard Libaridian, Senior advisor to Armenia's President Levon Ter - Petrossian, "the question of the pipeline construction does not affect the position of Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh".<sup>127</sup> Obviously, "Peace Pipeline" project would have had absolutely the worst outcome for Russia: if such a pipeline were built, Moscow would have much less flexibility in manipulating the two countries against each other.

Moreover, the ideological aspect of international involvement further fuels the cemented position of the separatist constituencies in the region. In other words, when the international community expressed its clear-cut position on internal/external self-determination, and it emphasised strong group rights before human rights values, it encouraged national minorities to fight for secession.<sup>128</sup> Some scholars in the field of conflict resolution think that space for the ambiguous interpretation of the self-determination principle leads to a 'legal license' of using force by the secessionist movements, ethnic cleansing and human rights violations,<sup>129</sup> and that "structural solutions, such as consistent support for the principle of national sovereignty and territorial integrity may, in the end, offer the most promising way out of the current dilemma."<sup>130</sup>

In fact, the attempt of the international community to recognize the principle of territorial integrity while accepting the results of the military defeat (of the central states) speaks for a face-saving approach.<sup>131</sup> Too much reliance of the international community on the will of the conflicting parties to compromise are interpreted as a lack of interest, which leads to the freezing of the peace process and encourages a policy of maximization of the gains, i.e. "zero-sum" game behaviour, rather than a real search for a compromise.

"Statements of I. Aliyev does not mean that Azerbaijan will re-start military operation, but that a format, a tone and a framework of the proposals the leaders of Armenia insisted on (which means a surrender of Nagorno-Karabakh itself plus Kelbadjar and Lachin regions) is impossible for Azerbaijan,"-comments one of the Azerbaijani leading experts, Rasim Musabeyov,"- USA, Russia, Europe do have leverages to make Kocharian ... refuse of his maximalist demands. If they want, they will use those leverages, and the way out of this deadlock will be found; if they do not - as minimum, we will have a perspective of an arms race."<sup>132</sup>

On the other hand, such "military outcomes legitimizing" approach of the international community, which normally leads to a nominal form of federation without a real vertical control by the central government over

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<sup>126</sup> Dadash Alishov (2001): "The Role of Caspian Oil in Maintaining Stability in the Caucasus Region: In the Case of Mountainous Karabakh Conflict" VAR

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> N. Sabanadze, 2002, op cit

<sup>129</sup> Falk, Richard, "Self-determination under International Law: The coherence of Doctrine vs. Incoherence of Experience." In: W. Danspeckgruber (2001): *The Self-Determination of Peoples, Community, nation, and state in the interdependent world*, Boulder Lynne Rienner, p. 45

<sup>130</sup> Vayrynen R. "Violence, sovereignty and conflict resolution" pp.111-129, in: Maley W., Sampford Ch., and R. Thakur (ed) *From civil strife to civil society: civil and military responsibilities in disrupted states*. United Nations University Press, p.128

<sup>131</sup> Ghia Nodia "Europeanization and Not Resolving Secessionist Conflicts" In: *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies from the European Periphery*, Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issue in Europe (JEMIE) Issue 1/2004, also available from <<http://www.ecmi.de/jemie/download/1-2004Comment01.pdf>>

the secessionist entity, can be seen as a facilitating condition for peacebuilding actors, for whom the chances of formal success increase, that is with minimal stress and resources: external interveners have fewer problems to overcome, and there are no contending parties to reconcile.<sup>133</sup>

Actor transformation, which would mean internal changes in major parties to the conflict, or the appearance and recognition of the new actors, did happen in our case but without contribution to positive transformation.

Both conflicting sides have problems of legitimacy of their power, which constrain them in accepting any results less than zero-sum outcome. A consensus pursuing behaviour of the ex-President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosian led to his resignation in 1998 and the replacement by the hardliner R. Kocharian (ex-leader of Nagorno-Karabakh) and increased the influence of Nagorno-Karabakh military elite in the domestic policy of Armenia. The influence of the Minister of Defence of Armenia – Serj Sarkisian (one of the main figures of new political elite from Nagorno-Karabakh) – in the domestic and external policy is increasing as the Presidential election is approaching in 2008.

On the one hand, the current President of Armenia R. Kocharian cannot accept the proposal of a withdrawal of military force from the occupied territories before the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is defined. That would have undermined the sense of the resignation of Ter-Petrosian in 1998. In other words, the political structure in Armenia represented by the “war-party” elite that was formed as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict does not facilitate the conflict resolution process and presses for zero-sum behaviour. As one of the experts of Council of Foreign Affairs of the USA put it in private talk: “Armenians want more than a victory”.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, the present political elite is supported by the influential Armenian diaspora (driven by the cultivated perceptions and the memory of the events of 1915 in Ottoman Empire), the role of which in defining the foreign policy of Armenia and in forming the domestic budgets of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh is crucial. The adopted double citizenship law in Armenia will seemingly deepen further this role. The picture is aggravated by the still influential position of the Armenian historical party – Dashnaktsutun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation - ARF), an ultra nationalist party established in 1890, which is sometimes identified as “not political party but rather terrorist fascist organisation,”<sup>135</sup> which confessed that it is in “favour of the defence of a Great Armenia”<sup>136</sup>, the idea (Hai Tahd) reflected in the programme of the party.<sup>137</sup> Being de-legalized by the government of Levon Ter-Petrosian, the party was legalized again by R. Kocharian by giving the Sport Youth and Education portfolio to the ARF in the coalition government. This development to a radicalisation of Armenia’s policy towards the Nagorno-

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<sup>132</sup> R. Musabekov, quoted in Orudjev, R. “Voyni mejdu Azerbajjanom i Armeniyey ne budet”, Echo, 3/03/06, <[www.echo-az.com/politica04.shtml](http://www.echo-az.com/politica04.shtml)> (Translated into Russian by the author)

<sup>133</sup> Ghia Nodia. op.cit.

<sup>134</sup> Private talk with the reporter from

<sup>135</sup> Dawisha, Karen and Parrot Bruce (1998): Conflict Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and Caucasus. Londers, Routledge, p.88

<sup>136</sup> Celia Chauffour: Is the Historical Dashnak party still driving force in Nagorno-Karabakh? 02/11/2004, Caucaz.com

<sup>137</sup> “The creation of an integral Armenia on the lands of Eastern and Western Armenia; the just resolution of the Artzakh issue is one of the stages of Hai Tahd”. ARF Programme, en <http://www.arfd.am/english/policy/programme.php>

Karabakh conflict and generally the post- Levon Ter-Petrosian period has been characterized by "heavy anti-Turkic mood, support to the security forces, and little count on democracy as political option".<sup>138</sup>

In Azerbaijan, domestic political turmoil, and the *coup d'état* in summer 1993 which brought to power H. Aliyev replacing the Popular Front government, stopped the military operations of the Azerbaijani side and led to the loss of almost seven provinces by Azerbaijan around Nagorno-Karabakh and to the eventual cease-fire. However, H. Aliyev's further persecution of the military elite and veterans of the Nagorno-Karabakh war as well as devotion of the new establishment to the peaceful settlement of the conflict did not encourage the Armenian establishment to positive transformations. Meanwhile, the unsettled conflict, the high rate of IDPs and refugees in the country (more than 800 000) turned the problem into a subject of political manipulation. Having monopolized the peace process, the ruling elite uses it to justify the postponing of socio-economical reforms and hindering of overall democratisation process in the country which is expressed in the downplaying of civil society - oppression of free media, persecution of journalists, intolerance towards opposition's peaceful demonstrations; and over-centralisation in the state structures – lack of check and balances, accountability, endemic corruption. At the same time, the influence and the role of the veterans of Nagorno-Karabakh war in Azerbaijan is marginal and incomparable with those vocal and influential veterans in Armenian society.<sup>139</sup>

Issue transformation which would change political agenda of the conflict towards the improvement of the chance for conflict management by emphasizing the issues on which commonality prevails while reducing the importance of the antagonistic issues also lacks in our case. The issue structure has been static since 12 years of negotiation – i.e. "independence vs. territorial integrity"- while positive conflict transformation requires opening the agenda instead of closing it.

According to the latest news, Azerbaijan's Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov called the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia held in Moscow on January 23, 2007 a "step backward":

"V. Oskanian stated some positions which run counter discussing which has been lasting for two years," Azimov said. - The talk is about the return of Azerbaijanis to Nagorno Karabakh and the use of the road through Lachin. If Armenians want to obtain agreement on the Karabakh's status they must understand that it will be impossible without return of Azerbaijani community to Karabakh. They must create safe conditions for the Azerbaijanis, and Armenian troops must be withdrawn from Karabakh, Azimov said. Regarding the fate of Lachin<sup>140</sup>, Armenia does not agree with joint use of this road."<sup>141</sup>

In the Nagorno-Karabakh case, the closed issue agenda preserves the stability of the societal coalitions and the configuration of their interest, the change of which may require considerable political change or how the expert of the Azerbaijan's leading oppositional party Musavat, Hikmet Hajizadeh put it: "Resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict requires democratic Azerbaijan and independent Armenia."

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<sup>138</sup> Alberto Priego: "Armenia, o el Continente Aislado", Januar 2005, UNISCI Discusión Papers, p. 6

<sup>139</sup> Arif Yunusov, interview to Day.az, December 13, 2006,

<sup>140</sup> The road which connects Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.

<sup>141</sup> BAKU/12.02.07/TURAN: Armenia refutes obtained agreements and does not want the return of Azerbaijanis to Nagorno-Karabakh, ARAZ AZIMOV says

Personal transformations, another type of transformation crucial for successful conflict management and reconciliation, refer to the changes in mind of individual leaders or decision-making groups. Some external interveners try to reach these leaders and bring this personal change directly.<sup>142</sup> However, at Level I the personal changes are more difficult to occur because the conflict may be a tool for their political hegemony, for example, to annex or maintain a certain territory, or the conflict may be a vehicle for a power struggle. Finally, the leader is perceived as a symbol of a nation, and must possess really high legitimacy, extensive "trust credit" among its people to take a step which would not fully please its people.

At the level of personal transformation of middle level and grassroots leaders, positive personal transformation is crucial, especially in case of the middle level because frequently it is by the efforts of this group of society the historical narratives are constructed and ancient hatred discourse is fuelled in nurturing negative transformation. Thus, this group is also in the position to influence positive transformations and to realize its potentiality of the champion of the reconciliation narratives.

However, these groups although having real potentiality for reconciliation are out of the peace process due to the semi-authoritarian nature of the regimes. While the President of Armenia Kocharian talks about "ethnic incompatibility" to co-exist with the Azerbaijanis<sup>143</sup>, it is remarkable that Azerbaijani IDPs from the occupied districts and Nagorno-Karabakh are still home-sick and as polls show agree to live next to each other again with the Armenians despite the personal risks and the experienced horrors of the war.<sup>144</sup> Although conduct of reliable polls is difficult in the closed separatist constituencies, it is reasonable to assume that reserves of reconciliation and peaceful co-existence also exist there.

Another type of transformation is a structure of the inter-actor relations, which happens if distribution of power between actors significantly changes.

In our case, at the top level, there is no evidence of emancipatory activities aimed at changing relations between parties, but rather attempts to reach a resolution within the post-war status quo. Actors are integrated into the existing structure, leading to a few changes in argumentation. The refusal of R. Kocharian, the President of Armenia, to discuss the security guarantees offered by I. Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, while continuing to stress the status issue as the cornerstone of the negotiations, on the one hand, and the refusal of I. Aliyev to institutionalize and detail the concept of the "widest autonomy", on the other hand, show levels of distrust between the leaders, and hypocritical attitudes towards the negotiation process from both sides. Moreover, regular switches from soft and hard statements on the part of both presidents are observable depending on the cycle of elections. Usually a year before the campaign, by using soft statements, the presidents try to demonstrate how progressive they are to get an official settlement. That is done in pursue of support from the western powers so that the latter close eyes on the regular frauds and ballot stuffing during the elections.<sup>145</sup> At the same time, asymmetrical conflicts cannot be transformed without changing unbalanced relationship that lies in their roots. Such changes may take place

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<sup>142</sup> Curle, 1987 referenced in H. Miall op.cit.

<sup>143</sup> Artur Terian "Kocharian Says Armenians, Azeris 'Ethnically Incompatible'" <http://www.armenialiberty.org/armeniareport/report/en/2003/01/4B1EBB47-69C0-40AF-83DB-24E810DA88E4.ASP>

<sup>144</sup> Azerbaijani Sociological Association referenced in International Crisis Group European report, No. op cit, p. 25, 27

<sup>145</sup> Ilgar Mamedov: "Totalizator prezidentov,"(In Russian)' available from [www.realazer.com/2006\\_79/st2.htm](http://www.realazer.com/2006_79/st2.htm)



gradually, but internal and external actors can support them.<sup>146</sup> In this respect, involvement of both communities (Azerbaijani and Armenian) of Nagorno-Karabakh into the negotiation under certain conditions would have the effect of a mutual acknowledgement of identity.

The structural transformation may also mean a significant increase or decrease of the extent of communication and interdependence between the actors. In our case there is isolation of the actors from each other, especially in respect of Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh. At the same time, some authors think that the most unstable combination is a high degree of inter-dependence and opposite interests.<sup>147</sup> Partially this combination also exists in the Nagorno-Karabakh case, where perceived incompatibility of interests prevents the restoration of cross-border contacts both between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Armenia and Turkey. The World Bank studies show that an opening of the borders by Turkey and Azerbaijan is especially in the interest for Armenia, whose trade could increase the GDP by 30%. Even for Azerbaijan, the sum it would gain by opening its frontier with Armenia is estimated to be a useful 5% of GDP.<sup>148</sup> Some important trades are completely cut off, notably the export of gas from Azerbaijan to Armenia (which it is getting instead from Iran via a new pipeline), and of electricity from Armenia to Turkey.<sup>149</sup> In this respect, despite the conclusion of international organizations, the government in Armenia issued its own study arguing that opening the borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan actually will not influence the GDP of Armenia so much.

Concluding, a review of five types of transformations, which in case of positive development should lead to a sustainable settlement of the conflict, inspires for little optimistic conclusions for Nagorno-Karabakh. Transformations did happen but those are mainly negative transformations with a lack of any considerable peacebuilding. While some scholars recognize the rules have an independent impact on inter-actor relations, in Nagorno-Karabakh the rules of behaviour are dependent on the position of an actor, its power, interest and favourable context. As was demonstrated in the article none of the international actors are present enough to solve the conflicts. In the same way, practical effectiveness of international involvement, represented in our case by the OSCE, cannot be more than its member states allow that.

The growth of primordial nationalism in both societies is not contributing to dialogue and recognition of each other. Selective reference and interpretation of the historical facts are heavily politicized and used for destructive mass mobilization. Armenians cultivate a victim complex, which however was considerably compensated by the military victory in 1993. Armenian leaders refer to the fear of further victimization as justification of their control of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent regions,<sup>150</sup> and resistance to the promotion by Azerbaijan of a "pan-Turkic policy to control Caucasus".<sup>151</sup> Azerbaijan considers those arguments as hypocritical and as a justification to gain more land to realize the myth of "Great Armenia from sea to sea". Various public statements of the officials also contribute to this perception, for example, that of Armenia's

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<sup>146</sup> H. Miall op. cit.

<sup>147</sup> Deutsch, 1978: p 194, referenced in H. Miall, op. cit.

<sup>148</sup> Polyakov Evgeny (2000) "Changing Trade Patterns after Conflict Resolution in South Caucasus", World Bank Working Paper

<sup>149</sup> For Turkey, the macroeconomic cost of foregoing trade with Armenia is not as large at the national level, yet it is significant in hampering the economic development of its eastern regions.

<sup>150</sup> Artur Terian op. cit.

<sup>151</sup> International Crisis Group European report No. 164, op. cit. p. 26

first Minister of Foreign Affairs: "Armenia, the great regional power that extended from sea to sea in the first century before Christ and for ages played a central role in the history of Western Asia, has been reduced to a land-locked rump in modern times."<sup>152</sup>

On June 14, 2005 the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the first time since the war issued a statement acknowledging that direct inter-communal dialogue and associated confidence-building measures will contribute to creating the prerequisite conditions for normalizing relations between Karabakh Armenians and returning Azerbaijanis IDPs. Time will show whether this important opening will be really used for establishing a dialogue between both ethnic communities. However, both sides keep the bargaining chips active: Azerbaijan – the closed down communication and transportation; Armenia – occupied territories.

Another factor that seemingly perpetuates the "frozenness" of the conflict settlement is that the legitimacy of the leaders of both countries are shaky due to massive fraud practices during the elections. Therefore, on the one hand, they cannot go for compromise putting at risk their own power. On the other hand, the very existence of the conflict on Azerbaijan's territory and its unattended consequences (economical embargo by Azerbaijan and Turkey) for Armenia turned into manipulation chip the governments refer too to the justification of the lack of or of slow economical reforms, oppression of political and civil freedoms, poverty of the population and by that to calm down the open expression of social tension. The existence of an external enemy contributes to the coherence and mobilisation of the society, which can be easily manipulated.

Mutually increasing hostile rhetoric of the leaders of the conflicting sides, increasing of military budget obviously does not contribute to trust building among the people and even more aggravates a feeling of insecurity. While the elder generation still retains the memories of a peaceful co-existence of both communities, the younger generation is exposed to negative stereotyping of the enemy. A great portion of these "achievements" in this respect belongs to the journalists. The propaganda of the enemy images in Erevan, Baku, and Stepanakert/Khankendi is directed toward domestic consumption, which speaks for the double standard applied in both countries in respect of a compromise in the negotiation process.<sup>153</sup> Frequently the leaders found themselves imprisoned by their own propaganda. An example is a contradictory interpretation of Serj Sarkisian, Armenian Defence Minister, of the plans of Armenia concerning the 7 occupied regions of Azerbaijan beyond Nagorno-Karabakh: his reference to those lands as "security belt" contradicts to the perceptions of the top Armenian generals, and the official local propaganda which refer to those lands as 'liberated lands.'<sup>154</sup>

Thus, there are four levels of consensus to be reached in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh: contextual level connected to the geopolitical consensus between Russia and USA and normative ideological influence of

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<sup>152</sup> Raffi K. Hovannisian "Outside View: Armenia seeking a new place in the world". UPI Outside View Commentator, April 28, 2006

<sup>153</sup> Bagdasaryan Laura, "Diskurs uregulirovaniya Karabakhskogo konflikta: obrazi vruga i partnera"[Discourse on conflict resolution of Karabakh conflict: images of enemy and partner], *Central Asia and Caucasus*, No.3 (39), 2005, pp. 35- 44

<sup>154</sup> Quoted in "Aykanak Jamanak" in: Ayk Djanpoladian's press review as for March 3-9, 2006, [www.regnum.ru/news/604431](http://www.regnum.ru/news/604431)

the West; level of top leaders of the conflicting sides; and societal levels such as middle and grassroots levels of the conflicting parties. More specifically, as the review of the five types of transformation showed a positive transformation at each of these three levels requires changes in regional context, change in power structure, appearance of new actors and new goals, opening of the issues and formulating constructive compromise and, finally, changes of the perspectives at the personal level in order to create a space for the gestures of conciliation. In this respect, the role of the local and national peace builders is to prioritize needs and support peace mechanisms with the widest impact. What are the entry points for the internal and external peacebuilding actors?

## **5. Prospects for intensified peacebuilding towards reconciliation**

In the last chapter we have analyzed the types and quality of transformations that took place in the case of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and the peculiarities of the reconciliation process. The purpose of the current chapter is to outline the recommendations for third parties on a peacebuilding action with the special focus on the socio-cultural and political aspects, and the middle and grassroots level leaders as the main conductors of a reconciliation environment at the societal level.

### **5.1. Socio-cultural and political aspects of reconciliation: focusing on middle level leaders**

Because of its very nature power-based mediation seems not to be too promising for ethnic conflict due to the very state's ability to impose a political settlement or to keep deliberately the situation of "no peace not war". At the same time, although mediation of the international organizations in the track-sharing fails, in its nature it has (or can have) a much wider spectre of instruments adequate to the nature of ethnic conflict. However, this approach continues focusing almost exclusively on a political settlement rather than on any type of transformation of discourse and generally, attitudes and preparation of favourable reconciliation environment. Any successful mediation must not only broker a political settlement between political elites, but support and where possible to initiate the process of reconciliation at the societal level. While power-based mediation simply does not have a mechanism for that, institutional mediation may be the most successful at targeting socio-cultural aspects of reconciliation and mid-level leadership.

Violence, fear and a so called "ancient hatred" are the result of reanimation and reproduction of the old myths. After the war the system of societal reproduction is saturated with these beliefs represented in certain clichés through use of languages, formulated and reproduced via various discourse institutions such as education, art, mass media, and churches. In this situation, positive transformation towards reconciliation and generally effective peacebuilding presupposes questioning of those stereotypes.

The search for sustainable peace must be based on its own unique set of traditions since there is no universal technique for this. For example, recommendations of Caritas International handbook "Working for Reconciliation" include various approaches. Among others are identification of cultural dimensions of the conflict (e.g. ideology, religion) and cultural realities that impact negatively (prejudice, fear etc.) or positively

(shared values regarding cooperation, similar reconciliation customs) on the resolution of the conflict, in order to explore traditional or cultural methods for reconciliation. In this respect, a third party must help to identify those cultural narratives and support culturally grounded local and national initiatives for reconciliation which could have the highest legitimacy and sustainability in the long run.<sup>155</sup>

Referring to the definition of reconciliation adopted for the current paper “as a socio-political long-term process involving mutual acknowledgement of grievances, constructive communication building, transformation of destructive attitudes, where reconciliation efforts need to focus on short-term pragmatic considerations of what is possible in the immediate context but with the long term perspective”, we can see that rather than implying harmonic relationship, it stresses a constructive mechanism of conflict management such as inter-ethnic association and communication, tolerance, acknowledgement of responsibility for conflict. These are the peace mechanisms without which reconciliation is not possible and which must be supported by peacebuilding actors. Otherwise, violence mechanisms including insecurity feelings, appreciation of ethnic purity, exclusive identity, accusing of the opposite side and denial of its own responsibility for the conflict swallow and marginalize impact of the weak peace mechanisms.

In this respect, socio-cultural aspects of a reconciliation process are connected with the political aspect, i.e. refers to a role of the state. Long and Brecke studied 11 case studies of civil wars and 8 international conflicts and constructed an explanation for why reconciliation restores social order. They introduced a definition of “reconciliation events” at a political level (meetings between top former confronting leaders; public ceremonies, covered by national media; peace oriented symbolic behaviour) after a civil conflict. Long and Brecke found that for countries in which a reconciliation event took place 64% did not return to violent conflict. However, among countries that had not experienced a reconciliation event, only 9% did not return to war.<sup>156</sup> The civil war cases reveal that successful reconciliation is associated with a process of national forgiveness, not merely negotiated settlement. The authors argue that success is not solely the result of rational choice decision making. On the international level, however, successful reconciliation was not a part of a forgiveness process. Reconciliation was successful in bringing sustained peace when it was associated with a signalling process - an exchange of costly, voluntary, and binding concessions in a negotiated bargain.

Thus, the reconciliation friendly political attempts in a post-war situation are essential in peacebuilding. In this, the third parties’ contribution could be in supporting the governments in taking the crucial political responsibility of paving the way for reconciliation through law and education.

In any case, various approaches to reconciliation have one common denominator expressed in its goal to change the way how people think about their historical narratives. In this sense it is about individuals. However, highest officials would not be the most responsive to a peaceful transformation of identities: they may instrumentalize the conflict for a power struggle, to annex or keep a given territory; the conflict may be used to distract society from its domestic problems.

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<sup>155</sup> Starken, “Working for Reconciliation: A Caritas Handbook”, pp. 78–84.

<sup>156</sup> Long and Brecke (2003) *War and Reconciliation: Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press

Thus, by its nature, reconciliation is a “bottom up” process and external forces can hardly impose it, but they can support a reconciliation process by focusing on peace, by helping the sides see the benefit they have by accepting the other and by empowering the middle level as having significant impact on peacebuilding.

As was concluded in the previous chapters (p.23) the main task of conflict management and reconciliation perspectives in peacebuilding is to create a feeling of security in ways that do not threaten other groups. International actors can support this process by focusing on “reconciliation friendly” projects, which would encourage people to know each other better through discourse transformation, the main pioneer of which are middle level leaders, who revise existing cultural narratives. While the conflict apparently broke with the push of the middle level representatives as the initiators of the hatred discourse, today, middle level officials have repeatedly been the ones voicing a more moderate line, of more will to redefine national identities, and to use peaceful narratives.

Because national identity is based on selective narratives of national history, those can be narratives of hatred or reconciliation. In other words, it is a matter of will and choice to transform national identity for the worse or for the better; to give supremacy to the narratives of hatred and violence or those of peace. If the collective fear is not erased certain war groups may take advantage of this fear, or this fear may create the demand for such leaders. So far there is hardly any engagement in self-reflection about one’s role and behaviour in the dynamic of the conflict of the kind, that the methodology of reconciliation supposes.

## **5.2. Lessons learned from middle level involvement and recommendations on the entry points for peacebuilding**

As was demonstrated, the main type of activities of local NGOs implemented under the condition of assistance and support of international organisations are public awareness raise, empowerment, community development trainings, conflict resolution workshops targeted at IDPs, youth, women; civilian security activities such as demining operations, hostages exchange; holding public debate/campaign; media workers exchange and trainings. All such activities are hold in the format of bilateral, multilateral and broader pan-Caucasus initiatives. Many are concerned about sustainability of those actions, or lack of peacebuilding and reconciliation result.<sup>157</sup> In this respect, obviously a lack of political framework of peacebuilding and a strategy for reconciliation is very damaging to the whole process and for its actors. The circle of people getting access to contacts with the opposite community is growing very slow, limited to no more than some hundred NGOs members. On the one hand, sustainability of joint projects frequently is failing because of a “lack of real communication let alone friendship.”<sup>158</sup> On the other hand, some NGOs are not satisfied by the multiple repetitions of projects and the mere establishment of humanistic relationship and insist on the sustainability of work.

In the above paragraphs the general overview of operational context of local NGOs, typology of their activities, problems of international organisations and environment conducive for transformation was

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<sup>157</sup> Luisa Pogolian: <http://www.southcaucasus.com/index.php?page=tribune&id=7>

examined. In this section, by interpreting their experience and lessons learned, the attempt to outline the entry points for peacebuilding initiatives.

Shortage of the academic attention towards conflict and peace studies. There is still an observable tendency to concentrate on historical research with the aspiration to prove one's historical or territorial claims, while the societies miss policy-oriented studies in the field of peace studies and conflict resolution. Implication for peacebuilding actors are that they can support joint research projects in various fields and networking among the academic elites as well as debates, conferences among both established and young scholars.

Politics and NGOs. The problem in this field is that there are little alliances across the levels of the society, especially between NGOs and political parties to promote civic peacebuilding initiatives.<sup>159</sup> This problem is mostly indicator in the countries of the South Caucasus, especially in Azerbaijan where the gap between "political society" and civil society is profound, putting the civil society apart from the political process in the country. At the same time, the civil societies of the small separatist entities have comparably easier access to the political elite. However, the level of tolerance towards the alternative views in those societies is more limited than in the recognized states since in the separatist regimes the ruling elites try to give the impression of a coherence of the society. Besides, in both parties of the conflict even the most co-operative NGOs are clear in their political positions such as the commitment to independence or territorial integrity.

An implication for international peacebuilding actors could be that they can facilitate informal communication between civil society actors and the decision makers within and beyond the entities, bearing in mind that any such project has to be planned carefully to ensure complementarities on different levels.

Youth: The impact of isolation on the young generation is especially visible since it misses experience and memory of peaceful co-existence between the communities and nowadays are subject to severe brainwashing and one-sided propaganda. As various humanitarian aid workers observe in societies living in isolation a lack of communication and generally limited access to the mass media and high technology. People lack information not only about the peace process, but also about the world. Therefore, one of the entry points for peacebuilding activities would be the creation of a youth peace centre, the encouragement of joint academic projects among young scholars, summer schools on various region related topics, TV bridges. Special attention must be given to the youth of IDPs and refugees.<sup>160</sup> That all has the main goal to prevent the ongoing alienation of the youth from each other in the ethnic communities, to make official brainwashing more difficult to reach its goal, to provide access to alternative perspectives and a variety of information, to stimulate revision of stereotypes and enemy images.

Public debate and a low public awareness. While generally throughout the region pluralism of the public debate on the issue of conflict resolution is considered to be sensitive in the separatist constituencies, public debate is most difficult due to a perceived need to create an image of high internal consolidation, on

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Laurence Broers (ed)(2005) op.cit.

the one hand, and a need to control narratives of propaganda to have power over transformational processes. The media as a site of narratives fabrication successfully contribute into hampering the reconciliation process and creating enemy images by competing for the image of the "most patriotic" journal, TV channel or journalist.

Although exchange of information between Azerbaijani and Armenian news agencies was always maintained, the vehicle of reproduction of hatred discourse is there having its immediate and wide impact especially in Azerbaijan (as a "looser" side in the conflict). At the same time, in Nagorno-Karabakh mass media are underdeveloped: public television is poorly equipped while only a small group of people that can watch satellite TV.<sup>161</sup> Print media are more developed there, though mainly concentrated in the main city of Nagorno-Karabakh – Stepanakert/Khankendi, having both pro-governmental and few non-governmental newspapers.

Shortage of publicity about the NGOs activists' bilateral or multilateral meetings is observable. That is because sometimes NGO activists prefer to keep such events unpublicised under the risk of being accused of betrayal after their return; thereby the impact from those meetings is limited. The same pattern of behaviour is followed by the international organisations who are not inclined to publicize their conflict management related activities referring to "sensitivity" of the issue.

A peacebuilding action could be the support of an understanding of the importance of transformation discourse and concentration on discourse producing actors, such as media, education, which would have the widest impact for reconciliation in the pre-settlement and post-settlement period. For example, production of documentaries reflecting the grievances of both communities will serve the purpose of raising awareness; soap operas, fiction films reflecting the personal sides of individuals will create emotional involvement with the process of reconciliation and discourse transformation, and support of intra-community groups with alternative views.

*Bilateral and multilateral projects:* While it remains uncertain whether bilateral contacts between NGOs play a significant role in conflict prevention in the South Caucasus, those projects are mainly externally generated and are designed to promote co-operation between Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, sometimes incorporating also people from unrecognised constituencies as well. In this respect, a role of third parties in any forum with pan-Caucasian orientation is significant in facilitation, in co-ordination of the implementation process, in paying particular attention to technical and political issues, as well as in ensuring not to lose the overall sight of the initiative's general purpose and agenda.

*International organisations: humanitarian aid and development projects.* In the context of the high politicization of humanitarian aid in the South Caucasus, the situation of humanitarian aid was best described in the study of MacFarlane, which argued that politics can be a positive, rather than a negative, force in humanitarian aid. Humanitarian action can contribute to the processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation as well as reconstruction. Although diasporic NGOs and individuals from the US, Europe, and

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<sup>160</sup> Anna Matveeva, in: Conflict prevention in Caucasus, op. cit.

<sup>161</sup> International Crisis Group report. Op. cit.

the Middle East have contributed to humanitarian aid and development initiatives in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, there has been little cooperation with and support for local NGOs involved in peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives in Armenia. On the contrary, some diasporic organizations, especially nationalist political parties, have taken more cemented uncompromising positions.<sup>162</sup>

While, most of the international organisations recognize the importance of the engaged local civil society, they do not do it in the scope that reflects civil society's importance. Assistance tends to be ad hoc, perpetuating a weak civil society system in which NGOs are often small project implementation agencies. It is like this because the support for country defined strategies often means support for 'government-defined' priorities. It is vital to find a balance between working among and across the levels of the society.

Development cooperation and peacebuilding oriented organisations must include a peacebuilding component into their agenda, appropriate units of lessons learned, implementation of recommendations, and after all, a definition of peacebuilding according to its goals. Conflict sensitive approach and coordination among those involved in the reconciliation process is crucial in respect of knowing who does, what, where as well as sharing lessons learned. In its turn, donor organisations should officially press on including these components into the activities of international NGOs as well as consider a more comprehensive peacebuilding process and allocate funds for reconciliation oriented activities, impact assessment and lessons learned units in the organisations.

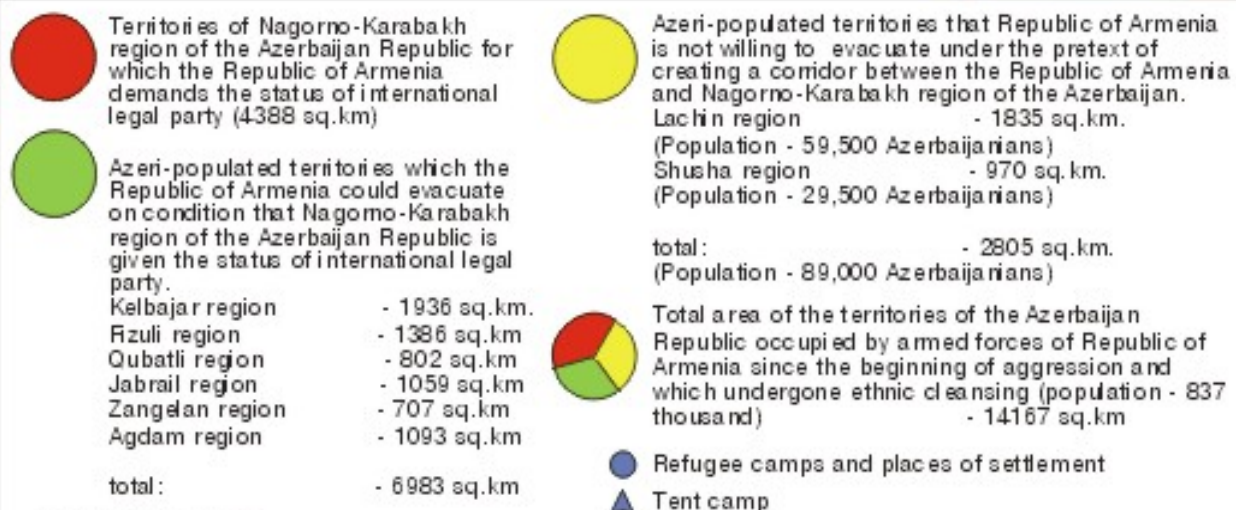
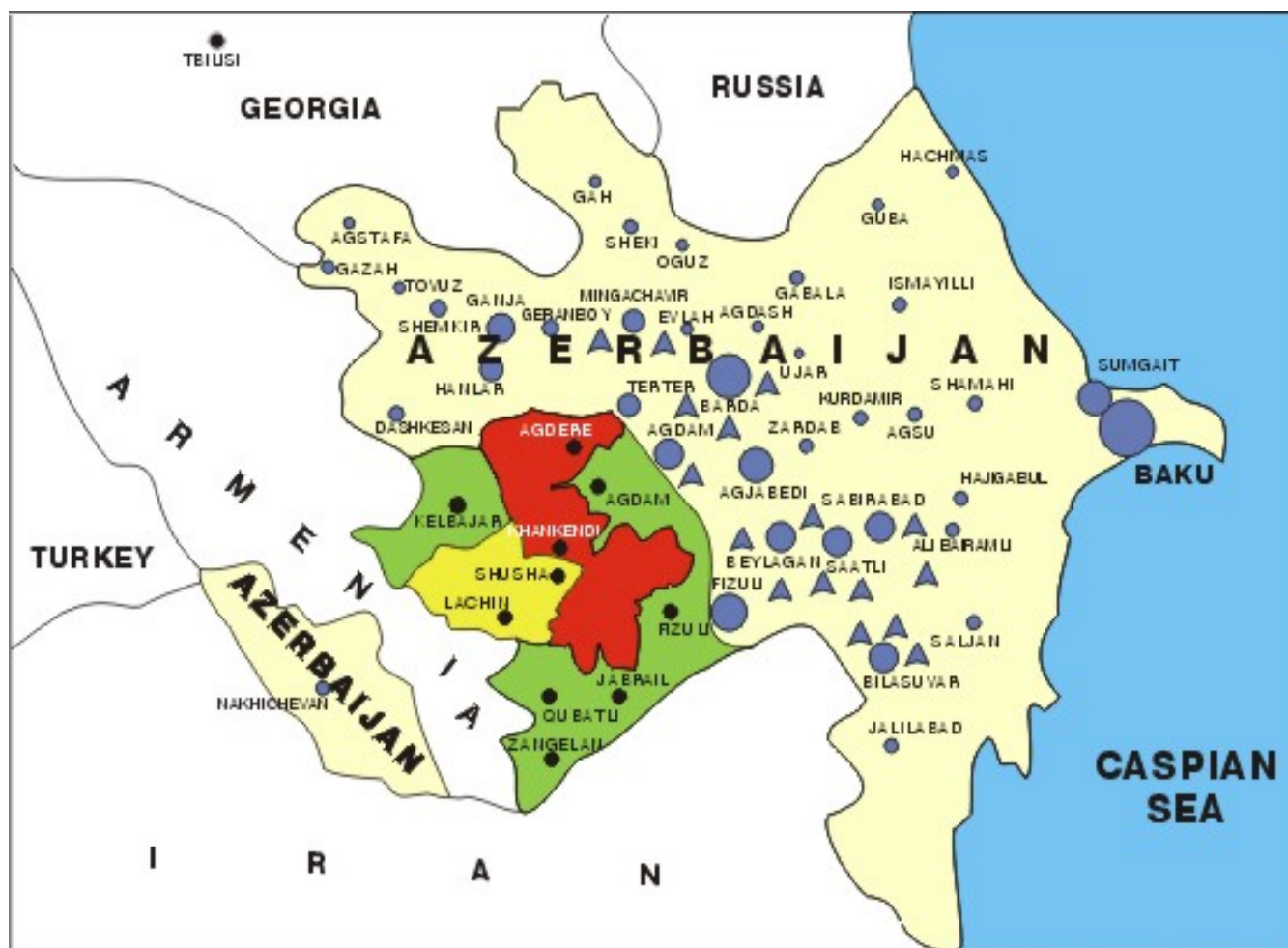
International organisations can take the lead in improving the understanding and capacity of local authorities; facilitate people-to-people contacts and interactions such as over common environmental, socio-economical concerns. They can facilitate people-to-people contacts and interaction; improve understanding and capacity of the local authorities; ensure that the voice of groups that may otherwise be marginalised is heard such as, for example, of women who are able to work across the conflict divides. Thus, creation of initiatives at the local level can be more cost-effective than large scale infrastructure rehabilitation.

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<sup>162</sup> Hasanov Avaz and Armine Ishkanian "Bridging divides: civil society peacebuilding initiatives" in: Laurence Broers (ed) (2005) *The limits of leadership*, op. cit.



### Annex. 1. Territories of Azerbaijan under occupation



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