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IDENTITY CONFLICT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

Ethnic conflicts with territorial dimensions expressed in secessionism have been important causes of contemporary conflict in the 1990s in the post Communist area and pose a major challenge to conflict management. Real or perceived inequalities and fears turn ethnicity into a political instrument for channeling ethnic based interests and needs.

Three major factors can be identified as influencing the wave of contemporary ethnic conflicts. First, the trend towards ‘democratization’ in previously authoritarian countries has given more opportunities for ethnic minorities to freely assert their perceived group rights. Second, there is increasing international concern for minority rights, which seems in some cases to override concerns on sovereignty. Third, there is a legal gap left for the voluntary interpretation of the content and holders of self-determination rights. In reality, such a situation can create a ‘legal license’ for violent ethnic conflict, with ethnic cleansing and human rights violations as the main attributes of the secessionist movement. This ‘hardly contributes to multicultural dialogue and the process of learning to live together’.²

This article suggests an analytical framework for understanding the inter-ethnic conflicts in the South Caucasus, using the case of Armenian-Azerbaijan dispute over Nagorniy Karabakh. Contrary to extreme primordialist or structuralist arguments, the author argues for an integrative framework to comprehend both structural and ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse factors which mutually escalate and provoke violent ethnic conflict. It is ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse that makes the contemporary internal wars – wars over identity.

Through analysis of the narratives and functions of the ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse in the case of Nagorniy Karabakh conflict, the author draws implications for conflict management in respect to the need to integrate the conflict transformation approach into the peace process by targeting attitudes, fears and stereotypes nurtured by ‘ancient ethnic hatred’

¹ *Las opiniones expresadas en estos artículos son propias de sus autores. Estos artículos no reflejan necesariamente la opinión de UNISCI.* The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors. These articles do not necessarily reflect the views of UNISCI.

² Falk, Richard: ‘Self-determination under International Law: The coherence of Doctrine vs. Incoherence of Experience,’ in Danspeckgruber, W. (2001): *The Self-Determination of Peoples, Community, nation, and state in the interdependent world*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, p. 45.



discourse. A two-fold nature of Nagorniy Karabakh conflict - ethnic and territorial – implies a need for complementary applications of the conflict-settlement and conflict transformation approaches. In practice, that means involving broader civil society to target attitudes and stereotypes in addition to top-level negotiators and power-mediators focusing exclusively on a political settlement.

Following the logic of the arguments and the thesis, the article is divided into the three chapters. In the first chapter, a general overview of the context in South Caucasus is followed by a brief description of the dynamics of the Nagorniy Karabakh conflict. The second chapter, following a general theoretical debate on causality of ethnic conflict, emphasizes principle narratives which formed the ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse in the Nagorniy Karabakh case. The third chapter draws implications from ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse for conflict management. With this aim an overview of the conflict management efforts by power mediation, institutional mediation and middle-level leaders (Track II) in Nagorniy Karabakh case is provided with the emphasis of the middle level in discourse transformation. The fourth chapter contains the concluding remarks on the role, problems and perspectives of middle level leaders’ contribution to the peace process, and entry points for discourse transformation by both local and external actors.

1. South Caucasus – region of ‘frozen conflicts’

1.1. Overview of the region

Remarkable ethnic diversity in the Caucasus region has forced attempts to draw and re-draw political borders in the region since the collapse of Soviet Union. The three largest ethnic groups are the title groups and comprise overwhelming majorities of the three independent states: the Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Georgians. The region is populated by some 15 million people: the Georgians (4,700 million); the Azerbaijanis (8 million); the Armenians (about 3 million). The ethnic composition of South Caucasus is extremely diverse. The only mono-ethnic country in South Caucasus is Armenia (since 1988-89), while Azerbaijan and Georgia accommodate large ethnic groups from neighboring republics. This is not a facilitating factor in stability of the region.

The republics of the South Caucasus have had a history of independent statehood only in a short two-year period of 1918-1921, which was interrupted by the incorporation of those states into the USSR in 1922. Soviet territory was divided into various ethnic units and structures reflecting certain hierarchy - republics, autonomous republics within the Union republic, and autonomous oblast (region/district)³.

The conflicts over the territorial status of three regions populated by ethnic minorities came on with the weakening of the Soviet Union: Autonomous Province of Nagorniy (mountainous) Karabakh of Azerbaijan, populated mainly by Armenians (armed conflict between 1988 and 1994) in Azerbaijan; the Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic of Abkhazia (1992-93) and the South Ossetian Autonomous Province (1989-92), both in Georgia. The ethnopolitical conflicts in the region in the early 1990s have led to the death of over 50,000 people, great material destruction, and contributed significantly to the political

³ Beissinger, Mark (2002): *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.



instability, economic hardships, and the increase in transnational crime that has characterized the region in its first decade of independence.

The Caucasus region is characterized by a number of features which can partially explain a high level of ethnic tension.. Firstly, geographical factors explain how the low mobility of the population leads to perseverance of ethnic identity and native languages as point of reference for the right for self-determination. The second factor is what Tom de Waal called ‘divergent national narratives’⁴ i.e. contradictory interpretations of history. The third factor is connected to the availability of weaponry to secessionist movements during weakening of the USSR in the late 1980s.⁵ Fourthly, perestroika made available various political opportunities structures which facilitated large social mobilization in the society, which did not have clear channels of mediation or mechanism of dialogue among the conflicting parties. ‘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.’⁶ Conflicting beliefs were generated on the both sides and in the absence of corrective interpretation grew into ‘truth’. In other words, while reinforcing each other, structural and discourse factors produced wars in the early 1990s. One of the first ethnopolitical conflicts to erupt on the former Soviet territory was over the Armenian populated enclave of 4,400 sq km within Azerbaijan - Autonomous Region of Nagorniy Karabakh (NKAO) (76.9% Armenian population (and 21.5% Azerbaijani⁷), the Armenian majority of which demanded unification with Armenia in 1987 and later independence. The conflict went through the number of phases and is stuck in a ‘no peace, no war’ stage despite of fifteen years of negotiation under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk group, which is the main institution of the peace process in Nagorniy Karabakh.

The conflict over Nagorniy Karabakh is exemplary in terms of how identity constructs interplay with the political actions of the conflicting sides; and how a lack of adequate policy response prevents the conflict from positive transformation towards a sustainable settlement, let alone reconciliation.

The nature of Nagorniy Karabakh conflict and other conflicts in South Caucasus is ethno-territorial and based on separatism informed by self-determination right. They occurred within the borders of central state but had impact across the state boundaries. External factors played a crucial role in the conflicts, i.e. each of the secessionist constituencies has external patronage. They are political in nature and asymmetrical. They are protracted in duration, i.e. being military successful. The secessionist units are neither recognized by international community nor was any political settlement was achieved. They tend to develop dynamics independent of the original causes. They are embedded in the existing socio-political and cultural structures.

In addition, the region is characterized by controversial strategic background represented by the international community is presented by the regional powers such as Russia, Turkey, Iran, and increasingly the USA, and international organizations such as the UN, OSCE, CoE,

⁴ DeWaal, Thomas: ‘The Nagorny Karabakh conflict: origins, dynamics and misperceptions,’ in Broers, Laurence (ed.) (2005): *The limits of leadership: Elites and societies in the Nagorny Karabakh peace process*. Conciliation Resources, ACCORD.

⁵ Cornell, Svante E. (2002): *The South Caucasus: A regional overview and conflict assessment*. SIDA/Cornell Caspian Consulting

⁶ Kurkchian Marina, (2005): ‘The Karabakh Conflict,’ in: Herzig, E. and Kurkchian, M. (eds): *The Armenians: Past and Present in the making of national identity*, pp. 147-165

⁷ 145,500 Armenians and 46,347 ethnic Azerbaijanis, see references in ICG European Report No. 166.



NATO and CIS. As D. Lynch put it 'the international community (presence is?) sufficient to create misperceptions and misunderstandings but not enough to dissolve them'.⁸

1.2. Brief history of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

The Seven Rules of Nationalism (Formulated by David C. Pugh⁹)

1. If an area was ours for 500 years and yours for 50 years, it should belong to *us*. You are merely occupiers.
2. If an area was yours for 500 years and ours for 50 years, it should belong to *us*. Borders must not be changed.
3. If an area belonged to us 500 years ago but never since then, it should belong to *us*. It is the Cradle of our Nation.
4. If a majority of our people live there, it must belong to *us*, they must enjoy the right of self-determination.
5. If a minority of our people live there, it must belong to *us*, they must be protected against your oppression.
6. All the above rules apply to *us* but not to *you*.
7. *Our* dream of greatness is Historical Necessity, *yours* is Fascism.

The conflict over Nagorniy Karabakh passed through various stages. Below after a short description of the dynamic of the conflict, we will distill the identity narratives to outline 'ancient-hatred' discourse.

Quarrel resulted from the hard public debates: Before a full-fledged fighting broke out at the end of 1991, in the late 1980s intellectuals had formulated detailed arguments that formed a national frame of reference. Diametrically opposed versions of history were propagated by Armenian writer Zori Balayan and Azerbaijani scholar Zia Bunyatov. Both sides linked an issue of national identity formation to possession of Nagorniy Karabakh. This contributed into a sensation of insecurity in the face of the threat posed by the 'other', real or perceived since the modern history of both Armenians and Azerbaijanis contains enough cases of catastrophe to provide grounds for insecurity and narratives for nationalist story. However, from the very beginning of the public debate, the Armenian position had an advantage in 'information war' and their version of the story was known better than the locally articulated Azerbaijani opinion.¹⁰

⁸ Lynch, D. (ed) (2003): *The South Caucasus: A challenge for the EU*. Chaillot Papers, No. 65, Paris, EU

⁹ Heradstveit, Daniel (1993): *Ethnic Conflicts and Refugees in the Former Soviet Union* (Oslo: Norwegian Refugee Council, p.4.) In 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

¹⁰ De Waal, Thomas (2003): *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan though peace and war*. New York, New York University Press, p. 30.



Crisis, which marked beginning of escalation by calling for actions. Once the political dispute had begun in late 1987 with Armenian rallies, followed by Azerbaijan's protest, identification across the ethnic fault lines resulted in mutual influx of refugees. The first group of Azerbaijani refugees fled from Armenia in winter 1987–1988 and in beginning of 1988 Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan. Horror stories of the suffering of the refugees were used widely in mass mobilization. The voting of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region (NKAO) to be transferred to Armenia in February 1988 led¹¹ to the largest demonstrations ever seen in the capitals of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In May 1988 the proposal to upgrade the status of Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (region) to that of Autonomous Republic (which would give the province new privileges: local parliament, constitution, and government, building of Lachin road to connect with Armenia) was rejected by Pogosian, party leader of the Armenian community of Nagorny Karabakh.¹²

Sporadic interethnic violence. What brought confrontational politics into sporadic inter-ethnic clashes was the pogrom in Sumgait in Azerbaijan on 28-29 February 1988, where a sudden influx of Azerbaijanis refugees from Armenia, a high concentration of *lumpen* proletariat, and the silence of the authorities in Moscow inspired angry demonstrations and pogroms with 30 Armenians, and 6 Azerbaijani killed.¹³ September-October 1988 is marked by massive influx of Azerbaijani population from NKAO and Armenia.

Following the resolution adopted on June 15 by the Supreme Soviet of Armenia formally giving its approval to the idea of Nagorny Karabakh joining Armenia, the Regional Soviet of Nagorny Karabakh passed a resolution for the unilateral secession from Azerbaijan and renaming Nagorny Karabakh 'the Artsakh Armenian Autonomous Region.'

In August 1989, Azerbaijan stopped railway communication with Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh. From the second half of 1989, as Nagorny Karabakh got small arms to replace the rifles, casualties increased.¹⁴ On December 1, The Armenian Supreme Soviet and Nagorny Karabakh National Council passed a joint resolution announcing 'reunification of Armenian SSR and Nagorny Karabakh, and the population of Nagorny Karabakh is granted rights of citizenship of the Armenian SSR.'¹⁵

In the situation of silence from Moscow and non-interference of the Red Army forces located in Baku, in January 13-15, 1990 pogroms of the remaining Armenians took place and resulted in more than one hundred dead before an evacuation was organized by the Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF). The APF was gaining public support and in January 20, USSR leaders sent Red Army forces to Baku killing around 150 civilians.

In 1990, a leader of Karabakh Committee, the Armenian movement, Ter-Petrosian, became a chair of Supreme Soviet and, in 1991 a President of Armenia. In November 1991, the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet annulled the autonomous status of Nagorny Karabakh, and in response, the region held a referendum in favor of secession from Azerbaijan although from legal point of view, referendum is only allowed in the whole territory of Azerbaijan.

¹¹ The resolution did not comply with the constitution of USSR, according to which the autonomous oblasts do not have a right to secede from a Union republic or from the USSR.

¹² De Waal, *op cit.*, p. 60.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 40-41.

¹⁴ *Ibid*. p. 71.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.72.



Operation ‘Ring’ approved by Moscow was launched by Azerbaijan with the aim to restore order through intimidation of Karabakh Armenians, and to create a ring of Azerbaijani villages around Nagorniy Karabakh inspired the Armenian Party officials of Nagorniy Karabakh to pass resolution on June 19, 1991 to change ‘the course from policy of confrontation to a policy of dialogue and negotiation’ and sent delegation to Baku. Less than one month later, Grigorian Valery who headed the delegation was shot in Stepanakert, a main city of Nagorniy Karabakh. Commenting this event, nationalist activist Galstiyany Zhanna said: “Anyone who signed such document... we would have threatened his life...even if this was a close friend of ours.”¹⁶

Full-fledged war and ceasefire agreement. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, on January 1992, Nagorno-Karabakh parliament declared the region's independence and conflict escalated into full-fledged warfare with involvement of *fedayin* from Armenia, the brutal episodes of which were the central government's shelling of main city of Nagorno-Karabakh in 1992 and the massacre of the 613 Azerbaijani civilians of Khojaly city by the Armenian forces in February 1992.

The advancement of Azerbaijani forces in second half of 1992 was hampered by the domestic turmoil and *coup d'eta*, which brought Heydar Aliyev, ex-USSR KGB chief, to power in Azerbaijan. In February–June 1993, the Armenian forces advanced beyond Nagorniy Karabakh. The attack sharpened the division among Armenian leadership: those who were interested in a diplomatic settlement to the war (President Ter-Petrosian) and those who wanted to continue military advantage (Defense Minister, and Nagorniy Karabakh Armenian leaders).¹⁷ In four months, as power changed in Baku, Azerbaijanis gave up five regions beyond Nagorniy Karabakh practically without fight.¹⁸

Throughout the war, the both sides received support from various international volunteers and mercenaries as well as patron-states: Armenians of Nagorniy Karabakh were supported by the Russian military bases located in Nagorniy Karabakh, Armenia and Armenian Diaspora; Azerbaijan was supported by consultancy of Turkish militants, and until late 1992 from locally based Russian divisions.

Since March 1992, CSCE represented first-ever international organization's involvement into resolving military conflict in the former Soviet Union. The initiative was taken by the OSCE “Minsk group” which worked towards presenting cease-fire proposal. However, brokered by Russia Minister of Defense, Grachev the ceasefire was signed in 1994 primarily as a result of decisive Armenian military victory over Azerbaijani forces, which led to occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent regions beyond Nagorniy Karabakh (16% of Azerbaijan) and the expulsion of half a million of Azerbaijanis from those regions. Total numbers of refugees were estimated to some 300 000 Armenians fled to Armenia from Azerbaijan in 1988-92;¹⁹ 724,000 Azerbaijanis (and Kurds) fled from Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding seven districts.²⁰

¹⁶ De Waal, *op. cit* (2003), p.120.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p 212.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁹ Parliamentary Assembly Report ‘Situation of refugees and displaced persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia’ Doc. 9480, 4 June 2002, in <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc02/EDOC9480.htm>.

²⁰ International Crisis Group Europe Report No. 166: ‘Nagorno-Karabakh: Viewing the Conflict from the Ground’, 14 September 2005, in <http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/caucasus/166>.



'No war, no peace': Nagorniy Karabakh is a case of de facto secession and integration with Armenia. A situation often described by the term "frozen conflict" means that neither central state nor international community recognized them and there is no an agreed political settlement. Nagorniy Karabakh is a part of the Armenian currency area, customs union, common foreign passports; the former 'President of Nagorniy Karabakh' became the President of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh is in the official home budget of Armenia, Armenian army servants (soldiers?) have to serve at least half of their term in Nagorno-Karabakh. According to the unofficial estimations, there are about 10 000 solders out of 20 000 from Armenia serving in Nagorniy Karabakh army.²¹

The number of population of the region apparently decreased since 1988: although the local authorities indicate the figure 145 000 (i.e as pre-war), according to foreign aid workers, the number of population of Nagorniy Karabakh with those inhabiting the occupied territories does not exceed 60 000 people,²² of which about 1/3 are displaced Armenians from other regions of Azerbaijan. However, leaders of Nagorniy Karabakh implement various policies of encouraging population to move to the region.²³

2. The role of 'ancient ethnic hatred' discourse in ethnic conflict

2.1. Theoretical debate on the causality of ethnic conflict

While generally ethnic conflict appears to be a permanent form of struggle in the modern world, ethno-territorial conflicts expressed in irredentism and secessionism have been important causes of 'new' conflicts in the 1990s in the post Communist area. The phenomenon of ethnic conflict is often depicted as 'internal' since it usually involves a dispute within the borders of an existing State. However, recent experience has shown that perception of internal war, as a matter of domestic concern is no longer sustainable in the reality of post-cold-war time. Thus, the externalist approach with its neo-realist assumptions proves to be unaccommodating in its ignoring domestic variables in the search for a better understanding of the nature and causes of internal war. On the other hand, internalist approach has been criticized for neglecting external factors in the analysis of the 'domestic' issues.

Therefore, a study of causes of phenomena such as ethnic conflicts and its possibly violent expression requires a much more comprehensive analytical framework, one of which can transcend the State-centric focus of the realists on the one hand, and the society centered perspective of political theory on the other.

The volume of academic explanatory studies on ethnic conflict can be categorized roughly into two main approaches: primordial approach with its 'ancient hatreds' argument; structuralist with the socio-political arguments. In a more simplistic sense, it is a debate about whether the ethnically motivated violence is rational or irrational.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²² DeWaal, *op. cit.*, p. 285; Zardusht Alizadeh, speech at conference, 'Yujniy Kavkaz –nestabilniy region zamorojennix konfliktov' / 'South Caucasus- unstable region of the frozen conflicts', Berlin, November 26-27, pp. 91-96; International Crisis Group European report No. 164, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

²³ Petrosian, David (2005) 'Nagorno-Karabakh: One year more without a war', Yerevan, p. 74 quoted in ICG European report No. 164, *op. cit.* p. 6.



Vast scope of literature in international politics focuses on ethnic conflicts appealing to the argument of ‘ancient hatreds’ with the elements of irrationality. This approach takes its root in primordial explanation of ethnicity. For example, the central argument of Vanhanen’s study is that a significant part of the universality of ethnic conflicts can be explained by our developed predisposition to ethnic nepotism, which is regarded as an extended form of kin nepotism.²⁴ Rushton complemented the theories of kin selection and ethnic nepotism by his genetic similarity theory. This theory suggests, “genetically similar people tend to seek one another out and to provide mutually supportive environments such as marriage, friendship, and social groups. This may represent a biological factor underlying ethnocentrism and group selection”.²⁵ Van den Berghe noted that “the degree of cooperation between organisms can be expected to be a direct function of the proportion of the genes they share; conversely, the degree of conflict between them is an inverse function of the proportion of shared genes”²⁶

By being mono-causal, primordial approach risks ignoring the political and economic motivation of ethnic conflict²⁷ and the fact that the components of ethnic identity drawn from collective memory is also subject to reinvention (predominance of certain narratives over the others) especially when other sources of political legitimization fail.²⁸ Moreover, primordial/ancient hatred approach tends to focus on mass dimensions as uncontrollable social forces, and hereby underestimate the role of the political elite and their logic of perceived threats and opportunities under which elites make the choices in political crises.²⁹

Structuralist approach attempts to encompass the broad social, political, and economic variables that supposedly drive internal conflict. A structuralist point re-focuses attention on state processes in internal war: conflict is the result of state-making – both in terms of territorial consolidation and institution-building,- i.e. ‘weak states’ argument prevails.³⁰ Michael Brown limits ethnic conflict to “a dispute about important political, economic, social, cultural, or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities.”³¹ Stavenhagen adds that “ethnic conflicts generally involve a clash of interests or a struggle over rights: rights to land, education, the use of language, political representation, freedom of religion, the preservation of ethnic identity, autonomy, or self-determination, etc.”³² Another group of scholars in the structuralist approach emphasizes the rationality argument in explanation of internal wars. It suggests that certain structural conditions, which weaken state structures due

²⁴ Vanhanen, Tatu (1999): *Ethnic Conflicts Explained by Ethnic Nepotism. Research in Biopolitics*, Vol. 7, Stamford, CT, JAI Press.

²⁵ Rushton, J.P. (1995): *Race, Evolution, and Behavior*. New Brunswick, Transaction, p. 69.

²⁶ Van den Berghe, P.L. (1981/1987): *The Ethnic Phenomenon*. New York, Elsevier, p. 7.

²⁷ Keen, David (1998): ‘The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars’, *Adelphi Papers*, nº 320, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 10-11.

²⁸ Kaldor, Mary (1999): *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, p.7

²⁹ Job, Brian: ‘The Insecurity Dilemma: National, Regime, and State Securities in the Third World.’ In: Job, Brian. (ed.) (1992): *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security of Third World States*. Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner.

³⁰ Ayoob, Mohammed: ‘State Making, State Breaking, and State Failure,’ in Crocker, Chester; Hampson, Fen Olser and Aall, Pamela (eds.) (1996): *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, Washington, DC, United States Institute of Peace Press; Tilly, Charles: ‘Reflections on the History of European State-Making,’ in Tilly, Charles (ed.) (1975): *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press; Zartman, I. William: ‘Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse,’ in Zartman, I.W. (ed.) (1995): *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner.

³¹ Brown, Michael E.: ‘Causes and Implication of Ethnic Conflict’, in Brown, Michael E. (ed.) (1993): *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, p. 5.

³² Stavenhagen, Rodolfo (1991): *The Ethnic Question. Conflicts, Development, and Human Rights*, p. 77.



to the globalization process, inspire elites and groups to make rational decisions to pursue their aims by violent means. For example, many current internal wars involve aspects of maintenance of 'war economies' by certain entrepreneurs.³³ The role of political and ethnic entrepreneurs, who deliberately construct a "totalizing discourse" of violence, was examined by Jackson. His research confirms the importance of "discourse"—as historical memory, symbolic politics, and language—in constructing a culture of violence in which former neighbors are induced to commit atrocities against each other. Jackson argues that in weak states characterized by poverty, social division, and institutional incapacity, totalizing discourses can protract inter-communal violence.³⁴

The weakness of the 'weak state' concept is that it does not help us to answer why there are also ethnic conflicts in a strong states such as UK, Spain, and Turkey. It fails to explain a number of phenomena such as the nature of religion and ethnic conflicts. Why should one invented, structured version of the past be more persuasive than the other? In other words, the past the political elite in ethnic conflict appeal to is not any past but the past of the particular community with certain events and personages which could be interpreted in various ways.³⁵ Generally, the approach's over-concentration on the elite manipulation of 'the masse' underestimates dynamics of mass mobilization to answer why people are so readily responsive to nationalist slogans.³⁶

In the context of the primordialism-structuralism debate, it is reasonable to argue that while any of these explanations can make ethnic conflict highly probable, none of them by themselves could give a sufficient explanation of why ethnic rivalry rises in certain regions, but not in other. It is logical to assume that the 'raw material' for 'ancient-hatred' discourse exists almost everywhere, yet conflicts do not erupt in every region; and vice versa, even in places with a positive interaction background, conflicts breakout. Therefore, it seems that ethnicity itself is not a cause of violent conflict, but when ethnicity gets linked in a problematic way to the contextual factors it comes as one of the major fault lines along which societies fracture.³⁷ When shaped by the behavior and policies of local elites and regional powers, certain groups (mainly at the middle level represented by intelligentsia) re-frame and reinforce the 'ancient hatred' discourse.

In this context, a plausible hypothesis would be that historical conditions (background context) have created a situation in which ethno-territorial identity achieves greater political importance, and provides ground for mass mobilization to pursue various interests to maximize the privilege of its position especially in the period of weakening of central state. Inspired by modernity's 'rules of game' with the Nation-State as a main goal and actor of international arena, ethno-nationalist movements make claims on behalf of people. Yet the implication of these claims are very often of a 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 group's ethnic identity.³⁸ In such ethno-national mobilization, various methods - peaceful and violent - are employed depending on the

³³ Kaldor (1999), *op. cit.*

³⁴ Jackson, Richard: 'The Social Construction of Internal War' in Jackson, Richard (ed.) (2004): *(Re)Constructing Cultures of Violence and Peace*. Amsterdam/New York, NY.

³⁵ Ozkeremli, Umut (2000): *Theories of nationalism. A Critical Introduction*. Palgrave, p. 122.

³⁶ Smith, in Ozkeremli, *op. cit.*, p 40.

³⁷ Singh, Maheshwar: 'Ethnic Conflict and International Security: Theoretical Considerations'. *World Affairs* (Online Journal), Vol. 6, No. 4 (October -December 2002).

³⁸ Wolf, Stefan (2003): *Disputed Territories*. New York, Berghan Books, p. 7



resources available, overall regional context, and patronage. The role of both actors, elite and mass is prominent in this process: they are mutually triggered.

Thus, we come up with two-level framework for understanding ethnic conflict: - the level of background context (regional and domestic political context; opportunities available; lack of mediation channels); and – the level of the ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse based on the ontological issue and security dilemma. These two levels of factors through reinforcing each other produce a risk of violent conflict. The plausibility of this hypothesis and framework is demonstrated on the case of Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Some scholarly opinion states that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is actually an issue of territory rather than national identity. That is pushing the differences between ethnic groups into hatred and violence.³⁹ Other scholars emphasize economically motivated grounds or cultural suppression as the most probable sources of the ethnic conflict. However, the fact is that even a big influx of investment from Moscow in 1988-89 did not convince the Karabakh Armenians it was within their interests to stay within Soviet Azerbaijan.

In the following section we will try to present some key points articulated by the intelligentsia and widely referred to by the Armenians and Azerbaijanis in ‘proving’ their ownership of Nagorniy Karabakh in order to outline narratives of the discourse revived, re-framed and successfully appealed to during ethno-national mobilization. Understanding of those identity narratives is very important in the context of the urgency of transformation of the whole discourse from ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse to peace discourse.

2.2. ‘Ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse in case of Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict

1. Both the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides perceive possessing of Nagorniy Karabakh as a cornerstone of their national identity. Identity associated with the ownership of Karabakh by Azerbaijani side is linked to the feudal state khanate of Karabakh in XVIII-XIX cc and its most prominent rulers Panakh khan, Ibrahim khan and number of prominent poets and singers; for Armenian side the ownership is connected with the ‘Meliks’(princes) and multiple cultural memorials.

Antagonism between Armenia and Azerbaijan are traced back to street-level fighting which occurred in 1905, in Baku resulted in 10,000 deaths, mainly Azerbaijani⁴⁰ and in March 30 –April 1,1918, when Armenian nationalists of Dashnakzutun party supported Bolshevik communist revolt and intervened together with Russian Red Army in Baku, Shemakha, Guba, Lenkoran cities where allegedly more than 50 000 Azerbaijanis were killed: ‘As the Armenians found support among the Reds (who regarded the Tartars [Azerbaijanis] as a counter-revolutionary elements) the fighting soon became a massacre of the Tartar population.’⁴¹ These events were revived in collective memory and accentuated during the events of 1988 and the massacre of the Azerbaijanis population of Khojali city in

³⁹ Milanova, Nadia ‘The Territory-Identity Nexus in the Conflict over Nagorniy Karabakh: Implications for OSCE Peace Efforts,’ *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, No. 2 (2003).

⁴⁰ Swietochowski, Tadeuz (1995): *Russia and Azerbaijan: The borderland in transition*. New York, Columbia University Press, p. 39.

⁴¹ Smith, Michael: ‘The Russian Revolution as National Revolution: Tragic Deaths and Rituals of Remembrance in Muslim Azerbaijan (1907–1920)’, *Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 49 (2001).



Nagorno-Karabakh in February 1992 to strengthen feeling of consistent hatred of Armenians towards Azerbaijanis.

2. Throughout an independent state-building period of 1918-1920, the interethnic clashes continued between Azerbaijanis and Armenians over territories with mixed populations, including in the Karabakh region where the mountainous part were populated predominantly by Armenians and the plain by Azerbaijanis. Brutal inter-ethnic clashes resulted in a change in ethnic proportions. For example, while before 1918-20 clashes, population of Shusha was mix (Azerbaijanis and Armenians approximately 42% and 57% correspondingly in 1897/42), after the clashes the proportion changed in favor of Azerbaijanis. In the same way, in the ethnically mix Erivan with almost equal proportions of Armenians and Azerbaijanis ethnics (50%-50% by 1830), ethnic proportion changed in favor of Armenians in the beginning of XXc. Both ethnic groups perceive those facts as result of massacres and policy of ethnic cleansing, especially a brutal suppression of the Armenian rebellion in March 1920 in the mountains of Karabakh.

Finally, with the establishing communist rule, on July 5, 1921 The Caucasus Committee ('Kavburo'), the highest communist authority in Caucasus, voted to keep Karabakh within Azerbaijan border based on economical reasons. First, it was assumed that this less developed region will more benefit from the more industrialized Baku; second, it suited the Azerbaijanis inhabiting the plains of Karabakh to drive their sheep to the high pastures of mountainous Karabakh in summer, and down to the plains for the winter.⁴³ At the same time following advice of Stalin on granting Armenian minority an autonomy, on July 7, 1923, Central Executive Committee of the Azerbaijan SSR issued a decree «On establishment of the autonomous region of the Nagorniy Karabakh»⁴⁴, setting administrative borders that cut the mountainous part with predominately Armenian villages from the rest of the Karabakh with predominately Azerbaijani villages.⁴⁵

The decision of 1921 is perceived by Armenians as an unjust historical error committed by 'the illegal communist ruler Stalin'⁴⁶. Azerbaijan takes this decision as a legal action by the highest authority of that time, noting that 200 000 strong Azerbaijan community in Armenia has never gained the autonomy, and that the other mix populated region Zangezur, as well as a number of villages in the year 1922, 1929, and 1969 were incorporated to Armenia by Stalin,⁴⁷ who also in the period of 1948-1951 signed decrees on a forced "resettlement" of approximately 100,000 Azerbaijani nationals from Armenian SSR to Azerbaijan SSR.⁴⁸

⁴² *Perepis' 1897*, t. 61, 63, 69, 71, tab. XXIV, in Muradaliyeva (1991), p. 82, referenced in Eva-Maria Auch (ed.) (2004): *Muslim-Untertan-Bürger: Idenitätswandel in Gesellschaftlichen Transformationsprozesse der muslimischen Ostprovinzen Südkaukasiens (end 18-Anfang 19)*, pp. 592-604.

⁴³ DeWaal, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁴⁴ *Baku Worker* (Bakinsky rabochi) newspaper, July 9, 1923 / Id., in *History of Nagorniy Karabakh*. Available from <http://www.karabakh.org/?id=3051&item=5>.

⁴⁵ Altstadt, A. L.: 'O Patria Mia: National Conflict in Mountainous Karabakh,' in Duncan W.R. and Holman, G.P. (eds.) (1994): *Ethnic Nationalism and Regional Conflict: The Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*, Boulder, CO, Westview Press.

⁴⁶ Letter of Mikhayil Vardanian, Charge d'Affairs, a.i. Embassy of Armenia, *Embassy Magazine*, 22 February 2006, in http://www.embassymag.ca/html/index.php?display=story&full_path=/2006/february/22/let2.

⁴⁷ MFA of Azerbaijan Republic Bulletin: 'Concise Historical Information on Azerbaijan and the roots of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict', INF/192/96, 16 October, 1996.

⁴⁸ USSR Council of Ministers decrees, dated 23 December 1947 (No. 4083) and 10 March 1948 (No. 754), referenced in Baguirov, Adil: 'Top 5 Myths Circulating about the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict,' *Azerbaijan*



3. The latter issue is subject to controversial interpretation by Armenian and Azerbaijani sides. The Azerbaijani side's version refers to it as deportation a result of a policy of making Armenia a mono-ethnic country. In 1943 in Teheran conference discussing USSR-Iran relationships, Armenian Diaspora appealed to the Minister of foreign affairs of USSR, Molotov, V. to allow re-settlement of Iranian Armenians to USSR. After official approval of the request by Stalin, the chief of Armenia G. Arutyunov also got permission on re-settlement of Azerbaijanis living in Armenia to Azerbaijan to liberate place for Armenians from abroad. Following the resolution passed by the USSR Ministries Council and dated December 23, 1947, the strategic Azerbaijani settlements around Erevan and other regional centers of Armenia were liberated from Azerbaijanis in 1947-53.⁴⁹

According to Armenian version, the Azerbaijanis misinterpret Soviet resettlement of Azerbaijanis from Armenia in Soviet times: in fact, this was the best deal of Soviet government in the nationalization policy, which targeted the problem of demographical vacuum in the central plain zone of Azerbaijan. USSR Ministries Council passed resolution on 'Resettlement of kolkhoz-workers and other Azerbaijani population to Kura-Araks plains of Azerbaijani USSR' of December 23, 1947.⁵⁰

4. While the Azerbaijan population was growing sharply, the number of Armenians stayed roughly the same level and in Nagorniy Karabakh decreased from 90% to 70% for the 70 years of Soviet period. Therefore, the main concern of the Armenians was a fear of a demographic marginalization in the region, which can be prevented by resorting to self-determination right.⁵¹ However, the census of 1970-79 shows that in Armenia the ethnic Armenian population rose by 23%, while the Azerbaijanis minority in Armenia only by 8%. The same was observed in relation to Azerbaijan, where the title nation was increasing, and Armenian and Russian decreasing.⁵² These facts contributed into mutual fears.

Therefore, the decision of the local authority in 1988 about transference of NKAO to Armenia is perceived by Armenians as 'a constitutional right to self-determination'⁵³. According to the Armenians perception, Azerbaijan authorities operated a policy of socio-economical and cultural discrimination designated to expel Armenian people from Nagorniy Karabakh, as a result of which Armenian proportion decreased from 95% in 1921 to 75% in 1988; financial resources were put into the development of villages with predominant Azeri population; few books were published in Armenian language; there was no Armenian-language TV in the region, the history of Armenia was not taught in Armenian-language schools; appointments to professional positions were to be approved by Baku. In other words, complaints are about 'suppressing of Armenians demand to have Nagorniy Karabakh as distinctively Armenian region'.⁵⁴

At the background of these perceptions, the conclusion made by Armenians is that in case Nagorniy Karabakh was in Azerbaijan, an ethnic cleansing would have been effectively implemented. All this would be a part of Pan-Turkism designed to rebuild a vast Turkish

International magazine, No. 6.1 (Spring 1998); updated version is also available from BakuToday.Net <http://www.bakutoday.net/view.php?d=4400>.

⁴⁹ Mirkadirov, R. and Bayramova, J.: *Zerkalo*, 19 April 2006.

⁵⁰ Sarkisan, Manvel: "IA Regnum", quoted in Mirkadirov and Bayramova, *op. cit.*

⁵¹ Hunter (1993): *The Transcaucasia in Transition*. Washington DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies, p. 105.

⁵² DeWaal, *op. cit.*, p.133.

⁵³ Kurkchiyan, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

⁵⁴ DeWaal, *op. cit.*



state.⁵⁵ In addition, according to the perception of the Armenians Nagorniy-Karabakh ‘was never a part of independent Azerbaijan’.⁵⁶

Contrary to this view, Azerbaijanis perceive the events of 1988 as manipulation of the external intervention, namely by the Armenian Diaspora. Azerbaijan’s position is confirmed by international law in terms of its inviolability of territorial integrity via violence and invalidity of all resolutions, referendums held in Nagorniy Karabakh since the constitutions neither of USSR nor of independent Azerbaijan permit secession of the autonomous regions. The principle position of Azerbaijan is that that ethnic composition cannot be a sufficient motivation for the changing of its borders. In addition, according to the opinion of Azerbaijani side there is no objective reason to suspect the existence of a deliberate policy of discrimination against Armenians in Azerbaijan: the region contained Armenian schools and theaters. As for low number of books published in Armenian, the same was in respect of Azerbaijani language books, which were under-published in the context of the general Russification policy of Kremlin. As for immigration and change of ethnic proportions, it is a result of 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. Actually, a 215 000 Armenian community of Baku was the most advantageous, having jobs and housing in the prestigious quarters of the city; at the same time, a newly arrived Armenians from the province set up their neighborhoods in Baku. Financially there was urgency to support Azerbaijani villages since they were the poorest in the region while predominately Armenian populated cities in the region were much better-off. Generally, in Nagorniy Karabakh the fact is that the province was not substantially poorer than many other parts of the Soviet Union. It had indicators higher than average economic indicators for Azerbaijan: while the industrial output of the whole Azerbaijan rose by a factor of 3 (1970-86), for Nagorniy Karabakh the figure was 3.3; capital investments rose by factor of 3.1 (1970-86), while only by factor 2.5 in the whole Azerbaijan; the housing space available to each inhabitant of the NKAO was nearly 1/3 greater than average for Azerbaijan.⁵⁷ As for control of Baku on professional appointments, this is attributed to the general authoritarian governance system of USSR.

Thus, according to Azerbaijani opinion, the ‘Karabakh problem’ is made up by the Armenian chauvinists led by the Armenian fundamentalist party Dashnakzutun, who want to re-conquer the territories held by their ancestors a thousand years ago to restore a legendary ‘Greater Armenia from Sea to Sea’ of I century BC.⁵⁸

5. Pogroms of Armenians in February 1988 in Sumgait and in January 1990 in Baku are points of reference for different interpretations by the parties of the conflict. Armenians say the events were attempts to frighten them and serve evidence of general hostile intentions of Azerbaijanis towards Armenians. The events were put in context of the massacres of 1915 in Ottoman Empire. The Azerbaijani side presents these events in the context of the logic the violent ethnic conflict and points out to the background of the events as inspired by the influx of refugees who were violently displaced from Armenia and the subsequent pogroms as committed by lumpen proletariat motivated to grab the possessions of Armenians in those cities.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Kurkchian, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁵⁶ Letter of Mikhayil Vardanian, Charge d’Affairs, a.i., *op.cit*

⁵⁷ Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Republic Bulletin, *op cit*, p. 13.

⁵⁸ Kurkchian, *op. cit* p.153; also see interviews with IDPs in International Crisis Group Europe report No 166.

⁵⁹ DeWaal, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-44.



6. The massacre of 613 Azeri civilians in Khojaly city in Nagorniy Karabakh in February 26, 1992 by Armenian forces with the alleged support of Russian military basis in Armenia gave ground for Azerbaijan to accuse Armenia in genocide of Azerbaijani population.⁶⁰ Serge Sarkissian, Defense Minister of Armenia expressed quite clearly the message of the massacre: “Before Khojaly the Azerbaijanis thought that... the Armenians were people who could not raise their hands against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype].”⁶¹ On its part, the shelling of the main cities of Nagorniy Karabakh by the Azerbaijani forces caused civilian casualty, which is hard for Armenians to forgive.

7. The Armenians, of whom a minority live in homeland state and majority across the world, are linked in their shared identity by what sociologists called ‘a web of significance’, which is formed by the collective memory, ‘socially constructed’ selection from history that provides a shared self-image. In this self-image, it became the custom to express national identity in terms of conflict with the enemy.⁶² In this context, at its cornerstone is a deep hatred against anything Turkish, which is traced back to the sufferings, deportation and massacres of Armenians in 1915 under Ottoman Empire. In Turkish ideology, the event has a very different interpretation: deportation is perceived as necessary since the Armenians were the fifth column of the Great Powers in World War I, who were seeking to destroy the new Turkish state.⁶³ In addition, according to Turkish methodology of the calculation of victims based on the numbers of Armenian emigrants all over the world, pre-war and post-war population, the total number of killed does not exceed 300 000. In their turn, Turkey compares this number with two millions of Turks killed during the war.

Azerbaijanis are called by the Armenians ‘Turks’ due to their linguistic commonality with Turkey,⁶⁴ and therefore, as also sharing the responsibility of the massacre of Armenian people in the period of World War I, although Azerbaijan never was a part of the Ottoman Empire.

8. Military activities finished in 1994 with the military gain in favor of Armenia, who occupied seven regions beyond Nagorniy Karabakh. During the negotiations these regions were perceived as a ‘security belt’, and the return of the regions serves as bargaining chip for the independent status of Nagorniy Karabakh. At the same time, in Armenian domestic propaganda, those territories are referred to as ‘liberated territories’.⁶⁵ This fact gives ground to the Azerbaijani side to stress the expansionist nature of Armenian policy in the region.

Briefly, the key components of the revived, re-framed, and reinforced ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse in case of Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict evolves around few points of historical events: for Armenians there are a crash of ‘Great Armenia’ of I BC by Roman Empire; mass killing of Armenians in 1915 in Ottoman Empire; inter-ethnic clashes with Azerbaijanis in 1905 and 1918-20; plus perceptions on intention of cultural assimilation. In the same way, revived memories (mainly during the conflict escalation in the end of 1980s)

⁶⁰ For further information see Goltz, Thomas: ‘A Decade of Useless War Remembered,’ *Azerbaijan International Magazine*, No. 10.1 (Spring 2002), in http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai101_folder/101_articles/101_goltz_speech.html.

⁶¹ DeWaal, *op. cit.*, p.172.

⁶² Kurkchiyan, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁶³ DeWaal, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁶⁴ Baird, Anthony (1999): ‘An Atmosphere of Reconciliation: A theory of Resolving Ethnic Conflict Based on the Transcaucasian Conflicts,’ *The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, No. 2.4 (November 1999); DeWaal, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁶⁵ Quoted in ‘Aykanak Jamanak’ in Ayk Djanpoladian’s press review, 3-9 March 2006, in <http://www.regnum.ru/news/604431>.



on mass killing of Azerbaijanis in 1905-07; 1918 and 1920 in Azerbaijan by Armenian nationalists; feelings of resentment because of the perceived disloyal behavior of Armenians provided fruitful soil for nationalistic narratives in Azerbaijan in 1988. If the Karabakh Armenians felt culturally disadvantaged within Azerbaijan, the Karabakh Azerbaijanis felt disadvantaged within the Nagorniy Karabakh.⁶⁶ Noteworthy is that Azerbaijanis national identity was stimulated heavily by the confrontation with Armenians in the beginning of the XXth century, further reinforced in the mid of 1980s by the ‘Nagorniy Karabakh problem’.

All these narratives are instrumental in construction of ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse, which is in its turn functional for channeling ethnic conflict. A favorable situation for activation of ‘reserves of ancient hatred’ is created and politic of identity come to be a strategy of first choice for elites. This fact brings us to linking micro and macro levels of explanation – the interaction of the social/group and the individual. It suggests that certain groups of ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’ purposefully attempt to manipulate the thoughts and feelings of people to motivate violence. In the same way, for Azerbaijani side, the murder of two men in Nagorniy Karabakh, influx of groups of Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia in the end of 1987, were motivating reference points for those groups who call for revenge, which resulted finally on the pogroms in Sumgait and Baku.

There are several visible characteristics of ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse. The aim of the mobilization is to promote the designation of the Other as ‘enemy’, on the one hand, by the stereotyping, dehumanizing and deepening grievance feeling; and on the other hand, by forming beliefs about the justification of violence against the Other. For example, as Lyudmila Harutyunian, a well known Armenian sociologist noticed, when Armenians committed acts of violence against Azerbaijanis, many in Armenian refused to believe these had happened, ‘...because the Armenians historical memory does not have a basis for that.’⁶⁷ Thus, collective and historical memory is selective, based on accentuating certain narratives over the other. The pioneering role in this process belongs to the intelligentsia, which today ironically is falling into the category of Track II alternative actors in peace process.

Thus, collective norms drawn on collective memories and histories provide possibility to control social opinion and action.⁶⁸ Typically, the threat posed by the Other is expressed in extreme and zero-sum terms. For example, politicization of the historic events, such as massacres of 1915 in Ottoman Empire started by Robert Kocharian as response to the solidarism of Turkey with Azerbaijan in Nagorniy Karabakh conflict, produce contrary effect. As Armenian historian, G. Libaridian expressed it: ‘It seems that in the battle for and against recognition (events of 1915 as Genocide by the various parliaments –A.G.), both sides appear to be repeating the logic of the past in order to justify it. The tail ends of the two rejectionist positions- comprehensive rejection of the other seem to be feeding off each other.’⁶⁹

The processes at work in the creation of ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse involves discrediting of alternative moderate nationalist discourses and involves the mobilization of multiple discursive sites – politics, media, religion, education – in the pursuit of the conflict entrepreneurs’ designs.⁷⁰ Education system along with family socialization, are also potent sites for the discursive formation of ethnic identity along the political symbolism. At the same

⁶⁶ DeWaal, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁶⁸ Jackson, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ DeWaal, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁷⁰ Jackson, Richard: ‘The Social Construction of Internal War’, in Jackson, Richard (ed.) (2004): *(Re)Constructing Cultures of Violence and Peace*. Amsterdam/New York, NY.



time academics confirm the validity of political statements, the media compiles its reporting correspondingly and religious actors give religious approval to the conflict entrepreneurs' message and values

Despite the availability of various testimonies of the foreign travelers in the medieval ages, which demonstrate the constant Armenian and Azerbaijani presence in the Karabakh for centuries, ruled by both Muslim khans and Armenian meliks, Nagorniy Karabakh became the battleground between Armenian and Azerbaijani historians. Less interested in modern history, they are concentrated on the arguments beyond international law following pervasive logic of whoever settled the first, is the true possessor of the land. As a result, Karabakh has become a place with 'unpredictable past'.⁷¹

In February 1988, the Armenian writer Zori Balayan declared: "We can understand the terms Georgia, Russia, Armenia – but not Azerbaijan. By using such term we confirm the existence of such country".⁷² The logic of the statement is widely reflected in the public opinion in Armenia implies that Azerbaijanis as recent creature have fewer historical rights.

In Azerbaijan, the refusal of its Armenian neighbors to recognize legitimacy of its identity and historical rights as people, whose ethno-genesis contained native Caucasian, Turkish, Iranian, Mongolian components, provoked the process of re-inventing and re-framing its history with new accents with the aim of reinforcing national identity. Appealing to mythological motives, the authors of history textbooks tend to present the confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan as a perpetual attack of the enemy-nation against the nation-victim. The new Azerbaijan national history textbooks adapt the epic to the current political situation with the Armenians. Legendary events are presented as real and are used to reconstruct the perpetual "national" enemies (Armenians), friends (Turks), national values, and territory to justify the territorial space of Azerbaijan. Rumiantsev, the author of the study about the influence of epic on the construction of image of enemy, stresses the danger of underestimation of impact of ethno-centrist version of history on the formation of people self-perceptions and group identity, especially concerning neighboring regions.⁷³ Such comparatively new tendency in post-Soviet Azerbaijan is widely explained by Azerbaijanis themselves as a counter-reaction to the 'consistent Armenian tendency to falsify certain historical events to its favor by emphasizing only Armenian ethnic element in the region and marginalizing all the others'.

The 'contribution' of mass media as a major narrative breeding site into stereotypes formation is significant. The study of mass media in Azerbaijan and Armenia shows⁷⁴ that in both countries stable negative images of each other exist and proliferate. While, in Armenia press can allow itself to be neutral in the topics on Azerbaijan (if these are non-Nagorno-Karabakh issues), in Azerbaijan press negative images of Armenia is characterized for most of the publications on Armenians.⁷⁵ Both positive and negative features of national character of Armenians are presented in the articles but as mobilized against Azerbaijan. Generally,

⁷¹ DeWaal, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

⁷² Zori Balayan's interview to *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, Boston, 20 February 1988, quoted in DeWaal, *op. cit.*, p.150.

⁷³ Rumiantsev, Sergei: 'Heroic Epic Poetry and a Construction of the Image of the Historical Enemy,' *Ab Imperio*, No. 2 (2005).

⁷⁴ Research Center 'Region,' referenced in Bagdasariyan Laura: 'Diskurs uregulirovaniya Karabakhslogo 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.



Nagorno-Karabakh conflict took more coverage in Azerbaijan mass media than in Armenian. In addition, here, a new for Azerbaijanis complex of victim who must be ready for revenge is nurtured.

On its turn, Armenian press concentrates more on negative features of Turks. In this case, a stable negative image of Turk is mentioned recently in categorical form only in order to form the image of Azerbaijanis. Another interesting aspect is that in the period of confrontation between the government and opposition in Armenia, traditionally, the problem of Nagorniy Karabakh is rarely mentioned.⁷⁶ This fact may speak for unanimous opinion in Armenia on the resolution of Nagorniy Karabakh problem. The military victory over Nagorniy Karabakh made powerful impression on the Armenian self-image, and almost took away its self-victimization as a traditional component of national identity: 'Armenians were no longer losers, from now on, they were winners' although appeal to 'victimization' remains as strong as ever in Diaspora communities.⁷⁷

Returning to the question about the causality of violent ethnic conflict, as concluded in the second chapter an 'ancient ethnic hatred' discourse accompanies structural factors. In practice, that means that the 'reserves' of 'ancient ethnic hatred' are always there for leaders of the movement to appeal to and frame grievances and provide 'rationale' for collective action. The volume of Thomas DeWaal containing the interviews with the initiators of the separatist movement provides insights into the logic of the process of mass mobilization using political opportunity structures, which became available due to liberalization and perestroika and the general weakening of the repressive apparatus of the state.

The peculiarity of the Karabakh Armenians' in the 1980s was that initiators of this movement were Karabakh Armenians living outside of the region: the extensive communities all over the USSR allowed them to set up an informal network to coordinate activities. The center of this network was Igor Muradian, who thought that Armenians must take advantage of the historical moment provided by Gorbachev's reforms.⁷⁸ Being a splendid political organizer and hard-line nationalist and economist working in State Planning Committee, Muradian using his good contacts in Communist party, started working on gaining maximum broad political support from the top leaders of the communist party in Armenia, Moscow based Armenian intelligentsia, WWII veterans. In parallel, he launched contacts with the members of the prohibited ultra-radical nationalist party 'Dashnakzutun' via their foreign and underground Erevan branches, and starting from the summer 1986, the first delivery of light weapon was received. Most of the weaponry was directed to Nagorno-Karabakh, where all organizations, local Comsomolists (young communist members) had their own guns,⁷⁹ leaflets were regularly distributed into the postboxes of households to synchronize the actions. Influential representatives of the Armenian Diaspora were actively lobbying the issue abroad.⁸⁰ There is a remarkable observation of Tom DeWaal during his interview with Muradian:

Muradian's account of how he planned and organized the modern Nagorno-Karabakh movement suggests a formidably organized campaign that drew tacit support from senior Party figures and succeeded in mobilizing large numbers of people. But, his tale reveals the terrifying blind spot in his thinking –and that of many Armenians. In telling his story,

⁷⁶ Bagdasariyan, *op. cit.*

⁷⁷ Kurkchiyan, *op. cit.*, p.16.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.18.



Muradioan made absolutely no reference to the position of Azerbaijan or what would be reaction of the forty thousands Azerbaijanis of Karabakh.⁸¹

As DeWaal reasonably notes, lack of interest to the opinion of the neighbors was founded in the rigid vertical system of Soviet system, where the Union Republics initiated dialogue not directly with each other but through Moscow.⁸² In this context, liberalization and glasnost created opportunity for articulating the conflict but under the situation of lack of channels of mediation, conflict management institutions, it easily flew into violence.

Further, looking for the answer for the personal roots of the conflict, DeWaal talked to Robert Kocharian, current President of Armenia, ex-leader of the Karabakh Armenian national movement 'Krunck' from the very beginning, who also participated in the capture of Shusha. 'Of course I do have Azerbaijani friends...I have no complains about them...But usually when the ethnic conflict begins, it always retreats into the background.' He talked as if he played no role in starting the conflict, as if he had come out of blue... The language was passive'.⁸³

A terrible state of 'psychoses' among the survivors right after the earthquake in December 1989 in Armenia which took away 25 000 lives are remembered by the Moscow journalist Viktor Loshak: 'What did these people speak about to me? Not about death ... or forecast of new earthquake. They spoke about the Azerbaijanis sending them medicine and they believed of course that the Azerbaijanis wanted to poison them. It was already on the level of an absolute psychosis.'⁸⁴

The case of Nagorniy Karabakh demonstrates that the level of favorable political opportunities (in our case, liberalization, glasnost and weakening of state structures) does not automatically generate violent conflict but requires also apprehension of political opportunities by both leaders and mass, which depends on national identity components. Structural contexts such as lack of power-sharing, dialogue, bargaining methods, and regional economic cooperation in South Caucasus, stimulated the conflict eruption. Thus, we can see that while the conflict was elite-initiated, it quickly swept through the whole society, and the masses proved to be very responsive to nationalistic claims. In other words, the process of violent conflict generation, grievances construction is a two-direction process: mass - elite and elite-mass.

Again, controlling of discursive sites and constructing a new social reality by conflict entrepreneurs does not automatically lead to violent conflict. It is a mutual 'feedback process' where both levels: structural level representing domestic and external context, opportunities; and 'ancient ethnic hatred' discourse – 'reinforce each other in an escalatory way'.⁸⁵ In such situation, it seems 'to allow conflict to break out, the government needed only to do nothing'.⁸⁶ In other words, bad governance is another component in our search of causality for violent ethnic conflict. To sum up with the words of peace activist Prof. Vesua Pesic from Belgrade University '...Ethnic conflicts is caused by the fear of future, lived through the past.

⁸¹ Kurkchian, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸³ DeWaal, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁸⁵ Jackson, Richard: 'The Social Construction of Internal War: Towards a Framework of Understanding', Paper Presented at 'Cultures of Violence', 3rd Global Conference: Diversity within Unity, 12-16 August, 2002, Prague, Czech Republic; see also Kaufman, Stuart (2001): *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, London, Cornell University Press.

⁸⁶ DeWaal (2003), *op. cit.*, p. 144.



This 'fear of future' needs to be understood by conflict management experts both at micro and macro level.⁸⁷

The first two sections focused on the discursive factor of ethnic conflict over Nagorniy Karabakh following the two-level-framework for explaining the violent ethnic conflict, concluded that neither structural context nor 'ancient ethnic hatred' discourse exclusively automatically produces violence. The third and fourth sections will concentrate on the implications of discursive aspect of ethnic conflict for conflict management.

3. Implications for conflict management

There are two main approaches undertaken in the conflict management of Nagorno-Karabakh dispute: power-mediation represented by the mediation activities of the international organizations (mainly OSCE) and states (such as USA, Russia, Iran, Turkey) representing official Track1 level with the focus on the political settlement and signing the peace accords; the second, less sound represented approach involves the Track 2 (medium level leaders, academicians, NGOs) and Track 3 (grassroots leaders and organizations) with the focus on the transformation issues.

Following the acknowledged rationale that the role of the society is prominent in the implementation of any agreement, the author argues that usurpation of peace process by the top level and the discouraging political environment for cross-communal communication deepens further 'ancient ethnic hatred' discourse and intensifies formation of narratives unfriendly to reconciliation.

By analyzing the operational context of local and international NGOs and their main type of activities, the author provides a picture of civil society and its role in the peace process.

3.1. Is ethnic conflict a rational or irrational phenomenon? What are the implications of the answer for conflict management?

With the aim to formulate implications for conflict management, we can put forth a simple question: after all, is ethnic conflict a rational or irrational phenomenon?

If conflict is a result of exclusively elite-outbidding, the best method to manage ethnic conflict would be to create initiatives for the elite to establish moderate polices. In this case power-sharing would be a major solution. However, as multiple examples show it is not always the sustainable solution. The examples of Spain and Canada show that a federation can exacerbate ethno nationalist conflict, instead of inhibiting it. In other words, a federation provides leaders with control over resources, which can be mobilized for ethnonationalist ends, i.e. with institutional support⁸⁸. Moreover, federalism may be better suited to resolve material differences between the units than cultural ones.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Prof. Vesua Pesic, quoted in Singh, *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ Hechter, M.: 'Containing Ethnonationalist Violence,' in Wimmer, A.; Goldstone, R.J.; Horowitz; Joras, U.; Schetter, C. (2004) *Facing Ethnic Conflicts. Towards a New Realism*, Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 283-300.

⁸⁹ Watts, referenced in Hechter, *op.cit.*



While some conclusions imply that local leaders must be offered meaningful careers in the central government, and that less self-governance in a multinational state increase the possibility of ethno nationalist conflict, Gurr is among those who claim that this trend has described ethno-national conflict during the 1990s.⁹⁰ However, the example of Yugoslavia with its proportional power distribution among the country leaders shows the contrary: that ethnic violence was appealed to when the external financial resources were cut after the end of Cold War.⁹¹

The evidence suggests that the nature of political decentralisation, governing institutions especially the party system may indeed quiet if not reduce ethno-nationalist conflict. Possible reconciliation of these controversial opinions suggested by Michael Hechter is that although decentralisation may lead to a rise in protest events, at the same time it may erode the demand for sovereignty.⁹²

At the same time, Vayrynen concludes 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 (search for solution for civil wars and humanitarian disasters-A.G.)’⁹³

There are reasons to believe that inter- and intra-group interactions are linked to the larger strategic calculus with rational and irrational components: as 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.⁹⁴ Such assumption may tempt to lead to conclusion that if so, there is no implication for institutional solution: neither systemic cooptation of local leaders nor decentralization is able to provide a full resolution of ethnic conflict. 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 them constructively.⁹⁵

The author of the article takes more optimistic, but nevertheless, pragmatic assumption that conflict management is able to manage conflict to prevent it from flow into violence by reframing conflicts issues from ‘ancient ethnic hatred’ discourse into the peace discourse by involving various channels and sites of this discourse. The major role in this process belongs to the middle level leaders or Track II in stratification pyramid of Lederach.⁹⁶ With the aim of examining potentiality, problems and prospects of conflict transformation at this level, below, after a brief overview of the top-level conflict management efforts, we look at the operational context of NGOs which represent in our case a middle level track.

⁹⁰ Gurr, Ted (1993): *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflict*, Washington, DC, US Institute of Peace Press.

⁹¹ Hechter, *op. cit.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Vayrynen, R.: ‘Violence, sovereignty and conflict resolution,’ pp.111-129, in Maley, W.; Sampford, C. and Thakur, R. (eds): *From civil strife to civil society: civil and military responsibilities in disrupted states*. United Nations University Press, p. 128.

⁹⁴ Hechter, *op. cit.*

⁹⁵ Kaplan, referenced in Hechter, *op. cit.*

⁹⁶ Lederach (1997): *Building Peace: Sustainable reconstruction in divided societies*, Washington D.C., US Institute of Peace Press.



3.2. Brief Overview of the Top-level Conflict Management on Nagorniy Karabakh case

Urgency of the escalating situation in 1990s dictated to pass some of the functions of peacekeeping and peacemaking to regional organization, such as NATO, EU, OSCE, CIS and other. This approach is called a track sharing. In the same way, while the United Nations Security Council has condemned the Armenian military occupation of Azerbaijan's territory and demanded 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 CSCE (reformed to OSCE since 1994). Since 1994 Minsk Group of CSCE is an official international peacemaking institution on Nagorniy-Karabakh conflict settlement with Russia, France and USA as the co-chairs of this organization. Generally their activity is perceived ambiguously by the sides of the conflicts: Azerbaijan sees France and Russia as the openly biased for Armenia; and USA is taken suspiciously by Armenia due to USA oil interests in Azerbaijan.

In all three cases of conflicts in South Caucasus, Russia was the only mediator which was able to broker cease-fire agreements. At the same time, Russian political experts think that despite 'Russia systematically provided weaponry to Armenia and permanently fuel the conflict between the contesting parties..., since Russia is becoming petrol-oil power,...lately the turn towards official Baku is observable...today, Russia is not interested in fueling the conflict.'⁹⁷

USA views resolving of regional conflicts as important in promoting its own goals in the region, but it has not devoted so far significant efforts to resolving them. Through the various periods, US policy in the region has been uncoordinated and often contradictory.

Iran is active in economical support of Armenia during the war and in post-war period, although trying at the same time to mediate negotiation in 1993. At the same time, Iran possessing about 20-22 million Azerbaijani population at its north borders, associates existing of independent republic of Azerbaijan as a potential threat to its own territorial integrity.

Turkey due to its cultural and historical ties is consistent in supporting Azerbaijan in the conflict by closing the borders and freezing diplomatic relations with Armenia.

Within the period of 1994 -2001, four proposals of resolution were discussed with the focus on Nagorniy Karabakh's status and security, as well as refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the problem of the once Azerbaijani-dominated Nagorniy Karabakh city of Shusha.⁹⁸ Since the focus of the article is other than discussion of the best outcome of the negotiation for the parties, we will not analyze in-depth the plausibility of the proposals made by the OSCE Minsk groups. Just to mention there was package, step-by step, common state concepts reflected almost all possible variants of Nagorniy Karabakh's future status. None of the proposals was admitted by all three parties involved. After a few years of interruption in negotiation since 2001, the Prague Process was designed in summer 2005 to reinvigorate dialogue between the sides, focusing on advancing negotiations towards a settlement. The top-level meetings in France in February 2006 did not bring any result raising some speculation that Russia encouraged Armenian President Robert Kocharyan to harden his position in peace negotiations, devastating a long-expected framework agreement. On its part,

⁹⁷ Radzikhovski, Leonid: "Seychas Rossiya ne zainteresovanna v razjiganii karabakhsokogo konflikta" (Today Russia is not interested in fueling Karabakh conflict), *PanARMENIAN.Net*, in <http://www.day.az/news/armenia/45783.html>.

⁹⁸ Volker, Jacoby 'The role of the OSCE: an assessment of international mediation efforts,' in Broers, *op. cit.*



Azerbaijan officials increased militaristic phraseology to make pressure on Armenia and the international community.

The last negotiation round demonstrated that despite of 15 years of peace process, the positions of the parties are the same in following maximalist attitudes. Azerbaijan not compromising on its territorial integrity is ready to discuss any form of a 'a widest autonomy' for Nagorniy Karabakh 'based on international experience', but is unwilling to institutionalize it, and this only intensifies the Armenians' distrust.⁹⁹ Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanyan in October 2004 stated that there could be no compromise on the independence status of Nagorniy Karabakh, since "every inch of Armenia is priceless, including Karabakh"¹⁰⁰ and that 'Armenia has already offered compromise on its part'¹⁰¹ implying readiness to consider the return of the 5 occupied regions out of 7 adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan in exchange to status of Nagorniy Karabakh. On its part, Azerbaijan side refuses to talk to the leaders of the Armenian community of Nagorniy Karabakh unless 'they recognize themselves citizen of Azerbaijan',¹⁰² withdraw military forces from all occupied territories beyond Nagorniy Karabakh and recognize the rights of the expelled Azerbaijani community of Nagorniy Karabakh.

In other words, the sides pursue not an optimal, but maximalist resolution of the conflict appealing to the debatable principles in international law such as self-determination and territorial integrity rather than on the assumptions of integrative resolution accommodating the interests of all conflicting sides. Various irresponsible statements of the both sides such as that made by Robert Kocharian that events of 1988-92 'indicate impossibility of Armenians to live in Azerbaijan ... we are talking about some sort of ethnic incompatibility',¹⁰³ continue feeding the 'ancient hatred discourse' and get internalized by the ordinary people who repeat after the President 'genetically we are not made to live with Azeris.'¹⁰⁴

3.3. Focusing on middle level leaders as pioneer of discourse transformation

Because of its very nature, exclusive state power-based mediation seems not to be too promising for ethnic conflict. At the same time, although mediation of organizations in the track-sharing is failing, in its nature it has (or can have) a much wider specter of instruments adequate to the nature of ethnic conflict. However, so far, a toolbox continues focusing almost exclusively on political settlement rather than on any type of transformation of discourse and generally, attitudes.

Any successful mediation must not only broker a political settlement between political elites, but must support, and where possible initiate the process of reconciliation at the societal level. While power-based mediation simply does not have mechanism for that,

⁹⁹ Ambassador Vladimir Kazimirov 'We Must Remove Artificial Obstacles to Settling the Karabakh Situation', *Conflict Studies Research Centre* (July 2002), in <http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/Caucasus/P39%20/P39.pt10>.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Jim Nichol 'Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests' *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, 2005.

¹⁰¹ Interview of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, in <http://www.day.az/news/armenia/43875.html>.

¹⁰² 31 March 2006 [14:04], in *Day.Az*, in <http://www.day.az/news/politics/45318.html>.

¹⁰³ Artur Terian 'Kocharian Says Armenians, Azeris 'Ethnically Incompatible,' <http://www.armenialiberty.org/armeniareport/report/en/2003/01/4B1EBB47-69C0-40AF-83DB-24E810DA88E4.ASP>.

¹⁰⁴ Crisis Group interview, Shusha, *Crisis Group Europe Report*, No. 166 (May 2005), *op. cit.*, p. 26.



institutional mediation may be the most successful at it. Moreover, the focus of the track sharing approach should be mid-level leadership specifically as the basis of societal-level reconciliation, simply because they represent the powerful discursive sites.

The whole case study of the article shows that in Nagorniy Karabakh case, desire of the conflict parties to achieve political settlement and conflict resolution without positive conflict transformation led to the paradoxical situation - 'frozen peace process', where the positions of the parties hardly come closer and stuck in 'self-determination vs. territorial integrity' tone of the negotiations. Seemingly, within this period it was not apprehended that sustainable conflict settlement and resolution is not possible without necessary transformation simply because as post Cold War reality shows conflict settlement and conflict transformation are more effective when they are applied complementarily rather than exclusively. That is especially in the case of Nagorniy Karabakh, which shows how the territorial conflict is closely linked to the identity issue framed by 'ancient-hatred' discourse. In such a case, conflict transformation and conflict settlement (with its power-mediation and negotiations) appear to be closely connected: in order to achieve sustainable political settlement, the whole 'ancient ethnic hatred' discourse must be transformed.

In practice, this theoretical assumption would mean that to transform ethno-nationalism, 'resolution must satisfy the need for recognition of collective identities without threatening the other group.'¹⁰⁵ In other words, it is important that the both communities of Nagorniy Karabakh, Azerbaijani and Armenian would start accept each other as equal and legitimacy of grievances of each other¹⁰⁶, which is important for attitudes transformation and further forgiveness. For this purposes the positive discourses must be there by including all influential discursive institutions: academic, schools, families, religious institutions, the media.

Despite the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan encouraged contacts of civil societies in his statement of June 2005, lately statement of other 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 Nagorniy Karabakh after our lands occupied by the Armenian will be liberated, communication restored and peacekeeping forced deployed, the question of Azerbaijani return to Nagorniy Karabakh, question of co-existence of Azerbaijani and Armenian communities, issue of security discussed. At that stage, the trips of our journalists to Nagorniy Karabakh is not only possible but also necessary.¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless, space for positive transformation is still there. As polls show Azerbaijani grievances are associated with the land issues¹⁰⁸ (i.e. fact of occupation of their lands by the Armenians which prevent them from returning there), and not with 'ancient hatred' factor. According to the results of the polls, Azerbaijani IDPs agree to live next to Armenians again despite the personal risks and the experienced horrors of the war.¹⁰⁹ Azerbaijani IDPs are

¹⁰⁵ Ropers (1995): *Peaceful Intervention: structure, process, and strategies for the constructive regulation of ethno political conflicts*, Berghof Report No.1, Berlin, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, p. 25.

¹⁰⁶ Rabie, Mohamed (1994): *Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity*, Westport, CT, Praeger, p. 134.

¹⁰⁷ (Translated by the author from Russian) Interview of Tair Tagizadeh, Head of Press and Information Policy Department of MFA of Azerbaijan, *Day.Az*, 7 April 2006, in <http://www.day.az/news/politics/45901.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Azerbaijani Sociological Association, referenced in *International Crisis Group European report*, No. 164, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25, 27.



often the first to recall how they lived happily with Armenian neighbors in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, despite of war and deprivations. This is explained by the fact that they generally perceive the war as having been imposed by political elites from Yerevan and the Armenian Diaspora. The study on the textbooks on history in Azerbaijan showed that only one interviewer noted that history helps to differentiate the world into 'Us' and 'the Other', the enemies and the friends. In other words, the image of the enemy in the textbooks has not become dominating in the memories of the pupils about the history course and emotionally charged in their discussion on the role of history.¹¹⁰ These factors are very important for a reconciliation environment.

At the same time, about a third of the Armenians living in Nagorniy Karabakh today are from other parts of Azerbaijan, also retain some good memories of shared life in a multiethnic country, and some admit they are ready to re-establish relations with Azerbaijanis.

This 'controversy' was repeatedly observed by the foreign journalists, conflict resolution scholars working in the region.¹¹¹ As widely observed by foreign journalists, international NGOs visitors, population in Nagorniy Karabakh suffer from shortage of information, generally about the world and specifically about the peace process, life and people opinion in the rest of Azerbaijan. The frontline separating Nagorniy Karabakh and occupied territories from the rest of Azerbaijan is considered to be the most fortified in the world. This isolation in its turn provides a fruitful ground for nurturing 'ancient ethnic hatred' discourse and brain washing of young generations who lack positive experience of peaceful co-existence.

Because national identity is based on selective narratives of a national history, those can be the 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 narratives of hatred and violence or to peace. The Azerbaijanis need to become more familiar with the Armenian grievances, culture, and history and take steps to show the Armenians more understanding. In the same way, for reconciliation process it would be favorable more openness of Armenian society towards globalization, more secular worldview and transformation of emotional national narratives from 'enemy – ally,' 'us-they' scheme towards more inclusive. In this way transformation of narratives will help acknowledge the identity of their neighbors and historical rights, even if they national consolidation finished just few centuries ago.

In this context, while middle-level leaders (i.e. academicians, writers, and journalists) were always in the vanguard of the ancient hatred discourse formation in the end of 1980s, they are in position today also to be in the vanguard of a positive transformation of the narratives towards reconciliation. And it is the middle level today who is voicing a more temperate line. After the political framework for peacebuilding activities is achieved, society as a whole must learn to accept reconciliation narratives and give them priority over all others. This is the task of the middle level leaders. This is due to various advantages that Track II has in comparison to Track I (top-level leaders). While at the top level there is no evidence of emancipatory activities aimed at changing relations between parties, the middle level represents alternative approach of changing attitudes. The assumption behind this is that after reaching political agreement it is people who must implement it. Track II has access to both grassroots level and top level, the feature, which is important potentiality for the peace

¹¹⁰ Ilham Abbasov (2005): *Uchebniki Istorii Epokhi Nezavisimosti. Azerbaijan v Mire* [The Textbooks of Independence period. *Azerbaijan in the World*], Vol. 3, No. 1 (2006), in <http://www.realazer.com/mag/m3/m28.htm>.

¹¹¹ See DeWaal, *op. cit.*; and *Crisis Group Europe report*, No. 166, *op. cit.*



process according to Lederach. In this context, the purpose of mediators should be a supporting more flexible leaders in the network, which has capacity to disseminate further reconciliation narratives.

Briefly, it must be recognized that any conflict management must involve all levels of the society (or discourse sites), each has its own role in the issues to deal with. Namely, while level of national leaders (track 1) has to deal with the political issues; tracks 2 (academician level, NGOs) and 3 (grassroots organisations, municipalities) have mission of transforming attitudes towards 'broadening' identity of the people, which in its turn also facilitate a political settlement process.

Various approaches to reconciliation are about individuals i.e. by its nature, reconciliation is more a 'bottom up' process and external forces can hardly impose it. But third parties have a room for support reconciliation by focusing on peace, rather than on justice; by acknowledging and empowering NGOs and middle level as having significant impact on peacebuilding; by helping the sides see the benefit they have in accepting the other. International actors should promote and support reconciliation friendly projects, which would encourage people to know each other better through discourse.

At the same time, it is wrong to assume that the Track 1 level is not the important group at negotiating table. It is, at least in the semi-authoritarian reality of South Caucasus. The semi-authoritarian regimes in those countries usurped the peace process and do not encourage Track II initiatives due to continuum understating of conflict management stages (i.e. peacebuilding and bilateral contacts are possible only after the peace agreement is signed). While the current political establishments are perhaps more reluctant than ever to loosen their monopoly in peace process and generally in conflict management, the need for movement in the peace process is creating openings for new forms of civic contact across the conflict parts to target 'ancient-hatred' discourse.

In such a situation, apparently, the role of international community in both conflict management and peacebuilding is becoming significant, first through supporting reconciliation and transformation oriented projects. Below we will review the operational context and conflict management oriented types of activities undertaken by local and international NGOs in order to pinpoint problems and entry points for local and external actors.

3.4. Operational context and types of activities of NGOs

The scope of peacebuilding initiatives by local and international NGOs include bilateral and multilateral contacts, humanitarian assistance to IDPs and refugees, trainings, information exchange, prisoners of wars and hostages exchange.¹¹² On the grassroots level, primarily humanitarian and development projects do not have peacebuilding or conflict transformation component.

Local and international NGOs, academicians, journalists fall into the category of middle-level leaders. Their operational context is characterized by three main aspects widely

¹¹² 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, pp. 445-467.



acknowledged as not favourable for a development of track 2 and 3 involvement: semi-authoritarian political environment, deficit of resources, and patriarchal mentality of the societies.

In the early 1990s, development of civil society in the whole Caucasus was influenced by ethnic agenda, states regarded NGOs with suspicion, and NGOs were highly politicized acting as opponents of the establishment. Many local NGOs were originally created with the human rights and democratization agenda, as for example HI-92 in Azerbaijan, which were founded as reaction to Khojali massacre, and is engaged in protection of human rights. In comparison with Armenia and Georgia in Azerbaijan NGO proliferation is narrower and does not attract so many peace or conflict transformation activities. In fact, the actors are limited to Helsinki Assambly-92, and the Institute of Peace and Democracy in Baku, and few local NGOs working with IDPs. On its part, Western aid targeted mainly development area is marginalizing attention to conflict management.

Since all NGOs operate in the legal framework provided by the state, they are also subject to various restrictions and pressures that the state is able to resort to. 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, one group has access to the political elite of their own countries and are frequently instrumentalized while the other group - run the major risk of becoming marginalised from mainstream political process. At the same time, while oppositional and Human rights NGOs are open for cross-communal meetings, the pro-governmental NGOs express their solidarity with the official position of the state. The recent statement of the Chairmen of the National Forum of NGOs in Azerbaijan that Azerbaijan NGOs will not collaborate with Armenian NGOs unless they recognize territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is illustrative.

The fact that most of the local NGOs are also quite small, with a limited scope of operations lead to the problems of low public awareness of activities of NGOs and overall cynical attitude of the establishment towards the very notion of civil society, as well as to the local NGOs sustained within foreign grants.

Another problem with the functioning of NGOs is in the conflicting zone: international humanitarian NGOs in Nagorno-Karabakh experience constraints on their presence since their operational mandate depends on the approval of Azerbaijan. As a result, only the International Committee of the Red Cross and Medicines Sans Frontiers established their missions in Nagorniy Karabakh. High political nature of humanitarian action in the region, especially in Nagorno-Karabakh, affects significantly humanitarian responses. Although potentially, humanitarian action can contribute to the processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation as well as reconstruction,¹¹³ there has been little in the way of cooperation and support for local NGOs involved in peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives. On the contrary, some Diaspora organizations and individuals from the US, Europe, and the Middle East have contributed to humanitarian aid and development initiatives in Armenia and Nagorniy Karabakh are not inclined for conflict transformation activities, and have taken more uncompromising positions.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ MacFarlane, S. Neil and Minear, Larry (1997): *Humanitarian Action and Politics: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh*, Occasional Paper, No. 25 The Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, p. ix

¹¹⁴ Avaz, Hasanov and Ishkanian, Armine: 'Bridging divides: civil society peacebuilding initiatives,' in Broers, *op. cit.*



Generally, conflict on Nagorno-Karabakh has attracted much less conflict studies than conflicts in Georgia, for example, and is characterized by the insignificant level of conflict management oriented efforts by both international and local NGOs. These can be explained by few factors.

Firstly, non-peace oriented situation is formed not so much because of the lack of the will of the both communities to be involved in the process, but by the unfavorable environment created by the semi-authoritarian leaders who monopolized the conflict management and peace process. Under such conditions, on the one hand, representatives of grassroots and middle level do not risk confronting with the official position and do not voluntarily initiate activities. In other words, in Azerbaijan extensive authoritarian control did not leave maneuver space for NGOs towards conflict management: to survive they concentrated on the struggle on internal democracy problems and generally, their space for independent initiative is more limited.

Secondly, reluctance to be involved in the bilateral dialogue can be explained by the Armenian cemented position in regards to the conflict fueled by the Armenian Diaspora who financed fighting of 1990s¹¹⁵. The considerable military victory contributed into the healing of the victim complex in national identity of Armenians, especially that of Diaspora. The occupied territory is called 'liberated territories', and the problem of the Nagorno-Karabakh is believed to be solved. Hard-line position of the leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians can be also explained by the fact that they are not totally blockaded but obtained a territorial link to Armenia.¹¹⁶

Thirdly, while it is obvious that international component is vital for any bi- or multilateral contact, international NGOs also accept the 'rules of game' established by the local officials, and are not inclined to spoil their relationship with the local governments. Thus, situation where the only issue that has interest for the both sides is exchange of war prisoners and missing persons, is frustrating for international NGOs workers. Therefore, they are also reluctant of launching any major visual initiative toward conflict transformation.¹¹⁷

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 shortage of information, and some of them are directly affected by the conflict. As a result, they are more inclined to criticize internal policies of their own governments rather than settlement of conflicts. In other words, local NGOs are at the same time the subject and object of reconciliation.

In the context of the non-favorable environment, the lack of political framework of peacebuilding (and therefore a strategy for reconciliation) is very damaging to the whole process and its actors. The circle of people getting access to contacts with the opposite community is growing very slow, and is limited to couple of hundred of NGOs members. Sustainability of joint projects frequently is failing because of 'lack of real communication not to say friendship.'¹¹⁸ Something important to consider is that some NGOs are not satisfied by mere repetitions of multiple projects and establishment of only personal relationship and

¹¹⁵ Matveeva, *op. cit.* p. 460.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 461; also see ICG Europe report No 166, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

¹¹⁷ Matveeva, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*



stress importance of continuation of work if sustainability of those actions and peacebuilding result to be expected.¹¹⁹

Undoubtedly, the growth of NGOs in the South Caucasus occurred due to the presence of international organisations. Similarly, the emergence of NGOs promoting conflict resolution is also closely related to the activities of international organisations in the region. One of the implications of this fact can be that international organisations are in position to emphasize further affirmative policy towards encouraging conflict and reconciliation oriented activities of NGOs. Although this may create a clientalistic orientation of the local NGOs, the impact 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.

The main type of activities of local NGOs implemented with the initiative and/or support of international organizations are public awareness raising, 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 held in the format of bilateral, multilateral and broader pan-Caucasus initiatives. Below, some examples of activities held by local and international NGOs with conflict transformation component are briefly described with the purpose of understanding types of activities currently undertaken and pinpoint gaps.

Bilateral contacts occurred mainly with the initiatives of the international NGOs such as Helsinki Initiatives 92; Swiss based Caucasus Media Support Project, LINKS, and International Alerts as well as various German foundations.

The project in community mobilization, Transcaucasia Dialogue movement of the HCA, has been supporting a network of trust building civic initiatives through its HCA branches in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorniy Karabakh since 1992. In November 2000 the HCA General Assembly facilitated by International Alert (IA) was held in Baku bringing together 600 participants including 40 Armenians including those from Nagorniy Karabakh

In Azerbaijan, IDPs are characterized by 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 defense organizations, which united in regional effort. Such are Transcaucasia Women's Dialogue, regional coalition Women for Peace. In Azerbaijan, IDPs are characterized by low level of organization and political mobilization. A major hardship is by IDP women who took over the responsibility of daily survival of the households. UNIFEM conducts various trainings for women on various topics, especially for women refugees and IDPs. In those trainings, women were encouraged to organize associations and the Network of Women IDPs and they organized Coordination council with the most active women. However, a general solidarity of the IDP women remains fragile.¹²⁰

In addition, academic centers mainly in USA such as the Caspian Studies Programme in Berkley act as centers of discussion.¹²¹ Much of international contribution was in the form of trainings on conflict resolution. In 1995, the Centre for international development and conflict

¹¹⁹ Luisa Pogolian, in <http://www.southcaucasus.com/index.php?page=tribune&id=7>.

¹²⁰ Azerbaijan Gender Information Centre. *Newsletter* No. 3 (2004), in http://www.gender-az.org/shablon_ru.shtml?doc/ru/pacebuild/1325/1.

¹²¹ Matveeva, *Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia*, *op. cit.*



management at the university Maryland provided four month programme for the participants from the hot areas of South Caucasus. In May 2001, a workshop ‘Stability and peace in Caucasus: the case of Nagorno-Karabakh’ was organized by the Development and Peace Foundation, although with international participants outnumbered the local which made only 1/3 of the whole participants.¹²²

Many initiatives are held in the context of pan-Caucasian dialogue. Among them ongoing civilian initiative ‘South Caucasus Integration: Alternative Start’¹²³ supported by Caritas France involves NGO such as Caucasian Center of Peacebuilding Initiatives(Armenia), and independent individuals from South Caucasus states and unrecognized 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 human rights NGOs of the region. The results of the work and reports are submitted to the public discussion.

Another important field of activity of international NGOs is the development of mass media and contacts between journalists. Caucasus Media Support Project organized 12 conference and trainings for 200 participants within 1997-2000. In May 2001 Minsk Group organized a trip of seven journalists for the first time crossed a line between Azerbaijanis and Armenians of Nagorniy Karabakh. At the same time, The Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) published the periodical War Report 1995-98 in attempt to incorporate local voices into an English-language publication. National Press clubs in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh act as forum for debate in the Project ‘At a Crossroads: No Peace, No War’ aimed at providing an accurate picture of the stereotypes both propagandized and widely held among Armenian and Azerbaijan societies, was carried out in 2004-2005 by the Region Research Centre of the Investigative Journalists NGO (Armenia) in partnership with the Institute of Peace and Democracy Azerbaijan.

The Eurasia Foundation’s South Caucasus Cooperation Program (SCCP) is supporting 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 Georgia. The partners develops 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 neighboring 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. The partnership groups received funding from SCCP include NGOs, universities, press clubs, Helsinki Civil Assembly, information centers from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, who collaborate in the projects of Caucasus Journalism Higher Education Initiative, Monitoring and Analysis of Media Coverage of Regional Issues, Establishing a South Caucasus Network for Analytical Journalists.¹²⁴

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

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 458.

¹²³ South Caucasian Integration: Alternative Start, in <http://www.southcaucasus.com>.

¹²⁴ Eurasia Foundation’s South Caucasus Cooperation Program, in http://www.efscpp.org/pdf/SCCP%20Media%20competition%20announcement_FINAL.pdf.



and State-building (LINKS) represents a UK government-funded initiative to bring a more comprehensive approach. With the concentration on work on civil society (IA), work on media (CR), work on consolidation of 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. The Consortium Initiative is unique in that it is the only significant engagement that links stakeholders at multiple levels from Nagorniy Karabakh itself with counterparts in Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is also aimed at including displaced communities with a role in the resolution of the conflict.

Another example is an attempt to involve track II level into the conflict resolution process via Dortmund Conference which launched activities in mid 1960-ies and co-chaired for the elaboration of common positions of the United States and Russia on the settlement of regional conflict. Beginning from 2001, representatives of the society of Azerbaijan, Nagorniy Karabakh and Armenia (NGO activists, resigned high officials, businessmen, academicians, political parties' representatives) hold nine meetings with Russian and American members of the working group. Finally in May 2006, the working group produced a document, matrix of framework agreement suggesting step-by step approach consisting of two phases. The formula can be put as "Peace and intermediate status in exchange for 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.

To sum up, overall situation is characterized by the marginalization of conflict management oriented projects. The up to date point can be described as a 'frozen peace process'- characterized by unchangeable issue structure, and ineffective power-mediation and track-sharing approach since fifteen years at the background of deficit of the favorable transformations of international context, structure, issue, actor and persons, speaking in the terms of Miall Hugh, who suggest these five types of transformation as key for sustainable conflict resolution.¹²⁵

The reality is that societies do not widely participate in the peace process, and do not represent a factor of influence on the development of the events on conflict resolution. The societies are absorbing propaganda, which is imposing the conviction that resolution is impossible. Under such situation, any political agreement signed will be shocking for the societies because of their un-preparedness. While political agreement depends on the top-level leaders, the society plays crucial role in its implementation, but for the time being, societies are hardly aware of the economical and political loss as a result of the conflict.

4. Concluding remarks on entry points of discourse transformation

Based on the types of activities of international and local NGOs overviewed in the third chapter, in this chapter, the author examines lessons learned and outlines the entry points for future peacebuilding initiatives, especially identity and discourse transformation oriented ones.

¹²⁵ Miall, H.: 'Transforming Ethnic Conflicts: Theories and Practices,' in *Facing Ethnic Conflicts, op. cit.*, pp. 160-173.



4.1. Lessons learned from II Track involvement and entry points for conflict transformation

In this section, by interpreting the experience and lessons learned of local NGOs, the attempt to outline entry points for peacebuilding initiatives is undertaken. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, the main type of activities of local NGOs implemented under the condition of assistance and support of international organizations are public awareness raising, 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 held in the format of bilateral, multilateral and broader pan-Caucasus initiatives. Below the main problem areas and entry points for discourse transformation are outlined for further elaborations.

Quality of the Research: Main actors and founders of NGOs are those with academic background, which determines the type of their activities. However, most of the conflict resolution related research is limited to historical descriptions or conducting polls and public opinion surveys, which face a problem of not being published if they do not suit the political needs of the ruling regimes. In other words, there is still a shortage of more policy-oriented studies, and full-fledged dialogues among the scholars from the both sides.

Politics and NGOs: The fact is that members of NGOs are frequently those affected by the conflict, which makes them at the same time the subject and the object of the reconciliation. This controversial position is also represented in the case that even NGO representatives who are enthusiastic in co-operation with their counterparts from the opposite side, do not give up their political positions, such as the commitment to independence or territorial integrity.¹²⁶ At the same time, there has been very little in the way of alliances between NGOs and political parties to promote civic peacebuilding initiatives, underlying the gap between “political society” and civil society,¹²⁷ putting the civil society apart from the political process in the country.

Non-effective advocacy: Due to the small size of the separatist societies, the leading actors in NGOs / civil society are usually a part of the political and intellectual elite and have more easy access to those in power than those in much larger states. At the same time, the level of tolerance of unorthodox views is limited, as implied by the emigration of some representatives of the political elite from separatist constituencies.

The implication for international actors could be that they can facilitate informal communication and access to decision makers; by raising public awareness about the activity of reconciliation oriented individuals and support in-community groups with unorthodox visions. In the context that in the case of separatist regimes, advocacy is even more complicated, strategies have to be planned carefully to ensure complementarities on different levels.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Matveeva, A.: ‘The conflict Prevention Capacities of Local NGOs in the Caucasus,’ in Lund, Michael; Matveeva, Anna and Tishkov, Valery (2001): *Conflict Prevention in Caucasus*, London, East West Institute, pp. 92-112.

¹²⁷ Broers, Laurence (ed.) (2005): *The limits of leadership: Elites and societies in the Nagorny Karabakh peace process*. Conciliation Resources, ACCORD

¹²⁸ Matveeva, in *Conflict Prevention in Caucasus*, *op. cit.* p. 103.



Low publicity and public awareness: Shortage of publicity about the NGOs activists' bilateral or multilateral meetings is observable. That is because sometimes NGO activists are challenged by dilemma to publicize its participation and increase impact from those meetings or under the risk of being accused in betray upon their return, keep it secret. The same pattern is followed by the international organizations who are not inclined to publicize their conflict management related activities referring to 'sensitivity' of the issue.

In societies living in isolation, the lack of communication and generally limited access to the mass media and high technology, especially young people lack general information not only about the peace process, but also about wider world, as various humanitarian aid workers observe. In this respect, in NK mass media is underdeveloped: public television is poorly equipped and limited to few hours of broadcasting a day in the near zones,¹²⁹ while small group of better-off people can watch satellite TV (Armenian, Russian, Azerbaijani, Turkish and Iranian). Print media is more developed there, though mainly concentrated in the main city -Stepanakert, having both pro-governmental and few non-governmental newspapers.

Controlled Public Debate and Media: While generally throughout the region pluralism of public debate on conflict resolution issue is considered to be a sensitive issue, in the separatist constituencies, public debate is mostly difficult due to a perceived need to create an image of internal strength and high consolidation, on the one hand, and a need to control narratives of propaganda to have power over transformational processes.

The media successfully contributes into hampering the reconciliation process and creating negative enemy image competing for the image of a 'most patriotic' journal and journalist. Although exchange of information between Azerbaijani and Armenian news agencies was maintained even when political relations were at their worst, the vehicle of reproduction of hatred discourse is there having its immediate impact. In this context, third parties must understand the importance of transformation discourse and concentrate on discourse producing actors, such as media, education, which has the widest impact for reconciliation in pre-settlement and post-settlement period. Production of documentaries reflecting the grievances of the both communities will serve the purpose of awareness raise. In the same way soap operas, fiction films reflecting personal sides of the individuals create emotional involvement with the process of reconciliation and discourse transformation.

Impact of isolation on youth: Such a situation is especially hard for young people, who missed the experience and memory of times of peaceful co-existence between the communities and nowadays are subject to severe brainwashing and one-sided propaganda. One proposal is to create young people's peace centers in different areas of the Caucasus, although it is often difficult for young people in the separatist states to overcome political pressure.¹³⁰

Bilateral and multilateral projects: While it remains uncertain whether bilateral contacts between NGOs play a significant role in conflict prevention, integrationist (multilateral) projects in the Caucasus are externally generated and are designed to promote co-operation between Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, sometimes incorporating also people from unrecognized constituencies. However, various complications connected with technical and political questions make dialogues unworkable. Establishment of personal relations makes

¹²⁹ *Crisis Group European Report No 166, op.cit. p. 11.*

¹³⁰ Matveeva, 'The conflict Prevention Capacities of Local NGOs in the Caucasus', *op. cit.*



sense only if the meetings and projects have continuation and reproduce impact beyond the individuals directly involved into the meetings.

Creation of any forum with pan-Caucasus orientation must ensure access from all Caucasian peace building oriented organizations. At the same time, it is important not to lose sight of the initiative's overall purpose and agenda, which determines feasible conflict prevention measures achievable in multilateral forum. In this context, joint projects seem to work best when undertaken with the facilitation of external actors who can co-ordinate the implementation process and solve any possible problems and misunderstandings.

On the other hand, any attempt of the international NGOs to organize conflict resolution oriented event/and or discussion involving only one side of the conflict provokes outrage from the other side and implies that to reach its goal initiatives of the international organizations must involve both sides of the conflict if possible.

4.2. Conclusion

A proposition of the explanatory framework for ethnic conflict with the emphasis on 'ancient-ethnic' discourse presented in the article is that it may have important implications for conflict prevention and reconciliation as the goals of peacebuilding to preventing recurrence of violence.

So far, most of the early warning and conflict prevention systems have focused exclusively on the analysis of structural indicators. The thesis presented in the article suggests that a careful analysis of 'ancient-hatred' discourse in politics and every day life is also indispensable in tailoring a response policy by various peacebuilding NGOs, and those representing a so called 'track -sharing approach' on behalf of international organizations. For example, OSCE, which apparently was unable to turn into the decision making organ on the conflict due to its limitation in implementation mechanism, has, nevertheless, the potential to intervene in appropriate ways to target discourse transformation, if international conflict management is to be effective in inter-ethnic wars.

The reality is that many of the conflict transformation activities are presently considered marginal to the main diplomatic activities of mediation, negotiation in Nagorniy Karabakh conflict, due to the unwillingness of the establishments to share control of the peace process with wider society and the assumption that any conflict transformation/peacebuilding activities must be realized only after the signing of the agreement.

There are also few domestic factors not favourable for a development of civil society involvement into the peace process and conflict transformation. Those factors are the semi-authoritarian political environment; deficit of resources of local NGOs; patriarchal mentality of the societies; not much involvement of international NGOs in peace process efforts. As a result of these not facilitating factors, NGOs reach only a small segment of the population while the larger public remains unaware of their work, which lead to a limited level of participation in the peace process and a very low sense of ownership of it.¹³¹ While this situation with the involvement of NGOs is characteristic for the whole Caucasus, in the case of Nagorniy Karabakh it is the most obvious. Depending on whether international community

¹³¹ Stewart, Susan (2004): 'The Role of International and Local NGOs in the Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict,' *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 3, No. 3-4 (March/June 2004), pp. 3-22.



will support active mainstreaming of conflict transformation into the peace process or not, there are two options of development:

- future strengthening of authoritarian tendencies and same ‘ancient-hatred’ discourse would destroy the modest signs of conflict management by track 2 and track 3 and discourage them from continuing working in the field;
- development of civil society gives some impulses to peace process and sustainable conflict settlement.