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A CONFLICT WHICH HAS NOT BEEN PREVENTED: THE CASE OF NAGORNY KARABAKH

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I. Introduction

The method: lessons learnt

The new stage of escalation of the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh started in 1988. It escalated earlier than other conflicts between central governments of soon-to-become former Soviet republics and ethnic groups. It is still unresolved, though the cease-fire holds from 1994 onward. It shares some of its traits with other such conflicts, as those in Georgia, Chechnya, or Moldova, in that all these conflicts resulted in wars between central governments and ethnic groups, often supported to various degrees by another state or states because of ethnic kinship or political and strategic considerations. Also, these conflicts resulted in declaration of a non-recognized state, and their resolutions have proved to be extremely difficult due to incompatibility of the interests of sides.

This paper seeks to establish and analyze main escalatory factors of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. The essence of the lessons learnt approach is analysis of past events in order to gain valuable insights about their major characteristics, with the aim of using this knowledge in future, in other roughly similar situations. By analyzing the factors which led to the escalation of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, a link will be sought with more broadly defined categories, which are not case-specific, so that they can be useful either for explaining or preventing from escalation another conflict, current or future, or for preventing the Nagorny Karabakh conflict from a new circle of escalation. But this is only half of the aim. The other half is to identify not only what has or has not been done, but also what could or should have been done in order to prevent the conflict from escalation. It will be impossible, within the limits of this paper, to address these questions in their entire capacity, however, several remarks in that respect will be made. The methodology of conflict prevention relied upon in this paper, accordingly, can be roughly defined as a methodology of analyzing the escalation of conflict, identifying the escalatory factors, and identifying the means for neutralizing these factors, towards which ambitious aim only the first approximation will be made in this paper.

dissipative events

In light of the adopted method and of the above-defined aim, this essay is not a kind of intrinsic case study with the main aim to describe the chain of events, but rather an applied case study. There are several intrinsic case studies on the variety of aspects of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict¹. Despite discussing several historical events of the near and not so near past, this study does not present the history of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. In this paper, from the stream of events those events are selected which can be called the „dissipative“ events, i.e., those turning points which presented at least two possibilities for further developments rather than led inevitably to one or another development. Every dissipative event is a historical occurrence, but it represents and also symbolizes a very significant escalatory factor. Dissipative events have different duration in time. *Sumgait* was a matter of three days, while the First World War, which actually created the conflict, continued several years. The further past in history, the less it is likely that a single event can be pinpointed as the dissipative event. But the dissipative events of the past ten years can be identified more or less exactly.

Dissipative events become escalatory factors because of impact they have on perceptions and attitudes of the opposite side in an interactive situation of developing conflict. A great lot of events happened in this conflict not merely because some other events caused them but also because the causal events were interpreted this or that way. Where appropriate, these pitfalls of interpretation, perception and attitude are analyzed too.

The introduction of the concept of dissipative events is not a self-aim. A dissipative event is what should become the most important indicator of developing conflict for early warning and deployment of conflict prevention mechanisms. Taken seriously in all its possible consequences, a dissipative event could become a window of opportunity to end the conflict. Left without attention or misinterpreted, it becomes a powerful, if not determinant, factor of conflict escalation.

In a simpler world, it would be sufficient to notice the first case of interethnic violence, or even its likelihood, to introduce a well-established mechanism of conflict prevention to preclude the escalation of conflict. Unfortunately, it is not always possible. The problem is not so much lack of various instruments and mechanisms for conflict prevention, as lack of necessary strength of

¹ Levon Chorbajian, Patrick Donabedian and Claude Mutafian: *The Caucasian knot : the history and politics of Nagorno-Karabagh*. London : Atlantic Highlands, NJ : Zed Books, 1995.
Walker, Christopher J., ed.: *Armenia and Karabagh: The struggle for unity* (London: Minority rights publications, 1991).

political will to deploy them. It is usually considered too early to intervene until the conflict has escalated, and too late when it has already deteriorated in war. It is this discrepancy between a clear warning provided by a dissipative event and the lack of mechanisms developed sufficiently to react on such an event (if not to preclude it at all) rather than on its consequence that characterizes the challenge of conflict prevention.

Also, while the first case of interethnic violence is quite easy to discern, some events, as the legacy of the World War I, are too protracted in time or too distant in past. The impact of such events on the perceptions and attitudes of the sides in the conflict is usually either overestimated (and the conflict is interpreted as caused by intractable primordial hatred) or underestimated. It seems important to assess, in the first approximation at least, what is the relevance of history to the conflict, even if its impact cannot be always measured in rational terms.

This is important because the world we have inherited with the collapse of the USSR is governed by the rules made after the World War II. These rules are defended or modified by powerful global actors, first of all Western powers. A very complicated historical process was necessary for the contemporary landscape of international relations to take shape. It was, perhaps superficially expected that the newly independent states (NIS) of Eurasia would straightforwardly accept the rules of the game offered to them by the international community led by Western powers. This did not happen because of several reasons. First, because the new actors bring with themselves their perspectives. Second, because they have not been participating in shaping these rules after the World War II. Also, because the levers of influencing them were insufficient or lacking at the beginning of their new history, in 1989-1992. These levers are being constructed over time. Their perspectives become better known, and the gap of misunderstanding disappears. One of these misunderstandings was that the legacy of World War I is far distant in history and cannot shape today's politics. This is not so in the Caucasus. The legacy of the World War I, complicated by the rules imposed after the World War II, is among the factors that fuel the conflicts in this area.

Accordingly, this essay devotes substantial discussion to the relevance of history for Nagorny Karabakh conflict. It then proceeds to identify the main dissipative events of the latest stage of conflict. Events of the pre-war stage are given particular attention because of several reasons. First, they are of the most direct concern from conflict prevention perspective: it was at the pre-war stage of the conflict that conflict prevention should have been but was not applied, or was insufficiently applied, and the conflict deteriorated in war. Second, these events caused the

war. Third, new developments give new spin and significance to the history of the early stage of conflict, and it is important to reevaluate the early stage from the perspective of the present.

Some key problems of the peace process are then discussed, and in the conclusion, a comprehensive conflict prevention strategy based on lessons learnt from this conflict is sketched out. Tables at the end of the essay summarize dissipative events and their escalatory dialectics.

II. Dissipative events and escalatory factors

World war I as a source of unresolved conflict; does history repeat itself?

In Transcaucasus, the „end of history“ has not yet occurred. The interpretations of history of the region are fiercely contested by the Armenians, on one hand, and Azeris and Turks, on the other. Historians argue whether or not particular events took place and what was their meaning, because their findings have political implications for today. While the historians argue, political and military leaders try to rearrange the legacy of history, to resolve the questions unresolved at the beginning of the 20th century, which were frozen during the Soviet years and reappeared after the collapse of the USSR. For many nations in Eurasia, history re-started rather than ended with the collapse of the USSR, because only now achieved they an opportunity to become historical actors and to make history by their political actions--an opportunity they were deprived of during the Soviet years. If for the Western world, World War II became the crucial turning point which gave shape to contemporary international relations, for the Eurasian world, World War I is still such a point, since Eurasia was frozen before, during and after the World War II in the Soviet system. There has not been a moral and political full stop after the World War I for Eurasia which could be compared to the Nuremberg trials. That is why distant history is so alive today and so important in determining relations between new emerging international actors in Eurasia, and particularly in the Caucasus.

In addition, history repeats itself in the region. Not only references to history are used to justify this or that political action; not only history is an area of political contest: also, the same pattern of escalation characteristic for the years of the World War I worked again from 1988 onward.

For many centuries, the Armenian ethnos has been in latent conflict with Turkic ethnic groups. In the 19th century, this conflict became exacerbated by the influence of the ideas of

Enlightenment in the Caucasus and Ottoman Empire (the *Tansimat* era), and by the development of nationalist ideologies among the nation living in the Ottoman Empire and in the Caucasus. These ideologies were greatly influenced by the ideas of self-determination and by the concept *one nation-one state*. In the situation of co-habitation of different ethno-religious groups in the same territory, one nation could be created only if the opposite ethno-religious group would adopt the nationality and religion of the dominant group.

This situation prompted national reawakening and creation of national political parties by all the ethnoses in the region. Turks were the dominant ethnos of the Ottoman Empire. They naturally regarded the creation of Armenian national parties, especially Armenian Revolutionary Federation (a party with an explicit aim to achieve independent statehood for Armenia) as a challenge to their rule. At the same time, the ideologies of pan-Turanism and pan-Turkism started to take shape among the intelligentsia of Turkic ethnicities within the Russian Empire and from there they were transferred to the Ottoman Empire. These ideologies were examples of the development of nationalist ideologies to the extreme: they declared all Turkic ethnic groups one nation, and all the territories where these ethnic groups lived as a potential united Turkic state. Turan.

The result was that starting from the end of the 19th century, the nationalizing Ottoman Empire gradually changed its policies toward its ethnic minorities. If beforehand, the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were regarded as a loyal *millet* (national group) with limited communal self-rule, and were quite isolated from politics and government at the level of the Empire, toward the end of the 19th century their communities became increasingly under attack by the government as well as by the nationalizing Turkish and Kurdish populations of the Ottoman Empire. Minorities in their turn became involved in national-liberation struggle, fearing extermination or assimilation, and demanding self-rule up to state independence. This resulted in several massacres at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The policies corresponding to the ideology of nationalism culminated during the First World War, when the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were subjected to genocide and deportation, under the pretext of their collaboration with the Russian troops with whom the Ottoman Empire was in war. While collaboration, indeed, took place (if it can justify a genocide), the most logical reason for the genocide, however, was the desire of Turkish rulers to preclude any future possibility for the Armenians to claim secession on

a part of the territories of the Ottoman Empire². From that time on, the Armenians struggle for the recognition of the genocide by the Turkish government, which would have far-reaching consequences for the political landscape of the region.

The genocide had extremely detrimental consequences for the Armenian ethnos. At the time when other nations (Greeks, Bulgarians, nations of Yugoslavia, etc.) emerged from the Ottoman Empire and embarked upon modernization and development in close relationship with Western Europe, the Armenians lost a third of their population, all their historical places of residence in the territory of the Ottoman Empire, and another third of them was dispersed throughout the world as refugees. Genetic, demographic, territorial, and psychological consequences of genocide are felt even today. If there were no genocide, the history of the Armenian nation would turn in a completely different direction, and one can safely assume that the Karabakh conflict either would not occur, or would occur in a very different form.

In the parallel setting of the Caucasus, under the Russian Tsarist rule, the same processes of nationalization of popular ideologies, and the reaction of Tsarist administration to these processes, resulted in several clashes between the Armenians and the Caucasian Tartars (who were going to be later called Azeris). The Tsarist administration provoked clashes in order to divert the local populations' participation in political processes, as for instance in the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907. The clashes resulted in massacres of the Armenians in Baku and Shusha (the then-capital of Nagorny Karabakh); however, the Armenians also replied by the instances of violence and mass murder.

Due to its geographical location, being a mountainous region isolated from the rest of the Caucasus and Iran by the strips of desert, Nagorny Karabakh has been a de facto semi-independent

² Cf. Lewis V. Thomas & Richard N. Fryc: *The United States and Turkey and Iran*, 1951. p. 60:

„Recounting this grim story simply as a series of "massacres" and "deportations" would, however, tell only part of the tale. What the Ottomans had to deal with was unquestionably a slow-burning rebellion. The Armenians' suffering do not cancel out the facts that many of them were potential rebels against the state and that final disaster did not overtake them until when, during the first World War and with a Russian army deep within Turkey, many Moslem Turks finally became convinced that their Armenian "fellow-citizens" were serving as an active fifth column delivering them over to their greatest and most merciless foe. That conviction was doubtless greatly exaggerated, but it had enough basis in fact that one can only dismiss it if one is willing to argue that the Turks should not have moved to save themselves.

By 1918, with the definitive excision of the total Armenian Christian population from Anatolia and the Straits Area, except for a small and wholly insignificant enclave in Istanbul city, the hitherto largely peaceful processes of Turkification and Moslemization had been advanced in one great surge by the use of force. How else can one assess the final blame except to say that this was a tragic consequence of the impact of western European nationalism upon Anatolia? Had Turkification and Moslemization not been accelerated there by the use of force, there certainly would not today exist a Turkish Republic, a Republic owing its strength and stability in no small measure to the homogeneity of its population, a state which is now a valued associate of the United States".

region throughout the centuries, with nominal subjection to Iran until 1805, when it became a part of the Russian Empire. While it is one of the key regions for the Armenian national consciousness in terms of its ancient historical significance and monuments, the amount of Armenians drastically increased in that region after it became a part of Russia, due to the organized re-patriation of the Armenians from Persia to the regions newly acquired by Russia. Toward the end of the First World War, Armenians comprised the overwhelming majority of the population of the region. During the Russian rule Shusha (in Armenian transcription, Shushi) became one of the Armenian cultural centers of the Caucasus, along with Tiflis (the old name of Tbilisi) and Baku.

The Revolution of 1917, Bolshevik coup and establishment of the Communist government in Russia along with the collapse of the Russian Empire created a power vacuum in the Transcaucasus. The national parties of three dominant ethnic groups, Azeris, Armenians, and Georgians, had an opportunity to come to power. Neither of these parties had any experience in governance; their respective nations had lost state independence long time ago, or never had one. The World War was still continuing. The first reaction in the Transcaucasus was to create a federative state, the Transcaucasian Confederation, with the government in Tiflis (Tbilisi). Soon, however, the incompatibility of national interests of the parties became apparent, and the Confederation collapsed. Thus, in spring 1918, three Transcaucasian independent states were declared with unclear borders and populations. The appearance of these states was not a result of thorough preparation and planning. Rather, it was an accident of history. While many leaders of the national parties used the rhetoric of national independence, neither of them envisioned how could that independence come in reality, and what would their tasks be when independence would be achieved. This situation strikingly resembles the one after the collapse of the USSR, which resulted in the same way in the appearance of three weak states in the Transcaucasus³.

One of the crucial points of contention between Azerbaijan's and Armenia's governments in 1918 was the issue of disputed territories. These included three: Nakhichevan, a region to the South East from Yerevan, Zangezur to the South, and Mountainous Karabakh to the South West. All three territories had mixed populations, but all three were predominantly populated by the Armenians. Armenia was the weakest member of the triad of states. The nation had suffered and was still suffering from the genocide which was being carried out in the collapsing Ottoman

³ While the Baltic Republics and Russia had been preparing for future independence, most other republics became independent overnight, after the Belovejskaya accord in December 1991, without a master plan for independent statehood. In Armenia as in most other NIS, there was a lot of political rhetoric about independence, but no responsible preparatory work had been done to face its coming.

Empire by the government of Young Turks. The territory was under the attack of the Turkish army. These factors gave Azerbaijan an opportunity to claim the disputed territories. As ethnic brethren, the Azeris were strongly supported by the advancing Turkish army. Today, despite Turkey's being a NATO member and the fact that the Soviet-Turkish border had not been violated throughout the history of the USSR, including the years of the Second World War, the Armenians still fear military intervention from Turkey directed to helping resolve the Karabakh problem in favor of Azerbaijan.

Being surrounded by the Turkish troops from three sides, the Armenian government was forced to sign a treaty in Batum. The Treaty reduced the territory of Armenia to 12,000 square miles, with about 300,000 refugees out of approximately 700,000 total population, 100,000 of whom were Azeris. According to that Treaty, Zangezur and Mountainous Karabakh were not going to be parts of Armenia. However, the unexpected happened: mostly due to the efforts of the Armenian popular generals, leaders of militia groups, these two regions were prevented from being incorporated in Azerbaijan. The actions of these generals were decisive and cruel: they cleansed several local Turkic-Azeri villages from their population. These events were one of the instances in the period at the end of 19th and beginning of the 20th century where the Armenians had an adequate opportunity to reply by mid-scale violence (massacres and ethnic cleansing) to the Turkic ethnic groups. While the scales of the genocide experienced by Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and of these events are incomparable, these events, and the entire circle of 'Armenian-Tartar war' at the beginning of the 20th century, are referred to often as a proof that the Armenians have not always been the victims, but sometimes also the offenders, especially in the setting of Caucasus, where their religion coincided with the religion of the ruling power (Russia) as opposed to the Ottoman Empire. The Armenians refer to these events to boost their national glory, and the Azeris and Turks refer to them in order to dismantle the „myth“ of the Armenian suffering by pointing out the examples to the opposite. The Karabakh Armenians still believe that only their military force can help them preserve independence from Azerbaijan and secure favorable peace accord. They quote the history of Karabakh and Zangezur during the years of the First World War and the role of popular guerrilla in preserving Zangezur as a part of Armenia as examples.

It seems this pattern repeats itself throughout the history of the Armenian-Turkic conflict: Armenian ethnic groups formulate their political demands vis-à-vis the Turkish and / or Azeri central authorities in the respective states; Turks and / or Azeris usually then start the violent stage

of conflict by an action of politicized violence against the civilians (pogrom or massacre); Armenians, if they are capable to, reply by reciprocal violence. A state or states (then Russia, now Armenia and Russia), having their own interests, intervene in the conflict overtly or covertly, partly or with full support on the side of the Armenian ethnic group. Sides mimic the actions of each other, adopt the strategies of each other, and frequently exchange positions vis-à-vis each other.

The analogy with the beginning of the century is not perfect, of course, but valid in several respects. There is no world war going on today, not even a regional conflict which would involve the surrounding states (even though the possibility still exists). If at the beginning of the century Turkey, for instance, was overtly participating in the conflict, now it merely imposes economic blockade on Armenia and helps training the Azeri troops. If at the beginning of the century the independence of three states continued only for two years, today, in new international environment, their juridical independence and sovereignty (but not territorial integrity) are more secure despite all the turmoil they experience on the road of state-building.

Despite resistance by the Armenians, the Turkish offensive on Karabakh could succeed (they occupied and plundered Shusha), but it was interrupted by Turkey's surrender to the Allies at the end of October 1918. The Allies' representative became General Thomson, who was interested in creating an independent Azerbaijan, a British ally or protectorate, a future source of oil export and a forepost against the Bolshevik menace. Thomson ordered the Armenian population of Karabakh to submit to the Azerbaijani rule. The self-governing body of the Armenian community of Karabakh refused. They were put under a heavy pressure by economic blockade from Azerbaijan, and attacked by the Kurdish irregular troops. On August 22, 1919, they finally agreed to recognize „provisionally“ the authority of the Azerbaijani government, hoping that the post-war Peace Conference would give them a chance to revise that decision. This, however, did not preclude the arrival of Azerbaijani troops and further intimidation of the local population. In reply, the population rose in revolt. The army reacted by attacking civilians, destroying entire villages, and massacring the Armenian population of Shushi, for the fifth time in one decade. From that time on, Shushi, situated in the center of overwhelmingly Armenian-populated Karabakh, lost its Armenian population, and in some decades became completely Azerbaijani-populated.

It was the Azerbaijani troops' heavy concentration in Shushi which allowed the Red Army to attack Azerbaijan and easily conquer Baku, toppling the national government and effectively

„Sovietizing“ the republic. Arguably, Azerbaijan lost independence while trying to preserve Mountainous Karabakh; or, the price of gaining Mountainous Karabakh was loss of independence.

In a milder form, the same may happen again, if in order to regain control over Nagorny Karabakh Azerbaijan accepts the Russian troops along its external border with Iran, or if it accepts the Russian peace-makers in Nagorny Karabakh: it may regain control over that territory, but it will sacrifice a very significant portion of its military and political sovereignty. Some events in the near past also illustrate the same dependence of Azerbaijani statehood from the situation in Karabakh: in 1993, President Elcibey was ousted by the troops of Suret Guseinov with clandestine approval of Russia, and the Armenian forces of Karabakh advanced deep inside the Azeri territory, threatening the second-biggest city Ganja. This does not mean in a simplistic way that Karabakh is a direct Russian lever in the region, but a mix of various factors allows Russia to manipulate the Karabakh conflict in such a way as to maximize its influence over Azerbaijan⁴.

Armenia too was easily Sovietized by the Red Army, due to another attack by the Turks, which made it completely vulnerable to the Russian offer to be Sovietized and strengthened the position of those who argued, not without reason and foresight, that the only way to preserve the nation was to adopt the Bolshevik rule and to allow the Russians to occupy its territory. Again, in the current situation, Armenia has accepted quite unusual for an independent state level of military cooperation with Russia, seeing Russia as its guarantor against threat from Turkey and against the possibility of the Nagorny Karabakh problem's resolution in favor of Azerbaijan.

The question of disputed territories was first treated by new Azerbaijani Bolshevik leadership in light of the tenet of workers' solidarity and of Lenin's concept of self-determination. The Azerbaijani communist leader Narimanov declared that all three disputed regions „are recognized to be integral parts of the socialist republic of Armenia“⁵. This, however, was merely a maneuver by the Bolsheviks to make their rule seem attractive to Armenia. When Armenia was effectively Sovietized, Azerbaijan refused to withhold its claim to these territories. At that time, General Kemal Ataturk's Turkey for a short while became one of the main revolutionary allies of the Bolshevik Russia. In fact, it was the first state with which Russia established diplomatic relations and developed economic ties. The Bolsheviks were expecting a coming socialist revolution in Turkey, and Ataturk was not discouraging them. Naturally, Ataturk supported

⁴ The escalatory significance of this well-known aspect of the conflict will be discussed below in more details.

⁵ quoted from: Caroline Cox and John Eibner: *Ethnic cleansing in progress. War in Nagorno Karabakh*. Institute for Religious Minorities in the Islamic World. Zurich, London, Washington, 1993, p. 31.

Azerbaijan's demands, and the Bolshevik government of Moscow was inclined to satisfy them. However, at first the Transcaucasian Bureau of Communist Party refused to grant Nagorny Karabakh to Azerbaijan. But under the insistence of Stalin, pressure of Ataturk and Narimanov's threat that this could be a cause for nationalists to gain power in Azerbaijan, and that if Karabakh was not granted to Azerbaijan, further massacres of Armenians would follow, the Bureau reversed its decision.

While Nakhichevan became a part of Azerbaijan (with Turkey as guarantor) as a result of international treaty, Karabakh's inclusion in Azerbaijan was a quasi-executive act of the regional bureau of Communist Party, not even of an official governmental body, which afterwards entered unchanged in all the official governmental documents of the Soviet Union, including its Constitution.

In this respect, the fate of Zangezur is remarkable: some historians argue⁶ that it was precluded from becoming a part of Azerbaijan by the de facto defense of popular militia under the leadership of General Njdeh. Njdeh allegedly threatened to attack Yerevan and topple the Bolshevik government if Zangezur would be declared a part of Azerbaijan. Apparently unable or unwilling to continue military confrontation, the Bolsheviks left Zangezur under Njdeh's rule for a long time, and only during late 1920s and early 1930s they were able to finalize the Soviet rule in that region. However, it remained under the jurisdiction of Armenia. The combination of these two factors (granting Karabakh to Azerbaijan by a decision from above and Zangezur's remaining in Armenia due to popular resistance) strengthens the argument of those in Karabakh and Armenia who believe that only military resistance is capable of securing Karabakh's independence or eventual unification with Armenia.

This brief historical review demonstrates that the problem of Nagorny Karabakh appeared as a result of the First World War. It was regarded as a piece of territory highly valuable to both contenders, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The will of the population of Nagorny Karabakh was not taken into account. The population of Karabakh became under discussion as a subject *to* political decisions rather than as a subject *of* political decisions. Its role was mostly limited to being a hostage to the threats and instances of massacre.

⁶ Antranig Chalabian. *General Antranik and the Armenian Revolutionary Movement*. Southfield, MI, 1988.

However, references to history by scholars and nationalist politicians could not be enough to make history become such a determining factor for day-to-day political and military actions in and around Karabakh in 1980s and 1990s. The idea that only popular--and afterwards institutionalized--military defense can help Karabakh not be depopulated from Armenians and achieve the aim of being reunited with Armenia (the aim was changed later on, on becoming an independent statelet closely connected with Armenia) is, of course, a lesson learnt by the Armenians from the history of conflicts between Armenians and the Turkic states. But for the military path to be accepted by the population, a combination of several other factors was necessary. First, it was necessary the experience of the Soviet years, when, on one hand, the conflict and popular dissent from the Azeri rule were kept alive, while the problem was not resolved as the Karabakh Armenians demanded. Second, it was necessary that the Armenians could find new examples of politicized mass violence against themselves (and this was found in the events of Sumgait, Kirovabad, Baku, and Operation Ring, to be discussed further). This proved the point that the Azeris can see only one resolution to the conflict--depopulation of Nagorny Karabakh from the Armenians. Third, they had the example of Nakhichevan, which was indeed, by a combination of economic, cultural, and political pressure, silently depopulated from the Armenians during the peaceful Soviet years. Fourth, the context of the collapsing Soviet state created a situation of vacuum of legal and administrative protection: The Armenians of Karabakh learned from several events mentioned above that even limited protection which the Soviet system could beforehand provide them with was over. Step by step, they were forced to learn that their survival in Nagorny Karabakh depends only on their own actions. It is important to note that at the first stages of escalation (1988-1989) very few among the political leaders in Karabakh and Armenia advocated a military solution. The leader of the national movement and the President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrossian never defended the military solution. Even after Armenia and Karabakh were dragged in the war by a complex chain of events, actions and counteractions, Ter-Petrossian, going often against the popular sentiment, consistently and often unsuccessfully advocated the peaceful position.

In the following sections, some of the above-mentioned dissipative events, which signified new escalatory factors, will be analyzed in more details.

Soviet nationalities policies: deepening the dormant conflict

In subsequent years, while the administrative-territorial structure of the USSR was being finalized, Nagorny Karabakh was awarded a status of Autonomous Region (Oblast), and a formal referendum was held in that territory in order to legitimize Azerbaijan's rule over the region. The referendum of 1926 approved Azerbaijan's rule, but as any show of public choice in the USSR, it was carried out under the political supervision of the Bolshevik authorities, and its authenticity cannot be trusted.

It is impossible to discern what was the main motivation for granting a status of autonomy to Nagorny Karabakh: whether it was a concession to the pressure by Armenians, with the idea that cultural autonomy would ameliorate tensions in the region, or it was a strategic calculation to create a lever of influence in the region: any, even infinitesimal dissension of Azerbaijan could be countered by a threat of revision of the status of Nagorny Karabakh. Probably, both motivations played a certain role. However, it does not seem very likely that the usefulness of national-territorial administrative units for the policies of *divide and rule* was explicitly realized by the Soviet leaders until 1960s⁷.

Other policy actions shaping the future of the conflict included the creation for a short while of another autonomous entity--the Autonomous Okrug of Red Kurdistan, allegedly to give the Kurds of the USSR territorial representation. It was carved out from the districts between Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh, and partly from what had been historically Nagorny Karabakh itself, in Lachin and southern part of Kelbajar. Red Kurdistan was dissolved very soon (1930), by an administrative rather than legislative decision (the same way it was created), and Azerbaijan restored its complete jurisdiction over Lachin and Kelbajar. But from that time on a narrow territorial belt separated Armenia from Nagorny Karabakh, a belt which in its thin part did not exceed five kilometers, but was sufficient to effectively blockade development of infrastructures which would connect Armenia with Nagorny Karabakh.

The Soviet nationalities policies can be roughly divided in two stages: before and after death of Stalin. In the first stage, the policies of *korenizatsia* (rooting) dominated⁸. *Korenizatsia* meant a strong preferential position in the hierarchy of nations to those which possessed status of

⁷ I am thankful to Rexane Dehdashti for her suggestion that ethnic groups which had political status (autonomy) within the USSR, and therefore an administrative structure with some attributes of a quasi-state entity, were more likely to revolt than those which did not have one. This proves the well-known finding that structurally defined ethnoterritorial federations are prone to collapse.

⁸ About *korenizatsia* versus compartmentalization, see Marc Saroyan: *Beyond the nation-state: Culture and ethnic politics in Soviet Transcaucasia*. In Ronald Grigor Suny, ed.: *Transcaucasia, nationalism, and social change*. The University of Michigan Press. Anna Arbor, 1996.

union republics. All other units within the republics--autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts, okrugs, etc., were strictly subjected to the rule by the republics. During the years of Stalin's tyranny, non-titular ethnic groups were deprived of almost any cultural rights. If they resisted the policies of korenizatsia, they had an option of superficial Russification ('ussrization', see below). This was an apparent deviation from Lenin's design of the Soviet Union as a federation where every ethnicity has a territory assigned to it where it would, according to theory, enjoy at least some sovereignty⁹.

After Stalin's death, with the thaw of late 1950s and early 1960s, the policies of korenizatsia gave way to national reawakening of non-titular nations or those parts of titular nations which were situated in other republics. This can be called a stage of *compartmentalization* of nationalities.

Compartmentalization was institutionalized quite easily because of several reasons. First, this was a simple reaction to the years of forced homogenization beforehand. Second, this was a natural continuation of the policies of korenizatsia for those nations which in many respects took shape due to those policies--such as the Azeris, the Kazakhs, the Uzbeks, the Moldovans, etc. Being declared nominally titular nationalities in their republics, some ethnic groups received an opportunity, perhaps for the first time in their history, to engage in active nation-building. As a result, the imagined communities of the republican level became so strong and dominating that after Stalin's death, with relaxation on at least some restrictions, they started to become interested in the fate of their brethren in other republics, those where they were not a titular nationality.

Third, while political and economic criticism of the regime remained prohibited, new loyal dissent could be channeled in cultural criticism--hence the opportunity to criticize cultural or national policies toward their brethren in other republics. This kind of criticism, struggling for more cultural rights for the minorities and non-titular nations, would not at the same time affect any fundamental political or economic tenet of the Soviet socialism. It was usually constructed as

⁹ One point is usually omitted in the discussions concerning the Soviet administrative-territorial and national system. That is that before and after the Russian revolution of 1917 and in the first years of the Soviet rule there were many individuals who sincerely believed in the values of internationalism. There were many among the intelligentsia in the Transcaucasus in particular who believed that the socialist revolution would indeed end the rivalry between nations. Disconcerted from the previous experience of wars and massacres, these people constituted a natural popular support base for extinguishing nationalist rivalries as soon as at least some order was restored in their societies. They voluntarily adopted the Russian as the language of international communication. The 'ussrization' (discussed further) was not done merely by force of 'proletarian dictatorship' but by a combination of policies from above and popular support, at least in some urban circles, from below, otherwise it couldn't be so successful.

a criticism directed toward the local authorities or republic-to-republic criticism. While de facto it undermined one of the basic Marxist-Leninist postulates about disappearing national contradictions in the real socialism, on the surface it was merely about cultural and national contradictions, useful also to divert the attention of the populations from pending political and economic issues which could be the concern of everybody rather than of merely compartmentalized ethnicities.

Finally, compartmentalization was a useful tool in the hands of the center to strengthen its position as an arbiter between ethnic groups, as well as to promote further overall 'ussrization' of republics by partly strengthening local cultures and thereby encouraging different minority and majority groups within the republics to communicate in Russian and adopt the Russian popular culture as their intercultural communication means. This may be called 'ussrization' rather than Russification by analogy with Tito's 'yugoslavization' policies, taking into account that the net result was not recruitment of more individuals who changed their ethnic affiliation from their native ethnicity to Russian, but of those for whom the Russian became *lingua franca* and the language of popular culture. These policies, therefore, were disliked even by the nationalists in Russia, who probably would not complain if Russification would be successful, but they complained that 'ussrization' inversely affected the 'purity' of Russian culture.

Being one of the substitutes for drastic universal reforms in politics and economy, compartmentalization deepened the crisis of the Soviet system: the real roots of problems for the population were general rather than particular. However, these general problems were prohibited to be discussed, even under the guise of national-cultural problems. Therefore, resulting communities were even more imagined than otherwise--the real essence of their problems was hidden under the vile of the Soviet propaganda.

Compartmentalization was manifested by appearance of several publications concerning culture and history of ethnic minorities and non-titular nations, by changes in the national history programs in the secondary schools, and by other similar undertakings. Since these cultural products could not embark upon objective analysis of the situation, they were producing new superficial myths. They, however, met the obvious resistance of the republican level authorities, thereby deepening the latent conflict both between republics and between titular and non-titular nations.

There is a rich evidence to suggest that the Armenians of Nagorny Karabakh were treated badly during the years of Azerbaijani rule¹⁰. In comparative terms, however, they did not experience any more acute or qualitatively different economic and social maltreatment than many other backward rural regions of the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan itself. What made the situation intolerable in the eyes of the Armenian population was Azerbaijan's policy of using any possible situation to deprive the region of the possibility of satisfying its cultural needs. Naturally, rare politically styled individual appraisals were presented and interpreted in the light of national aspirations. By keeping the region deliberately backward, the government of Azerbaijan was creating a motivation for the mobile part of the population to leave. By obstructing cultural contacts with Armenia, it was pursuing the same goal. Naturally, any hardship became associated in the eyes of an average Karabakh Armenian with the rule of the government of Azerbaijan.

Similar policies in Nakhichevan resulted in almost complete disappearance of the Armenian population from that autonomous republic. Why the same did not happen in Nagorny Karabakh? A part of the answer lies with such an intangible aspect as the character of Karabakh Armenians. They represent a sub-ethnic group of the Armenian ethnos, according to one version, the inhabitants of ancient Caucasian Albania, a part of them who were Armenized and Christianized rather than Islamized after the collapse of their state (according to another version, the inhabitants of Caucasian Albania from the outset were not ethnically different from the Armenians)¹¹. The Karabakh Armenians are historically used to the hardship of the life in the mountains, and to de facto independent self-rule. They have militant, stubborn, and persevering character. While the percentage of Armenians in Karabakh decreased during the Soviet years from 95% to 75%, at the end of 1980s they still constituted the overwhelming majority of the population. Their participation in the Second World War in the Soviet troops resulted in giving fourteen battle and career generals, among whom four marshals. This is a high rate for a region with the population no more than 200,000.

Karabakh's strategic isolation even within the context of the USSR resulted in the following effect: the Armenian inhabitants of Karabakh were capable of preserving their historical traits, traditions, and myths, while those who left Karabakh and were largely educated in a Russian-language environment in Baku, in an institution in Armenia, or in Russia, created that

¹⁰ a review see in Otto Luchterhandt: Nagorny Karabakh right to state independence according to international law. Foundation for Armenian studies, Hamburg. 1993.

¹¹ Vitaly V. Naumkin, ed.: Central Asia and Transcaucasia. Ethnicity and conflict. Greenwood Press. Westport. Connecticut; London, 1994, p. 24.

layer of emigree intelligentsia which, as it is classical for the forming nationalist ideology, fueled by their opinions and their cultural work local nationalism. During the Soviet years, several appeals were directed to the central authorities in Moscow with a request to transfer Karabakh from Azerbaijan to Armenia. Their authors were prosecuted and even lost their lives for these attempts, but the attempts never ceased. However, such a decision was not only never taken, it was not even deliberated seriously (except perhaps briefly at the end of the Second World War, when it was suggested to balance the unification of „Southern Azerbaijani“ part of Iran with the Soviet Azerbaijan by the transfer of Karabakh to Armenia).

perestroika: escalation and mirror effect within the USSR (1988-1991)

spread of conflict: demonstrations and rallies¹²

Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* were delayed in the Transcaucasus. While the democratic forces were rapidly forming in the center, the Communist nomenklatura of periphery was reluctant to change, give up power, or adjust to the new wind. As late as the fall of 1987, there were only a few ecological and cultural informal groups in the republics of Transcaucasia who appeared as a result of the „fresh air“ from the center. The suppressed public discontent with the Communist rule, however, was high, especially in Georgia and Armenia.

The Nagorny Karabakh Regional Soviet's request from the USSR authorities, Azerbaijan and Armenia to revise the Region's (Oblast's) status and to change its jurisdiction from Azerbaijan to Armenia became a glue to unite all the layers of the Armenian population, both in Karabakh and Armenia, around a symbolic cause highly significant for the national consciousness of the Armenians. Manifestations and rallies of previously unseen scale, involving at some days about one million people, or a third of the population of Armenia, occurred in Yerevan in support of the Karabakh request. The Karabakh Armenians were rallying too. These first rallies in the February of 1988, however, possessed peaceful character. They were the first ones in the post-Soviet space. The representatives of the forming national fronts and independent public organizations of the Baltic republics and of the Eastern European states, such as Czechoslovakia and Hungary, arrived

¹² Dissipative events from 1988 onwards are presented in Tables A-D.

at Yerevan to exchange valuable experience of organizing peaceful non-violent manifestations of public discontent. These rallies became a rehearsal for the *velvet revolutions* and *human-chains* all over the then-socialist camp. There is an opinion that they were generated by KGB and the local party leaders in order to divert the attention of the populations from more important political issues. Even if some in these circles entertained for a while the idea that the Karabakh movement would divert the mass attention from their rule to the cause of Karabakh, and from the evils of the system to the evils of national injustice, the party leadership was completely paralyzed by the rallies and strikes, and eventually lost power as a result of them. It is true, however, and it will be discussed below, that the inability and unwillingness of the old nomenklatura to exercise their duties and govern in the new political circumstances, as well as the absence of mechanisms for managing such a peculiar phenomenon as a mass social movement¹³, contributed to gradual degeneration of strikes in almost complete disruption of social order, which made the burden of economic and political collapse of the USSR, soon to be felt by the population, even heavier.

The rallies were a mass expression of rather emotional discontent of public with the existing rule of the Soviet system. The fact that they were focused on the Karabakh cause may be explained by taking into account that no other issue could unite so diverse a public, since the ideas of democracy and free market were not well-developed, and even the idea of national independence did not have much support at that time. No other issue could find an appeal of such a scale; and no other issue appeared as simple and as simply resolvable as that. The belief was that it was enough for Gorbachev to approve the Karabakh request, and the problem would be resolved. The arbitrary changes in the national-territorial structure of the USSR had been happened several times. Inclusion of Karabakh in Azerbaijan was a result of Stalin's decision. Stalin's policies were denounced by Gorbachev. Correcting the mistakes of those policies appeared to be the most logical action of *perestroika*. The mass social movement was naive.

Moscow's reaction, however, was delayed and vague: the central authorities feared that any such action would generate a chain reaction, and other pending national-territorial issues would arise. In addition, Gorbachev feared loss of his popularity and therefore power in Azerbaijan and other Muslim republics if he would concede to the Armenian demand.

Manifestations and rallies in Armenia were greeted all over the world as an evidence that the USSR was democratizing, and that the Communist party's grip on power was weakening.

¹³ Rightfully, it can be called also national-liberation movement. It is difficult to choose between the terms *mass social movement* or *national-liberation movement* in this particular case. Both terms have merits.

What was overlooked was the fact that the compound of ideals and sensitivities which pushed the populace to the squares in Yerevan and Stepanakert had only one point powerful enough to be shared by everybody: the national demand that Karabakh be united with Armenia. Thus, the rallies, while being a refreshing experience in the closed Soviet atmosphere and becoming the beginning of new era in the Armenian history, objectively manifested the expansion of the Nagorny Karabakh problem from a problem between an autonomy and a republic (such an interpretation could open ways for containing the conflict and directing it to an administrative-legal route) to a problem between two ethnoses--the occurrence which was rooted in the formulation of the request of the Nagorny Karabakh Regional Soviet--to be separated from Azerbaijan **and** united with Armenia. While very soon after realizing that this was too strong a demand the Karabakh leaders started to argue in favor of merely being freed from the rule of Azerbaijan--in whatever format possible--the first act was done, the population of Armenia was involved--not the least because of the paralysis of the local Communist leadership and lack of skill and want to manage the situation--and the conflict became spilled over the boundaries of Azerbaijan and Karabakh.

The wording of the Karabakh Soviet request (being united with Armenia) was not merely a result of the lack of political skill and knowledge. It was based on assumption that one should ask for a lot to get at least something. Given that the overwhelming majority of the population in Armenia had a very vague knowledge about Karabakh's existence before these events, and that many did not know about Karabakh at all, there was no special reason, except for providing a rationale of unification of two parts of a separated nation (which is a direct way to conflict if the nation is situated in two different states), to invoke Armenia in the process. When Armenia was invoked, however, a new reason became apparent: to use the demonstrations and strikes in Armenia (which had more political and economic impact on the entire USSR than Karabakh's demonstrations and strikes, the latter besides being vulnerable to a crush from Azerbaijani authorities) as a lever to force the central authorities to act. The entire Armenian nation, thus, was used by a group representing only 200,000 people, a group which included Armenian political activists and intelligentsia of and from Karabakh, as a trump card in their struggle for power against the Azerbaijani authorities. It is another truth, of course, that as soon as the demonstrations in Yerevan started, they became a perfect tool for the ambitious young leaders to start their own struggle for power in Armenia, using the Karabakh problem as a means in its turn rather than as an end in itself.

The participants in the rallies had contradictory feelings while standing for hours in the overcrowded square, with disciplined fellow-participants, expecting that *somebody who knows what is going on* will enlighten them from the tribune. The feeling of lack of information, and of being used by some unknown forces--**not** the leaders of the movement and **not** by the Karabakh Armenians, however,--went along with the exciting feeling of belonging to the *body of nation*. Isolated in their established routine social structures in their day-to-day activities, people on the square felt, many for the first time in their life in the Soviet system, where beforehand rallies were prohibited, an immense pleasure of being reunited across social and geographic positions, genders, professions, ages, and any other dividing lines. Soon, however, leaders of the movement--themselves inexperienced in popular politics and administration, quite occasionally being pushed to the tribune by the crowd, but also starting to feel overwhelming responsibility for the management of the situation--realizing that they could not overturn the *agenda* of permanent rallies easily and quickly enough, tried to at least establish control over the *process*. They, for instance, spent enormous amount of time persuading the populace to stay longer, to increase their ranks, or, in other occasions, to go home peacefully, and come back later on at an exact time. The crowd on the square, thus, became a leverage to force the authorities at every level of the Soviet hierarchy to make political decisions. And while the agenda of rallies remained, for the most part, dominated by the crowd, the procedure of rallying started to being quite skillfully managed by the leaders.

Rallies manifested shaping the problem of Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Oblast as a national cause for the Armenians. This was the first and most significant step in **polarization** of sides in the conflict according to the lines of ethnic divisions. There was no sentiment of enmity against the Azeris at that point in time. The mobilization of nation was conceived as an action *for* rather than as an action *against*. If there was any adversary, that was considered to be the Stalinist system which had „unjustly“ included Nagorny Karabakh into Azerbaijan. The Azeris were not even perceived as interested sides affected by the movement of the Armenians for unification. However, as long as one side had construed itself in terms of ethnic unity, the other side accepted the natural logic of polarization.

Sumgait: politicization of violence as escalatory factor

Only days after mass demonstrations in Stepanakert and Yerevan started, first violence occurred: two Azeris were killed in a local clash on the border between Nagorny Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

According to different versions, the assassins were not Armenians, or if they were, this was not a premeditated murder, but a clash accident. Nevertheless, this event had a magnified echo in Azerbaijan, where the stories about mass actions against the Azeris started to circulate. To prevent this effect, not only proper legal work by prosecuting those responsible should have been done, but also a powerful interethnic public campaign should have been necessary, a campaign which would clarify that this was not an action of one ethnos against another; and that the issue of administrative subordination of Nagorny Karabakh should not be perceived in one knot with these murders. Neither correct information, nor correct interpretation, however, were provided by the local authorities. Even in the times of the full Soviet power the legal system was not open sufficiently to deal with interethnic crime. In 1988, in the circumstances when the system of power was entering the shaky state of its decline, it became evident that there was no mechanism to deal with interethnic crime, and not even power sufficient to suppress its consequences (as it could be done earlier).

These murders became a pretext for organized mass disturbances in an Azerbaijani city Sumgait¹⁴, where the crowd armed with metal tubes and other self-made weaponry attacked the Armenian apartments (after gathering citywide information about the districts and apartments where the Armenians lived), killed and burned alive the Armenians, and raped women. The official Soviet investigation stopped on the figure of 32 victims, of which 26 Armenians and 6 Azeris, but the Armenians who escaped the massacre and arrived to Armenia or Moscow identified at least 56 missing persons in addition to those who were officially declared as victims, and strongly believed that the amount of victims was much higher.

The center was interested in keeping the numbers of victims down. The Armenians were interested in boosting the numbers in order to reinforce the image of themselves as pure victims, and of Azeris as savages. Azerbaijan's interest was divided: on one hand, it did not want that occasion to be used for reinforcing its diabolic image. On the other hand, the political goal of the massacre was to teach Armenians a lesson, therefore the fact of the event should not have been completely denied, moreover that it was impossible due to the international publicity which the event acquired.

The Sumgait pogrom was another manifestation of the spillover of conflict, and of its fast degeneration from a conflict between two administrative units to a conflict between two ethno-

¹⁴ All data on Sumgait is taken from Samvel Shahmuradian: *Sumgait. Documenty i materialy*. Yerevan, 1988. This is the most comprehensive investigation of the event.

it was a declaration by some forces in Azerbaijan that the Armenians in Azerbaijan (about 300,000 beyond Nagorny Karabakh) were essentially hostages and would be held responsible for the demands of Karabakh. The Sumgait affair was even more striking on the background of absence of wide-spread physical mob violence in the USSR in the preceding years. It became a symbol of returning to the century-old type of relationships between Armenians and Azeris, when massacre was the decisive argument.

Further investigations revealed that the pogrom was partly encouraged by the local Communist leadership, and even by some forces from Moscow; that it was a deliberately prepared, a premeditated action rather than an unexpected outburst of mob violence; and that the Soviet troops delayed their entrance the city and enforcement of order for three days--sufficient for the massacre to succeed.

The event became a turning point in the conflict, clearly indicating that the conflict was escalating. It contributed to further mobilization of the Armenians around the Karabakh cause. In the consciousness of the Armenians, it was directly linked to the genocide issue--and the message the organizers of the massacre sent was, actually, intended to exact that link: that if the Armenians would not withdraw their demands, all the Armenians in Azerbaijan would be massacred and/or expelled.

Later on, the Azeris presented evidence that one of the active members of the mob group leadership was a person with the Armenian last name. This, coupled with the echo the events had in the international media, became a reason for a myth appearing in Azerbaijan about the deviousness of the Armenians who organized their own massacre in order to demonstrate to the world the diabolic image of the Azeris, and to substantiate their cause that Karabakh could not remain under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan. This, in turn, paralleled the argument which exists in Turkey that the massacres of the Armenians in Turkey at the beginning of the century were inflicted upon them by themselves. In short, the argument stated that it was the fault of the Armenians that they were massacred. Massacres, according to this argument, were necessary for their politicians to substantiate their cause of gaining lands from the Turks and the Azeris.

This interpretation had a reverse effect on the Armenians: *revanche* became one of the strongest motivations for their actions. The events in Sumgait taught both sides in the conflict that victimization of one side can have a powerful propagandistic significance, just as glorification does. Both self-victimization and self-glorification became intensively used tools for the further polarization of the identities of two sides, and escalation of the conflict.

The central authorities tried to downgrade the significance of *Sumgait*. The press which enjoyed considerable freedom under Gorbachev, was however prohibited from publishing the details of what happened. Moreover, the central organs *Pravda* and *Izvestia* published articles where the wording criticizing peaceful demonstrations in Armenia and Karabakh was stronger than the wording condemning the events in Sumgait. An article entitled „Emotions and reason“ was essentially devoted to the criticism of Armenian demonstrations and demands as emotional. By implication, it could be inferred that the Sumgait events were a „reasonable“ reply to these emotional demands.

One of the most important reasons for this position of the center was that large-scale mass demonstrations were perceived as more detrimental to the authority of the central power than *Sumgait*: the former constituted a general challenge to the governability of the society by the Soviet power, even though they started by advancing the Gorbachev slogans of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The latter, though involving overt physical violence of unprecedented scale, were indeed intended to be perceived a punishment for disobedience. The Soviet authority was based on violence, overt or hidden, and it associated itself easier with violent than with peaceful methods.

From an administrative perspective, this was a no-win situation for the center: after Sumgait had happened, even if it were properly condemned, the Armenians would have even more reason to demand change of Karabakh's status. An entire revolutionary change in the style of Soviet governance would be necessary to stop the conflict from deteriorating after that point in time. It is possible to imagine an aggressive holistic masterplan for reconciling the sides by condemning the perpetrators of Sumgait; partly satisfying the demands of NKAO (for instance, by subjecting it to the direct rule from the center, as it was tried later on); and initiating several actions to (peacefully or with minimal force) disperse the mass movement in Armenia and NKAO, to stop spreading of pogroms of Armenians in Azerbaijan, and to preclude blockade of communication lines. It is easy to notice that the policies of the center, indeed, went along the above-mentioned lines. However, these policies could be successful only if the USSR would be at the apex of its power, and if this conflict would be at the center of the attention of Moscow. But if these conditions were present, *Sumgait* most probably would not happen at all. In the absence of these two factors, the actions by the center were either delayed, or implemented half-heartedly. *Sumgait* was a message not only to the Armenians, but also to the center: that if the Soviet system continues to democratize, here is what it should expect. As a result, the center selected the low-key approach.

It was decided that the trials of the perpetrators would be moved to different cities throughout the USSR rather than carried out in Azerbaijan, and that the dependents would be tried separately rather than as a group, so that the association between *Sumgait* and pogrom with political implications would be blurred. Later, however, some of the defendants were returned to Baku and tried there. They were cleared of the charges by an amnesty, released from the courtroom and cheered by the crowds as national heroes.

These events had the effect opposite to what they intended: the Armenians were sensitized to the lack of clear condemnation of *Sumgait*, and learned that physical violence is an option in political struggle. They perceived the situation as a plot of the center in an alliance with Azerbaijan directed against their legitimate non-violent demands. Thus, among other factors, a fertile ground for the propaganda of independence, and for the cultivation of anti-Soviet and anti-Russian ideas, was established.

intensification of ethnic cleansing: from *Sumgait* to *Kirovabad* and *Baku*

Other Armenian communities in Azerbaijan, concentrated mostly in the major cities Baku and Kirovabad (today Ganja), started to feel increasingly insecure. Even though there was not yet any indication that *Sumgait* might have continuation, some of them initiated re-settlement to Armenia or Russia. At the same time, the same process started in Armenia: some of the Azeri village communities started to move outside Armenia. To understand the dynamics of the resettlement process, one has to bear in mind that if before the Sovietization the Azeris constituted one of the most significant communities in Yerevan, during the Soviet years their amount in the capital significantly decreased. In the 1970s and 80s, however, their amount in the countryside started to increase. Starting from 1960s, industrialization and urbanization acquired fast pace in Armenia. As a result, the rural population moved to the rapidly expanding cities. In their place, some resettlers from Azerbaijan arrived.

In Azerbaijan, there were almost no Armenians in the countryside, except for Nagorny Karabakh and adjacent to it northern territories, particularly Shahumian district (called thus after Stepan Shahumian, the leader of Baku Commune, just as Stepanakert was) and some big villages near it, such as Getashen and Martunashen. Most of the Armenian minority was concentrated in the cities. Gradually, the nationalization policies in Azerbaijan removed the representatives of this well-established century-old minority from their key positions in the party structures and industry,

leaving them, however, the intelligentsia professions, as engineers, doctors, and teachers, and in mid-level party nomenklatura.

Anticipation of danger was not absolutely unwarranted, since the tensions on both sides were rising. However, the exchange of the population could not be properly administered: many Armenians were reluctant to leave their homes in Azerbaijan for an unclear perspective to resettle in mostly rural communities left by the Azeris. Also, such a resettlement program would be a clear indication of the failure of the Soviet nationalities policies. Every particular case of resettlement was perceived in a hostile light: those who were leaving Armenia were considered as knowing that they should leave since soon new massacres in Azerbaijan against the Armenians would start, and vice versa. As a result, the chaotic resettlement based on individual initiative of resettlers became another cause for further escalation of tensions.

Start of voluntary resettlement, therefore, is an indicator of rising hidden tensions, and should be used for early warning.

During the first half of 1988, there was no mass political mobilization in Azerbaijan comparable to that in Armenia. While in Armenia permanent round-the-clock demonstrations were continuing, in Azerbaijan after the pogroms in Sumgait only sporadic mass demonstrations were registered. The situation changed toward the fall of 1988, when the Azerbaijani Popular Front started to crystallize and call for rallies around the issue of Nagorny Karabakh. Here again the mirror-effect worked: since the Armenians were rallying, the Azeris had to start the same, to balance the situation.

One of the most well-known points of complaint of the Karabakh Armenians concerning the Azeri rule was that the Azeri government did not take care of the ancient Armenian monuments. These included churches, cemeteries, and such a peculiar ancient Armenian national craft as *khachkars* (cross-stones). The Armenians published books and articles about the fate of their national monuments in Turkey and Azerbaijan, and advanced the concept of the „white genocide“ to describe the policy of destruction of these monuments, or of lack of special care for their preservation. In part, especially in the case of Soviet Azerbaijan, the fate of the churches was the result of the atheistic policies of the USSR and was only indirectly linked to anti-Armenian stance in Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, this became one of the major points on the list of complaints concerning inhibition of cultural rights of the Armenians, including the insufficient amount of schools, lack of university-level programs available in Armenian, insufficient amount of

newspapers, obstacles to the Armenian TV broadcasting, and obstacles to the Armenian intelligentsia and artists from Armenia to visit Nagorny Karabakh.

The mirror-effect of the escalation spiral worked in this case just as in the case of Sumgait and rallies: a construction which had started in a Karabakh site called Tophana (sponsored within the program of development of Nagorny Karabakh as a measure to partly satisfy the demands of the Armenians by removing the economic causes of their complaints) was declared in Azerbaijan at the rallies to be an act of sacrilege of an ancient Albanian grave (in reality, it was a waste plot of land with no historical significance). This allegedly became a pretext for the next major round of pogroms, which happened in Kirovabad (Ganja), the second-biggest city. While there were only few victims registered, the entire 40,000 Armenian population of Kirovabad was ousted and arrived to Armenia as refugees. The incident also resulted in killing of some Soviet (mostly Russian) soldiers who, having no clear orders, were however trying to defend the Armenian population from the attacks, unlike in the *Sumgait* case, where the soldiers mostly stood idly and watched the massacre impartially.

This incident demonstrates how, after conflict starts to escalate, myth, falsehood, or misinterpretation can trigger a new round of escalation with astonishing force. Actually, the relationship between Tophana construction and Kirovabad events is even more complicated: Kirovabad would probably occur even in the absence of Tophana pretext; but that pretext allowed the sides in the conflict to construct a plausible explanation for the new round of escalation. One side needed to justify its action by a significant symbolic cause. The other side needed to dismiss the significance and symbolism of that cause and to demonstrate that the cause, even if it were true, was insufficient for exaggerated violent reply. Indeed, Kirovabad was not a quid-pro-quo or tit-for-tat: instead of violating Armenian graves in a cemetery (which could be a symmetric reply to the alleged sacrilege of Tophana), the Azeris ousted the Armenian population from the city.

The Kirovabad events were the last point of „innocence“ of the Armenians: following the mirror-effect logic, the Armenians finally learned that only ethnic cleansing works in such a situation, and started to purge the Azeris from the entire countryside of Armenia. One should note, however, that most of the national movement leaders condemned these practices at the rallies in Yerevan, whereas in the countryside the deportation was administered by the local party employees. The conclusion in Yerevan was ambivalent: while the leaders as well as the majority of the rally participants did not perceive any personal hostility to the Azeris residing in Armenia, they were caught off guard: they did not possess any tactics and clear ideology to preclude what was

happening. The local communist party structures' employees, trying to re-gain lost popularity and power, were adopting an extreme form of nationalist ideology and advancing the idea of necessity of ethnic cleansing. The leaders of the national movement, then, tried to voice their disagreement with these practices. But this time they did not find sufficient support from the rally participants: simple and straightforward nationalist patriotism of the populace could not understand such a sophisticated logic as the ideas of continuing fruitless non-violent resistance to violence of Azeris, and absence of guilt of the Azeri nation, especially of the local Azeris, for the suffering of the Armenians in Azerbaijan. Perhaps not for the first time, the newly-born leaders of the huge mass social and political movement had a choice: either to be led by the expectations of the crowd, or to lose authority and be overthrown. Not surprisingly, the voices against deportations were soon silenced. The better-organized part of the most humanistic wing of the national Movement adopted a neutral stance of humanitarian assistance, and started to provide help to the Azeris temporarily concentrated in the military bootcamps, trying to make their stay as comfortable as possible, and organize their departure before any further attacks on them would occur. In Armenia, then, the expulsion of Azeris, when it started and developed, became perceived as an inevitable process.

In Azerbaijan, meanwhile, the *sacrilege* or *white genocide* argument was appropriated to justify the Kirovabad events, and from that time on violence became endemic, and the conflict accelerated. *Kirovabad* was followed by the Baku events, where the Armenian community of Baku was pogromed and evacuated from the city. This event was used by the central authorities to move in the Soviet army, allegedly to stop the massacres, but in reality to re-store the communist party power which was at the verge of collapse. A martial law was declared, many activists of the Azerbaijani Popular Front were arrested, but most significantly, during the occupation indiscriminate fire of the Soviet tanks caused more than hundreds death among the civilians, already Azeris. The unfortunate timing of the arrival of troops (since they did not arrive at the time the massacre, but only several days later), as well as their style of handling the operation, caused a wide-spread belief that the massacres were provoked by the local communist leaders in cooperation with some circles in Moscow in order to have a pretext to ruin the Popular Front movement.

Violence in the two republics appears crucial for understanding the logic of conflict escalation. There was violence in Karabakh too: it started from the death of two Azeris in February 1988. But the important point is to take into account that this first event was not a

political action. It was an outcome of a random clash. Only its interpretation in Azerbaijan became politicized. Whereas the Azeri violent reply, Sumgait, had from the outset an unfortunate character of a political action.

Interethnic violence in Karabakh, however, was limited in scope compared to that in Azerbaijan and Armenia. And in a sense, it was more „understandable“: the conflict was the immediate concern of the people of Karabakh. Meanwhile, violent reactions on the events in Karabakh in two republics could not be justified: in essence, the respective communities were held hostages and made responsible for the actions of the other side, and experienced pogroms and / or deportations because of a conflict *somewhere else*. Moreover, these pogroms and deportations, at least in the first phase, were carried out by the groups who had no affiliation with Karabakh and perhaps had heard about it for the first time some weeks and months ago. Only in 1990 it was claimed that the refugees from Armenia, who arrived in Baku ready to retaliate, actively participated in pogroms.

violence by suffocation: blockade as escalatory factor

A crucial „intervening variable“ in the escalatory spiral of violence was blockade. Just as Nakhichevan and Nagorny Karabakh were included in the political structure of Azerbaijan, to complicate the geopolitical situation, the same way major economic and transportation lines which connected Armenia to the rest of the Soviet Union were coming through Azerbaijan. And of course, the supply lines to Karabakh were coming through Azerbaijan too. Therefore, Azerbaijan, trying to force Armenians to back down from their demands, started to use the railway and pipeline blockade as one of its main tools of coercion. Blockade first started in the summer of 1989, and then, with some interruptions, became permanent. After the collapse of the USSR, it was joined by the blockade from Turkey.

There was only one railroad line coming from Georgia rather than Azerbaijan to Armenia, and it was not supposed to be used as a major supply route. The coming of natural gas stopped almost completely. It is difficult to judge now, whether or not there was a devious intention in such a design of communication lines which made the economy of Armenia absolutely dependent on the flow of fuel and goods from Azerbaijan, or was that merely a result of short-sightedness of the Armenian engineers and rulers of the Soviet period that they did not insist on building some additional communications. Whatever the cause, the economic situation started to rapidly

deteriorate in Armenia and Karabakh. Combined with the blockade, the economy was suffering from frequent strikes. The republican Soviet government and party leadership were paralyzed and had not clue what to do. In addition, the overall Soviet process of inflation of ruble began.

The mirror-effect worked in the case of blockade too: Nakhichevan, having no connection with Azerbaijan, was the last stop of the railroad line coming from Azerbaijan, and passing through the southern part of Armenia. By blockading Armenia, the Azeris were naturally blockading their brethren in Nakhichevan too. But since the blockade started once, it became increasingly difficult to trust each other and stop it: Azerbaijan was quite sure that if it would stop the blockade of Armenia, Armenia would not however stop the blockade of Nakhichevan, in order to retaliate for the first round of the blockade.

The blockade had an extremely detrimental consequence for the Armenian economy as well as for the social welfare. The terrible winters of 1992--1994 were the direct result of it, coupled with the overall destruction of industrial connections throughout the former Soviet Union. The blockade became a cause for US Congress to restrict governmental aid to Azerbaijan. The Armenian government in the following years tried to include blockade as an example of hostilities of Azerbaijan against Armenia in the negotiations under the auspices of the CSCE / OSCE (see below).

The complex nature of blockade can be realized if one takes into account several factors. First, as it is mentioned above, it was accompanied by the general disruption of the industrial system of the USSR. This made it difficult to put a clear-cut line between the political dimension of the blockade (as a lever to be used against Armenia and Karabakh) and its economic dimension (the unwillingness of the previous suppliers and transit states to provide fuel and goods anymore without new contracts between new political actors).

This meant that after new states became recognized, blockade's simple removal (without specifying new costs and prices of supply and transit) would hardly be sufficient to restore the proper functioning of industry. This in its turn meant that after putting several times the necessity to open blockade in the drafts of cease-fire agreement, considering blockade under the heading of „hostilities“, Armenia gradually lost hope and ceased to insist on the removal of the blockade, and started looking rather for new and alternative means and ways of supply. In addition, it became apparent that even if the Karabakh conflict would be resolved, that might not be sufficient reason for Azerbaijan and Turkey to end the blockade of Armenia, because these states objectively had and have no interest in helping Armenia to become an economically strong state. Finally, the

Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act (1992) which restricted the US official assistance to Azerbaijan became perceived as an example of unfair policies of the US toward Azerbaijan, and as a direct result of the Armenian lobbying without any other political rationale. It is already for a while that Azerbaijan tries to interpret this ban as unfair, pointing out that it is Armenia which occupies Azeri territories, and claiming that the blockade was installed as a reaction to occupation. This is untrue, unless Azerbaijan interprets the fact that Karabakh is Armenian-populated as an instance of occupation: the blockade had been first installed in 1989 and became permanent to the end of that year; because of that, the Armenian economy and population suffered extreme difficulties. Meanwhile, the occupation of territories outside Nagorny Karabakh occurred, for the first time, in 1992 (Lachin corridor), at the time when the blockade was long in place and was actually one of the causes for the attacks of Karabakh forces.

This is important again as an illustration how interpretation based on the mirror-image approach works for conflict escalation: merely by changing the timing and presenting the cause-effect relationship inversely (occupation therefore blockade, rather than first blockade, and then, because of that and many other reasons, occupation), Azerbaijan effectively removes the question of blockade from the agenda of negotiations¹⁵. If that would be on the agenda and the Armenians had an incentive to look for cooperative solutions instead of looking for alternative ways for supply, that could work as a bargaining chip. It is, however, removed because of this misinterpretation, and Azerbaijan merely uses this confused argument to advance the hostile image of Armenia and of Armenian diaspora's lobbying organizations.

Just as by installing blockade Azerbaijan made the entire population of Armenia hostage to the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh, now Azerbaijan claims that having a diaspora is an unfair advantage of Armenia over Azerbaijan. The Armenian diaspora in the US appeared primarily as a result of the genocide of 1915, by expressing „jealousy“ for not having diaspora, Azerbaijan indirectly expresses disrespect to those who have suffered genocide; by accusing Armenians for using their diaspora for political purposes, Azerbaijan actually accuses the victims for utilizing means they have been left with, making the Armenian diaspora, in addition to the Armenians of Armenia, also responsible for Azerbaijan's conflict with the minority in Nagorny Karabakh.

The US ban on state (but not private) aid to Azerbaijan generated several consequences, one of them being that Azerbaijan's leadership lost the incentive to face effectively its economic

¹⁵ In the last peace proposal, the point has been returned by Armenia, but no reaction from Azerbaijan as of yet.

and social problems, particularly, to accommodate refugees from the conflict zone, and started to use refugees as a trump card to emphasize the need of Azerbaijan in economic assistance¹⁶. Of course, another reason for this policy toward the refugees, as it is evident from many other similar conflicts too, is the hope of the Azeri government to settle them back, and for that they have to be kept in a mobile condition. The other side of this coin is that, in addition to the inhumanity of such an approach and lack of guarantees that resettlement will happen smoothly and in near enough future, the unsettled refugees increase tensions in Azerbaijan, especially if they are kept in the capital, and can become the necessary body for initiating mass disturbances. The government, however, apparently hopes to use them as a striking force in the case if the military stage of the conflict is going to be resumed.

„high politics“: contributing to escalation by irrelevance of decisions to the real situation

On such a background, political decisions adopted by the Communist leaders or governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the USSR, either did not have any relevance to the actual situation, or were another tool for conflict escalation, or both. The same pattern continued after the international organizations became involved in the negotiations: proposals by the CSCE / OSCE, and UN Security Council resolutions did not have almost any soothing effect on the conflict process¹⁷. Perhaps the most significant success of high politics trying to influence the war in the region has been Russia's brokering the cease-fire in 1994 (see below). This, however, can be explained by the natural geopolitical and military equilibrium which evolved in the region after the Armenian forces occupied Azeri regions beyond Nagorny Karabakh.

operation „Ring“: smooth transition from ethnic cleansing to war

Within a year, an alliance between the Azeri Communist leadership and Moscow emerged which took course on the resolution of the Karabakh problem by an organized military ethnic cleansing. In the spring of 1991, military forces of the 23rd Division of the 4th Soviet Army stationed in

¹⁶ Elisabeth Schroedter: Fact-finding mission on the political situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan with particular reference to the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Report for the European Parliament. 15-30 August, 1996 (manuscript).

¹⁷ see Table D. See also: Eric Remacle and Olivier Paye: The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh--A new pattern of cooperation between UN and OSCE. In Reimund Seidelmann, ed.: Crisis policies in Eastern Europe. Imperatives, problems and perspectives. Nomos, Baden-Baden, 1996, p. 149.

Azerbaijan undertook a joint operation with Azerbaijani Ministry of Interior (OMON) forces with the declared aim to disarm the illicit armed groups in the Shahumian district and Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Region. As a result of this operation, which was called „Koltso“ (ring), the Shahumian region, along with two big villages Getashen and Martunashen, were effectively cleansed from their entire population (afterwards, some people returned to their homes until the district was conquered by the Azeri army during the next rounds of war). This was the most significant instance of violence in the conflict immediately before the end of the USSR. Its impact on Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh was straightforward: if beforehand, self-armed groups of volunteers were of a sporadic nature, and represented mostly local male population ready to resist to the attacks from the Azeri villages, afterwards, self-armament became endemic throughout Armenia and Karabakh. Truncated instances of violence gradually gave way to systematic armed confrontation, which eventually took a shape of war with the collapse of the USSR.

After USSR: war, military victory, and cease-fire as a quasi-resolution (1992-1994)

It took four years for the Karabakh conflict to reach the stage of full-scale war. It took three years for the Karabakh war to reach a stage of shaky equilibrium and stop. It is already three years that a political solution fails to reinforce this equilibrium.

At the first stage of conflict, violence was sporadic. Soon, it became large-scale and systematic. It was possible to stop violence, and to decelerate the conflict, when the first instances of violence occurred: at that time, two ethnic groups were mixed, and the overwhelming majorities of the populations did not perceive each other as enemies. At the first instances of violence, if the internal societal rules and laws would be exercised properly, the violence perhaps would not spread. When violence accelerated in scope and scale, two ethnoses ceased to perceive each other as belonging to one and the same community of human beings. The morality and laws of internal society would not apply anymore toward the representatives of „others“. The first instances of violence were violation of the rules of community. The later instances became violations of rules of war. The part of violence which was **not** seen as a violation of rules of war, became thus somehow legitimized.

who is the actor, Russia, Armenia, or the Karabakh Armenians? (difficulty with the identification of main actor as an escalatory factor)

When the USSR collapsed and the two republics declared independence, the Karabakh conflict objectively became interstate conflict. Times when the Karabakh Armenians could accept at least some kind of settlement within Azerbaijan were lost, and Azerbaijan never actually offered one anyway: the Operation „Ring“ demonstrated clearly, from the perspective of the Karabakh Armenians, that the only solution Azerbaijan imagined was ethnic cleansing. The new leadership of Armenia, however, being in an extremely difficult situation, was reluctant to recognize Nagorny Karabakh as its part and thereby declare itself an outright annexor of a part of the territory of Azerbaijan; therefore, the Nagorny Karabakh population chose another road--it declared an independent state, and became one of several non-recognized states in the post-Soviet space. From this time on, the logic of war was based on local geopolitical considerations, and much of the war was the result of local leaders' actions and decision-making, while economic, military equipment and armaments, and manpower support to the Karabakh guerrillas (who started to reorganize fast in a disciplined army) were received from Armenia as well as from Russia and from the Armenian diaspora through a complicated system of personal connections, bribes, and individual initiatives.

The perception of this and similar wars by the international community is heavily influenced by the seeming paradox that a small entity of no more than 200 000 people can stand against a state with the population of seven million. This disbalance in seeming capabilities, coupled with the success of the Karabakh forces, has generated several interpretations, from times to times supported also by the Armenian and Azeri governments, about who is indeed fighting the Karabakh war. Azerbaijan tries to advance the idea that there is no independent political entity Nagorny Karabakh, and that it is Armenia who has all the levers of conflict in its hands, or it is Armenia with Russia. Armenia sometimes also has emphasized the role of Russia and shadowed its own role. Finally, it is a very convenient position for the international community to declare Russia the main actor in the region and thus to diminish the necessity in political engagement with local actors. Thus, misperception or misrepresentation of real actors becomes an obstacle in finding

working proposals for resolution. If the conflict is a Russian conspiracy against Azerbaijan, it can't even be resolved via negotiations with Armenia, not to say about Nagorny Karabakh. Also, no defense against the formidable military force of Russia is possible, while all defeats are easily explainable. But, then, if Russia is so powerful, why did it lose the war in Chechnya?

The role of Russia is, indeed, crucial in the region. But it should be emphasized that it is not a role of a protagonist. The burden of making war in and around Nagorny Karabakh has been shouldered primarily by the Armenians of Nagorny Karabakh. Weapons left after the Soviet army had retreated from the region had to be put in use to become a factor in the conflict. While the Karabakh army used all the weapons it could, the Azeri army did not utilize to the same extent the arsenals stored in Aghdam. Weapons without soldiers are useless. While Russia retains enormous political influence, the Karabakh population and army are the key military and therefore also political actor in the conflict.

Russia's role can be understood also from the following assertion: potentially, if Russia wanted, it could achieve peace in the region, perhaps not at any moment of the conflict, but it had and has that capacity to the extent to which any other actor--either local or international--lacks it. It was Russia who effectively brokered the cease-fire and ended the stage of major violence in 1994. It was Russia who encouraged Suret Guseinov to overthrow Elcibey in 1993. And Russia has all the leverage to force the sides to the conflict to an agreement--*any* agreement, if its leaders put their mind to that. However, Russia is very selective in its policies in the conflict, and there are several reasons why does Russia act this way rather than another way. First of all, while it has the leverage to enforce peace agreement, it does not feel that it has enough international legitimacy to do so. Because of this, it is reluctant to put to such a formidable probation its obvious leverage, fearing the consequences internally and internationally. An internal consequence could be another upsurge of isolationist stance among several political groupings, threatening the political career of those who forced peace, and an international consequence would be the necessity to take up future responsibility for implementation of the agreement as well as perhaps, responsibility for brokering the same kind of peace in several other settings.

But crucially and most importantly, Russia also lacks an incentive, and interest, in achieving final peace in this conflict. The Russian interest in such a peace could be a return to the past strategic military system of the USSR, with its troops stationed along the external border of Azerbaijan. Any other kind of peace in this conflict would mean even further decrease in Russia's influence, in which Russia definitely is not interested. Taking into account also the strategic issue of petroleum, Russia is objectively interested in hindering any resolution to the conflict which would not give it the maximum possible benefit, at least in economic terms. These constraints explain Russia's role in the conflict.

It should be taken into account, also, that the conflict in the region, as it is, is not a priority for Russia. This means that Russia's policies there are truncated and disbalanced. For a while, the situation grows quite independently of Russia, and then it suddenly turns to the region and tries to outbalance the accumulated events by an action, which should be even more powerful in order to make up for previous absence of any kind of action at all. These policies of lack of action combined with sudden outbreaks of activity characterize the entire duration of conflict, and not only Russia but also other external actors, as for instance, OSCE. However, in the case of Russia this is especially significant, because among all the external actors, Russia has the decisive influence over the conflict.

the logic of war

If it is clearly understood that without availability of local actors willing to shoulder the burden of making war, no external actor could play a decisive role, the general logic of the Karabakh war can be explained quite easily. A look at the map will make it clear what the possible developments could be, and it is the unfortunate nature of this war that many of the possible military actions which could be contemplated theoretically did indeed take place.

First, the regional geostrategic distribution of forces will reveal that Armenia is situated between two Turkic states, Turkey and Azerbaijan, bordered by Iran from the south and Georgia

from the north. The southern part of Armenia. Zangezur, separates Nakhichevan, which belongs to Azerbaijan with Turkey as guarantee, from Azerbaijan. This means that the geopolitical doctrine of Armenia, independently of the Karabakh problem, is directed toward securing its south Zangezur from the potential Azeri-Turkish aspirations to reunite. In this, the role of Nagorny Karabakh, which somewhat adds to the thickness of Armenian stripe between Turkey and Azerbaijan, is essential. That is why it could be said from the very beginning that any suggestions about swapping territories between Armenia and Azerbaijan were unrealistic, because Armenia needs all of its present territories *plus* the Armenian-populated Nagorny Karabakh (with whatever status) in order to guarantee its minimal security. Any actor which supports Armenia because of whatever reasons is equally interested in preserving the Armenianness of Nagorny Karabakh, even if they would not recognize the full independence of Karabakh from Azerbaijan. These actors which have definite geopolitical reasons to support Armenia are first of all Russia (for obvious reasons--having its own Turkic-Muslim groups and federation units, it is not at all interested in the political consolidation of Turkic-Muslim belt around its periphery) and Iran (which has about 17 million Azeris living in its northern part, Southern Azerbaijan, and is understandably concerned about preserving the status quo in the Caucasus so that its own territorial integrity will not be jeopardized).

With Yeltsin's coming to power, he had plenty of reasons not to support the ethnic cleansing of Nagorny Karabakh. If beforehand these policies were designed in a desperate attempt to preserve the alliance between right-wing communists and leaders in Muslim republics, now geopolitically Armenia and Karabakh were of much value for Russia. In addition, Yeltsin and Ter-Petrossian were from the same pack, new post-communist leaders, whereas the leadership in Azerbaijan was still the old communist one. Finally, the isolationist stance of the very first months of Russia's independent new leaders contributed to interruption of whatever operations were under way, and withdrawal of all the former Soviet troops from most part of the former Soviet republics. Even though the Operation „Ring“ was interrupted, the Armenians of Karabakh perceived their only chance of survival in fighting back. At this point, the geopolitics of Nagorny

Karabakh itself became to the forefront, however, inextricably linked to the larger geopolitical picture outlined above.

The advance of the Soviet army with Azerbaijani OMON was stopped at the North-Eastern border of the Sarsang water reservoir, the main water source for Nagorny Karabakh as well as for Azerbaijan's territories to the north of Karabakh. Thus, about a half of the Mardakert district, along with the northern districts previously populated by the Armenians but administratively excluded from Nagorny Karabakh, fell in the hands of the Azeris. In addition, the Azeris were concentrated along the borders of Nagorny Karabakh in all possible directions, as well as in Shushi and Khojaly in the center of Nagorny Karabakh. Shushi is a stronghold which overlooks Stepanakert, the Armenian capital, and shelling from it can reach several other parts of Nagorny Karabakh. A systematic shelling from Shushi started some time in the mid-1991 and continued up until that stronghold fell under the attack of the Armenians (May 1992). Indiscriminate shelling with use of artillery and Grad missiles was directed against the Armenian civilian population in Stepanakert first of all. In addition, the Azeris in Khojaly blocked the only existing airport in Karabakh, making thus the blockade of Karabakh absolute. Finally, while Armenia and Karabakh had only a few helicopters at their disposal, Azerbaijan had several military fighters left by the Soviet army, which were used both for attacks on military as well as civilian entities in Karabakh, and for delivery of airborne bombs.

ojaly

While the negotiations process was developing slowly despite the availability of numerous peace initiatives (all of which lacked any mechanism or instruments for achieving and implementing a peace agreement--see below), the obvious logic of war dictated the Armenians to defend the borders of Nagorny Karabakh, to conquer Khojaly and Shushi, and to open a land connection with Armenia through Lachin. These strategic objectives were achieved step by step until the summer 1993, and military superiority (in skill, if not in numbers) of the Karabakh forces to those of

Azerbaijan became apparent during that time. *Khojaly* manifested another turning point in conflict, another dissipative event, in that this was the first most obvious case of massacring the Azeri civilians by the Armenian forces. Trustworthy sources claim that this event was a result of unprofessional war-making of both sides rather than a symbolic action of violence against the civilians¹⁸. But as in other similar cases, its symbolic and propagandistic interpretation were more important for the conflict escalation than the real sequence of events. It should be noted that this was perhaps the first and the last event of mass physical violence against the Azeri civilians by the Armenian military¹⁹. One can assume that its international echo and very experience of those who participated in this action had a sobering effect on the Armenian forces. After that event, many cases of pillaging conquered villages were registered, and many Azeri civilians were pushed out from their homes; however, mass scale physical violence against them did not occur anymore.

While military operations were still continuing for an entire year, and resulted in the occupation by the Armenian forces of several districts of Nagorny Karabakh, which launched waves of Azeri refugees, *Khojaly* can be seen as an obscure point which for the first time manifested closeness of de-escalation dynamics. *Khojaly* was given significant international attention by the human rights organizations; presence of human rights bodies in the area of conflict, and their attention to the developments, became as permanent as possible due to *Khojaly*. This, as well as the sobering effect which violence against peaceful civilians can induce in soldiers who are not psychologically prepared for such actions, could be the reasons why in many other subsequent military operations Azeri civilians were not significantly physically damaged.

It is, however, necessary to mention that no satisfactory official international investigation of the event has been conducted which would answer all the questions about the event, and it still remains to a large extent a matter of interpretation by the sides (how many victims, how did they die, and who was actually responsible).

¹⁸ Azerbaijan: Seven years of conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. New York; Human Rights Watch, 1994.

¹⁹ During the deportations in late 1988, physical violence and particularly murders were not registered.

ce as fragile balance of power, or stable instability

In summer 1993, a coincidence of several events created a situation where Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and other members of the Minsk group increased their efforts for achieving cease-fire and afterwards a peace agreement. For Armenia, the reasons were obvious: the Ter-Petrosian administration was never interested in the warlike development of the conflict, even though it had moderately used the nationalist rhetoric for winning power from the not-completely bankrupt communists²⁰. Ter-Petrosian had used one and half years in power for effective concentration of military power in Armenia in the hands of his subordinates, by defeating and disarming chaotic militia units which appeared with the weakening of the Soviet empire; he also used that time for concentration of political power, which involved constant struggle with the strongest and most militant nationalist opposition party--Dashnaktsutun, with headquarters abroad. The result of this struggle was that several active members and leaders of Dashnaktsutun were concentrated in Karabakh and were participating in the war directly, and even the leadership of the breakaway republic was comprised in several key positions of the ARF members. This meant that if Ter-Petrosian was moderately successful in partly neutralizing the opposition party at home, he was greatly concerned with the problem of their keeping strong positions in Karabakh. If the situation at home was a pure case of political struggle, the situation in Karabakh was complicated by the fact that here nationalism and militants were justified by the circumstances of war; therefore, it was extremely difficult for Ter-Petrosian to remove the leaders in Karabakh, who had weapons, armed units for their disposal, legitimacy of national-liberation struggle, and public opinion support.

On the other hand, the situation could not be left as it was, because if the military initiatives of Karabakh would continue, this would become increasing embarrassment for the Armenian

²⁰ It should be distinguished in this respect statist nationalism, quite strong in the Ter-Petrosian administration, from ethnic nationalism, i.e., from the ideology in favor of unification with Karabakh as well as, in a longer run, incorporation of all the 'lost lands', particularly those remained in Turkey. Contrary to this ideology, the current administration advocates statist-neorealist nationalism based on the values of a system of civic nation-states with fixed territories, even though it cannot abandon support to Nagorny Karabakh because of the strength of ethnic nationalism among the populace.

leader, who felt that both his power as well as the security of Armenia could be jeopardized by the independent actions of the Karabakh forces.

Finally, the three strategic military objectives of the Karabakh forces were already achieved: a bridge between Armenia and Karabakh was opened through the Lachin corridor; Shushi was conquered, and the immediate threat to the civilians in Stepanakert and other villages from shelling was neutralized; and Khojaly was conquered and the airport was under the disposal of the Armenian forces. This was a balance point in the war, where Ter-Petrossian could argue to its counterparts in Karabakh that it was the best time for concluding the cease-fire.

OSCE's increase in activities was conditioned by some other factors, namely, necessity to support Elcibey's declarative pro-western and anti-Russian government; development of first oil-transit projects and signing of the first agreements in that respect with the Elcibey government; and perhaps not less importantly, the increasing understanding that the spillover effect of escalation can involve also other regional actors directly in the military situations. The OSCE was also concerned with increasing its role in the post-Soviet space vis-à-vis Russia's more and more coherent attempts to reestablish itself as the only regional care-taker, which was apparent in Russia's help to Abkhazia.

Russia, on the other hand, was indeed increasing its presence in the region, or returning to the region. The first point on its agenda was bringing Georgia and Azerbaijan back into its institutional space by making them members of the CIS, with the follow-up point of bringing its military presence back in these states. Accordingly, it was interested in reestablishing its direct leverage over the Karabakh conflict, and in excluding a possibility of any development without its direct participation.

The result was that a new cease-fire proposal was offered for consideration to the sides. Beforehand, these proposals were not accepted in various ways: if Armenia would accept, Azerbaijan would reject. Or, Armenia would accept knowing that Karabakh would reject (in the case if the proposal did not correspond to its interests).

The reasons for a proposal to be accepted or rejected could also be various: if it was suggested in the proposal that the Armenian and Azeri forces should move back and create a narrow neutral zone, the Armenians would mention that without specification this meant that Nagorny Karabakh remained within the range of Azerbaijan's artillery, which was unacceptable. If, however, it was noted that Nagorny Karabakh forces should also participate in the move back operation, Armenia and / or Karabakh would note that since Karabakh's territory was limited, the distance of moving back *within* Karabakh should be less than the distance of moving back *outside* Karabakh, i.e., that the Azeri forces should withdraw from a larger strip of territory than the Karabakh forces, this, in turn, was unacceptable to Azerbaijan. Add to these and other controversies the fact that the Karabakh Armenians were effectively excluded from direct negotiations with Azerbaijan within the framework of the OSCE, or counterbalanced by the representatives of the Azeri minority of Karabakh in exile²¹; and also that the goodwill of all the sides involved was necessary for achieving cease-fire, but there was no ready-made mechanism for enforcing or even maintaining it by the OSCE, and even monitoring was under question *until* the agreement would be achieved. This meant that it was offered to the two sides in the conflict (rather than to the real three sides) to achieve an agreement without effective international guarantees, despite their deep mistrust of each other, and if such an agreement were achieved and maintained for a while (from 30 to 90 days according to different versions of the cease-fire papers), only *then* the monitoring groups would arrive. If the sides were able to trust each other for three months, no monitors would be necessary at all. The international involvement was necessary to provide an impartial mechanism of controlling the behavior of sides; meanwhile the OSCE was persuading the sides to discipline themselves and trust each other after the last elements of trust were broken, without providing a realistic mechanism to achieve that aim.

Apparently, such a process of achieving peace was quite unrealistic, and no wonder that the Azeri and Karabakh sides were often, in the hot stage of conflict, using the OSCE peace

²¹ Times when the representatives of two communities could fruitfully discuss their problems had passed; OSCE intervened when the conflict was between a politicized ethnic group which had proclaimed independent statehood and a state wherein that group was situated. At that point of time, equating the NK representatives with representatives of refugees from the Shushi Azerbaijani community could not bear any political results.

process as a parallel setting to the war, in which they hoped to achieve a military solution to their dispute.

This became apparent when in summer 1993, under the circumstances discussed above, Levon Ter-Petrossian visited Nagorny Karabakh in order to enforce the adoption by the Karabakh leadership of the proposed cease-fire. This resulted in a political crisis in Karabakh and resignation of some of the leaders associated with the Dashnaktsutjun party. However, the document was accepted. But then, new developments in Azerbaijan hindered its implementation. Colonel Suret Guseinov moved some of its brigades from Ganja toward Baku, overthrew Elcibey (who found refuge in Nakhichevan), and declared Elcibey's rule toppled. He invited Geidar Aliev, the old-time communist and KGB leader of all-Soviet significance, and the greatest charismatic leader of Azerbaijan, who was in Nakhichevan during the previous period after being ousted from the Soviet Politburo, to join him in Baku. Aliev came back to active politics and soon reinstalled himself as the main leader of Azerbaijan, gradually marginalizing Guseinov, declaring him traitor and effectively eliminating his political influence and his supporters, including his connections with Russia. Many observers noted that Russia staged a successful coup, which brought about unexpected results.

Political turmoil in Azerbaijan during the latest part of summer in 1993 opened another opportunity for the Karabakh army to continue and finish its strategic reconfiguration of the map of the area. Three major problems have been left after the first series of offensives: Aghdam, which because of its location was deep inside of the body of Nagorny Karabakh, and was quite difficult to be conquered; Kelbajar, which was between Armenia and Karabakh, and should have been conquered in order to preclude the possibility of double hit on the Lachin corridor from north and south; and establishing a *security belt* all along the perimeter of Karabakh, for which Aghdam and Kelbajar, as well as Lachin, became natural parts.

Thus, despite all the attempts of Ter-Petrossian to preclude further escalation of the conflict, the objective situation contributed to the opportunity, for the Armenian side, to enhance its security and bargaining power at the expense of the local Azeri population in the surrounding

territories. This meant that war went outside the territory of Nagorny Karabakh, and continued on the territory of Azerbaijan. Operations in Lachin, Kelbajar and other districts of Azerbaijan, as well as the obvious success of the Karabakh forces, reinforced the conclusion that despite all the declarations of its leadership, Armenia is directly participating in the acts of war against Azerbaijan.

At this point, a new geopolitical situation emerged in the region: To the south, the Armenian forces pushed the Azeris out of the strip of territory between Nagorny Karabakh and Iran. Many refugees appeared in Iran, which increased the possibility of Iran's involuntary involvement in the conflict. To the north, the Armenian forces had an open road toward Gianja, the second-main city of Azerbaijan, from which the army had been moved to Baku by Suret Gusseinov. Should the Armenians continue their raid in either direction, the conflict was going to involve major regional powers: from Gianja, the road to Baku was open, and S. Gusseinov's example demonstrated that it would not take much time or effort to reach and defeat Baku, the Azeri capital, thereby creating a completely new situation, to which Turkey was very likely to respond by initiating military action against Armenia from the west. If the conflict would develop to the south, then Iran's involvement was unavoidable.

Both versions were possible, but neither of them occurred in reality. The war effectively ended at that stage, with establishing the „security belt“ around Nagorny Karabakh. This very fact illustrates perhaps that the main actor who was waging war from the Armenian side was the Nagorny Karabakh army, who was not interested in a major regional conflict, but only in resolving the problem of security of Nagorny Karabakh. It illustrates also that both Armenia and Russia retained considerable political influence over the process, and while they were unable to effectively preclude actions of self-defense, nor preventive a retaliatory strikes of the Karabakh forces around the periphery, they however could preclude the war's becoming a major interregional conflict by involving Turkey, Iran, as well as Georgia or Russia's northern Caucasus (which would easily happen should the Armenian forces advance further to the north-west in the direction of Gianja).

After coming to power, Aliyev tried to balance new Azerbaijan's policies toward the West, Russia, Turkey, and Iran. While he achieved considerable détente in his state's relations with Russia, as well as preserved its valuable relations with Turkey, he failed to achieve good relations with Iran. His policies toward Nagorny Karabakh were evidently more flexible than his predecessors': first, he tried to re-conquer the lost territories; after a failure which resulted in major losses from both sides in the winter 1994, he suddenly agreed to a change in framework of the negotiations and to the inclusion of the Nagorny Karabakh's leadership in signing the cease-fire agreement brokered by Russia, and particularly by Russia's then defense minister Pavel Grachev. A piece of paper with signatures of Armenia, Russia, and Nagorny Karabakh was thus produced, and the hot stage of war effectively ended. It should be noted that while the idea of separation of cease-fire from the agreement on status of Nagorny Karabakh belonged to the experienced diplomats of the OSCE Minsk group (since the sides would easier agree on cease-fire than on the status), the implementation of cease-fire by inviting Nagorny Karabakh to participate in it was mainly Russia's achievement.

One cannot argue, of course, that this agreement would hold if a geopolitical balance in the region were not established. Gradual weakening of Azerbaijan by a succession of three coups; loss of territories and establishment of a security zone around Nagorny Karabakh; and at least declarative return of Azerbaijan within the sphere of influence of Russia (by becoming a full-fledged member of the CIS) played their decisive role. However, the cease-fire agreement was qualitatively different in nature than all the previous proposals, in that it bore the signatures of the real sides to the conflict, and among them, of the Karabakh leadership. While the agreement's status as an international document which recognized the existence of a self-governed unit under the name of Nagorny Karabakh is contested by Azerbaijan, it nevertheless played a decisive role in reinforcing the end to shooting war: in addition to accomplishing all their geopolitical objectives of securing the integrity of Nagorny Karabakh (to put it mildly), the Karabakh leadership was given a chance, finally, to be recognized as a side in conflict, which even further lessened its possible incentive to continue the hot war.

The truce, therefore, would not preclude any major military action, if that were contemplated by the sides. But what the truce helped to achieve was that in the absence of necessity (for the Armenians) or possibility (for the Azeris) of a major military action the perimeter of the conflict became stabilized, and minor incidents along it became singular events. Permanent shooting stopped for the time being.

Recognition of a politicized ethno-territorial unit for what it was became the magic clue for stopping the conflict, and obviously it happened only when the entity proved by brute force that it deserved such a recognition.

However simple and logical this fact seems from the outside, for Aliiev, this was of course a major concession. This did not mean that he realized that Nagorny Karabakh deserved special rights and recognition; as a realist, he knew that he could not achieve victory at that point. He needed a break from the war to consolidate his forces, develop the petroleum extraction and transit contracts with the Western companies, achieve recognition for his rule with the major powers, and try to persuade Russia to give up its support to Armenia and help Azerbaijan to restore its power over Karabakh. Even if the last objective were not achieved, because Russia wanted to preclude Azerbaijan's becoming a significant international player in the petroleum deals, the break could be used by Aliiev to rebuild the army, particularly using the petroleum bonuses, credits and revenues, and to make another attempt of military resolution of the conflict in future. The fact that so far he has not attempted that, leaving that option open and frequently declaring it as a possible outcome if the peace agreement is not achieved as soon as possible, is by no means a guarantee that it cannot happen if, indeed, the peace treaty is not finalized. Obviously, neither the Karabakh Armenians, nor Armenia want a continuation of war, and it cannot be expected that they can start another offensive: the military victory is on their side, and they still hope to exchange the fruits of that victory for a resolution which would be favorable to their interests. However, if the oil deals develop as expected, Azerbaijan is going to increase its military power and international influence. This situation explains the positions of the sides in the period after the cease-fire.

- Azerbaijan: fast peace agreement on the terms favorable to it or no agreement, because it still has the option of re-starting the war in future, in a better position (for instance, by using petroleum revenues for military purposes);

- Armenia: fast peace agreement on fair terms, because it has no interest in re-starting the war in a longer run;

- Nagorny Karabakh: fast peace agreement on the terms favorable to it, or long-term conservation of the situation as it is, because this would give it the opportunity to re-build, as well as to reinforce the perimeter of the security belt so that in the case of a future attack by Azerbaijan, the latter will be deterred by the considerations of costs which would be incurred;

- Russia: fast peace agreement with its troops stationed between the parties to the conflict, and / or with its troops returned to the external borders of Azerbaijan; or prolongation of indecisive situation until the Western companies will re-orient their expectations from Azerbaijan to Russia.

Russian-Armenian military cooperation: an escalatory factor?

It is this distribution of positions and interests which explains Russia's policies of close military cooperation with Armenia while at the same time declaring support to the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan (the latter also conditioned by Russia's own interest in not having another precedent of recognition of an ethnoterritorial unit's sovereignty). The same Russian former defense minister Grachev who brokered the cease-fire agreement also authorized the clandestine supplies of armaments to Armenia, and designed the structure of Russian military bases in Armenia, all with the aim of achieving long-term military balance between Armenia and Azerbaijan so that the latter would not have any real opportunity to resolve the conflict by military means at the cost of exclusion of Russia from the process and from the region as a whole. Since Armenia definitely has no interest in re-starting the war, increasing the Armenian armaments per se does not directly increase the possibility of new conflict. Rather, it increases the impossibility for Azerbaijan to

succeed if it tries to restore its power by force, and therefore arm supplies to Armenia deter rather than provoke a new conflict. There is, of course, a marginal possibility that, should a forceful change in power occur in Armenia, new leadership will be more radical than the current administration, or that the non-governmental troops will use the existing arsenals to fight each other or governmental forces; but this is not the central issue. The central issue is that these supplies decrease the likelihood of another armed conflict, because they decrease the likelihood of Azerbaijan's success if it tries to attack Nagorny Karabakh.

This question became a major point of Russian internal politics and, along with several others, was used by some political forces in Russia to discriminate against other forces, while simultaneously it helped Azerbaijan to present Armenia to the international community in an unfavorable light. An analysis of all the possible open resources and comparison of arms acquisitions of Armenia and Azerbaijan tend to a conclusion that still, despite all the armaments poured in Armenia, Azerbaijan is ahead in several types of weaponry²². Therefore, despite the rhetoric of disarmament and CFE agreements, accusations of Armenia in accepting these arms supplies are actually accusations of Armenia in its rational desire to guarantee its military security being surrounded by unfriendly (mildly put) powers and to preserve Nagorny Karabakh as an Armenian populated entity. In the peculiar situation Armenia found itself after independence, more armaments meant more security, more respect, and therefore more grounds for fair resolution to the Karabakh conflict and for possible cooperation with other regional actors. According to the base agreements with Russia, Armenia has no right to dispose these weapons according to its needs, because while being situated in Armenia, they actually belong to Russia and are a part of the armaments of the military bases under Russian military command; that is why, in particular, the accusations in a clandestine deal are unfounded, because transfer of armaments from one Russian base to another does not necessitate an interstate agreement, and therefore there is no other

²² Emil Sanamyan: Arms acquisitions of Armenia and Azerbaijan: A comparative approach. University of Arizona, 1997 (manuscript).

official agreement concerning these armaments between Armenia and Russia except for the agreement on military bases²³.

The situation is different in the case of Georgia and Azerbaijan. Georgia does not fear attack from Turkey or Azerbaijan, and the only power which can militarily intimidate it (and does so) is Russia. Therefore, a precondition for Georgia's complete independence is independence from Russia. The same applies to Azerbaijan. In the case of Armenia, however, the situation is the opposite: Turkey and Azerbaijan are overtly or covertly hostile to it, Iran is unreliable, and Georgia, with whom Armenia has friendly relations, is objectively more inclined toward Turkey and Azerbaijan than toward Armenia, which makes it an unsuitable security partner (not to say about the Armenian populated regions in Georgia and dependence of Armenia from the supply routes of Georgia, which are sources of constant tension between the two, otherwise friendly, states). Therefore, for Armenia military alliance with Russia, in a situation where there are no alternatives, is the only possible option. If Armenia were to reject military presence of Russia, even without Nagorny Karabakh conflict, it would be under the threat of military influence of Turkey (which wages prolonged non-recognized war against its Kurdish minority at the borders with Armenia). Given the Karabakh conflict, where Azerbaijan and Turkey appear as allies, no doubt that Turkey would try to fulfill the power vacuum after the collapse of the USSR by expanding its military presence to the east, and the first step in that direction would be installing its troops in Nakhichevan; today, Turkey is deterred from that action due to the presence of Russian border troops. Any unfriendly step against Armenia means unfriendly step against Russia, and Turkey knows that. Every year Turkey directs accusations toward Armenia and Russia about their supporting the Kurd guerrillas; knowing Turkey's peculiar attitude toward the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbors (Iraq, Syria, Cyprus, islands in the Aegean Sea), there cannot be any doubt that the military vacuum in the Transcaucasus would result in its appearing under Turkey's security umbrella, which in this case, unfortunately, does not necessarily mean under NATO's umbrella. In the security system of Transcaucasus, the chessboard principle becomes the

²³ Recently (September 1997) , a Russian-Armenian Treaty on Cooperation was signed by the Presidents which enhanced the legal basis for cooperation of two states in all spheres, including defense and military.

most reliable one: Russia's and Armenia's security systems merge in order to counterbalance Turkey's and Azerbaijan's security systems²⁴. One cannot even say that this affects the sovereignty of Armenia, because in the absence of other comparable alternatives (like membership in NATO) such an arrangement is to a high extent in the best interest of Armenia, insofar as Turkey is not the most reliable NATO member in the world.

In this context, it becomes apparent that the media campaign concerning unjustified supply of Armenia with armaments objectively may contribute to destroying one of the effective means of preventing further conflict in the area.

III. The peace process

Development of peace process coincided with changes in foreign policies of the US and other major powers after the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, for a while the agenda of peace- and democracy-building became to the forefront. Soon, however, the US realized that unlimited promotion of human rights agenda and democratization may as well result in destabilization; that it required continual engagement in internal affairs of several states, for which there were no resources and not enough commitment; and that the net result of these policies could be actually less rather than more stability in the international scene. Accordingly, big powers slightly modified their policies, making them more like the policies during the Cold War, when friendliness of a regime toward this or that side in the global conflict, rather than the regime's level of democracy and rates of human rights, counted as priority factors. The world may again be divided between friends and foes, but if beforehand the division was more ideological, now it becomes more economically-motivated: those states which have resources in which the Western states are interested, or those states which adopt strict free and open market rules, can count on the Western support even if they are not perfectly democratic, and even if they are not democratic at all.

²⁴ Not to say that it is astonishing to see how the US media encourage Azeri leadership's assertions that the oil revenues will be used for the purposes of reconquest of Karabakh. Business is supposed to bring peace rather than war. International corporations are supposed to refrain financing overtly militaristic projects.

Moreover, if the Western powers have to choose between stability with authoritarian leadership or fragile democracy with the prospects of destabilization, they would perhaps prefer the first to the second. These tendencies created a situation where Azerbaijan's oil resources and its potential of being a link between Central Asian petroleum and the West, a link independent of Russia, determined emergence of an anti-Armenian media campaign in the US. This resulted also in an increasing pressure on Armenia to accept a settlement to the conflict which would bring back the arrangement which existed before the collapse of the USSR, that is, Nagorny Karabakh as a mere autonomy within Azerbaijan. This would mean that all the sacrifices and military victories, achieved not so much because of the purely militant inclinations, but rather because of the escalatory path which the conflict took and because of lack of political- democratic means to find a peaceful solution to it, were for nothing. This would also mean that Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh would not have any real guarantees of the latter's secure existence in future. Armenia found itself step by step entrapped in a no-win situation.

The result is that, certainly, Armenia refuses to accept such a settlement despite all the pressure; what is worse, this creates an incentive for some in the Armenian circles to advocate new steps toward further destabilization and escalation, in a hope that such a turn would force the international actors to offer Armenia a better deal. But the most important result is that the lenience of international community toward Aliiev's rule in Azerbaijan with all its deviations from democracy makes Armenia less and less inclined to democratize, and as the internal developments demonstrate, a state which started with better adherence to democratic norms than any other one in the post-Soviet space, except for the Baltics, is going straight toward a kind of military-authoritarian stronghold. Some argue that this is not bad, since a politically overcentralized government can compromise in the matter of ending a war without fearing internal public opinion. But unfavorable ends of war with non-democratic governments actually decrease rather than increase internal stability, increase the likelihood of interruption of smooth transition of power, and create conditions for resurfacing of conflict resolved by a compromise. Therefore, a

precondition for lasting peaceful resolution to the Karabakh conflict should be advancement of democratic agenda.

Several reasons why the OSCE mediation in this conflict is not effective and successful have been analyzed²⁵, and several remedies have been offered, the last one being creation of a smaller ad hoc group than the Minsk group of states so that the decision-making process would concern only limited actors. There are some obvious points of criticism which are still valid, the main one being Azerbaijan's reluctance, after recognizing Nagorny Karabakh as a side in war and cease-fire negotiations, to recognize it also as a full-fledged side in the peace negotiations and to negotiate directly with the Karabakh authorities rather than to rely on the shuttle diplomacy of the mediators.

The very last peace proposal, advanced by the triad of states (France, the US, and Russia), while is kept confidential in its details, apparently is based on the same idea which helped to achieve cease-fire: separation of the status issue from the issue of final strengthening of the peace process and of building guarantees which would preclude another round of international war. According to this scheme²⁶, Nagorny Karabakh remains a part of Azerbaijan with a level of autonomy to be determined in the future; it has a right to keep armed police units; it returns all the occupied territories around it; it keeps its connection with Armenia through the Lachin corridor which is given an international status in this or that way (in some versions of the circulating ideas, it is proposed that the OSCE would *lease* the corridor from Azerbaijan); the refugees are resettled both in the currently occupied territories as well as in Shushi, which is excluded from the system of autonomy, whatever that would be, and remains directly subjected to Baku.

The cease-fire proposal succeeded not only because the time was ripe, but also because there were some crucial differences between the proposal of the OSCE and the one brokered by Russia and then endorsed by the OSCE; namely, the OSCE proposal strongly advocated creation

²⁵ One of the valuable analyses is presented in Roxane Dehdashti: The OSCE as a conflict mediator in the Caucasus: Lessons from the Nagorno-Karabakh and the South Ossetian case/ Presentation at Conference on Civilian Conflict Prevention as Part of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, 28-29 April, 1997 (manuscript).

²⁶ See Table E.

of a demilitarized zone, moving back from the front-line and sealing of weapons, and disarmament. The Russian version offered only cease-fire and de-emphasized any strengthening measures like disarmament etc. The OSCE proposal still never offered a clear position for the Karabakh side; in the Russian proposal, the Karabakh Commander-in-Chief was the major side in signing the agreement. Both proposals, however, were based on the right idea that the cease-fire is more urgent than the determination of status of Karabakh, and this understanding coincided with the interests of the sides in the particular circumstances of 1994.

The new tripartite proposal is a natural continuation of the cease-fire agreement. Its objective is to resolve the issues like demilitarization, return of territories and refugees, while leaving the final determination of status for the future. But if in the first case separation of status from cease-fire worked, in the current case separation of status from deoccupation and resettlement may not succeed precisely because from the perspective of Karabakh, return of territories and refugees makes sense only in exchange for a clear status. Azerbaijan is not ready yet to offer any other status than that of cultural autonomy, which would mean bringing the relations between Karabakh and Azerbaijan to the situation prior to 1988. Karabakh is naturally opposed to that, since in the indecisive situation of today it enjoys complete independence. This is the crucial issue of disagreement--whether or not the status should be negotiated in one package with all other major questions or separately. For Karabakh, return of territories makes sense only in exchange for status.

There are several other points of disagreement. In particular, the refugee return issue, from the Karabakh and Armenian perspective, looks one-sided: while the return of refugees to the occupied territories and Shushi is included, return of Armenian refugees to the villages in the Northern Karabakh (Martuni region, partly occupied by the Azeris), as well as to the villages in the Shahumian district adjacent to Karabakh, not to say to the Azerbaijani cities Baku, Sumgait, and Gianja is not included along with return of the Azeri refugees to the countryside villages in Armenia. The reasons are obvious: refugees can safely return only to those territories where jurisdiction belongs to their nation. However, this makes it look biased toward one type of

refugees in comparison with another. To avoid this, resettlement could be perhaps organized in several stages. First, refugees from some of the occupied territories could return--those which are strategically less important for the Karabakh security. Second, after the strategically important territories are returned to Azerbaijan and become demilitarized zones, the second wave of refugees could come back, particularly to Aghdam and Kelbajar. Third, only after Karabakh's status is clearly determined and accepted by all the sides, refugees from Shushi could be offered return with the same basic guarantees as refugees from Baku, Ganja, or Armenian countryside.

By stressing the issue of Shushi, Kelbajar, and Lachin at the expense of more resolvable issues, the Azeris create an impression that they want to use the return of refugees as a new lever in conflict. They are interested in re-Azerbaijanization of Shushi, a stronghold at the center of Karabakh, for political reasons more than in repopulating peripheral occupied territories such as Zangelan, Kubatly, Fizuli, etc. The same can be said about resettling Kelbajar and Lachin by the Azeris.

However, since the concerns of the Armenian side are not sufficiently taken into account, this issue becomes an obstacle for the success of negotiations: since the Armenians are particularly worried about the western perimeter of Karabakh and its connection with Armenia, as well as about internal security of Karabakh, they are unlikely to agree easily on the resettlement scheme as it exists today; rather, they officially or unofficially encourage resettlement of the Armenian refugees as well as those from the earthquake zone in the occupied territories, particularly in Shushi, Lachin, and even Kelbajar, thereby further complicating the situation. Shushi, Kelbajar and Lachin have been less populated than other occupied regions, but it is these three entities that are of major importance for the Azeri side--from which the Armenian side clearly makes a conclusion that the issue for the Azeris is not resolution of the problem of refugees, but gaining access to strategically crucial parts of the territory of conflict in order to re-start the isolationist tactics against Karabakh.

This situation, coupled with unclear mechanism and perspectives of international monitoring, not to say peace-keeping in the conflict, makes it quite unlikely that the deal offered

by the three states will be agreed upon by the sides to the conflict, despite the steadily increasing pressure on Armenia to concede (connected with the increase in Azerbaijan's international influence due to the petroleum and pipeline deals).

IV. *In lieu of a conclusion: Three stages of conflict escalation and conflict prevention strategy*

A recapitulation of the causes of escalation

The Nagorny Karabakh conflict presents three structurally distinct stages of development: pre-war (civilian phase), war (international phase) and post-war. Accordingly, three sets of conflict prevention measures would be appropriate to be applied to this conflict. Since the first stage is the crucial one and it determines the conflict's becoming war, it should have been at the forefront of attention from conflict prevention perspective.

In this subsection, some particular causes of escalation and of lack of success in resolution of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict selected from the detailed analysis in the previous sections will be presented. In the following one, appropriate modification of conflict prevention strategies according to the stages of the conflict will be discussed.

It can be noted that one of the most important causes for escalation of the conflict between Armenians and Azeris was use of politicized violence of a mass scale (pogroms, massacres, indiscriminate shelling of civilian populated areas, hostage-taking, and ethnic cleansing). Politicized violence of one ethnic group against another have been used in the same setting at the beginning of this century, and its re-birth in 1988 with the events in Sumgait was a crucial point from where on the conflict from a problem between the two actors, the government of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Armenian population of Nagorny Karabakh, became a conflict between two ethnic groups.

Another cause was shaping of political aspirations in terms of ethnic demands, as a result of which the conflict between two political entities became, again, a conflict between two ethnies.

The third cause was use of economic blockade for political purposes. The blockade installed by Azerbaijan and joined by Turkey contributed to the wide-spread opinion among the Armenians that they are trapped in between two hostile powers united in their struggle against Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh, and contributed to expanding the conflict from local to regional level, at least in perceptions of the sides.

These factors were under the disposal of the actors of the current stage of conflict. While, for instance, the Soviet policies of korenizatsia with compartmentalization can be considered also as causes for the current stage of conflict, they only explain, to some extent, why there was a conflict in the first place. But selection of violence and war to achieve aims and resolve the conflict still cannot be explained fully by the Soviet nationalities policies or any other historical factor: it was up to the leaders of the republics, national movements, and states to adopt a cautious and moderate strategy or a confrontational one. They adopted the confrontational strategy or allowed the populace to develop one without effectively hindering it.

Another factor which greatly contributed to escalation and hinders the resolution is the tangle of issues associated with the role and status of ethnic groups with territorial claims in international environment. In short, this is the variable of recognition versus denial. If ethnic groups were recognized as separate political entities in the world affairs, this generally might contribute to pacification of the Karabakh conflict. If, on the other hand, at least the Karabakh Armenians would be recognized as an independent political force, the first instances of violence and ethnic cleansing might not have continuation, and the conflict could stop with negotiations between Azerbaijan and Karabakh without degenerating in a war.

The aspects of social construction of the conflict played great role. This concerns the clashing interpretations of history of the two ethnic groups involved, and their construction of the logic of the current stage of conflict. But this concerns also the dominating international perspectives on this type of conflict, those perspectives which insist on priority of state

sovereignty over human and minority rights no matter what, and which prefer stability with hidden quotidian violence which does not affect other international actors to political upheavals which can become a trigger or an example for rising demands for change within other states.

Finally, an important cluster of causes is associated with the role external actors played in this conflict. The role of external actors in a state versus ethnic group conflict is being intensively studied, with a preliminary conclusion that the involvement of external actors increases the likelihood of violence. In this case, however, one might perhaps notice that it was not the fact of involvement but the peculiar way of involvement which contributed to conflict escalation. Russia was interested in making the conflict protracted so that both states remain directly subject to its influence ('divide and rule'): for that, center/Russia had to help sides interchangeably at the first stage to escalate the conflict; then it had to broker cease-fire as a quasi-peace; and then it had to abandon the sides to show them that they still remain greatly dependent on its involvement.

The pattern of involvement of the Western powers can be characterized as "tempting and abandoning". There is not enough interest and commitment in the West to this periphery of Europe on the background of such large-scale conflicts as those in the former Yugoslavia and Africa. Attention of Western powers is more symbolic than substantial. Even significant amounts of humanitarian and developmental aid, both material and financial, received by the actors in this conflict, at least at the first stages of it, have been merely a way to pour in money in order to avoid the necessity to adopt political decisions.

The result has been spectacular: the two states in conflict and the non-recognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic have superficially adopted all the attributes of a modern democratic state--periodic elections, presidents and parliaments, constitutions etc. But mimicking the "western" attributes of democracy has not been accompanied by internal adoption of the rules of the game necessary for democracy. Democratic institutions have become a facade for the new power and capital elites to rule the populations.

Peripheral location of the conflict from the perspective of great powers is still intact. This means that the significant players of the world are more likely to act in order to isolate and deter

the conflict rather than to direct sufficient efforts to resolve it. While the oil deals of Azerbaijan and the perspectives of the region's becoming a transit route for Central Asian petroleum have somehow moved the conflict to the forefront of the world's attention, this is more a temporary exaggeration of the region's significance than a qualitative reevaluation of it. The region is too small and too distant to be of major interest globally. This means that those actors in the region who demand more international involvement can once again use a kind of 'terrorist' tactic, i.e., provocation of conflict with the hope that the expansion of its scale will attract world's attention and make their cause and their truth known. What did not happen at the first round of the war, may be on the agenda of some forces to happen at the second. This can include direct involvement of Turkey and Iran in the conflict.

Recent developments in the international scene, which included NATO enlargement, Russia-Belarus union, Clinton-Aliev meeting in Washington, and Russian-Armenian Treaty of Cooperation, demonstrate that dividing lines of the Cold War, though geographically changed, still dominate the landscape of international relations. For the volatile situation in the Caucasus, this is another factor which can bring unstable stability, or otherwise lead to a new regional war.

sketch of a comprehensive conflict prevention strategy

Lessons learnt from the Karabakh war which was interrupted by the cease-fire, and the obvious possibility of the war's resumption make it clear that a working conflict prevention strategy should include, in the most general sense, the following three sets of measures:

- measures directed to preventing escalation of conflict at the pre-war and/or war stage;
- measures directed to precluding new spread of conflict at the post-war stage; and
- measures directed to finding incentives for the sides of the conflict to negotiate and bargain rather than to resume hot war.

The first set of measures refers to finding ways to prevent dissipative events from becoming escalatory factors. Dissipative events are highly significant occurrences, benchmarks on the road of development of conflict. They are highly visible, manifest extremely important from the perspective of at least one side or both sides events which determine perceptions and attitudes of the sides of each other. As it is clear from the discussion above, preventive measures should be directed to preventing dissipative events in a conflict from occurring, or to preventing their consequences from becoming an escalatory factor in themselves. The conflict would probably take another shape, were *Sumgait* precluded, or had it received different evaluation by the authorities. Most significant aspect of dissipative events is that they acquire escalatory potential via the process of interpretation by the sides. It is the coupling of event itself with its interpretation by the sides which determines the escalatory path of conflict. In Tables A and B, the link between dissipative events and attitude-formation of the sides is presented. The perpetrators of *Sumgait*, *Kirovabad*, and *Baku*, perhaps, did not connect one event with the other. For the Armenians, however, these events became a compound with a clear message: we are in the war with the Azeris. Similarly, peaceful demonstrations by the Armenians were not interpreted by them as a threat to the Azeris. But they were interpreted so by the Azeris. This perceptual effect conditioned the next round of escalation.

The obvious conclusion is that any conflict prevention strategy aimed at elimination of the escalatory effects of dissipative events should be directed also to change of interpretation of the events, to their re-interpretation, and counter-propaganda against the expected hostile attitudinal effects. This general observation could not be operationalized in details within the limits of this essay, but at least one example will illustrate this issue: from the perspective of international peace-makers and humanitarian workers, the key conflict prevention measures in the refugee problem are providing them with relief, precluding their situation from deteriorating even further, and eventually returning them to their homes. In advancing this understandable humanitarian agenda, the international bodies, however, tend to disregard the role played by the refugees as a political card in the hands of the conflicting sides (see above, pp. 32-33 and 54), i.e., as escalatory

factor. As a result, there is an interpretation clash between the problem of refugees from humanitarian perspective and the same problem from a political perspective. The international actors tend to disregard the political role of refugees (the escalatory potential of the refugee problem) as if that role will change or disappear if it is not discussed. Instead, a more appropriate measure would be to develop a program to address measures for depolitization of the issue of refugees. In the context of the Karabakh conflict, depolitization of the issue of refugees would mean, for instance, influencing Aliev's government to cease using them as a possible asset for resettling them in strategically important areas.

In the similar way, several perceptual and interpretational effects are not addressed by the mediators, in order to avoid opening „Pandora's box“ of incompatible images of world and history. Perhaps, a set of measures to address these images, to construct their interpretations with an ideological spin favorable to conflict prevention and resolution rather than to avoid them, would be a more effective tactic. An example from a different but closely related setting goes like this: it is often stated that Russia and Turkey have been in conflict for centuries. However, recently in a newspaper article it was stated that during ten centuries of relations, Russia and Turkey have been in war only for 28 years, by implication being in peace all other time.

The second set of measures refers to working with the neighboring powers (Turkey, Iran, Georgia, and Russia) in order to preclude possible polarization of sides; involvement of dormant or hot ethnic conflicts within these states; and involvement of Armenians and Azeris within these states in the Karabakh conflict. This also includes further strengthening tiny examples of cooperation existing between the Armenians and Azeris, for instance, in some Russian regions (concerning business transactions); the black market trade between the representatives of these two groups in Georgia; and importantly, development of cooperation between Armenians and Turks and Armenians and Georgians, after which Turks and Georgians can become links for advancing cooperation between Armenians and Azeris.

If history teaches us anything, the issue of genocide of the Armenians in Turkey should also be addressed within such a comprehensive peace-building strategy. The Karabakh conflict and

subsequent power rivalry between US and Turkey and Russia in the region resulted in thorough polarization of sides along the lines of the Cold War defense systems. Turkey's role in the region is crucial, and a course of reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey in a long run can help institutionalize the Armenian-Azeri peace and preclude any further conflict on the grounds of historical enmity in the region.

The third set of measures includes the crucial element of granting some kind of international recognition to Nagorny Karabakh, which might become a symbolic incentive to its leaders to seek long-lasting peace with the Azerbaijani government. The Azerbaijani leadership and the population should be persuaded to offer real guarantees of security to the people of Nagorny Karabakh.

This is not an opportunity to discuss the details of a peace proposal which would correspond to these strategic measures²⁷. Necessarily, such a proposal would include a set of long term peace- and democracy-building measures too. One can enumerate about fifteen different comprehensive peace proposals authored by official and unofficial actors, in a range from those which propose to merely register *de jure* the *de facto* situation to those which include drastic and improbable measures such as swap of territories etc. All these proposals, however, reflect the necessity of the above-mentioned two sets of measures. From the current situation in the region, it seems that the most plausible way to determine the status of Nagorny Karabakh would be granting some kind of joint administration to two states involved (provided there is a political will of both sides for such a solution), so that Armenia guarantees the security of Armenian population in Karabakh, and Azerbaijan supervises the resettlement and human rights of the Azeri population. However, any proposals to this effect are doomed to failure until the entire scope of problems is addressed, including deoccupation of parts of Karabakh occupied by Azerbaijan, and return of Armenian refugees in Azerbaijan and of the Azeri refugees from Armenia in Armenia. Since this is

²⁷ Such a proposal for the entire setting of Caucasus is advocated in Gevork Ter-Gabrielian: Strategies in ethnic conflict and a regional cooperation scheme for prevention of violent ethnic conflict in the Caucasus (to be published by NOMOS).

really a very complicated problem, it is not likely that any solution can be found to this in the near future (see Table E.).

Another, the most comprehensive approach says that peace in the Karabakh conflict should be sought in a systemic connection with peace in other conflicts in the Caucasus. For instance, if Georgia and Abkhazia conclude a federative peace, this will become another factor helping Azerbaijan to agree to a federative solution. The very fact that the words *federation* versus *confederation* are already inserted in the Georgian and Abkhazian discourses is a positive element from the perspective of making peace in Karabakh. The Chechen war and its outcome also had an impact on the Karabakh conflict. While Karabakh rhetorically supported Russia rather than Chechnya, because of its dependency on Russia, the Chechens' right to self-determination as reflected in the Khasavviurt accords made the Karabakh Armenians hopeful that such kind of agreement could be negotiated with the Azeris too.

The systemic view on this conflict comes down to the following: any successful comprehensive peace building and conflict prevention strategy should take into account necessity of finding a definition for some kind of international recognition of the politicized ethnic groups involved. Insofar as the Armenians in Nagorny Karabakh feel that the international community tries to trick them out of the conflict without giving what they are looking for, the conflict will not be over. It was interrupted already once by a combination of trick and force, in 1921, in the setting of the USSR. That did not prevent the conflict from erupting in war eighty years later. The same kind of strategy is likely to fail again. Insofar as there are Armenians in Karabakh, only by negotiating with them and granting them a significant part of their demands can Azerbaijan achieve long-lasting peace. And it is in this point that the international community should help Azerbaijan and Armenia. This can be done by granting Nagorny Karabakh (rather than any ethnic group in it) recognition within the structure of the Caucasus region, along with other administrative-territorial ethnic regions, in a regional organization where states and non-state actors will be presented alongside each other²⁸.

²⁸ How it is possible is discussed in op. cit.

TABLE A. dissipative events and attitude formation of Armenians

<u>escalation stages</u>	<u>dissipative events</u>	<u>attitude-formation</u> (perceptions and interpretations of the Armenians)
pre-war start _____	NKAO Soviet decision to request transfer	all-national cause for the Armenians (history matters)
spread & polarization	demonstrations in Armenia	
	Sumgait	genocide threat for the Armenians (history matters)
	Kirovabad	necessity to change the image of sacrificial lamb (history matters)
intensification of ethnic cleansing	blockade	
	ethnic cleansing of Azeris from Armenia	
	Baku	war against Armenians (history matters)
	Operation Ring	only self-defense can help (history matters)
toward war	self-defense units crystallizing	
	bombings _____	war is the only option to keep our civilians from being killed
	Khojaly _____	violence against civilians: we can do that too
war	territorial victories _____	only victory in war will help to achieve aims (history matters)

post-war

cease-fire

**this is the peace we want plus
recognition**

TABLE B. Dissipative events and attitude formation of Azeris

<u>escalation stages</u>	<u>dissipative events</u>	<u>attitude-formation</u> (perceptions and interpretations of the Azeris)
pre-war start	NKAO Soviet decision to request transfer	disobedient and ungrateful action by the Armenians whom we have given autonomy because of Stalin's pressure and our national generosity (history matters)
spread & polarization	demonstrations in Armenia	they want our territory they are well organized our brethren in Armenia are threatened they need a lesson
	Sumgait	natural reaction to rallies and rumors about pogroms
	Kirovabad	Karabakh is our ancient historical homeland being destroyed by the Armenians
	blockade	not only Karabakh, but also Armenia are dependent on our generosity and our supplies
intensification of ethnic cleansing	ethnic cleansing of Azeris from Armenia	a proof of their deviousness; the international media exaggerated Sumgait but are silent about <i>this</i>
	Baku	Communists used the Armenians to pogrom our national movement
	Operation Ring	Only by demonstrating its good will in helping us to clean our territory from Armenian guerrillas can the center bring Azerbaijan back in its orbit
toward war	self-defense units crystallizing	

	Section 907 Freedom Support Act	the worldwide conspiracy of powerful Armenian lobby and diaspora
	Khojaly	they finally showed their real face
war	territorial victories	aggression of Armenia supported by Russia
post-war	cease-fire	their occupation of our territory will never be recognized and final Karabakh is still ours
	oil deals	we will be rich and reconquer Karabakh
	Lisbon Summit	the world finally recognized that Karabakh is ours
	Kocharian becomes Prime-Minister of Armenia	they finally made it apparent that Armenia and Karabakh are the same
	Russian-Armenian arms deal	finally a proof that Russia helps Armenia in war against Azerbaijan

TABLE C. The escalatory spiral

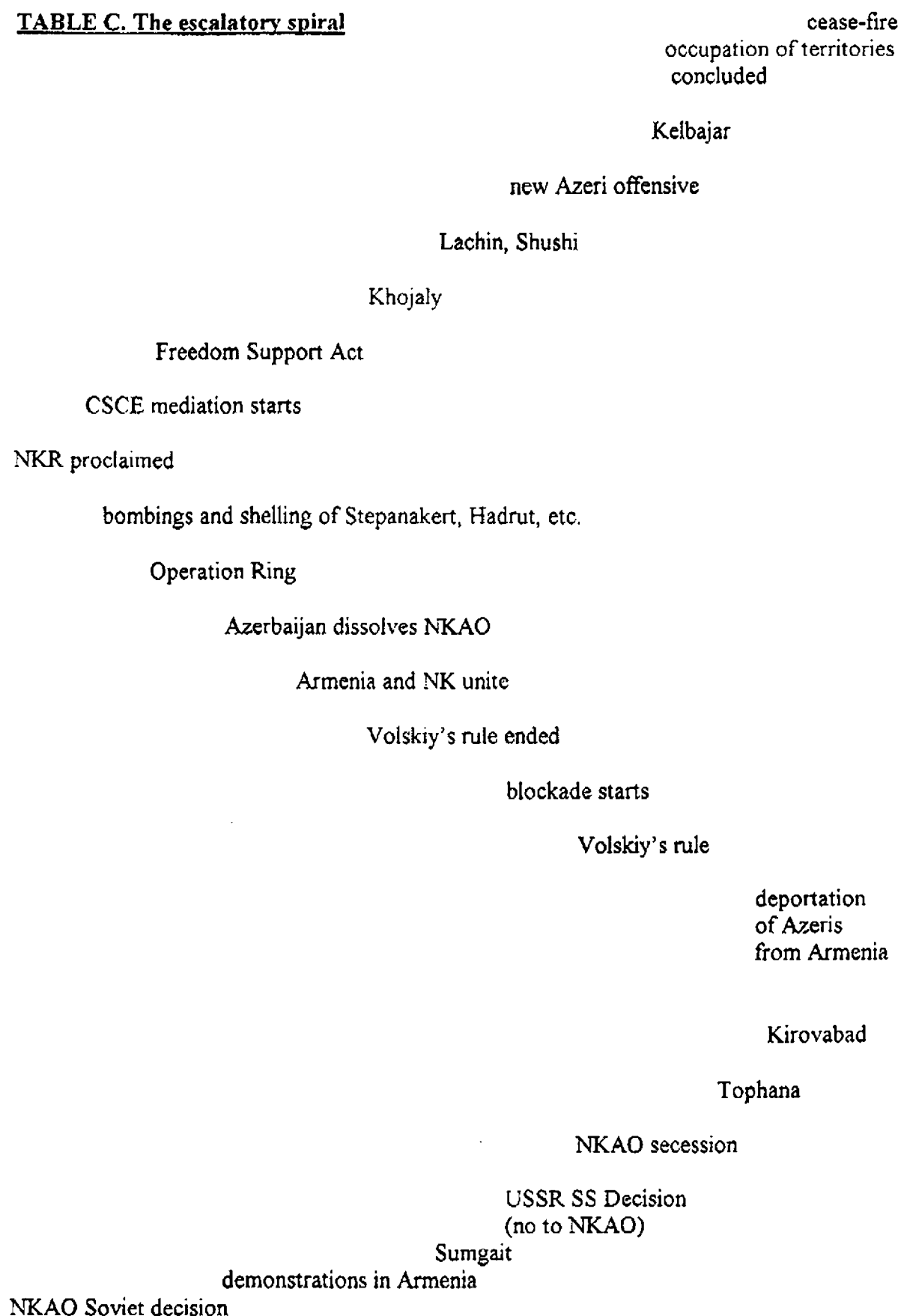


TABLE D. „High politics“

<u>dissipative events</u>		<u>decisions of political bodies</u>
1988		
20.02.		NKAO Soviet decision to request transfer (escalation)
02.88	demonstrations in Armenia	
28.02.	Sumgait	Gorbachev's vague speech calling for peace (irrelevant; escalation)
28.03.		USSR Supreme Soviet: no unification, socio-economic development (rooting of Tophana) (irrelevant; escalation)
20.07		NKAO Supreme Soviet: decision to secede from Azerbaijan and unite with Armenia (escalation)
10.88.	Tophana	
10.88.	Kirovabad	
11.88.	deportation of Azeris from Armenia	
1989		
01.12.		Special administrative status (Volskiy's rule) (mild soothing, unsuccessful)
08.89	blockade starts	
11.28.		Special status discontinued (outright escalation)
12.02.		Supreme Soviet of Armenia and National Council of NK hold joint session and declare unification (escalation)
1990		
01.90	Baku	
10.01.		Supreme Soviet of Armenia

		includes Karabakh in its state budget (escalation)
15.01.		USSR SS declares state of emergency in NKAO, Baku, Yerevan, and some regions of Azerbaijan (escalation)
27.07.		Azerbaijan SS dissolves NKAO (escalation)
1991		
14.01.		Azerbaijan dissolves Shahumian district (escalation)
04-05.	Operation Ring (Shahumian, Getashen, Martunashen cleansed)	
07.91.	Hadrut, a part of NKAO, cleansed	
07.91	Bombings and shelling of Stepanakert from Shushi and Aghdam start and become nearly permanent	
02.09.		Republic of NK proclaimed by NK Regional Council and Shahumian Governing Council (escalation)
1992		
06.01.		declaration of Independence of the NKR (escalation)
01.92.		CSCE involvement starts
02.92.		CSCE calls on Azerbaijan to cease blockade (irrelevant)
02.92.		Freedom Support Act section 907 (escalation).
04.91-02.92	Self-defense units crystallizing in Karabakh	
26.02.	Khojaly (notice anniversary of Sumgait)	
02.92-05.92	territorial victories (Lachin, Shushi)	collapse of Iranian mediation

06.92 after Elcibey is elected, the new Azeri offensive starts

1993
23.01

EP resolution characterizing blockade as violation of human rights (insufficient; escalation)

04.93. NKR forces take Kelbajar

30.04.

UN SC resolution calling for cessation of hostilities (insufficient; late reaction)

06-07. NKR forces occupy several of
1993 Azeri districts beyond NK and re-take some parts of NK previously occupied by Azerbaijan (Agdam, Mardakert, Fizuli, Jebrail, Kubatly, Zangelan)

18.07.

UN SC calls for immediate withdrawal of the Armenian forces (insufficient; late reaction)

TABLE E. Issues to consider for disentangling the conflict

1. status of Nagorny Karabakh
2. deoccupation of territories occupied by both sides
3. resettlement of refugees to these territories in Karabakh and adjacent districts (Shahumian, Getashen and Martunashen)
4. resettlement of refugees from Armenia to Armenia and from Azerbaijan to Azerbaijan
5. opening the blockade of communications
6. special status of Lachin and Shushi, and perhaps of the Kelbajar corridor
7. geography of demilitarized zone
8. status of Karabakh self-defense forces
9. mandate, amount, location, and nationalities of international observers
10. mandate, amount, location, and nationalities of international peace-keeping forces
11. distribution of power among administrative authorities
12. reliable early warning system with predetermined and secured guarantees of the mechanism of reaction in the case of resurgence of hostilities

The issues in this list are presented in no particular order, and in a wholesale formulation rather than in their versions advanced by the sides to the conflict. It is clear that they are prioritized differently by the sides. It is also clear that as of today, there are no mechanisms for implementing most of the issues addressed above. Moreover, secrecy which surrounds negotiations within the Minsk group results in raising distrust in the public opinion of the sides concerning their outcome. This makes it necessary to enhance explanatory work concerning the existing proposals, while continuing to prevent leaks as much as possible. A self-contradictory task, perhaps, which should be deliberated thoroughly.

