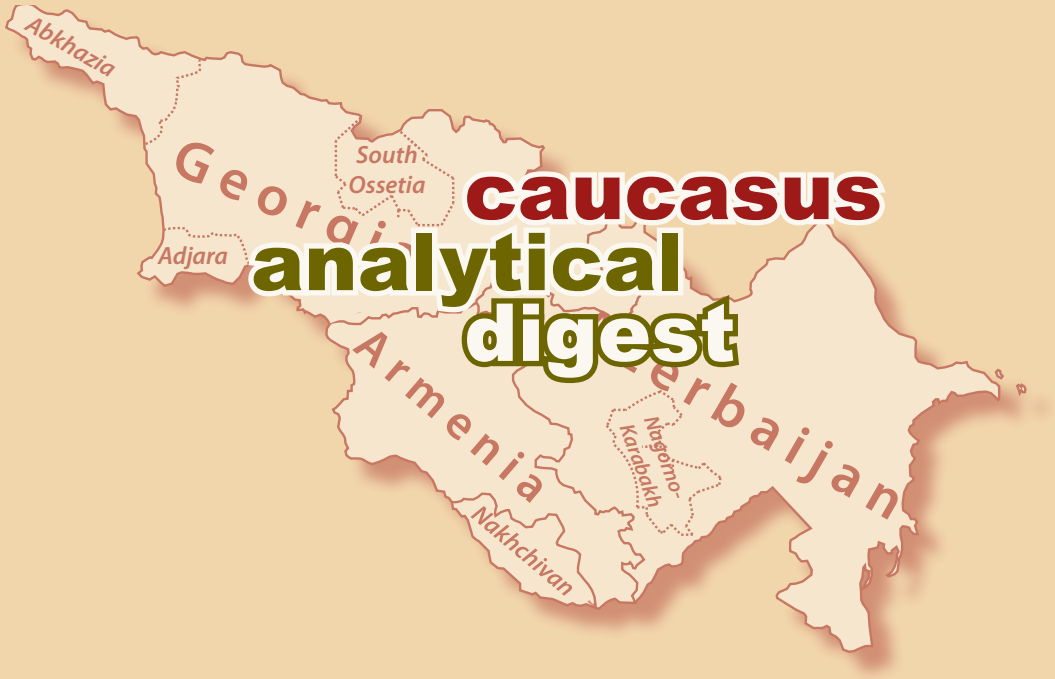
No. 65 | 17 September 2014



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NAGORNY KARABAKH CONFLICT

Special Editor: Robert Orttung

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Nagorny Karabakh Conflict Escalation and the Peace Process

By Artak Ayunts, Yerevan

Abstract

This article describes the summer 2014 violence along the Line of Contact in the Nagorny Karabakh conflict and then examines the potential for conflict transformation in the future. A central problem is the nature of the authoritarian regimes in Azerbaijan and Armenia, while solutions would come from a greater involvement of civil society groups in the negotiating process.

Violence on the Line of Contact

The ceasefire agreement signed among the parties of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict in May 1994[1] and reinforced in February 1995[2] has been violated numerous times since then and permitted multiple fatal incidents across the conflict divide in the last twenty years, influencing the everyday lives of people living in the border areas by forcing them to constantly feel anxiety and insecurity. The North-East part of Armenia bordering Azerbaijan, as well as South-East and North-East parts of Nagorny Karabakh bordering Azerbaijan, have seen the most turbulent times during the period of the "frozen" conflict, or *no-war-no-peace* situation. However, in the end of July 2014 through early August 2014 violence on the Line of Contact in the same areas escalated to unprecedentedly high levels, with some unofficial estimates of up to twenty casualties among Azerbaijani soldiers and several deaths among Armenian soldiers, as well as incidents including civilians directly affected by gunfire and shelling both on Armenian–Azerbaijani and Karabakhi–Azerbaijani border areas.

The last time the situation significantly deteriorated on the Line of Contact was more than six years ago in March 2008, when the post-election crisis in Armenia triggered a serious outbreak of hostilities in the North-East part of Nagorny Karabakh in the Martakert district causing several casualties. Official Yerevan and Baku blamed each other for provoking the clashes. Armenians claimed that Azerbaijanis wanted to use the vulnerability of the domestic political situation related to the post-election developments and state of emergency. Azerbaijanis claimed that Armenians triggered the clashes to divert attention from domestic problems.

Who Started It?

Similar mutual accusations for provoking clashes on the Line of Contact were also made during the recent upsurge of violence. One of the key differences this time was the scale of the information war waged on both sides including propaganda, disinformation and government-controlled newsfeed. It was practically impossible to figure out what happened in reality and what was the sequence of developments on the Line of Contact. One other characteristic was the use of social media, in particular Twitter, to galvanize international support for a favorable solution to the conflict, including Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's Tweets regarding the clashes and unresolved conflict in general.[3] Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan used a more traditional approach, giving an interview to one of Armenia's TV stations on the outbreak of the hostilities and infiltration attempts by the adversary, highlighting the peaceful way of conflict settlement as the only option for long-lasting peace.[4]

Having said this, the general perception among most of the Armenians was that violence on the Line of Contact was initiated by the Azerbaijani side simply because there was no interest for the Armenian side to resume violent clashes and change the favorable status quo. This is not necessarily merely a biased Armenian perspective. A renowned expert on the Caucasus and the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, Tom de Waal, made similar arguments: "In the last couple of months, the Azerbaijanis were maybe challenging the status quo. We know that the status quo does not suit them, as they are the ones that have lost territory. So, as you observed, it is more in their interest to challenge the ceasefire."[5]

The main message communicated by official channels in Armenia and media outlets was that the Armenian armed forces used all necessary measures, including proportionate military offence to thwart the Azerbaijani military threat. This, in turn, ensured that the Armenian army was capable of holding the adversary back in case Azerbaijan turned to war and a signal that any military offensive, including large scale violence along

1 <http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/ArmeniaAzerbaijan_BishkekProtocol1994.pdf>
2 <http://www.ca-c.org/dataeng/books/book-1/12.appendix-12.shtml>
3 <http://civilnet.am/aliyev-threatens-war-twitter/>
4 <http://www.president.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2014/08/11/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-interview-Arm news-Sochi/>
5 <http://civilnet.am/interview-tom-de-waal-carnegie-karabakh-august-clashes-text>

the Line of Contact, would be resisted accordingly and could have unpredictable consequences on different levels: national, regional and global.

On the other hand, few Armenians tend to understand that the status quo is not acceptable for Azerbaijan and, as long as no peace agreement is signed, violent encounters of different scales will occur from time to time for various domestic and international reasons. Azerbaijan's defeat in the war in the beginning of 1990s was just one stage in the conflict dynamics.

Nevertheless, Armenia's use of military force cooled down the situation on the Line of Contact for the time being even though smaller scale ceasefire violations continue on almost a daily basis. Violence, however, will only end once all parties to the conflict agree to certain terms and achieve an outcome of the conflict acceptable for all parties.

Political Implications

Talks to resume negotiations, which were halted after the Kazan meeting[6] between the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents in 2011 based on the so-called Madrid Principles, are again on the agenda of the leadership of Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, few people in Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh believe that a breakthrough is possible in the foreseeable future. One of the reasons for this is the reluctance by the fully authoritarian political regime in Azerbaijan and the competitive authoritarian regime in Armenia[7] to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict, which would require a significant amount of political will and sacrifice as it will require certain unpopular decisions to be made on both ends while endangering the leaders' political capital.

The argument here is that authoritarian regimes are keen to maintain the status quo and not risk losing power, which may be fraught with much more serious consequences for both regimes. If they lost power, key figures in the governments may face criminal investigation for previous fraudulent practices while in power. Under both competitive authoritarian and full authoritarian regimes, the authorities frequently use and manipulate the Nagorny Karabakh conflict in their domestic policies specifically to galvanize an enemy image of *the other* with the aim of fostering their own power positions. Thus, continuation of the current status quo is probably the most favorable condition for preserving the authoritarian nature of the political systems on both sides.

Tensions on the Line of Contact have often been manipulatively used by the authorities also to crash opposition sentiments and strengthen their own power positions in Armenia. This time though, key political opposition groups in Armenia responded to the escalated violence on the Line of Contact along the same lines with the authorities, calling for tough measures to be adequately executed to defend the borders and prevent further violations and military assaults. At the same time, a clear message was delivered by the opposition that the struggle against the autocratic regime in domestic politics will continue without any doubt. The example of Israel was highlighted as a state with democratic practices within domestic politics which does not preclude unanimous political support to fight against any form of encroachment against its sovereignty. The only reservation for halting the struggle for democratic reform by opposition in Armenia was in the case of a resumption of war by Azerbaijan.[8]

Global and Regional Dimensions

Global instability and volatility from North Africa across the Middle East and Eastern Europe sidelines the Nagorny Karabakh peace process from international attention and even violent clashes claiming dozens of lives attract significantly less attention compared with the conflicts in Iraq, Gaza, Syria, Libya and Ukraine. The OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries—Russia, France and the US—responsible for mediation in the Nagorny Karabakh peace process are directly or indirectly engaged in various hot-spots around the South Caucasus region.

The OSCE Minsk Group has been assisting the peace process since 1992, but all their efforts have failed to bring the parties closer to a negotiated solution. Different co-chair countries have played leading roles in the peace process in different times. Since the late 2000s Russians have made several attempts to revive the peace process, with the Maindorf declaration[9] being the only document where Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders put their signatures on the same document after the ceasefire agreements in 1994 and 1995. In 2001, negotiations to sign the Framework Agreement in Kazan again mediated predominantly by the Russians failed because of the last minute withdrawal of the Azerbaijani President. It was no surprise that after the clashes on the Line of Contact in August 2014 the Russians again intervened and invited the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan for a meeting.

6 <http://www.rferl.org/content/nagorno-karabakh_kazan_summit_breakthrough_in_peace_process/24244645.html>

7 On political terminology see S. Levitsky and L. A. Way, Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War, Cambridge University Press, 2010

8 See for example: <http://www.ilur.am/news/view/33374.html>, in Armenian

9 <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2008/11/208670.shtml>, in Russian

The Russian-brokered meeting of the Presidents in Sochi on August 10 was a sign of Russian willingness to re-establish dominance over the peace process and dictate its own rules for possible conflict settlement. There were speculations that the Russians wanted to use the situation on the Line of Contact to deploy Russian peacekeeping forces in the region. True or not, the composition of the peacekeeping forces to ensure security of all communities has long been on the agenda of the negotiations and one of the sticking points along with the future status of Nagorny Karabakh, territories around Nagorny Karabakh, and the return of all refugee and IDPs. The core of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict and peace process, however, is transformation of the conflict versus conflict resolution.

Peace Process: What Next?

The Nagorny Karabakh peace process is predominantly single tracked where Track One official diplomacy is still the only mechanism of peace negotiations with large segments of society left out of the peace process. Even though it is high level officials' responsibility to sign peace agreements, without inclusion of other actors within civil society in the peace process, it will be much harder to achieve a sustainable positive peace.

In the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, all actors including political institutions, mass media, Diasporas, and even certain groups within civil societies, play significantly negative roles in bringing peace among Armenians and Azerbaijanis closer. Diasporas stick only to the well-established positions of the conflicting parties and rarely want to focus on potential mutual interests being probably the most nationalistically oriented groups in the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. Mass media are the leading promulgators and channels of hate speech, war rhetoric and dehumanization of *the other*. Civil society actors "fighting" for peace are marginalized among influential nationalistic groups controlled by the Governments. And, the only actors of the official peace negotiations—top-level officials—have long shifted the emphasis from *grievances* to *greed*.

The violent incidents of early August 2014 not only endanger the fragile peace but also strengthen mistrust and animosity between the societies. In general hate speech, war mongering and the build-up of military arsenals not only jeopardize the peace process but also leave no room for trust-building in the future. Lack of trust and confidence building measures only deepens hatred among people significantly endangering any form of future coexistence even if a peace agreement is signed.

At this stage, there are several scenarios for the development of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict: preservation of the status quo, resumption of war and a negotiated settlement based on compromises. The war scenario is the least possible one given the unpredictability of the outcomes of war and the reluctance of authoritarian leaders to risk their power by waging all-out war despite the fact that Azerbaijan has been spending vast amounts of money to strengthen its military arsenal.

A negotiated settlement is also hardly possible in the near future particularly with the current leadership in Armenia and Azerbaijan in power. Compromises necessary for a peace deal require enormous efforts and political will by the leaders. This is a significant risk given some unpopular moves they will need to make which in turn can seriously damage their domestic political capital. There is also the *greed* component: autocratic regimes tend to maintain considerable wealth for themselves and their entourage rather than focus on the *grievances* of the conflict, genuinely searching for peace.

The most probable scenario is the preservation of the status quo, which unfortunately will continue claiming lives and provoking violence among civilians and the military. The *no-war-no-peace* situation is still far from being transformed toward a more peaceful state. With no mechanisms of incident control and independent investigation, it is hard to believe that violent clashes, infiltration efforts, shelling of border areas, and kidnapping attempts will stop before a comprehensive peace agreement is signed.

While many on all sides of the standoff will continue viewing the conflict from their own positions, they should know that there is no alternative to peaceful negotiations. Transformation of context, actors, structure and issues of the conflict should be sought in the near future, supported by all actors having stakes in peace, including middle-level activists and grassroots leadership rather than only political actors. Democratization reforms "dictated" by civil society should become more prevalent. Actor change based on substantial legitimacy is another prerequisite for conflict transformation. The consolidated approach of the Minsk Group Co-chair countries is important for context transformation. Transformation of the structure of the conflict by engaging all layers of the social structure is another significant factor. And lastly, acknowledging the grievances of all the people directly affected by the conflict and mechanisms of application of transitional justice mechanisms are the key for peace and reconciliation in the region.

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"August Heat": The Uncertain Trajectory of Nagorno-Karabakh's Conflict Resolution

By Zaur Shiriyev, Baku

Abstract

The frontline skirmishes between Armenia and Azerbaijan at the end of July and during the first week of August brought the heaviest concentration of casualties since the 1994 Ceasefire Agreement. Attempts by the U.S. and France to arrange a presidential meeting prior to the skirmishes ended with an unexpected bilateral meeting in Sochi, under Russian auspices. In the shadow of the ongoing West–Russia confrontation, the future of the Minsk Group mediation process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains unclear, given that both sides are represented as co-chairs.

Introduction

In the shadow of the ongoing confrontation between Russia and the West over Ukraine, many potential platforms for cooperation are rapidly becoming areas of confrontation. In light of these troubling developments, the prospect of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution is in limbo. The Minsk Group Co-Chairs—with representatives from Russia, France and the U.S.—are responsible for overseeing this process, and their cooperation is critical for any kind of progress. Between the meeting of the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents on January 23, 2012, in Sochi and their next meeting in Vienna on November 19, 2013, a full 666 days passed. Since the 1994 ceasefire, the major question has been how to increase the effectiveness of the negotiations process. The deadlock of nearly two years without a presidential-level meeting forced the negotiation agenda back, and another negative development of that magnitude will seriously jeopardize the process.

Without a doubt, it was the decision by the Armenian government to join the Moscow-led Customs Union last year (rather than the Ukraine events) that placed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution largely in Russia's hands. It is evident that under this scenario, the West is increasingly less likely—indeed less able—to push Armenia towards resolution. This situation led to an ever-deepening entrenchment of the status quo, with the Minsk group format as the only remaining mechanism—without limiting the co-Chair countries' leadership personal involvement at the president or foreign minister level.

Meanwhile, the perceived lack of leadership from the Minsk Group in its current format has in recent months been criticized by official Baku, especially after Russia's annexation of Crimea, following which the principle of territorial integrity was repeatedly underscored in the international debate as a core principle of international law. Azerbaijan has once again asked the West to increase its involvement in the process; Baku believes that the West could do more to support Azerbaijan, based on the principle of territorial integrity, as well as its importance as an energy exporter. Baku put forward a three-pronged approach, which contained no new content, but has gained new resonance in light of recent political developments. First, if negotiations are going to commence, high-level officials from the Minsk Group Co-Chair countries should take the initiative to drive them forward in a fruitful manner. Second, the "partial liberation" of occupied Azerbaijani land is not under question of peace negotiations; Azerbaijan wants Armenian forces to withdraw from the occupied regions as a matter of priority. Baku does not want to give Yerevan the opportunity to present a "timeline for withdrawal" as a bargaining chip in peace negotiations. Baku fears this would end up with a partial withdrawal that would then stagnate as the status quo. Third, Azerbaijan's stricter approach makes participation in presidential negotiations contingent on clear progress on conflict resolution.

Nevertheless, the lack of certainty around progress in peace negotiations is clear, despite the expectation of a presidential-level meeting at the invitation of the French President and the U.S. Secretary of State. And moreover, despite Azerbaijan's progress-oriented approach described above, the summer has seen an escalation of the conflict along the Line of Contact (LOC) as well as in the border regions. The escalation began in May 2014, and then on July 30th and August 5th flash skirmishes along the Armenian–Azerbaijan contact line erupted. While small-scale ceasefire violations have been relatively common, the recent events caused the highest casualty rates the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has seen since March 2008. According to official sources, thirteen Azerbaijani and five Armenian soldiers were killed during the July 30th–August 5th period. In the midst of the increasing causalities and the increasingly mutual antipathy at the societal level (particularly in Azerbaijan), Putin's invitation to an August 9th–10th presidential

meeting in Sochi raised several questions about the current and future trajectory of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution. Similarly, the explanation for the recent border skirmishes—the "August Heat"—is crucial to understanding how best to prevent similar events in the future.

Possible Reasons for the Recent Skirmishes and Increasing Tensions: the Azerbaijani Perspective

The August skirmishes, which threatened to escalate into a full-fledged war, did not arise due to an identifiable individual violation of the ceasefire. Nor is it possible—or indeed necessary—to stipulate who took the first shot. Nonetheless, the origins of the tensions can be traced, along with the reasons for Azerbaijan's increased readiness to react.

Azerbaijani society was politically mobilized in advance of the August border skirmishes, due to the kidnapping by Armenian forces of three Azerbaijani civilians in the occupied Kelbajar region of Azerbaijan. Accused by Armenian authorities of belonging to a sabotage group, one of the three died. No action was taken, despite the involvement of a humanitarian organization. As a consequence, the Azerbaijani public was in a state of agitation, and there was much media discussion of the issue. The public demanded action by the Azerbaijani armed forces.

During the subsequent border skirmishes, the public's outrage intensified, with an important difference: this time, the Azerbaijani media played a negative role, propagating misinformation about casualty figures and inflaming public reactions. This misinformation led not only to social tensions but also to increased expectations from frontline developments. Notably, the Ministry of Defence disclosed that during 1st–6th August, hundreds of people applied as volunteers to join the military.

The conflict parties have repeatedly accused one another of violating the terms of the cease-fire regime. Yerevan argued that the recent border skirmishes would be used by Azerbaijan to push for progress at the international level, arguing that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not frozen and requires international attention and involvement; Baku has often made such arguments in advance of presidential meetings or international events related to security issues. However, the recent skirmishes do not support this line of argument; rather, a number of factors indicate that the August developments favor Armenia's interests rather than Azerbaijan's. These include the Customs Union, Russia, domestic, and military factors, and I will discuss each in turn.

The Customs Union and International Attention. The developments of recent months have made Armenia feel diplomatically cornered in relation to Nagorno-Karabakh; Armenian dissatisfaction with Russia increased; and there was a generalized feeling that Azerbaijan's position was strengthening. Armenia's unhappiness with Russia's position on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue was heightened following the May 29th meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, where Moscow and other members expressed views that Armenia should be admitted to the future Eurasian Union only within its United Nations-recognized borders, i.e. not including Nagorno-Karabakh. However, since its September 2013 decision to join the Customs Union, the Armenian government has justified its position based on "security interests"; i.e. CU membership will benefit the current inhabitants in NK through increased economic prosperity and better economic links with Armenia. Yerevan's arguments for viewing Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh as separate political entities have been deployed previously: the same principles would have enabled Armenia to initial the EU's Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement without any reference to Nagorno-Karabakh in advance of the November 2013 EU Vilnius Summit. Armenia argued that increased EU integration would be managed through the installation of a customs checkpoint between Armenian and Karabakh by the EU, recognizing the official borders of Azerbaijan. The Astana meeting showed that in joining the Customs Union, Armenia will face the same issue in relation to internationally recognized borders. Around the same time, the U.S. Minsk Group Co-Chair and U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan made statements emphasizing a route to conflict resolution via restoration of Azerbaijani's territorial integrity, in line with the Madrid Principles. These statements refocused the attention of EU and U.S. officials on territorial integrity and sovereignty. Importantly, this coincided with Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. These concurrent developments, along with the increasing number of visits to Azerbaijan by Russian officials, suggest a diplomatic failure by Yerevan, which sacrificed its EU ambitions to join the Russian-led Eurasian Union, in large part based on the assumption that Moscow would support it on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

The Russian Factor. Developments in Russia's security policy are a source of increasing dissatisfaction to Armenia. In June, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, tasked with overseeing the Russian defense industry, mentioned bilateral discussions on new arms sales by Russia to Azerbaijan. Subsequently, the Armenian president openly criticized Russia for the first time. "This is a very painful issue for us. Our nation is very concerned about the fact that our strategic partner is selling weapons to Azerbaijan," said Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan on July 10th. Later, at end of the July, the Rus-

sian aircraft manufacturer Irkut, announced that Russia is planning to export Yak-130 combat aircraft to Azerbaijan. Russia has used this strategy before, selling military equipment to both sides to create tensions. Armenia has received the bulk of the equipment either free or at subsidized CSTO rates. Yerevan's concern about the recent sale to Baku coincides with worries about the general increase of diplomatic activity between Baku and Moscow, together with Russia's lack of support in the Customs Union membership issue, as described above. At the bilateral level, official outreach between Moscow and Baku has intensified: in June and July, Azerbaijan hosted high-level Russian officials (Deputy Prime Minister, Duma Speaker, Economic Minister, Foreign Minister). This increased interaction has sparked dissatisfaction among the Armenian leadership and the public regarding the behavior of its "strategic ally."

Domestic Factor. It has been argued that Armenia orchestrated the current escalation in order to divert attention from its internal economic problems. Notably, there has been an increase in energy prices, which affects both the Armenian population and Karabakh Armenians. In July, Armenia's Public Services Regulatory Commission approved an almost 10% rise in electricity prices for households, to come into force on 1 August 2014. In Karabakh, which is under occupation and governed by the separatist regime, major consumers will also be affected by the electricity tariff hike, though the remaining subscribers will benefit from government subsidies. Given that since December 2013, Armenian's domestic energy market has been fully controlled by the Russian giant Gazprom, this change is fuelling local dissatisfaction with both the central government and Russia.

Military Factor. From the military perspective, it is unlikely that Azerbaijan initiated the recent skirmishes, as the Defense Minister of Azerbaijan was on vacation at the time, and had to return to the country suddenly. For planned maneuvers, the head of the Army is always present. The other reason is that such maneuvers do not involve ordinary conscripts, and most of the Azerbaijani casualties were conscripts rather than special forces.

It seems likely that Armenia provoked Azerbaijan into a harsh response that was likely to increase losses on both sides, to be presented to the international community as an attack by Azerbaijan. Most importantly, Azerbaijan's recent heavy losses are damaging for domestic politics, specifically for the reputations of the military command and the government. For Armenia, border clashes serve political interests by focusing public attention on conflict rather than economic issues, and, crucially, reassuring the public that the country can guarantee national security without Moscow's help.

The Logic of the Sochi Meeting and Beyond

Reviewing the recent border skirmishes and analyzing the connections, it could be argued that Russia has played a key role. The political conditions—both domestic and international—indicating that the border skirmishes were started by Armenia, were likely manipulated by Moscow. Before the outbreak of violence, a meeting orchestrated by Russia was not on the agenda at all. The first official mention of a Sochi meeting came from the Armenian Prime Minister on 2 August in the midst of the skirmishes, and was later confirmed by Kremlin sources.

The meeting took place in Sochi on August 10. The previous day, Putin met the two presidents separately to discuss bilateral issues. Though the meeting was expected to become a "crisis meeting" on Nagorno-Karabakh, there was no advance "blueprint," or declaration by the Russian side to clarify the meeting's purpose. Given that Azerbaijan had previously declared that it would not take part in discussions without clear aims and had even threatened war, the Sochi meeting may have satisfied Armenia, in the sense that it appeared to quell Baku's initial instincts and demonstrated Moscow's capacity to manage the situation.

However, there is one key misunderstanding in relation to the Sochi meeting and of Russia's future role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Regional scholars deemed the Sochi meeting part of Russia's PR campaign to mitigate the international outcry against its actions in Ukraine, notably the contested downing of the MH17 flight. The Ukraine events once again revealed Russia's tendency to use existing conflicts (as well as creating new ones) as policy instruments in the post-Soviet space, aimed at increasing Moscow's influence. Thus, Moscow's sincerity in relation to its South Caucasus policy should be seriously questioned. The trajectory of Moscow's general foreign policy proves that it is not seeking to present itself a contributor to peace and security. Even if Moscow's aim was to promote its capacity as a facilitator of peace processes, it couldn't simply wait for border skirmishes. The only example of Moscow using the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to bolster its international image arose after the 2008 August War with Georgia, in line with Russia's "reset" policy with the US, launched a year later.

The misperception here lies in the question of why Moscow invited the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents in the *middle* of the clashes; that timing indicates a reactive rather than proactive policy. Moscow's action was driven by the demands of the situation, rather than an explicit desire to demonstrate a facilitating role. The political significance of the invitation to Sochi is likely two fold. The first aim is to provide a reminder of Mos-

cow's role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution process; a similar invitation from the French and/or U.S. Co-Chairs had been awaited. By taking the initiative, Russia has demonstrated its predominant role in the peace process. Moscow's other goal is to show Baku the limits of cooperation with West, if Baku's policy aims to limit Russia's influence in the European energy market. In line with this, the Astana meeting of the Eurasian Union essentially gave the green light to Azerbaijan by blasting Armenia diplomatically, constituting an informal invitation to join the Union.

Conclusion

The "August Heat"– the front line skirmishes and the outbreak of fighting in the border regions between Azerbaijan and Armenia—clearly demonstrates the fragility of the peace negotiations. As outlined above, domestic and international conditions led Armenia to take a more aggressive approach before and during the border skirmishes. In the midst of the fighting, following heavy losses, Azerbaijan took a more aggressive approach, a reminder from the leadership of the country's readiness for war in the event of continued aggression.

The major losses experienced during 30th July–5th August were not the products of the political or military strategies of either Yerevan or Baku. Rather, the events arose due to a toxic mix of internal discontent, Russian manipulation, and international inactivity on the conflict negotiation front.

The trajectory of peace negotiations remains uncertain. After the Russian-orchestrated Sochi Meeting, the conflict parties met at the September 2014 NATO Summit in Wales at the initiative of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. The State Department subsequently said, "[Secretary Kerry] encouraged the Presidents to work with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs." It is further expected that in November 2014, France, the other Minsk Group Co-Chair country, will organize a meeting between the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents.

However, despite the fact that all the Co-Chair countries have mobilized high-level officials to initiate presidential meetings, the outcome is not particularly hopeful. Before the recent events, the conflict parties' discussions were based on the Madrid Principles, which following agreement on all points were designed to become Basic Principles, essentially a Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Although an updated version of the Madrid Principles has been presented to the conflict sides a few years ago, the fate of the Basic Principles remains unclear. But, without a clear agenda submitted with international guidance, the meetings will provide little more than discussion for discussion's sake. What is needed is a framework focused on the implementation of key provisions (namely withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories, the return of IDPs), which could build trust at both the official and public levels. Otherwise, as seen in the Sochi Meeting—from which the Minsk Group Co-Chairs were excluded—the practice of reiterating lines of disagreement provides thin grounds for optimism.

About the Author

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Nagorny Karabakh's *De facto* Non-Governmental Organization Domain: Political Society vs. Civil Society?

By Nona Shahnazarian, St. Petersburg

To mold and to raise a citizen is the long-term goal of the Nagorni Karabakh Republic. We were cut off from the flow of a peaceful life, and we have much to learn… (G. Petrosyan, assistant/adviser to theNKR president, 2004)

Abstract
This article traces the history of civil society in Nagorny Karabakh and provides an overview of the current situation.

The Rise of the Civil Right Movement or Self-Determination?

Nagorny Karabakh was an autonomous region within Soviet Azerbaijan with a majority Armenian population. During the shaky days of Soviet rule, the Armenians of the Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, encouraged by the notion of Perestroika and Glasnost, once again sought independence or reunification with Armenia, just as they had done through repeated petitions to Moscow as early as the 1960s. In 1988, an independent social movement emerged in Nagorny Karabakh and sought to move quickly. It was launched by the Krunk coalition, which consisted of 11 members under the leadership of A. Manucharov and was spearheaded by the Karabakh Committee *Council of Directors* (led by B. Arushanyan), and *Miatsum* (R. Kocharyan). This independent social movement worked through various dissident actions, challenging the pattern of post-totalitarian liberation, which can be considered decolonization actions and prerequisites for establishing a post-communist civil society.

On 30 August 1991, Azerbaijan announced its secession from the USSR. Immediately after that, in September, Baku annulled the special autonomous status of Karabakh (NKAO). In response, Karabakh successfully held a referendum creating an independent state on December 10th, the International Day of Human Rights. In the first parliamentary elections in 1991, ten seats were allocated to local Azerbaijanis. However, they refused to participate.

According to G. Petrosyan, as a consequence two parallel trends occurred—NK established a regular army and a civil society. Relations between these two sides reached a crisis when Defense Minister S. Babayan allegedly sought to assassinate President A. Ghukasyan in 2000. That was not the only problem. With little support from the international community, NK residents worked to prevent the merging of military and civic structures in NK post-war society. As a result, NK avoided the creation of an authoritarian entity, though in the context of full-scale war, it was necessary to make decisions quickly (which was difficult given that the Soviet mentality considered any change extremely dangerous). The newly born state had to provide social programs, such as privatization, addressing inequality between the haves and have-nots through subsidies and pensions, and providing free education for the orphaned children (G. Petrosyan, 13.09.2004).

In establishing Karabakh and confronting Azerbaijan, the people of NK were far from passive. Grassroots level activism in the context of a power vacuum and the absence of state institutions was essential for survival. Ordinary people played an active role in the restoration and normalization of life in the conflict zone. Those turbulent events helped initiate the rise of civic identity, culture, and institutions. According to A. Gulyan (NKR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004), in the procedural sense, the situation with the NGO sector in the NKR was problematic because, due to the republic's unrecognized status, the civic/social institutions are not able to represent themselves on the international level. The fledgling self-proclaimed state faced many challenges coming from Azerbaijan's continual and incessant accusations of "terrorism" and "drug trafficking." "In response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on several occasions invited various international organizations to conduct independent monitoring in different areas of state institutions. Their observations showed no abnormalities. Thus, the state frequently conducts itself as an NGO, trying to defend the elementary rights of citizens for security, mobility, access to information" (Ashot Ghulyan, MFA,13.09.2004). Some international monitors and commissions after having observed other self-proclaimed states consider the situation in NKR as a paragon for others to emulate, including the civic liberties dimension, according to David Babayan, Head of the Information Department, NKR Presidential Office, in 2009.

Structure of the NK Civic Sector

NK NGOs are developing networks at the national, regional and international level and this process is con-

stantly progressing. The shortlist of the most active NGOs include at the national/local level: NK Helsinki Initiative-92, Stepanakert Press Club, Centre for Civic Initiatives, European Friends' Society, Refugee (since 1988), Women, Veteran, Youth NGOs; at the regional level: IDP NGO network—GRINGO, POW—prisoners of war and hostages, Caucasus Forum for NGO Cooperation since 1998; while the international bodies include two diverse sources—Armenian Diaspora entities and western governmental and non-governmental organizations(INGOs): Consortium Initiative–LINCS (the London Information Network on Conflicts and State-building), Catholic Relief Service, Conciliation Resource (CR), and International Alert (IA). Many successful initiatives were launched by NGOs like Red Cross International Committee, Medicins sans frontier (MSF-France), CICR, USAID, Safe Children, and Halo Trust (the project on de-mining). Four organizations, British Consortium, International Alert plus two more, financed by the British government are mostly involved in reconciliation efforts. The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK), funded by the European Union, seeks to positively impact the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process, working with local partners in the South Caucasus on a wide range of peacebuilding activities to contribute to lasting peace in the region (made up of five member organizations) (epnk.org)

Some external and internal actors coordinate "national" civil society organizations in NKR—western Armenian Diaspora organizations, as well as the local branch of Dashnaktutyun. The Dashnak organizations educate young people in the military-patriotic tradition working in winter and summer youth camps; summer schools in English language taught by English-speaking foreigners of Armenian descent in remote villages; and other educational programs. Similarly, Diaspora funding also brings a nationalistic agenda close to governmental priorities (Diaspora affairs are regulated by NK Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MFA). Some representatives of the "former" western Diaspora, returnees, organize three month international youth camps in NK, like Birth Right Armenia's camps.

A number of factors influence the effectiveness and impact of NGOs in NKR: capacity, the political culture and environment as well as the nature of the society of which civil society itself forms a part. Poverty and inertia inherited from the Soviet era in the early period of statehood reduced the efficiency of NGOs. Because of the politicization of NGOs, in a way following Russian political standards, western funded NGOs are considered a fifth column. At the same time, from the beginning the NKR authority showed its eagerness to demonstrate its viability. They assumed that the diversification of sources would facilitate the development of CSOs working on conflict-related activities, as well as human rights and democratization, or addressing specific problems, such as refugee issues. This multi-vector structure works as a way to overcome the limitations of resources, enhancing the effectiveness and impact and providing greater visibility and coherence to public actions. However, dependence on external funding can also marginalize CSOs and give them the image that they are co-opted and, in extreme cases, even traitors, especially when society is polarized. Impositions of the foreign donors' agenda, such as pushing for reconciliation and dialogue, has left local CSOs in fragile security conditions and has alienated them from the wider public. A strategy favored by governments in addressing the "threat" of NGOs as covert vehicles of opposition has been the proliferation of GONGOs—government-organized quasi-NGOs. A recent term that has come to describe GONGOs in Armenian is *grpanayin* (pocket) NGOs, a term used to describe NGOs seen as working for or "in the pocket" of the authorities (Hasanov, Ishkhanian, 2005).

Donors

Following the Soviet collapse, democracy promotion became a central part of Western aid programs as civil society development came to be seen as critical for western style democratization and a successful transition. The US leads a successive policy in NKR since it is the only country that helps with post-war reconstruction of the country since 1998 (A. Gulyan, 2004). These efforts led to the phenomenal growth in the number of NGOs. Currently, there are approximately 135 registered public organizations (K. Ohanjanian, 2013). There were about 71 NGOs in 2002, but only 7 or 8 were actually active (FIDH, 2003). *De facto* state aid was present and visible from the creation of Nagorno-Karabakh statehood. From the beginning of NKR, the authorities' cherished organizations are Veteran and Refugee NGOs. In the context of the general deprivation of former combatants and their relatives, these groups remain active political players, some of them also are well embedded into civic niches. As a result, war veterans as well as the widows of fallen combatants enjoy great respect and legitimacy.

The dialogue between the state and non-state institutions has become much more vigorous since 2005, when these interactions were put on a legal basis. The current legislature, according to experts' assessments, allows both organizations and individuals to realize full-fledged social activity. The juridical base for that

is formed by the laws (statute) on social organizations, trade unions, TV and media.

The registration procedure of CSOs is conspicuously easy; the government makes no obstacles for the improvement of civic institutions/organizations. Moreover in 2005 the NKR government decided to allow for CSOs expenses putting them into the state budget, which consists of two million Armenian Drams in total (the sum would be starkly inadequate without international grants). It seeks to support particular programs on a highly competitive basis. An ad hoc commission that distributes government grants for NGOs includes NGO leaders as well. About five NGOs receive state funding. Auditing procedures are stringent in spite of the fact that the accountability procedure is unprecedentedly transparent—financial reports are displayed online.

After 2007 there is a greater level of connectedness between governmental structures and mid- and top-level local NGOs. Leftist critique links this to the burgeoning of a real political opposition. The top local NGOs actually facilitate interactions and dialogue between state-actors and grassroots activists, linking them as mediators and exchanging essential information.

CSOs and the Peace Process: Conflict Transformation and Resolution

The efficiency of CSOs action in the area of peacebuilding used to be extremely low. Previously Karabakh CSOs made contacts with the other side (Azeris) with suspicion, reflecting the manipulation of the conflict in domestic politics. In 1999 President Heydar Aliyev announced that "for as long as we have not signed a peace agreement with Armenia there is no need for cooperation between our NGOs and Armenians. When Kocharian and I resolve the issue, it will inevitably involve compromises with which many will disagree. Then let NGOs reconcile the two peoples." In other words, NGOs are assigned the role not of active players in the peace process, but mitigators of public criticism directed at their leaders. The authorities of the three republics tried to maintain their monopoly in the negotiation process and peacemaking. Particularly, in 2005 the regime was more reluctant than ever to loosen its monopoly on peacemaking (Hasanov, Ishkhanian 2005).

Attempts by civil society actors to influence the Armenian–Azerbaijani peace process actually have been simultaneous in their emergence. Though there was also a problem of incorporating Karabakh Armenians into the Armenian–Azerbaijani peace dialogue because of Baku's reluctance to approve meetings between the Azerbaijanis and Karabakh Armenians. This has been in part a question of access, as Baku and Stepanakert have not been able to agree on a common mandate arrangement allowing international NGOs to have a mutually approved presence in Nagorny Karabakh. Nonetheless, since 1994 civil society initiatives, often working in very difficult conditions, have addressed various issues, including the protection of human rights, the release of hostages and prisoners of war (POWs), watchdog activities in Shushi prison (supervised by A. Voskanian, who progressed from the Soviet style *silovik* into a human right activist). The professionalization of CSOs improved their ability to impact the conflict. It also makes CSOs work visible. Nevertheless, the "give us your armaments and we'll provide your security" formula of the Madrid principles still has no credibility even among the NKR's most advanced and democratic NGOs (Gegham Baghdasaryan, 2014). The breaking point was the 2008 Russo–Georgian war, when conflict resolution became a top issue.

The return of the refugee topic is a litmus test for NK NGOs—ten years ago there was no way of even discussing it. It was partly provoked by Baku's policy of non-integration and resettlement of IDPs close to the front line (since 2006). Nonetheless the return is now at least a debated topic and can be discussed in a context of stability. Local NGOs in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorny Karabakh have organized and participated in dialogues between the parties involved in the conflict, they have worked for the release of POWs, organized youth camps, and led civic education and conflict resolution training programs as well as skills training programs for refugees and IDPs. The aim of these activities has been to keep the lines of communication open, to allow individuals from Armenia and Azerbaijan to meet, and to combat processes of de-humanization and enemy stereotyping (Hasanov, Ishkhanian 2005).

In addition to NGOs, there are some smaller grassroots organizations comprised of refugees, the mothers or wives of soldiers, and families of hostages or POWs. These organizations often work with NGOs and there is an increasing tendency for these organizations to institutionalize over time and to register as NGOs themselves. Armenian diaspora communities, particularly those in the US, have lobbied for foreign aid and publicized the Armenian position. Although diaspora NGOs and individuals from the US, Europe, and the Middle East have contributed to humanitarian aid and development initiatives since independence, there has been little in the way of cooperation with and support for local NGOs involved in peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives in Armenia. On the contrary, some diaspora organizations, especially nationalist political parties, have taken more intransigent positions.

The Role of the EU

EU involvement in the civil society domain in Armenia and Azerbaijan has been very limited. In 2005 some experts reported that, inside Nagorny Karabakh the EU is completely absent, and there is a long road ahead before it is regarded as a trust-worthy partner by local CSOs (Mailyan, 2012). The EU–Armenia ENP Action Plan was launched in 2006. From 2007 to the present, Frank Engel, a member of the European Parliament, who visited NKR in April 2014 and then made assurances that Armenia's attachment to the Custom Union will not affect the EU's active position in NKR, has declared that conflict resolution in Eurasia has gradually become a priority for the EU and its member states (Propescu 2007). The NK conflict rose to the top of the EU's agenda only after the 5-day war in South Ossetia, in 2008. Moreover, the gradual improvement of Armenian–Turkish relations has also opened a window of opportunity for movement in the NK peace process. Though the Armenian–Turkish rapprochement failed, the mechanism of confidence building measures was improved.

The EU impact on civil society has mainly been built through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which was missing a direct link to conflict resolution. Until the ENP was in place, the European Commission focused on the promotion of legislative reforms, strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) and TACIS program (Simao 2010). Nevertheless, the EU has to compete with other donors (including the Armenian Diaspora) for an impact on civil society and conflict resolution, since it remains a relatively complex and new donor in the region.

Youth NGOs

The NK Ministry on cultural affairs, Education, Sport & Youth oversees a Council Youth NGO. It is noteworthy to mention that 11 organizations come under the wing of the Youth Council and they are currently working on developing a draft of a law on youth. The creation of an All-Armenian Youth organization with an office in NKR's capital is also on the agenda.

Women's Organizations and Networks

A striking feature of NGOs in the former Soviet states is the considerable number of women involved. Some regional initiatives are important for this cluster. Women from Armenia and Azerbaijan have been working together through NGOs as well as transnational advocacy networks to promote peacebuilding and conflict resolution. An example of women's NGOs' collaborative efforts is the Transcaucasus Women's Dialogue, which was established in 1994 under the aegis of the National Peace Foundation in Washington, DC. From 1997–99, the Transcaucasus Women's Dialogue organized various projects involving the environment, democratic rights and education, including a three-year summer school at Tbilisi State University. Another women's regional initiative was the "Working Together—Networking Women in the Caucasus" program (1997–2002) sponsored by the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe (IDEE) with funding from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State. "Working Together" was a program for women leaders in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to promote greater cross-border networking. Through a range of training, civic education, NGO development and cross-border networking activities, the IDEE programs attempted to enhance the leadership abilities and capacity of women leaders and their NGOs, and to advance women's participation in public life.

Specific contextual factors can also enhance or curtail the efficiency of CSOs action in the gender equality movement. Nagorny Karabakh's women say they are tougher now than they were, and that the society will not turn back. "War has so hardened us women," said Julietta Arustamyan, the widow of a fallen officer and now head of the Harmony NGO (K. Ohanyan & A. Danielyan, the Armedia news agency; Shahnazarian 2011). The Karabakh war changed women's role with women retaining the greater equality they gained on the frontline. Just three ministers and five members of parliament are women, but in the non-governmental and business sectors women often outnumber men. That is a major reverse for a society that was strictly traditional towards the end of the Soviet period, with women crediting much of the change to the full part they took in the fighting. "Despite the fact that the main burden in actual fighting was born by men, the role of women in the war was no less important," said Zhanna Krikorova, chairwoman of the International Cooperation Centre of Nagorny Karabakh, which coordinates connections between non-governmental organizations in Karabakh with international non-governmental bodies.

There is no law regulating the number of women who should hold particular jobs, but politicians say female representation is increasing steadily. Some 29 per cent of judges are now women, and four of the 12 ministers are women, as are four of the 33 members of parliament. "I do not think there are any restrictions on women's participation. We are more concerned with improving the living standards of our citizens," according to Ludmila Barseghyan, one of the four women in parliament. Most women in NK believe their rights are respected. Narine Aghabalyan, minister for culture and youth issues, says the proportion of women in top jobs is higher in Kara-

bakh than in Armenia, so they do not suffer discrimination and are happy with their position in life.

Still there are some limitations on the influence of CSOs in NK (LGBT rights) which has its own ideological explanations. Domestic violence is considered as an irrelevant topic in NK because of non-involvement into family/citizens' private life. Women in Karabakh are unlikely to speak out against domestic violence, since they do not see it as being in any way abnormal. Hasmik Khachatryan, a judge in the Karabakh Appeals Court, said the paucity of domestic violence cases before the courts was not a reason for complacency. However, this could mean that women are keeping quiet about domestic violence. "I cannot say for sure whether women's human rights are being violated or not, but I think they are," said J. Arustamyan, the above mentioned head of Harmony. "Nor can I say why girls do well at school and university, but the jobs mostly go to men. Not only that, but more senior the position, the more it is to held by a man."

Free Speech

Freedom of expression seems to suffer from the general situation. There is no official censorship. However there is no circulation of ideas and opinions that would represent any opposition to government. The role of media is a fundamental aspect in the formation of local perceptions. An NK authority official reported in 2004 that "We do not have democratic media, except Demo newspaper (issued in Armenian and Russian). It positively poses sharp questions. There is the Helsinki [Initiative]-92 organization, but that is the only case" (G. Petrosyan 2004). However, the situation has radically changed over the last ten years. Since 2004 projects under EIDHR (EU) have focused on improving media standards. One of the most notorious initiatives is the Cross Caucasus Journalism Network, implemented by Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), which includes journalists from Nagorno Karabakh. Among the local entities, the Stepanakert Press Club (which was founded in 1998) is one of the key NGOs in NKR. It is connected with relevant journalist associations in the Caucasus and Russia, creating possibilities for the free circulation of ideas. It collaborated with the above mentioned "Demo" independent newspaper (2004–2008). The latter was replaced by the monthly Analyticon magazine (TheAnalyticon.com) that gave voice to the political and intellectual opposition and covered wider regional aspects.

A special law on the press has been adopted, similar to the one in Armenia. Particular space is given to Helsinki Initiative-92 (HI-92). Its founder Karen Ohanjanian made an unprecedented declaration immediately after the tragic events in Hojaly, crying out for the human rights of the civilians who suffered in "a spontaneous genocide" committed by irregular bandit units. Today HI-92 is one of the most prosperous and multi-funded (including state support) NGOs in Stepanakert. The trilingual on-line daily newspaper "Karabakh Open" touches upon NKR's economy, policy, sport and other societal problems and receives methodological and financial support both from international donors and the local authorities. The global Armenian Diapsora is reluctant to help this organization because of its national romanticism.

Still there are taboo topics such as the army, pacifism, and LGBT and gender inequality issues (some local experts consider that some of them are not discussed because of their irrelevance to the NK's social reality and society in general). The most problematic niches are sexual minorities, as well as religious ones (Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses). During the war and subsequently unfavorable attitudes were reported towards Jehovah's Witnesses because they were seen as "unpatriotic" for refusing military service. "Legalization" of those topics would be ideologically too dangerous for the authorities. Although there has not been widespread military confrontation between the two sides for 20 years, the current cease-fire is fragile. Religious minorities are often seen as advocating pacifism, which is deeply unpopular with the government. Nevertheless, there is some visible improvement even in this domain. The situation in the army is now a hotly debated topic in the NKR. Under pressure from several CSOs some tangible measures were undertaken to fix the situation in military institutions. One can see substantial, even radical changes in "hierarchical" relationships in the army. This change nurtures space for other relevant social movements. The soldiers' mother movement (there is no formidable NGO yet) has great potential at the moment, looking like a rare prospect for united Armenian–Azerbaijani civic actions to improve reconciliation in the long run.

Human Rights

Individual and collective complaints are currently impossible because of NKR's unresolved status. Since 2004 projects under the EU's European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) have focused on improving human rights protection, as well as local government and elections. Additionally, the fact that from the early stage of NKR's statehood, the institution of the prison was present speaks volumes (W. Reno, 2004). Albert Voskanyan, a blogger and leader of the "Centre for Civic Initiatives" NGO, is the only one who monitored the Shushi prison and was in the center of organizing the hostage exchange that took place there.

Coda

Karabakh, which has declared independence from Azerbaijan but has not been recognized internationally, is out of the mainstream of political and economic life in the region. The conflict over Nagorny Karabakh, pitting Armenia and Azerbaijan against each other, is the longest conflict in the OSCE area and a fundamental security threat to the South Caucasus and surrounding regions, preventing full and inclusive economic development and constraining regional relations. Although NKR has unrecognized status and is a kind of hybrid (not quite consolidated) democracy today, the current situation features fundamental freedoms and NGOs, which are necessary for the development of civil society. Experts see positive dynamics. Civic actors may have particular capacities to channel the concerns of their own constituencies to the leadership, and to open difficult or taboo subjects. Most of the NGO projects can at best have an indirect impact on conflict transformation and resolution. CSOs play a huge role in stopping the mutual process of de-humanization between Armenians and Azerbaijanis who are constantly surrounded by militaristic rhetoric.

About the Author

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CHRONICLE

15 July–7 September 2014

15 July 2014	Georgian troops end their four-year deployment in the Helmand province in Afghanistan as part of the ISAF mission
15 July 2014	An Armenian businessman based in Moscow, Levon Hayrapetian, is arrested at the Russian capital's Domodedovo airport over his alleged connections with a Russian criminal gang
17 July 2014	Armenian Prime Minister Ovik Abramian says to journalists that an agreement to allow Armenia to join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EES) will be signed in October
18 July 2014	The Georgian Parliament ratifies the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union at an extraordinary session
22 July 2014	An Armenian mayor is injured together with two other persons and one killed after their car hit a mine in the Kashatagh province of the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh
24 July 2014	The Georgian prosecutor's office says that is has reached an agreement with a group of international criminal law experts to consult regarding high-profile and sensitive cases involving high-ranked officials
25 July 2014	President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Hugh Bayley meets with Georgian leaders in Tbilisi and says that Georgia is "the most important partner that NATO has"
28 July 2014	The Georgian prosecutor's office says that it files criminal charges against former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili in relation to the breaking up of demonstrations in November 2007
31 July 2014	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili says that legal proceedings against Mikheil Saakashvili will be "objective and transparent"
31 July 2014	The United States voices deep concern after Azerbaijani authorities charge human rights activist Leyla Yunus with treason, tax evasion and fraud
31 July 2014	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili says that Russia's planned suspension of a free trade agreement with Georgia is "not a tragedy" and that consultations will take place over the issue
1 August 2014	Two Azerbaijani men are charged with high treason and sentenced to life in prison for spying for Iran in Baku
1 August 2014	The Polish Foreign Ministry says that it is concerned about the investigations carried out against former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili as they could take the form of a "selective application of justice"
2 August 2014	The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry says four Azerbaijani soldiers have been killed near the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh
4 August 2014	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili expresses concern over rising tensions in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh and says that Armenia and Azerbaijan are equally important for Georgia and hopes that peace will be restored soon
7 August 2014	Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania visits Georgian troops in Kabul and meets with outgoing commander of the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, General Joseph Dunford
10 August 2014	The presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi to discuss the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh amid tensions rising in the region
14 August 2014	Yazidis rally in Yerevan to call on the government to offer help, including weapons, to Yazidis in northern Iraq
19 August 2014	Defense Ministers of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey meet in Nakhchivan and agree to hold trilateral meetings once every six months
21 August 2014	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili meets with his Armenian counterpart Hovik Abrahamyan in Yerevan and says that no efforts will be spared to bring the two countries closer
24 August 2014	The European Union says that it does not recognize the presidential elections in the breakaway region of Abkhazia
25 August 2014	Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulates Raul Khajimba on his victory in the presidential elections in the breakaway region of Abkhazia
27 August 2014	Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania visits Georgian troops serving as part of the EU military mission in the Central African Republic
28 August 2014	Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili attends the inauguration ceremony of president-elect Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey and declares that Turkey is a major partner of Georgia

28 August 2014	New Abkhaz leader Raul Khajimba meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Novo-Ogaryovo state residence outside Moscow to discuss the signing of a cooperation treaty between Russia and the breakaway region of Abkhazia
29 August 2014	Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania meets with his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian in Paris to discuss France's support for Georgia's full integration into Euro-Atlantic structures
3 September 2014	Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says after a meeting in Baku with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev that Ankara will continue supporting Baku's efforts to resolve the situation in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh
3 September 2014	US President Barack Obama says in a speech in Tallinn, Estonia, that NATO has to do more to help its partners to strengthen their defence, including Georgia and Moldova
3 September 2014	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili says his country will ask for membership in NATO at the Alliance's summit in Wales
5 September 2014	Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev says at the NATO Summit in Wales that the Kars–Tbilisi–Baku railway will "create tremendous" trade opportunities for Afghanistan and Baku is ready to help with investment and reconstruction projects
5 September 2014	Georgian healthcare minister Davit Sergeenko says that Georgia will send humanitarian aid to Ukraine, including medical supplies and medicines
5 September 2014	Azerbaijani security officers raid the Baku office of the non-governmental organization IREX and confiscate documents and computers
7 September 2014	US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel says in Tbilisi that the NATO Summit in Wales was "an important milestone in Georgia's efforts" to join the Alliance following a meeting with Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania

Compiled by Lili Di Puppo

For the full chronicle since 2009 see <www.laender-analysen.de/cad>

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The Caucasus Research Resource Centers program (CRRC) is a network of research centers in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. We strengthen social science research and public policy analysis in the South Caucasus. A partnership between the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Eurasia Partnership Foundation, and local universities, the CRRC network integrates research, training and scholarly collaboration in the region.

ASCN

ASCN <www.ascn.ch> is a programme aimed at promoting the social sciences and humanities in the South Caucasus (primarily Georgia and Armenia). Its different activities foster the emergence of a new generation of talented scholars. Promising junior researchers receive support through research projects, capacity-building trainings and scholarships. The programme emphasizes the advancement of individuals who, thanks to their ASCN experience, become better integrated in international academic networks. The ASCN programme is coordinated and operated by the Interfaculty Institute for Central and Eastern Europe (IICEE) at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). It is initiated and supported by Gebert Rüf Stiftung <http://www.grstiftung.ch/en.html>.

The Caucasus Analytical Digest is supported by:

ASCN PROGRAMME
ACADEMIC SWISS CAUCASUS NET
AN INITIATIVE OF GEBERT RÜF STIFTUNG IN COOPERATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG

Editors: Denis Dafflon, Lili Di Puppo, Iris Kempe, Natia Mestvirishvili, Matthias Neumann, Robert Orttung, Jeronim Perović, Heiko Pleines
Layout: Cengiz Kibaroglu, Matthias Neumann, and Michael Clemens
ISSN 1867 9323 © 2014 by Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, Bremen and Center for Security Studies, Zürich
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