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Do the Social-Psychological Dimensions of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh Justify the Use of Interactive Conflict Resolution?

Isabella A. Missakyan

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Do the Social-Psychological Dimensions of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh Justify the Use of Interactive Conflict Resolution?

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Montclair State University

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Abstract

Using Kelman’s framework of the nature of international intractable conflict, this thesis seeks to examine thoroughly the unrelenting hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. The analysis will include the history of the primary parties in context, the root causes, the key issues, the needs, fears and other social-psychological factors driving and perpetuating the conflict. Special attention will be given to the secondary actors of the dispute since they play important roles in the conflict and have their own agendas. The secondary actors include Turkey, Russia, the Armenian Diaspora, the United States, the European Union, Iran, and Georgia.

The paper will discuss the conventional approaches of international conflict resolution such as official negotiation and mediation. These track-one diplomatic theories will be compared to the new social-psychological approaches employed in track-two diplomacy. The recent OSCE Minsk Group mediation efforts and results will be presented in an effort to demonstrate the limitations of track-one diplomacy as a sole conflict resolution method in the international arena. The paper will propose the utilization of Ronald Fisher’s Interactive Conflict Resolution model as a supplement to the official peacemaking efforts. The opponents of Fisher’s theory will be refuted through a comparative case analysis of several intractable conflicts in which the Interactive Conflict Resolution theory was applied, and appears to have exerted a positive effect on the stalled negotiations. An assessment of this approach will attempt to reveal its potential for overcoming the impasse and improving the chances of a peaceful resolution.
DO THE SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN
CONFLICT OVER NAGORNO-KARABAKH JUSTIFY THE USE OF
INTERACTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION?

By

ISABELLA A. MISSAKYAN

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters in Arts in Law and Governance
in the Department of Political Science and Law
in the Graduate Program of
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May 2012
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Assessment of the Conflict and Its Primary Actors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Social-Psychological Factors Driving and Perpetuating the Conflict</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The International Mediation Efforts</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interactive Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conclusion: Paving the Road to Peace through Interactive Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Map of the Caucasus and Surrounding Countries</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Regional Map of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Chronology of Key Events of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (1987-1994)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Conflict has always been a part of human existence. Researchers and practitioners in the conflict resolution field have an infinite supply of cases to scrutinize and material to explore. It seems like some conflicts are always in the international spotlight, while others have long faded into the background and do not draw much international attention. Nevertheless, even those seemingly distant and what some might characterize as unimportant clashes may lead to dire consequences for the parties involved, their region, and the world. The subject of this work is one of the world’s small intractable conflicts, in a land ravaged by hostilities since 1988 - the stalemate between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

This thesis will study that conflict by examining the social-psychological factors which have made it intractable. A better understanding of the conflict’s underlying issues and dynamics is the first step in the development of a more effective peace process. The paper focuses on one of the new methods of conflict resolution which has been gaining the support of international peacemakers during the last decade. In his 1997 book, the social-psychologist Ronald Fisher labeled the method Interactive Conflict Resolution.¹

The main proposition of the paper is that the official peace process is inadequate to resolve the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, because it fails to address the important social-psychological aspects which remain at the core of the hostilities. These elements of the intractable conflict call for social-psychological approaches to conflict resolution.

Therefore, the official track-one diplomatic efforts must be supplemented by track two methods such as Interactive Conflict Resolution.

**Chapter 1** offers an assessment of the geo-political, historical, religious, and economic realities of the primary actors through the lens of John Burton’s deep-rooted human needs² perspective. In his work, Burton makes a clear distinction between “dispute” and “conflict” explaining that unlike disputes, “conflicts arise out of the frustration of basic human needs that cannot be compromised or suppressed.”³

In **Chapter 2**, using Kelman’s framework of the nature of international intractable conflict, the analysis includes the root causes, the key issues, the needs, fears and other socio-psychological factors driving and perpetuating the conflict. The research examines historical events and official documents, and consults numerous news articles and scholarly publications on the subject. Special attention is given to the secondary actors of the dispute since they play important roles in the conflict influenced by their own agendas. These secondary actors include Turkey, Russia, the Armenian Diaspora, the United States, the European Union, Iran, and Georgia.

The emphasis in **Chapter 3** is placed on the official international conflict resolution theories such as negotiation and mediation. The OSCE’s Minsk group and its challenges and limitations as a chief mediator of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict are discussed while recent mediation efforts and results are presented. Factors hindering the

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efficacy of the official international mediation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are discussed. These track-one diplomatic theories are compared to the new social-psychological approaches employed in track-two diplomacy. **Chapter 4** offers an evaluation of the theory of Interactive Conflict Resolution as part of the international peacemaking framework. The opponents of Fisher's theory will be refuted through a comparative case analysis of four seemingly intractable conflicts in which the *Interactive Conflict Resolution* theory was applied, and had a positive effect on the stalled negotiations. **Chapter 5** presents recommendations for overcoming the impasse and improving the chances of a peaceful resolution. It evaluates warnings and predictions for the conflict's perpetuation and escalations and reaffirms the Interactive Conflict Resolution model's potential to ameliorate the inadequacy of the current pursuit for peace.
Chapter 1

Assessment of the Conflict and Its Primary Actors

The origin of the interactive conflict resolution theory can be traced to the pioneering work of John Burton and his colleagues in London during the mid 1960s. Burton conceptualized the idea that “deep-rooted conflict” is linked to frustration of basic human needs that are not subject to compromise or coerced settlement. This type of conflict is very different than a dispute over tangible, negotiable interests. These needs are related to the basic individual and collective human rights of identity, dignity, security, equity, voice, and self-determination. According to Burton, traditional approaches to conflict resolution that fall short of satisfying the basic human needs of the opposing sides are doomed to failure. In deep-rooted intractable conflicts, the official diplomacy approach must be re-assessed and expanded. Social-psychological approaches

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5 Ronald J. Fisher, Interactive Conflict Resolution, 19.

6 Ibid., 6.
Conflict resolution need to become a part of the peace process since they address the deep-rooted issues preventing the parties to reach an agreement.

*Nagorno-Karabakh: A Brief Overview of an Intractable Conflict*

The intractable conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh epitomizes a deep-rooted conflict that has escaped resolution for decades despite the continual negotiation and mediation efforts of representatives of the international community. The intercommunal hostilities erupted in 1988 while the two sides were still part of the Soviet Union. In a way the rise of the Armenian nationalist movement in Nagorno-Karabakh was the beginning of the end of the vast communist empire. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ethnic frictions quickly escalated to a war between two independent nations, which resulted in the loss of over thirty thousand lives and over one million refugees from both sides. The Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Nagorno-Karabakh is often referred to as one of the “frozen” Caucasus conflicts, because the parties remain deadlocked in their pursuit of an agreement and their implacable attitude and hatred have endured for over twenty years.

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A careful examination of latest developments reveals that matters have been escalating, despite the international diplomatic efforts for a political solution and the 1994 ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia. That agreement did not lead to a peace deal, because it left Nagorno-Karabakh as well as about 16% of Azerbaijani territory around the enclave in Armenian hands.\(^\text{10}\) Since then, both sides have had soldiers killed in sporadic breaches of the truce, and a simmering stalemate has prevailed, confirming Burton’s theory that “deep-rooted conflicts cannot be contained or suppressed in the long term.”\(^\text{11}\) The Azeri resent the loss of land they regard as rightfully theirs, while the Armenians who have lived there as an ethnic majority for centuries, believe that they are mitigating a historical injustice, and therefore, show no sign of willingness to give it back.\(^\text{12}\) As a response to the lost territory, Azerbaijan and its strongest ally, Turkey, closed off their borders with landlocked Armenia which greatly stifles the Armenian economy.\(^\text{13}\)

Understanding the geo-political, historical, religious and economic background of the primary actors of the conflict is the first step of the analysis that can clarify their underlying human needs. Fluency in regard of the main actors and a comprehensive

\(^{10}\)Gahramanova, 7.

\(^{11}\)Ronald J. Fisher, Interactive Conflict Resolution, 6.


evaluation of their underlying human needs is essential for an effective conflict resolution process.

**Nagorno-Karabakh: A Profile of a De Facto State**

Nagorno-Karabakh is a small, internationally unrecognized and isolated, *de facto* state situated in the mountainous lands of the South Caucasus in Eurasia. Its territory is 4,457 square miles (11,500 square km)\(^4\). The region has a strategic location between the Black and the Caspian seas, on the crossroads between Turkey and Central Asia, Russia and the Middle East. *See Appendix A and Appendix B.* In addition to its important geopolitical location, the fruitful soil and plentiful water resources of the land make it very appealing, especially since it is situated between two arid plains.\(^5\)

Thomas de Waal is a senior associate in the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment who visited the war-torn region and interviewed numerous individuals on both sides. He explains how “two versions of history collided” there, and “to hear Armenians and Azerbaijanis tell it, this was the fault line between Christians and Muslims, Armenians and Turks, west and east.”\(^6\) Nagorno-Karabakh’s history is


contested between Armenians and Azeri with the rise of their nationalistic movements.\textsuperscript{17} Populated for centuries by a majority of Christian Armenians and a minority of Muslim Turkic Azeri, the region of Nagorno-Karabakh has been plagued by violence and resentment between the two ethnic groups only since the time of Russian czarist rule over the area.\textsuperscript{18} Until then, the two ethnic groups coexisted in relative peace, sharing numerous elements of common culture despite their religious differences.\textsuperscript{19} Both peoples place significant cultural and symbolic importance on Nagorno-Karabakh,\textsuperscript{20} and both sides argue that their adversaries were merely temporary occupiers of the territory. Even though there were population shifts in the region over the years, there has always been a strong Armenian presence and there are numerous medieval Armenian churches and monasteries. Armenian princes ruled this land for centuries and held their autonomy even when the rest of the ancient Armenian lands fell under foreign rule. As some scholars point out, the Karabakh Armenians "have resisted against wind and tide to preserve their identity, waiting for the hour when Armenia would revive."\textsuperscript{21} On the other hand, Azerbaijanis view the region as their cultural cradle, the birthplace of their famous poets


\textsuperscript{19} De Waal, \textit{The Caucasus: An Introduction}, 100.

\textsuperscript{20} De Waal, \textit{Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War}, 3.

and musicians. According to an independent minority rights organization, both sides’ claims have certain validity:

In pre-modern times the region is thought to have formed part of Caucasian Albania (no relation to the Balkan Albania), a now extinct culture that had converted to Christianity in the fourth century and had assumed some Armenian cultural traits. In the early mediaeval period, waves of Seljuk invasions contributed to the spread of Islam and Turkic culture in the lowland areas of Karabakh. Through the early modern period a mixed system of rule obtained in the region, combining jurisdictions of Muslim khans and Armenian meliks (princes). To Armenians the region was known as Artsakh. Overall sovereignty over Karabakh belonged to the Persian empire (Iran) until 1813, when the region was formally incorporated into the Russian empire.

Even the name of these highlands exemplifies the numerous cultural influences on the region and its ethnic diversity. The ancient Armenian name for the enclave is “Artsakh,” but since the fourteenth century it became known by the Turko-Persian fusion “Kara-Bakh” which depicts its fertile soil. “Kara” means “black” in Turkish, and “bakh” is “garden” in Persian. The Russian adjective “nagorno” means “mountainous.”

The rivalry between the various ethnic groups in the South Caucasus is not new, but the current ethno-territorial conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has lasted too long, being fueled by Azeri ultra-nationalism that joined Armenian ultra-nationalism as an ideology based in hatred of the other.

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22 Gamaghelyan, 39.


24 De Waal, Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War, 8.

After the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in the early 1920s, the new Soviet rulers, as part of their divide-and-rule policy in the region, established the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, with an ethnic Armenian majority, within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan. It is well-known that one of Stalin’s notorious nicknames was “Breaker of Nations.” Clearly, the geography and the demography of the region have been mismatched for a long time threatening the fundamental human needs for the Armenians there. The frictions between Armenians and Azeri were kept under control in the years of authoritarian Soviet control, but the tensions lingered and the issues remained. The Karabakh Armenians sent petitions to Moscow asking to be united with Soviet Armenia in 1945, 1965 and 1977 but their efforts were fruitless. Finally, in 1988 as a result of the weakening of the Soviet Union, the Nagorno-Karabakh's parliament voted to secede and join Soviet Armenia and the violence exploded. The Azeri parliament’s response was to abolish the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh, dividing its territory among the surrounding districts. The Soviet Union initially sent troops to the region supporting the Azerbaijani defense forces and seeking to eliminate the growing Armenian paramilitary in Karabakh. When the Soviet Union ceased to exist and the Russian troops withdrew, the situation worsened for Azerbaijan. Soon the conflict escalated into a full-scale war between the Azerbaijani armed forces and the


28 Cornell, 27.

29 Ibid., 25.
Armenian secessionists in Karabakh, who were supported by the Armenian army and volunteers from the Armenian Diaspora. Taking advantage of internal political chaos in Baku, the Armenians gained control of Nagorno-Karabakh and pushed on to occupy Azerbaijani territory outside the region, creating a thin corridor between Armenia and Karabakh and establishing a large buffer zone. See Appendix B. The occupied lands comprise of approximately 16% of the territory of Azerbaijan. The military offenses caused a loss of lives of over thirty thousand people and over one million refugees as the ethnic Azeri population fled Karabakh and Armenia, while ethnic Armenians fled the rest of Azerbaijan. See Appendix C.

On December 10, 1991, after a referendum which was boycotted by its Azeri population, Nagorno-Karabakh declared itself an independent republic. That status is not recognized by any other country and most international organizations and countries still consider it to be a region within Azerbaijan, currently occupied by Armenia. As Cornell points out, “for every practical purpose, Nagorno Karabakh has become a part of Armenia - On the border between Armenia and what used to be parts of Azerbaijan, there is no demarcated border or passport controls. Officials even admit that in the economic and financial field, Karabakh and Armenia are actually one entity, just as their unified budget.” In a recent interview, Nagorno-Karabakh’s representative to the United States, Vardan Barseghian, said, “There is no going back for us. Just because Stalin gave

30 Ibid., 33.
31 Gahramanova, 103.
32 Cornell, 44.
Karabakh to Azerbaijan does not mean that the international community has to reinforce what Stalin did."33

Despite its great dependency on Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) is a de facto presidential democracy with a multi-party system and regular presidential and parliamentary elections. Since 2007, the NKR President has been Bako Sahakyan. Independent international groups warn that “the demography of the NKR is a politicized subject and all statistical data needs to be treated with caution,” but most estimates concur that the population is over 130,000 and the overwhelming majority are Christian Armenians.34 Mainly due to the Azerbaijani’s refusal, the de facto Nagorno-Karabakh authorities do not participate directly in the negotiations regarding the conflict, even though they are sometimes visited by the international mediators during their shuttle diplomacy efforts.35

Armenia: A Brief Country Profile

The national narrative of Armenia describes it as a country with ancient history, culture and traditions that have persevered for millennia despite scores of conquests from various invaders. Armenians often recollect the past, when the country was a powerful


34 “World Directory of Minorities: Nagorny Karabakh (Unrecognized State) Overview.”

empire stretching over a vast territory, including present-day Azerbaijan. Below is a
typical Armenian account of history:

One of the world’s oldest civilizations, Armenia once included Mount Ararat, which biblical tradition identifies as the mountain that Noah’s ark rested on after the flood. It was the first country in the world to officially embrace Christianity as its religion (c. 300)... Under Tigrane the Great (fl. 95-55 c.c.e.) the Armenian empire reached its height and became one of the most powerful in Asia, stretching from the Caspian to the Mediterranean Seas.36

The first Armenian Kingdom was founded in 6th century B.C., but over the centuries Armenia was conquered by Greeks, Romans, Persians, Byzantines, Mongols, Arabs, Ottoman Turks, and Russians.37 Thomas de Waal explains the significance of Nagorno-Karabakh for Armenians as “the last outpost of their Christian civilization and historic haven of Armenian princes and bishops before the eastern Turkic world begins.” Just like in Nagorno-Karabakh, the land is home to numerous Armenian churches and monasteries, some of which date to the 4th century. Between the 17th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, in the hands of the Ottoman Turks, the Armenian population was subjected to the worst oppression in their turbulent history. According to one scholar the most tragic event in the nation’s history is “the Armenian Genocide of 1915 in Ottoman Turkey, in which the entire Armenian population of Anatolia was destroyed.”39 The question of the Armenian genocide is an emotionally charged issue in modern

37 Gamaghelyan, 37.
38 De Waal, Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War, 3.
39 Gamaghelyan, 38.
international relations, since Turkey denies that it ever took place.\textsuperscript{40} It has hindered the latest negotiations for the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey, just as much as the failed mediation efforts for settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Diplomatic efforts to normalize relations between Armenia and Turkey in recent years have surged, but they have been unsuccessful so far.

In recent history, Armenia declared its independence from the USSR on August 23, 1991. It occupies territory of 11,494 square miles (29,770 square km).\textsuperscript{41} It is a presidential representative democracy with a multi-party system. The current president, Serge Sargsyan, who came to power in 2008 after controversial elections, has weak credibility at home.\textsuperscript{42} Armenia has a population of 2.9 million from which 97% are Christian Armenians\textsuperscript{43}, but it has a very large Diaspora. Armenia is a land-locked country and its economy suffers greatly due to its closed border with Turkey. According to the experts, “The World Bank studies show that an opening of the borders by Turkey and Azerbaijan is especially in the interest for Armenia, whose trade could increase the GDP

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{43} “Armenia,” \textit{The CIA World Factbook}.
by 30%.”44 The country is poor when it comes to natural resources and the estimated GDP for 2011 was $9.8 billion.45 Armenia receives a significant amount of foreign aid from the United States and the European Union. According to its budget, it planned to spend some $390 million on the army in 2011. Some analysts estimate that the total defense figure, counting Nagorno-Karabakh’s, is closer to $600 million.46

**Azerbaijan: A Brief Country Profile**

The national narrative of the Azerbaijani explains that even though the Republic of Azerbaijan first came into existence in the nineteenth century, the Azeri people have a rich history going back for centuries. As one scholar describes:

By some accounts, Azerbaijani identity consolidated in the 17th–19th centuries, while others trace it as a distinct identity group going back to the 10th century or earlier…. This discrepancy might have to do with the fact that the Muslim groups in the Ottoman and Persian Empires, although they had many distinct features such as culture and language, did not have a tradition of describing themselves in present-day ethnic terms and had one overarching Muslim identity.47

Azerbaijani lands have been invaded by numerous empires for millennia as well.

Similarly to the Armenians, the Azeris proudly recall their past control over the region.

The following quote is an example of the national rhetoric:

In the 7th century, Muslim Arabs invaded Azerbaijan introducing Islam to the Caucasus… Azerbaijan became a part of the Seljuk Empire in the 11th century. Under the Seljuk rule, the immigration of Turkic tribes further strengthened the

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44 Gahramanova, 103.

45 Armenia, "The CIA World Factbook.

46 “Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War,” 12.

47 Gamaghelyan, 38.
ancient and already dominant Turkic presence in Azerbaijan. Between 1501 and 1736 the Azerbaijani Sevevi dynasty, founded by Shah Ismayil Khatai, ruled Iran and neighboring countries, including Azerbaijan. Among the 19 semi-independent entities, such as khanates and sultanates, which emerged following the fall of the Sevevi dynasty, were the Azerbaijani khanates of Karabakh with the capital in Shusha and the khanate of Iravan with the capital in Iravan (Erevan, the capital of modern Armenia).

Azerbaijan is the largest and most populous state in the South Caucasus. Its entire territory is 33,436 square miles (86,600 square km). It is a nation with a majority Turkic Azeri (90%) population of 8.8 million. Their shared Turkic origins make Azerbaijan and Turkey closely related culturally and linguistically. However, the Azeris have strong cultural ties with Iran because 93% of them are Shia Muslims. Azerbaijan declared its independence from the USSR on October 18, 1991. It is a secular country, which holds elections for President and Parliament every five years, but political opposition is largely suppressed and the same party and family have been in power since 1993. The current president Ilham Aliyev succeeded his father in 2003. Azerbaijan has many oil wells in the Caspian Sea, and it is a strong oil exporter in the region. Several important oil and gas pipe lines run from Azerbaijan to neighboring countries, carefully going around Armenia. Azerbaijan had an estimated GDP for 2011 of $68.5 billion. Its official defense


50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.
spending has risen significantly in recent years, with an average annual increase approximating 50%, from $135 million in 2003 to $3.12 billion today.\textsuperscript{52}

Since the military defeat by the Armenians and the loss of its territorial integrity, the Azerbaijani population has developed a deep sense of victimization, and making concessions to the enemy has been viewed as impossible.\textsuperscript{53} Certainly, the minority of Karabakh Azeri, who were forced out from their homeland during the war, have a right to identity, dignity, security, equity, voice, and self-determination just as much as the majority of Karabakh Armenians do. Satisfying these basic human needs of both sides seems like an unattainable task, but that is in the core of the conflict resolution. In order to achieve it, Armenians and Azeri need to fundamentally change their policies and approaches to peace at the societal level. In the chapter that follows, the comprehensive analysis focuses on the social-psychological dimensions of the conflict following Herbert Kelman’s framework for examining international behavior.

\textsuperscript{52} “Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War,” 12.

Chapter 2

Social-Psychological Factors Driving and Perpetuating the Conflict

Herbert Kelman has spent most of his academic career at Harvard where he has worked in the fields of Social Ethics, Political Psychology, International Conflict Analysis and Resolution. As Ronald Fisher points out, Kelman’s “ground-breaking efforts to develop social psychology of international relations and to apply social-psychological concepts to the analysis and resolution of conflict, have placed him at the center of developments in interactive conflict resolution.”54 The social-psychological scholar makes four key observations regarding the nature of international conflict. This chapter applies his conclusions in the context of the Armenia-Azerbaijan multifaceted, protracted conflict.

Nagorno-Karabakh: Conflict as a Process Driven by Collective Needs and Fears

According to Kelman, “international conflict is a process driven by collective needs and fears, rather than entirely a product of rational calculation of objective national interests on the part of the political decision makers.”55 The lack of fulfillment of basic human needs and the collective fears from threats of these fundamental needs are powerful forces that fuel the conflict, turning it into a battle for group survival. Just like other intra-ethnic conflicts, the fight over Nagorno-Karabakh is seemingly over territory

54 Ronald J. Fisher, Interactive Conflict Resolution, 56.

55 William I. Zartman, 64.
and resources, but it also reflects and magnifies underlying concerns about security and identity.56

Azerbaijanis view the loss of their territory as a severe threat to their nationhood and sovereignty. They claim that the conflict is a result of the Armenian quest for expansion and land-grabbing ambitions against its Turkic neighbors. The Azeri contend that the Armenians massacred entire towns and villages as part of their ethnic cleansing offensive during the Karabakh war which resulted in over one million refugees in Azerbaijan.57 With the resolution of the conflict far from sight, Azeri refugees fear they will never be able to return to their homeland to live in safety and dignity next door to their Armenian neighbors. The same existential fears are shared by the thousands Armenian refugees who fled Azerbaijan during the hostilities between the two nations. The refugees on both sides see themselves as victims and feel marginalized by the narrow and closed peace negotiation process.

Armenians deny the Azeri’ ethnic cleansing claims and “view the fight for Karabakh as one to preserve their unique Armenian Christian culture, as revenge for the 1915-18 genocide at the hands of the Turks, and for anti-Armenian violence in Azerbaijan.”58 Nevertheless, the sense that their identity, security, and existence are at stake contributes to their separatist inclination, resistance to negotiation, and to conflict

56 Ibid., 65.
57 Cornell, 40.
escalation and perpetuation. Despite the fact that they have been the ethnic majority in the region, the Karabakh Armenians felt that their culture and religion were suppressed by Azerbaijan during the Soviet era. The Azeri “discount Armenian claims of cultural and religious repression, noting that their Turkic culture also had been fettered by Russification and communism.”\(^{59}\) They also think that the Armenians are satisfied with the status quo as military victors in full control of Nagorno-Karabakh and several adjoining provinces, and therefore, are unwilling to break the impasse. However, the government of Nagorno-Karabakh which has been denied access to the peace negotiation table due to Azerbaijan’s objections claims that its absence is an underlying factor for the deadlock.\(^{60}\) There is a lack of trust, and certainly, it is difficult to sell any negotiated proposition to a community that has not been included in the negotiations. Similarly to the refugees, the Karabakh Armenians feel marginalized and frustrated by the lack of voice when it comes to their own destiny. One independent observer agrees that the absence of the Karabakhis undermines the peace process\(^{61}\) since the fate of their territory is at the heart of the conflict.

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**Nagorno-Karabakh: Conflict as an Intersocietal Process**

As Kelman describes, “the parties are often unable to extricate themselves from the escalatory dynamic, in which they are caught up.”\(^{62}\) The sentiment that their identity,  

\(^{59}\) Migdalovitz, 11.  

\(^{60}\) O’Lear, 188.  


\(^{62}\) William I. Zartman, 65.
security, and existence are in danger contributes to their resistance to change or to engage in conciliation. Kelman concludes that “conflict is an intersocietal process, not only an interstate or intergovernmental phenomenon.”63 The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict has become an unavoidable part of the daily lives of both communities. Azerbaijani live with the painful reality that they were defeated militarily, and a large portion of their territory is currently under occupation. In addition, the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan has been completely cut off from the rest of Azerbaijan resulting in negative socioeconomic consequences.64 The Armenian military victory has had a similar outcome. The landlocked country suffers from an economic blockade as a consequence of its closed borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey.65 Certainly, the harshest daily reality is experienced by more than a million refugees on both sides who lost everything in the conflict and have lived for the last twenty years in limbo.

Due to these unfortunate circumstances, the vast public opinion and the collective moods on both sides support the hostilities. The issue of Nagorno-Karabakh is a sacred cause for the opposing parties in the conflict, because the two newly independent countries were built around it.66 Therefore, any notion of a compromise is viewed as a betrayal of the national interests. The economic factors and domestic political pressures affect leaders’ decision-making as well. According to Kelman, ‘leaders’ attempts to respond to public moods, to shape public opinion, and to mobilize group loyalties often

63 Ibid., 64.

64 De Waal, The Caucasus: An Introduction, 100.

65 Gamaghelyan, 41.

feed the conflict and reduce the options for conflict resolution."\(^{67}\) The presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan can be characterized as semi-authoritarian leaders who think that it is best if the general public knows as little as possible about the peace negotiations. At the same time, the societies are fed "black-and-white views on the conflict, hoping for a full victory; without a wider constituency pressing for change, the presidents have no mandate for peace in their negotiations."\(^{68}\) As a result of this vicious circle, the stalemate has prevailed – borders remain closed, regions remain isolated, ceasefire violations occur, refugees continue to suffer.

**Nagorno-Karabakh: Conflict as a Multifaceted Process of Mutual Influence**

Kelman’s third observation is that “conflict as a multifaceted process of mutual influence, not only a contest in the exercise of coercive power."\(^{69}\) During the years following the ceasefire agreement, Armenia and Azerbaijan “have built alliances and polarized international attitudes."\(^{70}\) Azerbaijan has used its Caspian Sea oil fields to make friends with the West, and enjoys the support of Turkey- its powerful regional ally. Key pipelines supplying oil and natural gas to Europe run through the region, but go around Armenia which leaves it isolated and economically weaker. The closed Turkey-Armenia border further exacerbates the economic situation in Armenia.\(^{71}\) The alliances created by

\(^{67}\) William I. Zartman, 69.


\(^{69}\) William I. Zartman, 64.


Azerbaijan push Armenia to form closer ties with Russia and Iran. The Armenian Diaspora plays a pivotal role by petitioning governments around the world to back the Armenian cause. The secondary parties in the conflict exercise strong influence on the conflict dynamics by supporting one side or the other, and maneuvering to protect their own interests. In such a multifaceted and intricately connected global environment, failure to find a solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will be disastrous for the region and the entire international community. The status quo is unsustainable and the pent-up tensions will eventually erupt more forcefully. A renewed military offensive will be intense, bloody, prolonged, and will disrupt major energy routes between Asia and Europe. The grave warning of the International Crisis Group issued in February 2011 is clear:

An arms race, escalating front-line clashes, vitriolic war rhetoric and a virtual breakdown in peace talks are increasing the chance Armenia and Azerbaijan will go back to war over Nagorno-Karabakh. Preventing this is urgent. Increased military capabilities on both sides would make a new armed conflict in the South Caucasus far more deadly than the 1992-1994 one that ended with a shaky truce. Neither side would be likely to win easily or quickly. Regional alliances could pull in Russia, Turkey and Iran. Vital oil and gas pipelines near the front lines would be threatened, as would the cooperation between Russia and Turkey that is central to regional stability. Another refugee crisis would be likely. 

*The Role of the Secondary Actors: Turkey*

Turks and Armenians have been fighting for centuries, and the memory of the Armenian Genocide in 1915 is still an open wound in the Armenian psyche. As one scholar points out, "As far as the Caucasus is concerned, the Turkish position has been heavily determined by its priority to relations with its ‘brother state’, Azerbaijan. Partly

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for reasons related to Azerbaijan and its conflict with Armenia, and partly because of
historic problems dating back to the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, relations with
Armenia have constantly been below the freezing point. As of today, Turkey and
Armenia maintain no diplomatic relationship. Naturally the Turkic Azeri have a strong
regional benefactor in Turkey which imports Caspian oil, and provides military
equipment and advisors to Azerbaijan. Turkey has not dared to intervene directly with
military force in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but the closed Turkey-Armenia border
has been extremely detrimental to the Armenian economy and used by Azerbaijan as
leverage during the negotiations. In a prepared statement for a U.S. Congressional
hearing, Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of European and Eurasian
Affairs of the U.S. State Department said that besides finding a peaceful solution of the
Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, “achieving normal relations between Armenia and Turkey is
another principle concern” for the U.S. government. The truce between the two
countries seemed possible in 2009 after the United States played a fine balancing act with
the several sensitive issues plaguing Armenia-Turkey relations. After enormous
diplomatic efforts by the State Department, the foreign ministers of both countries signed
protocols to reopen their border and establish diplomatic relations. However, the

73 Cornell, 60.
74 Chorbajian, 34.
75 U.S., Congress, 14.
governments of Turkey and Armenia have not yet ratified the protocols.\textsuperscript{76} According to one expert:

Turkey was insisting on making a linkage between Armenia-Turkey normalization and the Karabakh conflict that was not in the protocols the two sides signed in October 2009. That is not because Turkey cares deeply about the Karabakh issue as such, but it does care about its relations with its Turkic ally, Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan did enough to lobby in the Turkish parliament and to threaten Turkey with higher gas prices to dissuade the Turkish government from pursuing the normalization policy.\textsuperscript{77}

\textit{The Role of the Secondary Actors: Russia}

Russia and Iran are Armenia’s strongest supporters. Even though Russia has no direct border with Armenia, it exports energy to the country, and many believe that it also provides significant military assistance to Armenia.\textsuperscript{78} Russia denies that it was involved directly in the Armenian military offensive against Azerbaijan, but it does maintain a key Russian military base on Armenian territory. According to the International Crisis Group, in 2010 Russia’s Gyumri military base agreement was extended till 2044 and modified to include security guarantees against general threats to Armenian security which will include any attack from Azerbaijan.\textsuperscript{79}


\textsuperscript{78} “Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War,” 14.

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Ibid.}, 14.
Despite its alliance with Armenia, Russia has the important role of a chief mediator in the conflict. It is fascinating however that, Turkey and Russia have a strong interest to maintain good diplomatic relations between each other, since both countries reap significant economic benefits from their improved relationship in recent years. On the other hand, Russia’s main goal has been to preserve its pre- eminent dominance in the Caucasus and prevent the spread of Turkish and Western influences there. All of these factors make Russia a rather ambiguous broker of peace.

The Role of the Secondary Actors: Iran

Iran is another one of Armenia’s regional allies, mainly due to the Azerbaijani pro-Western stance. In addition, “whereas the Republic of Azerbaijan contains roughly six million Azeri, between 15 and 20 million are estimated to live in Iran.” The Islamic Republic has felt an influx of Azeri refugees and has concerns of destabilization of its northern territories. According to Cornell, Iran is concerned that a strong Azerbaijan can lead to a secessionist movement by the millions of Azeri in the north, and this fact has been an important reason for the ambivalence of Iran towards Azerbaijan. Even though in the first few years of the conflict Iran was officially calling for preserving the integrity of the international borders and condemning the Armenian advancement against

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80 Ibid., 15.
81 Cornell, 83.
82 Chorbajian, 35.
83 Cornell, 83.
Azerbaijan, the new gas pipeline between Armenia and Iran completed in 2006 with Russian capital investments speaks otherwise.

The Role of the Secondary Actors: Georgia

Georgia is officially an Azerbaijani and Turkish ally mainly due to the historical rivalry between Armenians and Georgians, and the country's extreme dislike of Russian hegemony in the region. However, Georgia has a cooperative relationship with Armenia. In fact, the flow of goods and people to and from Armenia would be extremely difficult without the Georgians' cooperation.

The Role of the Secondary Actors: The EU and the United States

The European Union and the United States try to maintain neutral roles because they need to balance the interests of oil-rich Azerbaijan and those of the strong Armenian lobby. The significant Caspian Sea oil reserves have ignited the interest of the West in the Caucasus, and the United States has shifted its initial position of backing the Armenian side. According to one scholar, by the end of the 1990s "the oil lobby in the US became a counterbalance to the Armenian lobby in the Congress on issues related to the Caucasus policy of the US." Despite the oil interest however, the strategic geopolitical location of the region must be an important factor for greater American involvement as well. The

84 Chorbajian, 35.
86 Cornell, 106.
United States feels that supporting Azerbaijan and Turkey offsets the Armenian-Russian-Iranian alliance.

*The Role of the Secondary Actors: The Armenian Diaspora*

Nevertheless, the Armenian Diaspora plays an important role in the conflict since it lobbies the governments of countries such as the United States, Russia, and France to support the Armenian cause. In Cornell’s words, “the strong lobbying efforts of the Armenian community in the United States, whose influential position in US politics is well-known, stemming from an impressive level of organization and lobbying skill as well as its importance in strategic states.” For example, in 1992 the Armenian lobby in Washington was able to get Congress to enact a law banning all foreign aid to Azerbaijan, due to its “blockade of Armenia.”

*Nagorno-Karabakh: Conflict as an Interactive Process with an Escalatory, Self-Perpetuating Dynamic*

Lastly, Kelman characterizes international conflict as “an interactive process with an escalatory, self-perpetuating dynamic.” The region was a province in a large Muslim country, populated mostly by Christian Armenians. Unfortunately, historical traumas between Christian and Muslim ethnic groups in the Caucasus serve as points of reference

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88 Cornell, 99.

89 Ibid., 99.

90 William I. Zartman, 64.
for current events. Kelman explains that conflicting parties manifest particularly strong
tendencies to seek out evidence that confirms negative images of each other and to resist
evidence that counters these images. People involved in intractable conflict develop a
"worldview that includes their conflict as a central component," and this passes from one
generation to the next, along with the hostility for the other.\textsuperscript{91} The current conflict
between Armenia and Azerbaijan has lasted over 20 years, and an entire generation on
both sides knows the other as "the enemy." These images are resistant to change and
contribute to the continuance and escalation of conflict.\textsuperscript{92} Each side views the other as
being the extreme aggressor, while its own actions are characterized as self-defense and
bringing freedom from an unjust oppression.

"In all international conflicts," the author explains, "the needs and fears of
populations are mobilized and often manipulated by the leadership."\textsuperscript{93} The needs and
fears of Armenians and Azerbaijani are serious and real, but the recent belligerent
rhetoric and actions coming from Yerevan and Baku are exacerbating these fears even
more. According to one observer, "neither leadership has taken steps to prepare their
populations for a compromise deal rather preferring to feed them fairytale scenarios.
Karabakh has had a major impact on the two societies strengthening mutual negative

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 91.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 95.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 66.
stereotypes and aggressive rhetoric. The conflict also continues to strongly influence political life and hold back democratization.”

Armenians started calling Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied buffer zone “liberated territories” or “historic Armenian lands” and began settlement activities, renamed several towns, and even conducted archeological excavations to prove the ancient Armenian origins in the region. Some of these actions were supported and financed by the Armenian Diaspora, whose powerful lobby managed to get the U.S. Congress to approve ten million dollars in direct aid to Nagorno-Karabakh in 2010, in addition to the millions in aid received by Armenia. Yerevan is investing millions of dollars in the infrastructure of the region, and recently government representatives from Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia celebrated the opening of the first in a series of hydro-electric plants in the de facto republic. In addition, the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities are seeking direct foreign investments from European countries in order to improve their


95 “Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War,” 11.


underdeveloped energy and mining sectors. Needless to say, all of these actions cause outrage in Baku and do nothing to ameliorate the conflict.

On the other hand, the Azerbaijani government officials have stepped up their rhetorically charged statements, military buildup, and sanctioned acts of cultural vandalism. On numerous occasions the Azerbaijani president has stated that Azerbaijan has the biggest army in the region and is able to liberate its lands via military means, or that force is a decisive factor, and Azerbaijan must be aggressive in its policies. One expert reported that in a speech in January 2011, “Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev repeated that Baku would never allow the establishment of a second Armenian state on its lands. He went on to talk about the strength of the Azerbaijani armed forces and that Azerbaijan’s defense spending will exceed $3 billion this year.” Some Azeri government officials have even stated on record that the Armenian capital city of Yerevan was a present to the Armenians in 1918 which was a big mistake that must be corrected, and others have called for the complete elimination of Armenians. Recently, a representative from Baku threatened to shoot down civilian planes flying to Nagorno-


99 Gahramanova, 103.

100 U.S., Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 21.


102 U.S., Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 49.
Karabakh, if the newly reconstructed airport in Stepanakert is reopened in 2011 as planned.\textsuperscript{103} As part of the “history war” offensives, in 2005 Azerbaijan erased Armenian scripts from an ancient church on its territory claiming they were not authentic, and in 2006 Armenian cultural monuments including thousands of cross-stones with Armenian inscriptions from a famous medieval cemetery were bulldozed.\textsuperscript{104} As Kelman states, “the discourse in deep-rooted conflicts is marked by mutual delegitimization and dehumanization.”\textsuperscript{105}

The international mediators of the conflict have repeatedly warned both sides of the dangers of such provocations and vitriolic statements. The OSCE Minsk Group mediators have requested on numerous occasions for both sides to withdraw their snipers from the line of contact, because sniper shootings are the most frequent and deadly breach of the ceasefire agreement.\textsuperscript{106} However, other than blaming each other for the ceasefire violation, neither side has taken steps to prevent such occurrences. Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders are facing declining economic conditions in their countries and strong pressure for domestic political reforms. According to some experts, “with Armenian parliamentary elections slated for 2011, it is unlikely Yerevan will be able to


\textsuperscript{104} De Waal, \textit{The Caucasus: An Introduction}, 108.

\textsuperscript{105} William I. Zartman, 80.

\textsuperscript{106} “U.S.: Armenia, Azerbaijan ‘Must Pull Out Snipers’.”
do anything that may be viewed as a concession.”\textsuperscript{107} The situation is even more serious in Baku where recent anti-government protests were met with violence and arrests aimed to suppress the opposition.\textsuperscript{108} Any concession on Nagorno-Karabakh is not likely in this political environment, because it may make president Aliyev look weak. Instead of promoting peaceful resolution of the conflict, the leaders in Yerevan and Baku prefer to follow the old, established formulas, nationalist rhetoric, and avoid any action that might weaken their positions. In deep-rooted intractable conflicts it is easier to gather support for aggression than conciliation.

Trying to find a win-win peaceful solution is extremely challenging in an intractable conflict environment with its complex dynamics and social-psychological characteristics. Failure to address the deep-rooted causes of the conflict and to change the conflict dynamics is not likely to produce a successful outcome. Track-one diplomatic efforts are focused only on finding a settlement to the conflict: the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and the refugees on both sides, withdrawal of Armenian troops from the adjoining provinces and so on.\textsuperscript{109} These official diplomatic efforts have not been effective so far, because they are not supplemented by track-two diplomacy, which has the tools to transform the societal attitudes and create a peace-promoting atmosphere. This is one of the main reasons for the persisting deadlock. The next chapter outlines the main track-one

\textsuperscript{107} Amanda Paul, “Nagorno-Karabakh: More Dangerous Than Ever.”

\textsuperscript{108} “U.S.: Armenia, Azerbaijan ‘Must Pull Out Snipers’.”

approaches to peace and elucidates the efforts and difficulties faced by the international mediators of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.
Chapter 3
The International Mediation Efforts

Due to limitations of international law as an instrument for resolving intra-state conflicts, formal negotiation and mediation have been the most popular alternative conflict resolution methods in the international arena.\textsuperscript{110} Crocker, Hampson and Aall label them as "structuralist paradigms" founded on the principle that the causes of the conflict are objective, and the parties are willing and capable to find a mutually beneficial negotiated settlement.\textsuperscript{111} Track-one framework of conflict resolution utilizes formal negotiation and mediation methods, conducted by official government representatives. There are numerous historic accounts of intra and inter-state conflicts which were ended through official diplomatic talks. Since 1945 mediation efforts have spanned the globe as attempts to resolve the majority of the world's violent conflicts.\textsuperscript{112}

\textit{Negotiation}

One scholar defines negotiations as "microcosms of international relations."\textsuperscript{113} For example, many international trade agreements, mutual cooperation agreements, weapons non-proliferation agreements are product of official government negotiations.


\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 20.

\textsuperscript{112} Bercovitch, \textit{Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management}, 30.

\textsuperscript{113} William I. Zartman, 119.
From a diplomatic perspective, negations can be communications exchanged between two or more nations' representatives, in order to find a mutually beneficial solution to their conflict.\textsuperscript{114} Negotiations could be positional or principled, interest-based or rights-based. Some scholars view negotiations as a puzzle to be solved, and others view the process as a bargaining game.\textsuperscript{115} Regardless of the type of the negations approach, the exchange is influenced by a variety of factors. The nature of the conflict is the main aspect determining the negotiations' dynamic. Other crucial factors include the relationship between the parties, their cultures and ideologies, their levels of power and knowledge, their emotions and experiences, and their alternatives to a negotiated agreement. Awareness and understanding of these factors are essential for a successful international negotiator. The two most important principles presented in Fisher and Ury's bestseller \textit{Getting To Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In}, are that negotiators should separate the people from the problem and that one needs to focus on interests, not positions.\textsuperscript{116}

The interest-based approaches to conflict resolution assume that the opposing parties remain objective and prefer a win-win negotiations framework. However, the complex characteristics of intractable conflicts are often obstacles to the application of these principles. The analysis of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict indicates, that the parties in conflict are not particularly rational when they believe that their underlying

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Ibid.}, 112.

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}, 113-117.

human-needs are threatened. Often bi-lateral negotiations between the adversaries of intractable conflicts are not possible or are unproductive. Therefore, it is common for a third party serving as a mediator to be utilized for the negotiating process.

**Mediation**

According to some scholars, mediation is "an extension and elaboration of the negotiation process."\(^{117}\) Perhaps the most exhaustive definition of mediation in the international relations context is the one provided by the United States Institute of Peace:

> A mode of negotiation in which a mutually acceptable third party helps the parties to a conflict find a solution that they cannot find by themselves. It is a three-sided political process in which the mediator builds and then draws upon relationships with the other two parties to help them reach a settlement. Unlike judges or arbitrators, mediators have no authority to decide the dispute between the parties, although powerful mediators may bring to the table considerable capability to influence the outcome. Mediators are typically from outside the conflict. Sometimes mediators are impartial and neutral, in other cases they have a strategic interest that motivates them to promote a negotiated outcome. Mediators may focus on facilitating communication and negotiation but they also may offer solutions and use leverage, including positive and negative incentives, to persuade the parties to achieve an agreement.\(^{118}\)

According to Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Ruben, at the 'heart' of international mediation is the mediator's effort to influence, to change or to modify the

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\(^{117}\) William I. Zartman, 166.

communication, experience and expectation of the disputing parties.\textsuperscript{119} The goal is to bring a positive change to the conflict dynamic through analysis of the parties' interests, and suggestions of alternative solutions. The authors explain that the various types of international mediators: individuals, states, organizations and institutions, all share similar roles which are framed around these efforts and goals. In their book Bercovitch and Ruben mention the Stulberg's theory on the mediators' roles: a catalyst, an educator, a translator, a resource-expander, bearer of bad news, an agent of reality, and a scapegoat.\textsuperscript{120} In every one of these roles, understanding the nature of conflict and possessing cultural proficiency are crucial for an effective mediation.

Ripeness and timing are important concepts in international conflict resolution. Ripeness refers to the readiness of parties to enter the talks and the particular circumstances conducive to a successful diplomatic process.\textsuperscript{121} The parties of the conflict must realize that a unilateral action will not be advantageous to their cause, and that refusing to accept a settlement will be more costly. William Zartman labels this condition as a "hurting stalemate."\textsuperscript{122} The timing aspect is closely connected with the conflict cycle, and sometimes the ripe moment occurs naturally. Other times, however, the mediators must coax the parties to the negotiating table through means such incentives or threats

\textsuperscript{119} Bercovitch, \textit{Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management}, 15.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 15.

\textsuperscript{121} Crocker, 21.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
The positive incentives can be rewards, promises of power, legitimatization, resources, economic help, military assistance and so on. Threats may include discrediting, penalties, economic sanctions, embargoes, use of military force, etc. The ability of the mediators to use their leverage over the parties in conflict is viewed by some experts as more important than the mediators’ neutrality and objectivity.124

The mediation process itself may vary greatly depending on the type of mediation being utilized, the conflict environment, and the relationship between the parties involved. The mediator of an intractable inter-state conflict is usually another state or international organization that has a stake in the region and a shared interest to see the conflict resolved.

The Role of the OSCE in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: The Beginning Stages of the Mediation

Despite its significant resources and conflict resolution expertise, the United Nations has not been directly involved in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Its role has been limited to condemning the violence and calling for territorial integrity of all countries involved. From the beginning, the mediator’s role was passed on to a new regional organization which was created at the end of the Cold War-the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), later known as Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).125 The organization undertook the task to resolve the complicated conflict in 1992, when the British delegate pointed out at the end of a

123 William I. Zartman, 182.
124 Crocker, 21.
125 Cornell, 119.
CSCE meeting that two of their newly-accepted members (Armenia and Azerbaijan) are at war with each other and something must be done about it.\textsuperscript{126} A few days later Belarus offered its capital for a potential peace conference, and the countries involved in the mediation process became known as the “Minsk Group.”\textsuperscript{127} The organizational structure of the CSCE emphasized the equality of all its members and no country was awarded any veto powers. Originally some truly neutral and sometimes disinterested countries such as Sweden, Finland, and Italy were the leading the mediation efforts, and the trust levels towards the mediators were high.\textsuperscript{128} On the other hand, the chief mediators lacked motivation, cultural expertise, and historical understanding.\textsuperscript{129} A successful mediation calls for motivation and commitment not just from the parties in conflict but also from the mediator. Traditional approaches to mediation assume that conflict parties and a mediator share one reason for initiating mediation: a desire to reduce, abate, or resolve a conflict.\textsuperscript{130} The new organization had little experience in conflict resolution, had a small budget, and had no peace-keeping forces. The governments of Western Europe and even the United States had very little knowledge of the South Caucasus and the nature of the conflict.\textsuperscript{131} In addition, during the early 1990s Armenia and Azerbaijan seemed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{126} De Waal, \textit{Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War}, 229.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Cornell, 119.
\item \textsuperscript{128} \textit{Ibid.}, 120.
\item \textsuperscript{130} William I. Zartman, 172.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Maresca, 476.
\end{itemize}
disinterested in a negotiated settlement. The moment for peace talks was not ripe yet. The factors mentioned above undermined the efforts of the CSCE mediators during this period, and the results were marginal and ineffective.\footnote{132}{Ibid., 475.}

**Russia Becomes the Chief Mediator of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict**

The Russians, on the other hand, had a working relationship with the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan, knew the local culture, and understood the underlying issues for both sides of the conflict. In addition, as a superpower with a categorical influence in the region, Russia enjoyed significant leverage at the mediation table. Mediation is often used as a vehicle for extending one’s influence\footnote{133}{Bercovitch, *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management*, 233.} and Russia was committed to preserve the South Caucasus in its own sphere of control. After a prolonged period of shuttle diplomacy, in May 1994 Russia was able to broker a cease-fire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.\footnote{134}{Gamaghelyan, 37.} According to one scholar, “Armenians accepted the Russian offer because Russia was their close and powerful ally; Azerbaijan accepted it because Russia was the only country that had enough leverage to pressure Armenians to stop their offensive.”\footnote{135}{Ibid.} The agreement is still in force today, even though there have been sporadic cease-fire violations resulting in casualties on both sides over the years.\footnote{136}{Tabib Huseynov, 13.} The cease-fire violations are occurring because there is no neutral peace-keeping force on the front-line.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[Ibid., 475.]
\item[Bercovitch, *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management*, 233.]
\item[Gamaghelyan, 37.]
\item[Ibid.]
\item[Tabib Huseynov, 13.]
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
to prevent them. Russia was the only country that made a commitment to deploy a peace-
keeping force in Nagorno-Karabakh. According to some experts, the UN and the Western
countries did not volunteer any peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh, partly due to being
preoccupied with the raging civil war in the Balkans. However, Azerbaijan objected to
the part of the agreement calling for Russian peacekeepers on the line of contact. Public
opinion in Azerbaijan held the view that the Armenians were able to achieve their
military victory mainly due to Russian military support, even though these allegations
were never independently confirmed. Nevertheless, the lack of trust towards the
Russians has been apparent and persistent for years. Russia has played an important, yet
dubious role in the resolution of the conflict. According to one analyst:

Whereas from the beginning, Russia was involved in the Minsk group, it became
increasingly clear that Russia would not allow an international organization to
take its place and hamper its interests in the Caucasus. The Russians sometimes
even actively undermined the peace efforts of the CSCE as they conducted
parallel unilateral mediation attempts without informing the CSCE.

These actions were extremely counterproductive since “the existence of parallel
mediation tracks led to the parties’ attempts to play one mediation out against the other to
go ‘forum shopping’.” In order to prevent Russia from conducting its own separate
mediation, the now-renamed Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

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137 De Waal, Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War, 239.
138 Gahramanova, 103.
139 Cornell, 122.
140 Ibid., 123.
(OSCE) elevated Russia’s status to a permanent co-chair of the Minsk Group with a role of assisting the rotating organization’s chairman.

**The OSCE Minsk Group Troika’s Mediation Efforts**

The West finally began to be more coordinated and competent in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the mid 1990s. During the Lisbon summit in 1996, the OSCE members nominated France to become Russia’s permanent co-chair of the Minsk Group in order to counterbalance the Russian dominance of the mediation process. Azerbaijan had objections due to the large Armenian Diaspora in France which could make the co-chair prejudiced against Azerbaijan. A compromise was reached when the United States and France joined Russia as permanent co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, despite Russia’s initials reservations. Currently, the chief international mediators of the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks are the same three countries co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group also known as the OSCE Troika\(^{141}\) (Russian for “threesome”). The other members of the Minsk Group are Belarus, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Turkey, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan.\(^{142}\) Noticeably, the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is not an OSCE member state, is the only regional power that has been excluded from the Nagorno-Karabakh peace mediation process.

According to the OSCE website, the main objectives of the Minsk group peace process can be summarized as follows:

\(^{141}\) *Ibid.*, 125.

Providing an appropriate framework for conflict resolution in the way of assuring the negotiation process supported by the Minsk Group;
Obtaining conclusion by the Parties of an agreement on the cessation of the armed conflict in order to permit the convening of the Minsk Conference;
Promoting the peace process by deploying OSCE multinational peacekeeping forces.¹⁴³

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution approach so far has been a closed-door mediation between high-ranking representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan, being facilitated by the special Ambassadors of the OSCE Troika. This type of formal track-one diplomacy is necessary, but ineffective on its own. Any potential compromise signed at the negotiation table would be impossible to implement on the ground, given the reality of mutual hatred and distrust between the two societies.

In addition, the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh state that no peace deal will be possible unless they are included in the mediation process.¹⁴⁴ Azerbaijan rejects such prepositions based on fears that giving the Armenian secessionists a spot at the mediation table may legitimize their claims for sovereignty and statehood. However, some experts "argue that not taking part in the negotiations gives Nagorno-Karabakh the ultimate veto right over any compromise"¹⁴⁵ which certainly is a big obstacle in the peace process.


¹⁴⁴ Ghaplanyan, 86.

The Minsk Troika has proposed different peace frameworks over the years, but none have been deemed acceptable by the opposing sides. These include a step-by-step peace proposal, a “common state” solution, and a *Basic Principles* plan. Each one of these frameworks is outlined below. Even when Armenia and Azerbaijan seemed to agree on principle and got closer to a compromise, the solution was rejected by the Nagorno-Karabakh leadership, indicating that the Armenians in Yerevan sometimes have different agendas than those in Stepanakert.

For example, in 1997 the Minsk group proposed a step-by-step solution to the conflict, beginning with Armenian withdrawal from the Azerbaijani provinces around Nagorno-Karabakh and allowing for the refugees to return to their homeland. The next step of the peace process would have been deciding the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. According to some experts, the Armenian president at the time, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, was leaning towards a compromise, even though the proposal was immediately rejected by the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. The notion of giving up the Armenian strongest bargaining chips without any guarantees for independence of Nagorno-Karabakh was political suicide for Ter-Petrosyan, who was forced to step down after losing all public support. In the presidential elections that followed in 1998, the majority of Armenians voted for the former president of the de-facto state of Nagorno-Karabakh, Robert

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146 Nichol, 14.

147 Cornell, 126.

Kocharyan. He was elected for president of Armenia, despite the fact that he was a citizen of Nagorno-Karabakh and not Armenia.\textsuperscript{149}

The details of the next Minsk group proposal were not made very clear to the public. According to some analysts, it was a package deal involving a “common state” solution between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia endorsed this proposal since that would have meant the recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh as a state within Azerbaijan. However, the Azerbaijani leaders immediately rejected this approach stating that it violates the principles of maintaining the territorial integrity of their country.\textsuperscript{150}

As Cornell assesses, “By its actions, the Minsk group hence actually increased the unwillingness of one party to the conflict to make serious compromises…An interesting observation is that the increased involvement of great powers in the mediation process has worsened rather than promoted the prospects of a solution.”\textsuperscript{151} Perhaps the rivalry between the interests of the Minsk Troika endures and undercuts their efforts to reach a common goal. That is often the opinion of ordinary Armenians and Azerbaijanis who are frustrated with the lack of progress. It is evident, however, that in the aftermath of the failed Minsk group proposals, the leaders of the opposing sides have stuck to their hard-line positions regarding the status of the region, and pointed fingers at each other for being unwilling to negotiate in good faith.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{150} Cornell, 128.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 129.
In 2005 the Minsk group mediators began working on a new peace proposal based on ideas discussed during years of negotiations. The latest proposal became known as the “Madrid principles” since it was introduced at a summit at the Spanish capital in 2007. In Madrid, the Minsk Troika presented the Basic Principles outlined below to the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan:

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

This framework exemplifies a single-text approach to negotiations. The parties are presented with one document which they must endorse after a series of revisions if necessary. Fortunately, the Madrid principles were not immediately rejected by either side. They have been discussed by the representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan since 2007 and numerous amendments were made by both sides. Unfortunately, as of today there is still a lack of consensus of the final draft of the Basic Principles and the peace process has stalled.

152 Nichol, 15.
Recent Mediation Efforts and the Persisting Stalemate

In a candid interview given in May 2010, Thomas de Waal expressed his opinion that the mediations over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are unfortunately deadlocked: "Observers of the peace talks have the perception that the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents actually prefer the narrowly based desultory peace process, which preserves the status quo and produces no results, to a more dynamic process that would force them to take hard decisions and make public compromises to the enemy."154 A more recent report from the International Crisis Group shares this assessment:

Any optimism that remained in 2009 over the framework agreement on basic principles, evaporated in the second half of 2010. While Aliyev and Sargsyan met six times in 2009, they did so only three times in 2010. The shuttle diplomacy by Minsk Group diplomats, who visited Yerevan, Baku, and the de facto authorities in Stepanakert sometimes as often as twice a month in 2009, also cooled. Even though there was an OSCE push to obtain agreement on the basic principles for the December 2010 summit, the presidents refused to meet each other and made only a vague commitment to seek a solution based on international legal principles.155

Almost twenty years have passed since the unstable ceasefire agreement was signed by Armenia and Azerbaijan. During this long span of years, there have been numerous meetings between the leaders of the two countries, mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs: Russia, the U.S., and France, but no one seems closer to finding a peaceful settlement. Despite the discouraging impasse, the international peace efforts continued. On March 5, 2011 in Sochi, Russia a peace-seeking meeting was attended by presidents Aliyev and Sargsyan, and mediated by the Russian president Medvedev. There were no breakthroughs or surprises during the meeting, and the Basic Principles

154 De Waal, "Nagorno-Karabakh and the Minsk Group Negotiations."

framework remained unsanctioned. However, the presidents released a statement that they have agreed to keep searching for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and to exchange prisoners of war as soon as possible. The prisoner exchange occurred on March 17, 2011 as agreed, but it was followed by deadly sniper fire on the line of contact the following day. According to some reports, days after the Sochi meeting, the Azerbaijani Defense Minister “stated that the “worthlessness” of the Minsk Group talks had forced Azerbaijan to build up its military capabilities in order to “take serious and necessary measures to liberate” Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas.”

The next peace mediation meeting was scheduled for June 24, 2011 in Kazan, Russia, and it was once more hosted by the Russian president. Despite the strongly worded statement issued at the May 2011 G-8 summit in Deauville, France by Presidents Obama, Medvedev and Sarkozy, which demanded no further delay in signing the Basic Principles, the results of the high-level meeting in Kazan were disappointing because no agreement was reached on the proposed framework. The meeting in Kazan was the ninth peace mediation between the Russian President and his Armenian and Azerbaijani


157 Nichol, 16.

counterparts. According to some sources, after the fruitless four hour meeting, President Medvedev sent letters to the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders asking for suggestions on how to move the talks forward. The same topic was discussed in Warsaw, Poland on September 29, 2011 when the Minsk group co-chairs met separately with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents.

The failed peace efforts call into question the commitment of the opposing sides to find a peaceful solution to their conflict through negotiation. It would appear that neither side has changed its position which remains the core of the conflict- “the competing claims of territorial integrity, which Azerbaijan insists takes precedence in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, and self-determination, which Armenia wants to see for the Armenians of Karabakh.” Other difficult issues still on the negotiating table include the right of the displaced people to return to their homes, and permitting a narrow corridor linking Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh. The ability of the mediators to persuade the parties to reach a compromise is also questionable. So far the only role the international mediators have mastered is the one of being scapegoats for the failed peace-seeking efforts.

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159 Ibid.

160 Nichol, 17.


162 U.S., Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 53.
According to Thomas de Waal, "there are deeper problems with the negotiations: It is far too narrow a process to get the kind of traction needed to resolve a major conflict. There is almost no Track Two process involving the two societies and few international resources are being expended to support the U.S., French and Russian mediators".\textsuperscript{163} It is clear that no peaceful solution is possible without popular support, and yet nothing is done to change the hostile attitudes and the counterproductive atmosphere on the streets of Armenia and Azerbaijan. In fact, there is almost no contact between the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies, and the discussions during the peace mediations are generally not shared with the public at home. The leaders prefer to keep the peace talks confidential, and are afraid to make conciliation gestures when it comes to Nagorno-Karabakh, because the passionate nationalistic rhetoric in Armenia and Azerbaijan portray any compromise on the issue as a betrayal of the national interests. Unless there is greater openness and candid internal dialogue in both countries that may lead to change of the mind-sets of the people, the leaders will remain trapped in their current positions. Unless there are initiatives aimed at encouraging interactions, improving communications, and building trust between the two nations, no peaceful resolution will be feasible. These are some of the peace-seeking principles of the Interactive Conflict Resolution approach, which is necessary as a complement to the existing formal mediation efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This track-two non-governmental method of international peacemaking is analyzed in the chapter that follows.

\textsuperscript{163} De Waal, "Nagorno-Karabakh and the Minsk Group Negotiations."
Chapter 4  
Interactive Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice

The term Interactive Conflict Resolution was first used in 1997 by Ronald J. Fisher, Director of the International Peace and Conflict Resolution Program in the School of International Service at American University in Washington, DC. Fisher has post-bachelor’s degrees in psychology and social psychology, and he has spent most of his career studying protracted social conflict. According to his profile, developing the scholar-practitioner field of Interactive Conflict Resolution is his main professional interest.

Interactive Conflict Resolution: A Social-Psychological Track-Two Paradigm

Ronald Fisher’s theory of Interactive Conflict Resolution is a part of the international peacemaking framework which could ameliorate the factors hindering the efficacy of the official mediation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Fisher’s model “involves problem-solving discussions between unofficial representatives of groups or states engaged in violent protracted conflict.” Even though a peace agreement could be reached as a part of the formal mediation process, no peaceful resolution can be implemented in reality, unless the atmosphere of the intractable conflict shifts dramatically. The goals of interactive conflict resolution include improved attitudes and
understanding, improved relationship, joint generation of creative solution that may lead to long-term-conflict resolution and societal reconciliation.\textsuperscript{167}

Ronald Fisher’s model is an essential component of the quest for peace. It consists of informal but structured workshops or consultations facilitated by a neutral third party scholar-practitioner.\textsuperscript{168} A small group of participants from both sides of the conflict gathers for a joint discussion in a neutral and informal setting.\textsuperscript{169} The participants in these workshops are not the countries’ presidents or ministers, but they are still influential figures in the society. Conflict resolution experts believe that “the approach seems to work best if individuals are middle-range elites such as academics, advisers, ex-officials, or retired politicians who continue to have access to those in power.”\textsuperscript{170} As Bercovitch and Jackson point out, “the underlying assumption is that increased communication and understanding between middle-level leaders will permeate both upward to the Track I level and downward to the level of community reconciliation.”\textsuperscript{171} According to professionals from the conflict resolution community, the multifaceted nature of intractable conflicts requires “a multidimensional approach involving a range of actors,


\textsuperscript{168} William I. Zartman, 229.

\textsuperscript{169} Ronald J. Fisher, \textit{Interactive Conflict Resolution}, 145.

\textsuperscript{170} Crocker, 23.

\textsuperscript{171} Bercovitch, \textit{Conflict Resolution in the Twenty-first Century: Principles, Methods, and Approaches}, 140.
Both official and unofficial.

Some scholars go even further in their conclusions stating that in identity-based intractable conflicts, where fundamental human needs are at stake, utilizing traditional methods of conflict resolution such as mediation “may exacerbate and prolong the conflict.”

Fisher elaborates:

Workshops provide an opportunity for influential representatives of the parties to engage in a mutual analysis of the social-psychological aspects of their conflict (images, needs, interaction patterns, escalation processes, ideologies, institutions) and to connect these to policymaking and public opinion. The intense, face-to-face interaction provides authentic information that can shift attitudes in a more realistic and less stereotyped direction.

Improving the participants’ attitudes, perceptions, patterns of behavior, and communication channels are the main goals of the interactive conflict resolution workshops. “By altering the psychological climate between the antagonists,” in time, the neutral scholar-practitioners would be able to transform the existing stalemate into a constructive and problem-solving dialogue.

The identity of the third party consultant is of great importance for the successful interactive conflict resolution model. According to Fisher, “the third party needs to possess professional expertise and knowledge, moderate knowledge about the conflict, and be perceived as impartial.” Substantive comprehension about the underlying issues

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172 Ibid.

173 William I. Zartman, 228.


175 Bercovitch, Conflict Resolution in the Twenty-first Century: Principles, Methods, and Approaches, 141.

of the conflict is essential. In addition to their competence level, the author discusses other requirements for the third party consultants, such as their high ethical standards, integrity, strong sense for social responsibility, and respect of people's rights and dignity. Finally, an effective third party consultant should be creative and culturally fluent. In Fisher's interactive conflict resolution model, the third party consultants are usually scholar-practitioners from a variety of professional disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, sociology, law, international relations, political science, etc.

The roles of the third party consultants are facilitative and diagnostic. Similar to mediators, the interactive conflict resolution scholar-practitioners "induce positive motivation, improve communication, diagnose the conflict, and regulate the interaction." Fisher emphasizes that interactive conflict resolution is not a substitute for formal international mediation, but a complementary approach which could be utilized during the various stages of peace negotiations. As part of the pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-negotiation phases, the interactive workshops aim to achieve "deep understanding, mutual recognition and respect, and jointly acceptable and sustainable solutions."

Harold Saunders, who has extensive experience in both official and unofficial conflict resolution roles, contends that peace cannot be achieved by relying

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177 Ibid., 158.
178 Ibid., 157.
179 Ibid., 145.
180 William I. Zartman, 228.
181 Ibid., 229.
solely on the negotiation and mediation efforts between government representatives.\textsuperscript{182} Comprehensive and sustainable peace could only be attained through transformation of the relationship between the societies. Therefore the process of peacemaking must involve informal communication between influential citizens of the opposing sides.

Bringing together representatives of the conflicting sides for a problem-solving dialogue could influence positive change of perceptions and attitudes and improve the relationship of the parties. According to Fisher, at first the guided interaction brings positive transformation on a small scale directly to the participants in the workshop, but eventually the interactive conflict resolution approach would be effective in dealing with many of the subjective aspects of the conflict on a larger scale.\textsuperscript{183}

\textit{Assessment of the Effectiveness of Interactive Conflict Resolution}

Some critics of Ronald Fisher’s theory claim that the social-psychological approach of conflict resolution is not practical and effective. Bercovitch, for example, considers the problem-solving workshops as “interesting exercises, but irrelevant and unsuccessful – largely because they do not conform to his view of mediation.”\textsuperscript{184} Because interactive conflict resolution workshops are not solution-oriented, and do not involve high-ranking government officials, their practical utility is questioned. Fisher explains that interactive conflict resolution and mediation are similar, but they do not have the


\textsuperscript{183} Ronald J. Fisher, \textit{Interactive Conflict Resolution}, 164.

\textsuperscript{184} Bercovitch, \textit{Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management}, 67.
same objectives. Mediation facilitates the opposing parties to uncover a mutually-agreeable solution, while the third-party consultation is focused on the problem-solving process, which is facilitated through open communication and analysis of the underlying issues of the conflict. Another expert contends that such goals are too broad and impossible to evaluate.\textsuperscript{185}

According to the critics, it is difficult to demonstrate how improved communications and attitudes between workshops' participants translate into improved conditions between the societies, and lead to a peaceful conflict resolution.\textsuperscript{186} Another expert in the field points out the "need to formulate, and to develop methodologies to examine, theoretical connections among current intervention techniques, microobjectives in the problem-solving workshop, and macrogoals of changing the dynamics of conflict."\textsuperscript{187} Fisher agrees that his theory can benefit from further research and evaluation. He explains that the effectiveness of the problem-solving workshops is somewhat dependent on the support they receive from government officials, and the level of coordination between track-two and track-one approaches of conflict resolution is essential.\textsuperscript{188} Unfortunately, many representatives in official diplomatic circles have historically perceived track-two practitioners to conflict resolution as "meddlers" who


\textsuperscript{186} Ronald J. Fisher, \textit{Interactive Conflict Resolution}, 196.

\textsuperscript{187} Stern, 295.

“raise unrealistic expectations, cause misunderstandings or interfere in other ways with the official process.” Only since the end of the Cold War, some diplomats started to recognize the potential of supplementing their official efforts with track-two approaches to conflict resolution.

However, skeptics declare that the problem-solving workshops could become a forum for disagreements and expression of profound differences between the parties which could be counterproductive to the peace process. Fisher refutes these claims by stating that, “interactive problem solving is based on a careful analysis of the relationship of workshops to the policy process, but it takes a broad view of that process.” The communication exchanges at workshops are controlled and the parties’ differences “can be explored and potentially reconciled.” He also points out that all diplomatic efforts are done on interpersonal level, and the fact that the workshop participants do not interact in an official capacity is actually a significant advantage. The lack of formal

189 Ibid, 70-71.
190 Ibid, 71.
191 Bercovitch, Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management, 67.
192 Ibid, 68.
193 Ibid., 67.
194 Ibid., 68.
constraints is conductive to greater transparency and adoption of creative ideas, even though the official support of the workshops has a positive effect on their utility. 

Fisher concurs with the skeptics that there are several deficiencies regarding his method. There is not enough empirical data indicative of the efficacy of the approach, mainly due to the informality the process and the absence of well-defined goals. According to one expert:

Without clearly predesignated expected outcomes and reasonably established means (both theoretical and empirical) to explain how these outcomes could be achieved, unofficial intervention is doomed to the status of double marginality: it will neither be taken seriously by policy makers and practitioners of the official diplomatic track nor will it succeed to become established as an academic discipline. 

In addition, there are not enough funding and organizational structures which support the scholar-practitioners in terms of their research, training and practice. All of these factors hinder the interactive conflict resolution development and growth.

**Comparative Case Analysis of Successful Interactive Conflict Resolution Workshops**

However, despite the above-mentioned deficiencies, the interactive conflict resolution model has been used successfully as a part of the international peacemaking framework for years. Variations of Ronald Fisher’s approach were applied to deep-rooted conflicts where official mediation efforts had reached a deadlock due to the reluctance of

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196 Stern, 103.

the representatives to negotiate about their peoples' identity, human dignity, historic grievances, security, and so on. The application of the interactive conflict resolution theory to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the civil war in Tajikistan, the Moldova-Transdniestria conflict, and the Peru-Ecuador war is indicative of the model's potential. These cases are examples of deep-rooted, violent, intractable conflicts which erupted after the disintegration of the colonial powers that used to be in control of the respective regions. Despite the cultural and geographical diversity of the cases, they share common underlying issues and grievances that were not addressed solely by track-one diplomacy.

The protracted ethno-political conflicts have similar social-psychological dynamics and characteristics to those of the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The society's collective needs and fears regarding threats to their identity, security and dignity make the conflict intractable. These psychological factors are not interest-based, and they impose perceptual cognitive constraints on processing of new positive information. The collective moods and public opinion are difficult to manipulate because the conflict and the hatred against the enemy have become part of the daily life and national narrative. Conflicting parties manifest particularly strong tendencies to seek out evidence that confirms negative images of each other and to resist evidence that counters these images. As a result, an intractable conflict embodies an interactive process with escalatory and self-perpetuating dynamic. The underlying social-psychological factors tend to reinforce and deepen the conflict. However, the

198 William I. Zartman, 79.

199 Ibid., 78.
peacemakers in the four cases infra, employed the interactive conflict resolution model to reverse the intractable conflicts’ dynamics which led to positive transformations between the societies and successful conflict resolutions.

*The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*

Herbert Kelman is a scholar-practitioner whose work for decades has been focused on one of the world’s well-known conflicts. One scholar describes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict an “archetypical example of an intractable conflict: a protracted, violent, drawn-out struggle in which generation after generation is socially conditioned to continue fighting.”200 According to Kelman and Fisher:

The roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict go back for more than a century to the birth of political Zionism and the growing Jewish presence in Palestine, which was perceived as a threat by the Arab population. Intergroup violence began in the 1920s and was accelerated by the failed United Nations partition plan and the establishment of Israel in 1948, leading to the first war between Israel and its Arab neighbors, which resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees. Subsequent wars in 1956, 1967, and 1973 established Israeli dominance, with the 1967 war resulting in the acquisition of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in addition to the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. This war also brought about the Palestinianization of the Arab-Israeli conflict, rendering it back into a conflict between two peoples over the same land.201

The parallels between the Israeli-Palestinian and the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflicts are obvious. The conflict is seemingly over territory, but the underlying factors fueling the hostility are those of identity, dignity, security, historical narratives, and so


201 Ronald J. Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Prenegotiation,” 73.
on, which are defined by racial, ethnic, religious and cultural group affiliations. The important geo-political location of the conflict has drawn the attention of the world’s Great Powers who are heavily involved in the conflict resolution process.

Kelman has organized and facilitated numerous workshops with Israeli and Palestinian participants of “increasingly greater influence in the politics and public opinion of their respective societies.”\textsuperscript{202} He tailored the series of workshops to meet the current developments of the conflict and his primary goal was to identify the “psychological prerequisites for mutual acceptance of the parties ... and to create the conditions for negotiations.”\textsuperscript{203} Once the formal talks began, the focus shifted to overcoming the obstacles of the track-one diplomatic process.

After the first Palestinian \textit{intifada} in the late 1980s, formal negotiation and mediation efforts intensified under the auspices of the United States and Russia. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was excluded from these talks and they resulted in little progress.\textsuperscript{204} Consequently, Kelman and his colleagues organized a continuing workshop with largely the same high-level Palestinian and Israeli participants that ran from November of 1990 to August 1993.\textsuperscript{205} Kelman labeled his approach a “third-party intervention workshop” but it has many of the features of an interactive conflict resolution model. According to Kelman, several of the participants of his

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., 72.

\textsuperscript{203} William I. Zartman, 235.

\textsuperscript{204} Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Prenegotiation,” 73.

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 73.
workshop eventually became members of the negotiation teams of the respective sides and that contributed to “the breakthrough of the Oslo agreement, which included mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, and articulated a set of principles for the transition to self-rule for the Palestinians.” In addition, “the information sharing and formulation of new ideas on the analysis and resolution of the conflict yielded important substantive inputs into the political discourse and into negotiations.” The workshops, along with other track-two facilitation efforts known as the “Norwegian channel”, fostered a political atmosphere that was conducive to negotiations and changed the relationship between the parties. The interactive conflict resolution model contributed to the sense of mutual acknowledgement and reassurance of the opposing parties, and the realization of the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The signing of the Oslo Accord in 1993 was a major breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, because it ended the armed conflict between Israel and the PLO, and led to their mutual recognition and legitimatization. Unfortunately, a sustainable peace between Israeli and Palestinians remains elusive. The Oslo accord was an important first step towards a lasting conflict resolution, but it was never fully implemented, and the peace negotiations have deteriorated in recent years. Fisher states that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has

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206 Ibid.
207 Ibid., 74.
208 Crocker, 527.
209 Ibid., 528.
“low receptivity to intervention” due to the presence of serious internal and external factors such as change of political leadership or transnational corporations’ interference, existence of natural resources or important geo-political location of the disputed territory. Interactive conflict resolution is not a mechanism which can address directly these factors, and they continue to impede the peace process.

The Civil War in Tajikistan

The collapse of the Soviet Union produced several destructive conflicts within and between the newly emerging independent republics. In 1991, the Central Asian nation of Tajikistan descended into a civil war between “different ethnicities and nationalities, clan-based and regional groups, and a mix of ideologies ranging from communist to democratic to militant Islam.” According to the former diplomat and current interactive conflict resolution practitioner, Harold Saunders, “the people of this fragmented country – formed and held together as a republic only under Soviet rule- had little sense of national identity.” The strong local clan-based identity and religious affiliations were the most important underlying factors in the fight for power. In that sense, the conflict is similar to the one over Nagorno-Karabakh. In addition, alike the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict multiple external regional forces exercised a significant influence on the developments on the ground. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran

210 Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Pre negotiation,” 74.

211 Ibid., 76.

212 Crocker, 164.

213 Ibid.
supported the Islamic movement in Tajikistan, while Russian military was involved "to protect the southern 'security border' of the Commonwealth of Independent States."\textsuperscript{214} The violent clashes in Tajikistan continued for years and resulted in numerous casualties and refugees.\textsuperscript{215}

In March 1993 (well before the U.N. sponsored negotiations began) a team of American and Russian facilitators from the Dartmouth Conference Regional Conflicts Task Force began an unofficial dialogue between the opposing groups in Tajikistan.\textsuperscript{216} As Fisher describes:

Harold Saunders and his colleagues organized a series of interactive sessions following a carefully constructed model of sustained dialogue. The sessions brought together influential highlevel participants from the government and opposition sides of the conflict, and made numerous contributions to the formal negotiation process, reconciliation among the antagonists, and the building of a civil society in the country.\textsuperscript{217}

Because Saunders perceives the dialogue model as "a public peace process within a multilevel peace process that also includes the official track, the quasi-official process and civil society,"\textsuperscript{218} there was a great coordination of efforts between the formal and informal diplomatic tracks. The unofficial track-two process was labeled the "Inter-Tajik Dialogue", and it included several regular members and some observers who met six

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{215} Ronald J Fisher, "Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Prenegotiation," 76.

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
times a year over a period of a few days. Similarly to the interactive conflict resolution workshops, the dialogue process focused on the deep-rooted causes of the conflict and the relationship between the opposing parties. As one scholar describes:

Between 1993 and 1996, when the political negotiations seemed deadlocked or often on the verge of collapse, participants in this informal or “track two” diplomacy continued to provide ideas for both sides in the political negotiations, including ideas for overcoming attitudes and misconceptions that blocked progress along the way. These ideas helped both parties in the formal negotiations to redefine their interests, and to develop new norms and patterns of behavior, a shared perception of accord desirability and even possibly a formula for compromise. They imagined cooperative strategies and generated suggestions for structuring the options, the negotiation process and strategies.

Fisher explains that the organizers of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue sought the approval and support of the government, and results of the sessions were shared with the public via a joint memorandum by the participants in the process. Some of the participants of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue were members of the formal negotiation teams. The dialogues and the subsequent information sharing had direct positive effects on the formal negotiation process, and played an essential role in creating civil society forums and organizations dedicated to peace-building. These initiatives began gradually to change the political, social and psychological atmosphere in the country. Thus the work of Saunders and his colleagues transformed Tajik society and generated substantial impetus which led to the


220 Ibid., 60.

221 Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Prenegotiation,” 77.

222 Ibid., 78.
signing of a peace agreement in 1997. The Inter-Tajik Dialogue process is a paradigm of the promising outcomes of harmonizing track-one diplomatic efforts with unofficial social-psychological approaches to peace-building.

*The Moldova-Transdniestria Conflict*

Similarly to the Armenia-Azerbaijan and Tajikistan conflicts, the one between Moldova and the breakaway Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic (Transdniestria) emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The region is situated between Romania and Ukraine and it has historically been contested by its neighbors. It has been a part of the Russian Empire till 1918, but later came under Romanian control, and in 1940 was annexed to the Soviet Union along with a territory on the left bank of the Dniester River (Transdniestria) which used to be part of Ukraine. The entire region is ethnically and linguistically diverse. In Moldova, the majority of the population is Moldovan and Romanian speaking, but Ukrainian, Russian and Bulgarian ethnic groups who speak Slavic languages comprise more than thirty percent of the population. In Transdniestria, the Slavic ethnic groups have a slight majority over the Moldovan population. As Moldova declared independence in 1991, Transdniestria declared its

223 Jonathan Zartman, 64.


226 Ibid.
own independence and the war erupted over its political sovereignty.227 Transdniestria is “defacto independent and provides the region with many visible state-like attributes as well as a separate "national" identity; however, no other state has recognized it.”228 Moldovan forces entered Transdniestria and were met with resistance by the local forces supported by Russian troops. The intense fighting which lasted about one year was ended by a cease-fire in 1992, enforced by Russian and Ukrainian peacekeeping troops.229 There is a deep ideological divide between the two parties: Moldova is oriented towards Western Europe, while Transdniestria wants to maintain close connections with Russia.230 The Moldova-Transdniestria conflict contains the same underlying issues as those of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: identity, dignity, security, self-determination, etc.

The official mediators of the Moldova-Transdniestria conflict, the OSCE aided by special envoys from Russia and Ukraine, began working with the opposing parties in 1993.231 The same year, informal problem solving workshops sponsored by the Centre for Conflict Analysis at the University of Kent, Canterbury, UK, and the Foundation for

227 Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Pre negotiation,” 79.

228 Venturi, 7.

229 Williams, 145.

230 Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Pre negotiation,” 79.

231 Ibid.
International Security, based in London, began their conciliatory mission. The series of workshops were facilitated by a team of academic scholar-practitioners, and the participants were high-ranking representatives of both governments and negotiators of the OSCE talks. According to Williams, the main goal of the problem-solving workshops was to let the participants express their emotions, fears and hopes. Then the discussions focused on a comprehensive analysis of the conflict, the political status of Transdniestria, and issues such as language, economics, education, and currency.

Fisher explains that the problem-solving workshops were “useful in developing a shared understanding of the conflict and developing directions and options toward its resolution.” Track-two diplomatic efforts were generating dialogue and creative thinking in the official diplomatic circles as well as the broader civil society on both banks of the Dniester River. Eventually the discussions “allowed the workshops to move toward the creation of a constitutional framework under the rubric of a “common state” that was articulated in a document acceptable to the participants from both sides.” Fisher explains that at the last series of problem-solving workshops in the Moldova-Transdniestria conflict were hybrids between track-one and track-two diplomacy:

A larger, more conventional problem-solving conference was held in 2000 in Kiev, with both official and unofficial participants and interveners. This session

232 Ibid.

233 Ibid., 80.

234 Williams, 150.

235 Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Pre negotiation,” 80.

236 Ibid.
produced a constitutional document, based on the concept of the common state, which Williams clearly sees as a result of the fusion of track-one and track-two processes.\footnote{Ibid.}

It is evident that the coordination and collaboration between track-one and track-two approaches to conflict resolution are highly productive. They lead to positive cognitive changes such as improved attitudes and trust, and positive substantive outcomes such as innovative peace agreements.

**The Peru-Ecuador Conflict**

As Ecuador and Peru gained independence from Spanish colonial rule in the early 1800s, they commenced their intra-state conflict over a vast (an area the size of France) disputed territory and the location of their common border.\footnote{Crocker, 408.} Diplomatic efforts were unsuccessful and the two countries engaged in continuous warfare. Similarly to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, the newly independent countries began to write their own version of history, usually antithetical to the national narrative of their enemy.\footnote{Ibid.} Fisher summarizes the key events of the protracted intractable conflict:

In 1941, a major conflagration saw Peru emerge victoriously and led to the signing of an international treaty, the Rio de Janeiro Protocol, intended to define the norms for a solution, with the United States, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina as guarantors. Lack of movement toward a resolution and the deep feelings of rivalry and hatred over the issue prepared the way for further armed conflict in 1981 and

\footnote{Ibid.}
1995, with Ecuador prevailing in the latter war, followed by a renewed effort on the part of the guarantor powers to achieve a settlement.240

Ecuador and Peru continued to reaffirm their claims over the same territory and the stalemate persisted. After centuries of fighting each other, the Ecuadorian and Peruvian people experience the same social-psychological factors hindering the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan. As one expert explains, ‘disputes over sovereignty are often so entwined with history and national psychology that those involved perceive them as different from all others- or at least sufficiently unique to inoculate them against formulaic solutions imposed from the outside.”241 In addition, the level of distrust was high, and there was significant resistance on both sides to engage in negotiations with the enemy.242 Coordinating the official diplomatic efforts of the multiple countries-guarantors was also a challenge to the peace-process.243

In 1996 official representatives from Ecuador and Peru were coaxed to meet face-to-face and discuss a settlement to their violent conflict. The track-one diplomatic efforts were supplemented by “a hybrid intervention of interactive conflict resolution known as the Innovative Problem Solving Workshop,” which was developed at the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland.244

240 Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Pre-negotiation,” 82.

241 Crocker, 420.

242 Ibid., 418.

243 Ibid., 417.

244 Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Pre-negotiation,” 82.
According to Fisher that workshop includes elements of “conflict resolution training, conflict analysis and problem solving, and involves influential participants from the two sides in a variety of activities with the overall goal of contributing to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.” During the Ecuador-Peru conflict resolution process, a series of workshops complemented the official talks and contributed to more effective negotiations, and to the development of a public opinion in both countries supportive of re-approachment. Fisher elaborates:

The workshops began with a trust-building phase, moved to a training phase providing concepts and skills, engaged the participants in searching for common ground on the issues, and finished with a reentry phase wherein participants developed commitments to their jointly-created action plans. The first workshop was held at the University of Maryland after the official negotiations had started, and among its many activities developed a shared vision of Peru-Ecuador relations and analyzed the positions and arguments of both countries in the conflict. The major theme revolved around how civil society could make contributions to support the peace process; five working groups to foster this were formed, the last one specifically looking at possible contributions to track-one diplomatic efforts. The participants formed a joint action group, later named Grupo Maryland, and paid well-publicized visits to the Peruvian and Ecuadorian embassies in Washington to present proposals and encourage movement on the peace process.

The workshops that followed included influential representatives from the border zone and focused on proposals to address critical problems in that area. The ideas generated during the discussions were communicated to officials from the two countries. In 1998, several months after the second workshop, a comprehensive settlement was signed by the

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245 Ibid.
246 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
governments of Peru and Ecuador, but the Innovative Problem Solving Workshops continued in order to facilitate the implementation of the peace plan. Official government representatives were among the participants of the workshops during that phase, and the agenda included “developing ideas on implementation of difficult items” and “consolidating the peace, largely by bolstering the border region’s economic development through joint ventures and institutions.”

The Peru-Ecuador peace process is an excellent illustration of the negative aspect of relying solely on track-one diplomacy when trying to resolve a deep-rooted intractable conflict. For decades, the only contact between the two societies was on the battlefield. However, the implementation of the interactive conflict resolution model aided the negotiation process and helped the parties overcome the impasse. According to Fisher, “numerous ideas and proposals were fed into the track-one process, and many of these were incorporated.” Most importantly, the transparency and open communications between the official and unofficial diplomatic circles, as well as the full support of the problem solving workshops by both governments led to the successful transformation of the peace process and the positive changes of the public opinion in both countries. Fisher concludes, “Overall, this intervention is a very ambitious effort that attempted to influence elite, midlevel, and grassroots sectors of the two societies, so that a

248 Crocker, 425.

249 Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Prenegotiation,” 83.

250 Ibid.
comprehensive movement could be built in the support of peace. It appears that this has been largely successful.”

251 Ibid., 84.
Chapter 5

Conclusion: Paving the Road to Peace through Interactive Conflict Resolution

Don't ask the mountain to move, just take a pebble each time you visit.\(^{252}\)

The examination of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the civil war in Tajikistan, the Moldova-Transdniestria conflict, and the Peru-Ecuador war offers the findings that even though deep-rooted conflicts are unique, they share similar social-psychological characteristics and escalating, self-perpetuating dynamics. The dimensions of the intractable conflicts cannot be addressed solely via the official negotiation or mediation processes. They can be attended mainly through unofficial conflict resolution methods. The coordination between track-one and track-two diplomatic efforts, and full governmental support of the parallel unofficial peace process, are important factors for the victory of the peace process. The successful application of the interactive conflict resolution approach in these violent conflicts is indicative of the model’s potential utility in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict since they share the same characteristics and dynamics.

Limitations of Track-one Diplomacy in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Most peace activists and scholars such as Burton, Crocker, Diamond, Fisher, Kelman, Lederach, Montville, Rouhana, Saunders and others agree that even though

\(^{252}\) "The Art of Peace."
track-one diplomacy is necessary to resolve intractable conflicts, strictly utilizing a formal, high-level conflict resolution method such as mediation between the countries' leaders, is insufficient on its own. The high-ranking individuals may have significant decision-making power, but there is always a lingering question that impedes the peace process: How will the news of a compromise or a concession towards the opposing side be received at home? As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the nature of intractable conflicts is very dynamic and has layers of multifarious social-psychological characteristics. Thomas De Waal points out that the Armenian and Azerbaijani “semi-authoritarian leaders are reluctant to open up the issue of compromise over Karabakh to wider debate inside their societies.” The lack of transparency, the mistrust, and misconceptions contribute to the cold collective moods in Armenia and Azerbaijan which have been poisoned for years with hostile acts and inflammatory language against the adversary. In such a dismal atmosphere, any notion of a concession or an appeasement towards the other side could be viewed as a cowardly betrayal of the motherland. The nationalistic rhetoric of Armenians and Azerbaijanis fuels the antagonism between them. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of contact between the two nations on a societal level. As a result, the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan remain trapped by the black and white perspectives of their current conflict. The young generations are not exposed to examples of peaceful coexistence and cooperation between Armenians and Azeri which go back hundreds of years, and the old generations seemed to have forgotten their history. As one author indicates:

253 Crocker, 20.

The current period of almost complete separation and many years of propaganda of images of “historical enemies” is an exception rather than the rule throughout the history of those relations. Currently, the activities of different mass media, social research and teaching at schools are not aiming at a discussion of inevitability of peace and neighborly existence. The reverse is true.\(^{255}\)

Cornell concurs that “an active process is under way in both republics to radicalize public opinion and deepen mistrust; a process which includes indoctrination of school children against the ‘enemy’.”\(^{256}\) The outcomes of such practices can be horrific. For example, in February 2004, in Budapest, Hungary, a young Azerbaijani army officer killed a sleeping Armenian army officer with an ax.\(^{257}\) The Azerbaijani officer “claimed that he had been driven to his act by the plight of fellow Azerbaijanis, including close family relatives, in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.”\(^{258}\) The irony is that the killer and the victim had been attending an English language course in the Hungarian capital as part of NATO’s Partnership for Peace program.\(^{259}\) Obviously, the effects of the relentless propaganda on both sides carry tragic consequences and are difficult to reverse. However, these harmful processes could be counterbalanced through interactive conflict resolution,


\(^{256}\) Cornell, 133.


\(^{258}\) Ibid.

\(^{259}\) Ibid.
which involves constructive informal dialogue between the opposing sides facilitated by a neutral third-party.\textsuperscript{260}

The mediator’s identity, knowledge and experience are important factors contributing to a successful peace process.\textsuperscript{261} Therefore, the absence of objective and neutral third-party mediators is another barrier to reaching a peaceful solution. The doubts and suspicions of the Armenians and Azerbaijani run deep not only towards their foes, but also towards the international mediators who seem to be lacking trust and legitimacy. The intentions of the leading mediators are often questioned by the parties in conflict. The official mediation efforts, which lacked coordination at first, are still perceived as a part of the “Great Game” for political and economic influence in the region.\textsuperscript{262} Even though the Cold War ended years ago, the Russian interests are often contrasted against those of the West, and Armenia and Azerbaijan often play the mediators against one another.\textsuperscript{263} As several experts emphasize, “opportunities to intervene and exercise effective procedural control will be missed if different mediators are sending mixed signals and there is no clear delegation of authority.”\textsuperscript{264}

The U.N. could take a more active role in the mediation process and dispatch peacekeeping forces to the region to prevent additional skirmishes on the line of contact. The stalemate of the negotiations could be overcome if there is a little more political will

\textsuperscript{260} Ronald J. Fisher, \textit{Interactive Conflict Resolution}, 145.

\textsuperscript{261} William I. Zartman, 184.

\textsuperscript{262} De Waal, \textit{The Caucasus: An Introduction}, 226.

\textsuperscript{263} Cornell, 123.

\textsuperscript{264} Crocker, 40.
on the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides. Their leaders need to stop the bellicose rhetoric, withdraw their snipers from the line of contact, and reach an agreement on the discussed basic principles. However, these peace-promoting measures would be possible only if there is a collective change of mood starting from the grassroots level. Instead of reciting the typical patriotic statements which boast the might of the national armies and recall military victories against their enemies, Armenians and Azerbaijanis need to demand a stop of the cycle of violence and hatred. According to the prominent peace activist and international mediator, John Paul Lederach:

Transcending violence is forged by the capacity to generate, mobilize, and build the moral imagination...Stated simply, the moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence.\(^{265}\)

Achieving such transformation would be possible if the international peace-makers begin to think creatively and move beyond the application of formal, structured mediation techniques. The barriers on the road to peace could be overcome through interactive conflict resolution.

**Track-Two Initiatives in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict**

In the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, third party consultations may be the catalysts for improved mutual understanding, openness and trust. A constructive face-to-face dialogue is a confidence-building activity which would help the parties overcome the

stalemate and "create conditions conductive to negotiations." Even though there are no records of interactive conflict resolution workshops being utilized in the Armenia-Azerbaijan intractable conflict so far, there have been some efforts to reestablish contacts between the two societies. When Armenians and Azerbaijani gathered to work on joint projects under the leadership of various nongovernmental organizations, the outcomes have been encouraging.

For example, breaking the stereotypical notions of the enemy occurred in 2007, when a small group of Armenian and Azerbaijani young journalists got together to collaborate on short documentary films for the first time. The visit of a handful of Azeri journalists to Yerevan as part of a program of the South Caucasus conflict resolution group called Conciliation Resources was a break-through peace-building initiative. The journalists did not at all find Armenia to resemble the stereotypes given in Azerbaijan and reported this; the same happened when Armenian journalists visited Baku. The young film-makers admitted that they were apprehensive and reluctant to sit down with their enemies at first, but as they chatted over some tea and began working on their film projects, they felt that the barriers between the two groups vanished.

Furthermore, the entire group realized that they are all sharing the same pain and scarred

266 William I. Zartman, 228.


268 Ibid.

269 Ibid.
childhood as a result of the intractable conflict. The positive results of this program are
telling; even if they are on a small scale. They demonstrate the need of more similar
initiatives that will improve communication, and build trust between Azerbaijani and
Armenians. Encouragement of both governments could demonstrate greater will to work
towards peace.

It is not clear if the short films were ever shown in Armenia and Azerbaijan.
However, in 2009 a book called *Positive Examples of Coexistence from the History of*
*Peoples and States of the South Caucasus* was published in Yerevan. It contains studies
and articles written by distinguished historians and civic activists from Armenia,
Azerbaijan and Georgia highlighting the numerous “positive historical examples of
coexistence and cooperation between peoples of the South Caucasus.” In addition to
the peace-promoting subject matter evident in the title of the book, it is even more
encouraging that the participating authors (Armenian, Azeri and Russian scholars)
worked together on the project. According to the editor:

The participants stated, particularly, that direct contacts are important as they let
to understand each other better and to exchange information about global,
regional and local processes... which may contribute towards reconciliation and
establishing an environment of peace and neighbourly relations in the South
Caucasus. Working meeting participants also expressed their distress concerning
the reality in which the scientific potential of our countries is being used mainly
for proving ancient roots and superiority of every people instead of working on
common scientific and educational projects. Yet, science and education have a
great potential for restoration of trust between our peoples and may serve as a fine
instrument for development of neighbourhood and cooperation in the region.

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270 Ibid.

271 Grigoryan, 7.

272 Ibid., 7-8.
One of the studies analyzed in the book reflects the inquiries of a team of Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, and Russian researchers who visited a small village in Georgia, where Armenians and Azerbaijanis have been living in harmony side-by-side for centuries. Even the war over Nagorno-Karabakh and the continuing hostilities have not ruined the friendship and cooperation between the two groups in the small community. However, the author points out that any topic relating to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is not openly discussed as a way to preserve the communal harmony. Similar were the findings of the analyst examining the nearby market of Sadakhlo, a larger Georgian village, populated predominantly with Azeri and located "on the Georgian-Armenian border - close to the hinge on the map where the three Caucasian republics meet." The author describes that "Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians went there to trade or to engage in different types of work, whether it be in the form of paid work for someone else or their own business to survive. "Trade relations" were conducted mainly between the Georgian Azerbaijanis and Armenians." Even though politics were not discussed at the marketplace, the willingness of Armenians and Azeri to do business with each other is remarkable nevertheless. According to the analyst, "real living conditions created incentives for people on either side of the frontline to engage in

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273 Ibid., 43.

274 Ibid., 44.

275 De Waal, Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War, 269.

trade — often counter to the politics of the enduring conflict.” Since the two groups co-exist in Georgia, they are somewhat protected from the daily nationalistic propaganda which impacts the collective moods in Armenia and Azerbaijan. They are also shielded from the mass media in their respective countries, which contributes in the creation of the enemy images that hamper the reconciliation efforts. Nevertheless, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains a principal factor in all Armenian-Azeri relationships.

Even though limited, the examples of continuing coexistence and collaboration between Armenians and Azeri are encouraging. They demonstrate that societal connections are imperative for building a framework of mutual respect, trust and support. Therefore more education and training programs highlighting the benefits of reconciliation and cooperation are needed. The underlying social-psychological issues of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict have left deep scars in the people’s conscience. They can be better addressed through numerous interactive conflict resolution workshops focusing on the core problems, and trying to discern a peaceful resolution. Simply avoiding divisive topics and burying the pain inflicted by the on-going hostilities will not result in a permanent peaceful solution. Interactive third party consultations conducted by skilled scholar-practitioners utilizing symbolic gestures, acknowledgements, and other confidence-building measures can vastly advance the chances of conflict resolution and long-lasting peace.

**Conclusion**

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has all the characteristics and dynamics of a complex, multifaceted, intractable struggle, rooted in a desire to satisfy basic human

277 William I. Zartman, 100.
needs such as sovereignty, security, self-determination, identity, and legitimacy. These underlying issues shape the national rhetoric and control the collective moods, perceptions and attitudes of the conflicting parties. Certainly, some deep-rooted conflicts, including the one between Armenia and Azerbaijan, are exposed to additional factors which add another layer to their complexity. These factors may include the lack of political stability and well-established democratic principles, economic concerns and transnational companies’ interference, the existence of natural resources and important strategic location. Fisher’s model does not take these elements in consideration, even though they may hinder the success of the peace process as well. As a result, some experts question the practicality of the interactive conflict resolution. Critics of Fisher’s approach often fail to recognize that the main goal of the unofficial dialogue is not the development of a peaceful settlement to the conflict. The main purpose of the model is to reframe the conflict and improve the relationships between the opposing sides:

Rather than focusing primarily on agenda issues and the need to write an agreement, participants explore their overall relationship. They examine their own human needs in relation to the needs of the other group. While participants in unofficial dialogue reflect the experience, feelings, and views of their own communities, their purpose in dialogue is to absorb the other party’s perspective—not to force their own. Participants put themselves, to the extent possible, in the minds of the adversary to understand what he or she needs in order to change the relationship. Rather than defending their own interests alone, they may gain respect for the others’ experience, feelings, and needs. They may experience change in themselves that can seem to bring them closer to the adversary.278

This is the foundation of Ronald Fisher’s social-psychological theory of Interactive Conflict Resolution. In that sense the model appears largely successful. The unofficial

278 Stern, 256.
tract-two diplomacy model complements the formal diplomatic efforts, and may have the potential to attain conflict de-escalation and reconciliation. Researchers believe that intractable conflicts are “marked by self-sustaining patterns of hostility”\textsuperscript{279} which can be incessant unless a change in the collective mood serves as a catalyst for a new peace-conducive environment. According to Fisher, eventually, the positive changes generated by the healing process of the dialogues, and the innovative ideas of the participants would penetrate the greater society and would allow for the “collective consciousness to include a shared vision of a peaceful world.”\textsuperscript{280}

Conflict resolution scholars concur that, “subjective forces linked to basic needs and existential fears contribute heavily to the conflict’s escalation and perpetuation.”\textsuperscript{281} Armenia and Azerbaijan have been trapped in a deadlock for decades, unable to make any progress on a resolution of their conflict over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. The perpetual conflict has become a representation of Armenians and Azerbaijanis, and reversing its spiraling negative consequences has proven a daunting task.

Solving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be achieved through peaceful, political means, because a breakout of a new war will be disastrous for the region and the entire global community. A renewed military offensive will be intense, bloody, prolonged, and will disrupt major energy routes between Asia and Europe. “Their

\textsuperscript{279} Crocker, 27.

\textsuperscript{280} William I. Zartman, 101.

\textsuperscript{281} Ibid., 65.
respective combat capabilities, geography and tactical considerations suggest that neither side could easily or quickly win a war,” 282 the analysts proclaim.

The adversaries and the formal international mediators have been unable to make any progress on the underlying issues of the conflict, and even though everyone contends that the status quo is unsustainable, the grim reality in both countries remains unchanged. During the past several years, the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, namely the United States, Russia and France, have held frequent high-level mediation sessions and proposed different peace frameworks to the opposing sides. 283 However, the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan and their high-ranking representatives have been incapable of reaching an agreement. The lack of progress suggests that utilizing an official diplomatic method of conflict resolution, such as international mediation, is not effective on its own. According to the professionals in the field, the negative images of the “enemy” in a deep-rooted intractable conflict are highly resistant to change, 284 and these views and lack of trust interfere with the success of the mediation. The official diplomatic process is too restricted and insufficient to close the deep divide between the conflicting societies, because it does not articulate and analyze the root causes of the conflict.

The history and the geopolitics of the South Caucasus, examined in detail in the beginning of this work, provide the context for the social-psychological factors influencing the current conflict. If certain conditions are met, identifying and reversing


283 Nichol, 14.

284 William I. Zartman, 100.
the underlying issues which control the collective moods, perceptions and attitudes of the conflicting parties could be achieved on the micro and macro levels.

For example, the issues of sovereignty, security, self-determination, identity, and legitimacy are present in the four intractable conflicts discussed in the foregoing chapter. The analysis of these diverse case studies, demonstrates that the application of interactive conflict resolution could lead to positive outcomes - an encouraging transformation of the relationship between the opposing parties which eventually translates into positive results during the official diplomacy. Fisher explains that “deeper psychological intercourse which can occur in unofficial meetings, around elements such as historical grievances, fears and hopes, and the broader base of support for the peace process that can be built”\(^{285}\) advocate for the utility of the model.

There is evidence that if certain elements are present, Fisher’s model might have the potential to ameliorate the inadequacy of the current search for a peaceful resolution in the Armenia-Azerbaijan protracted conflict. On the operational level, the success of the interactive conflict resolution approach depends partially on the design and sequence of the workshops, the identity of the third-party moderators, and the identity of the participants. In order for the workshops to induce an agreement on substantive issues and affirmative changes in track-one diplomacy, there must be mass media coverage of the positive outcomes, governmental support for the dialogues, and high level of coordination between the track-one and track-two diplomatic efforts.

\(^{285}\) Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Pre-negotiation,” 71.
The interactive conflict resolution approach involves a series of problem-solving workshops "aimed at cultivating respect and objectivity so that the parties develop a mutual commitment to cooperative exchanges in their relationship." Obviously, a single workshop cannot be an effective mechanism bringing such changes. The relationship's transformation is likely to occur gradually over a long period of time. Therefore, it is best if the participants in the workshops remain the same during the series. Usually the meetings in the beginning focus on trust-building and joint conflict analysis and the later workshops begin searching for common ground on the issues.

Herbert Kelman has held multiple problem-solving workshops between Israeli and Palestinian influential actors for more than twenty-five years. In 1990, however, he and his colleague Nadim Rouhana organized the first continuing workshop which, according to him, paved the way to the Oslo accords. The same participants met five times in a period of three years and each session lasted several days. Harold Saunders organized the Inter-Tajik dialogue, whose participants met more than thirty-five times over a span of ten years. There were three unofficial Moldova-Transdniestria problem-solving workshops held between 1993 and 1996 which were followed by a quasi-official problem-solving conference in 2000. The four innovative problem-solving workshops in the Peru-Ecuador conflict brought together the same participants for a period of three

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286 William I. Zartman, 23.

287 Stern, 269.

288 Ronald J Fisher, "Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Prenegotiation," 77.

289 Ibid., 80.
years.\textsuperscript{290} The venue for these workshops was usually a neutral academic institution affiliated with the academic scholar-practitioner facilitating the talks.

In addition to being culturally fluent conflict-resolution experts, these independent moderators must be extremely knowledgeable about the actors and the issues of the conflict. The goals of the neutral third-party scholar-practitioners who facilitate the interactive initiatives are to improve communications and understanding, to decrease tensions and fears, to affect attitudes and views of the mid-level influential participants by addressing root causes, feelings and needs.\textsuperscript{291} In some workshops the third-party facilitators are sole scholar-practitioners, and in others there is an entire team of social scientists. Regardless of their number, the third-party consultants must have the confidence and trust of the opposing sides.

The identity of the representatives of each conflicting side is of significant importance to a successful problem-solving workshop. Fisher's model underscores the fact that these are influential but unofficial representatives. They could be graduate students, journalists, academics, community leaders, retired diplomats, political advisers and so on. However, a closer examination of the four interactive conflict resolution cases discussed above, indicates that the greater involvement of higher level officials in the workshops, the better outcomes they produce. For example, in the Israeli-Palestinian intervention, many of the participants later became members of the official negotiation

\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., 82.

\textsuperscript{291} Bercovitch, \textit{Conflict Resolution in the Twenty-first Century: Principles, Methods, and Approaches}, 141.
team or obtained high-ranking positions in the government.\textsuperscript{292} In the Moldova-
Transdniestria workshops, some of the participants included “officials in unofficial
capacity.”\textsuperscript{293} The Inter-Tajik Dialogue included advisers to the respective leaders, official
negotiators and other high-ranking representatives.\textsuperscript{294} The participant in the Peru-Ecuador
problem-solving workshop brought together influential people from both countries,
including representatives from the disputed border region, as well as government officials
in unofficial capacity.\textsuperscript{295} Some members of \textit{Grupo Maryland} became members of their
respective negotiation teams.\textsuperscript{296} Naturally, the transfer effects of the unofficial outcomes
to the official diplomatic efforts are greatly influenced by the identity of the participants
in the workshops.

Another factor which impacts the level of transferability is the role of the mass
media and the sharing of information regarding formulation of new ideas with the general
public as well as with the official leaders. Shortage of publicity regarding any positive
bilateral or multilateral meetings is common in most intractable conflicts. Therefore,
well-publicized campaigns regarding the productive dialogues between the opposing
sides and their collaboration can promote encouraging changes in the collective moods in
the broader society. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the positive results of the

\textsuperscript{292} Stern, 271.

\textsuperscript{293} Ronald J Fisher, “Coordination Between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in
Successful Cases of Prenegotiation,” 79.

\textsuperscript{294} \textit{Ibid.}, 80.

\textsuperscript{295} \textit{Ibid.}, 83.

\textsuperscript{296} \textit{Ibid.}
workshops were shared with their respective communities through Kelman’s interviews, speeches and briefings. The Inter-Tajik dialogue produced “a continuing series of memoranda, based on the participants’ joint analyses and scenarios which have been fed into the official process.” Similar means of continuous information sharing existed in the Moldova-Transdniestria conflict resolution workshops. The mass media coverage in the Peru-Ecuador conflict was a subject discussed at the workshops and became a part of their peace-building framework. The media covered the workshops activities and constantly reported on their peace initiatives. In addition official reports and proposals were presented to government officials on a regular basis.

Governmental support of interactive conflict resolution workshops is not a precondition for their success, but it is certainly rather beneficial. A high degree of coordination between track-one and track-two diplomatic efforts in tandem with explicit support for the workshops from the official institutions increases the effectiveness of the peace process. The coordination efforts in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were limited, while in the Tajikistan, the Peru-Ecuador and the Moldova-Transdniestria cases “ideas from the unofficial discussions made their way into the peace agreements.”

In all of these cases, there was evidence of positive advances due to development of cadres prepared to participate in productive negotiations, the sharing of information and the formulation of new ideas that provide important input to the official diplomats, and the transformation of the societal atmosphere that makes the parties open to a new

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297 Ibid., 77.
298 Ibid., 83.
299 Ibid., 86.
relationship. These positive changes may seem limited at first, but in time they could
induce, along with ongoing track-one efforts, an agreement on substantive issues, and
encourage shifts of political policies and ideologies. According to the conflict resolution
specialists:

These workshops help undermine “we-they” images of conflict, establish linkages
among influentials, begin a discussion of framework solutions, identify steps that
will break the impasse, and in general create an understanding of these steps and
processes that participants can feed back into track-one effort where actual
decisions are made.  

Fisher states that the social-psychological approach has the greatest utility in the
pre-negotiation phase of international conflicts, because it might have a significant
potential for inducing ripeness and conflict de-escalation. Only through interaction
focused on needs and fears may the parties identify actions of mutual reassurance and
acknowledgement that will lead to their improved relationship and create atmosphere
conducive to effective negotiations. Therefore, the interactive conflict resolution model
might be an essential accompaniment to the official international mediation efforts in the
Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. It could lead to an improved
working relationship between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, which in turn might help
them to overcome the current impasse, and enhance the chances of a peaceful resolution.

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300 Crocker, 23.

301 Ronald J. Fisher, Interactive Conflict Resolution, 169.

302 Ibid., 184.
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Appendix A:

Map of the Caucasus and Surrounding Countries

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Appendix B:

Regional Map of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

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Appendix C:

Chronology of Key Events of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (1987-1994)\textsuperscript{305}

1987

August

A petition for Nagorno-Karabakh’s unification with Armenia with tens of thousands of signatures is sent from Karabakh and Armenia to Moscow.

November

Demonstrations take place in the Armenian capital Yerevan protesting the treatment of Armenians in the area north of Karabakh, and intercommunal violence breaks out in Kafan, Armenia.

1988

January

The first forced population movements of the emerging conflict take place as Azerbaijanis flee the Armenian town of Kafan.

February

Demonstrations begin in Stepanakert, echoed by mass demonstrations in Yerevan and later Baku. The Regional Soviet in Stepanakert passes a resolution requesting transfer to Armenia.

Anti-Armenian pogroms take place in Sumgait, Azerbaijan, killing up to 32 people according to official sources. Almost all of the town’s Armenian population leaves.

June-July

In June the Armenian Supreme Soviet affirms the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, while the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet affirms its status within Azerbaijan. The latter position is confirmed in July by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

\textsuperscript{305} Thomas de Waal, \textit{Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War}, 228-295.
September

Population movements within Nagorno-Karabakh increase as Armenians are driven out of the town of Shusha which has an Azeri majority, and Azeri are driven out of Stepanakert which has Armenian majority. Direct rule from Moscow is introduced to Nagorno-Karabakh.

November

Azerbaijanis are expelled from Armenia in large numbers, leading to mass demonstrations in Baku.

December

Armenia is struck by an earthquake, killing 25,000 people.

Gorbachev visits the region and the leaders of the Karabakh Committee, heading the Armenian opposition movement, are arrested.

1989

September

Azerbaijan’s Supreme Soviet passes a declaration of sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh, and direct rule nominally returns to Baku.

December

The Karabakh National Council passes a joint resolution with the Supreme Soviet of Armenia declaring Nagorno-Karabakh’s unification with the Armenian SSR.

1990

January

Anti-Armenian pogroms take place in Baku, and force virtually all Armenians to flee the city. State of emergency is imposed in Nagorno-Karabakh and the border regions.

Soviet tanks and troops enter Baku and are met by Azeri nationalist protestors, resulting in some 150 civilian deaths.

May

August

The Karabakh Committee’s leader Levon Ter-Petrosian is elected Speaker of the Armenian parliament, and on August 23 a declaration is passed stating Armenia is heading towards independence.

1991

March

Azerbaijan takes part in the referendum on the preservation of the Soviet Union. Armenia does not participate in the vote.

April-July

“Operation Ring” begins. Soviet troops, Azeri police and special forces units initiate attacks on Armenian villages in the Shaumian region.

August-September

In the aftermath of an attempted coup against Gorbachev in Moscow, Azerbaijan declares independence on August 30.

Karabakh announces its secession from Azerbaijan on September 2, proclaiming itself Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

Heidar Aliyev is elected speaker of the parliament of the Azerbaijani Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan on September 3. Mutalibov is elected president of Azerbaijan on September 8.

Armenia declares independence on September 23.

A joint Kazakh-Russian peace plan for Nagorno-Karabakh is signed in Zheleznovodsk, Russia.

October-November

Ter-Petrosian is elected president of Armenia. The Zheleznovodsk peace plan is abandoned after an Azerbaijani helicopter carrying high-ranking Azerbaijani, Russian and Kazakh military personnel crashes over Karabakh. Azerbaijan’s new National Council votes to revoke Nagorno-Karabakh’s autonomous status and declare it an ordinary province.
December

On December 10 Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians vote in favor of independence in a referendum boycotted by the Azeri population of the region. The Soviet Union collapses on December 31.

1992

January

On January 6 Nagorno-Karabakh declares itself an independent republic, but is not recognized by any state, including Armenia.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are admitted to the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which assumes responsibility as mediator for the conflict.

February

Hundreds of Azerbaijanis are massacred in the Nagorno-Karabakh village of Khojaly, eventually leading to President Mutalibov’s resignation.

March

The CSCE’s Minsk Group is formed with the objective to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

April

Dozens of Armenians are killed as Azerbaijanis attack the village of Maragha.

May

As Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders meet in Tehran to sign a statement on the general principles of a peace agreement, Armenian forces capture the town of Shusha. A few days later, the Armenian forces capture Lachin, creating a land link between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

June-July

Abulfaz Elchibey is elected president of Azerbaijan. Minsk Group negotiations open in Rome, but they are rapidly overtaken by the recapture of Shaumian region by an Azerbaijani offensive, followed by Mardakert in northern Karabakh.
August

Robert Kocharian forms the State Defense Committee as Nagorno-Karabakh’s new executive body.

September

Azerbaijan captures the village of Srkhavend and has control of almost half of Nagorno-Karabakh.

October

The United States Congress passes Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act prohibiting US government aid to Azerbaijan.

1993

February-April

Armenian forces capture the Kelbajar region, Azerbaijani territory situated between Karabakh and Armenia. It becomes the subject of UN Resolution 822 calling for Armenian withdrawal.

Turkey closes its border with land-locked Armenia.

June-August

In Azerbaijan, there is an uprising against President Elchibey who flees the capital. Heidar Aliyev becomes speaker of the Azerbaijani Parliament and is granted extraordinary presidential powers. This political upheaval in Azerbaijan fuels a number of catastrophic military defeats resulting in the fall of several Azerbaijani towns and provinces—Mardakert in June, Aghdam in July, and Fizuli, Jebrail and Kubatly in August.

September-December

In Moscow Aliyev meets Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian leader Kocharian in secret. On October 3, Heidar Aliyev is elected president of Azerbaijan.

Armenian forces capture the town of Goradiz and the district of Zengelan. Aliyev publicly criticizes the Azerbaijani army. The year ends with a renewed Azerbaijani offensive.
1994

January-February

Both Azerbaijani and Armenian forces suffer heavy losses in fierce fighting from late January to mid-February.

April

Armenians begin offensive against the Azerbaijani town of Terter.

May

In Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, at talks brokered by Russia, the Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Nagorno-Karabakh's representatives agree to a cease-fire agreement. It comes into force on May 12.