

THEMES FOR CONSIDERATION IN ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN PEACE PROCESS

Editors: Philip Gamaghelyan, Sevil Huseynova, Vadim Romashov

Tbilisi 2022

© Caucasus Edition: Journal of Conflict Transformation
ISSN 2155-5478



The collaboration of analysts that resulted in this publication has been supported by the European Union, Foreign Policy Instruments.

Caucasus Edition is the publication of the Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation. The Imagine Center is an independent, non-political organization that is dedicated to positively transforming relations and laying foundations for lasting and sustainable peace in conflict-torn societies.

www.imaginedialogue.com

info@imaginedialogue.com

IMAGINE

Center for Conflict Transformation

In This Issue

Rethinking Peacebuilding: Regional Geopolitical Transformations and the Future of Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Processes

Lala Darchinova, Philip Gamaghelyan, Sevil Huseynova, Vadim Romashov, Christina Soloyan 1

Armenia and Azerbaijan on the Way to Peace: The Process of Demarcation

Flora Ghazaryan, T.I. 12

Formal and Non-Formal Peace Education Programs for Youth in Armenia and Azerbaijan: Challenges and Opportunities

Marina Danoyan, Gulkhanim Mammadova 48

Re-Introducing Water to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Agenda: Prospects for Transboundary Water Cooperation in the Post-2020 Peace Processes

Sofya Manukyan, Heydar Isayev 77

Conceiving Armenian-Azerbaijani Relations through the Lens of Cinema: From Perestroika until the Present Day

Leon Aslanov, Togrul Abbasov..... 96

Authors 129

Editors 131

Rethinking Peacebuilding: Regional Geopolitical Transformations and the Future of Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Processes

**Lala Darchinova, Philip Gamaghelyan, Sevil
Huseynova, Vadim Romashov, and Christina Soloyan**

The recent war in Karabakh and the ongoing war in Ukraine have reshaped the security architecture and the geopolitical landscape in and around the South Caucasus. After almost three decades of its work, the local peacebuilding community is experiencing an 'identity crisis.' The peace community has been sidelined by geopolitical and local political actors who impose their agendas on the region, affecting the lives of millions of people. With the intent of recovering from this crisis, the Caucasus Edition team invited a regional network of local peacebuilders to analyze the current developments, their impact on regional peace initiatives, and possible responses from civil society. The main conclusion of these discussions is that now is the time to de-marginalize and re-politicize the peace practice that has been deprived of its political power by the top-down approaches to peacebuilding. This requires converting peacebuilding practice into peace activism and uniting various peace initiatives into a peace movement that will challenge the agents and structures of violence to instigate large social changes to thwart wars, oppression, nationalism, patriarchy, and other social injustices.

A Series of Armenian-Azerbaijani Dialogues in 2022

The Second Karabakh war affected the fragile relations between the heavily institutionalized civil societies of Armenia and Azerbaijan as the already rare contacts between them virtually ceased to exist. A number of informal, non-institutional, and grassroots initiatives emerged during and soon after the war, filling the vacuum in cross-border communication. Most notable among these were Bright Garden Voices, Caucasus Talks, Caucasus Crossroads, and the Feminist Peace Collective.

Following the end of the war in late 2020, the transnational team of the Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation and the editorial team of its publication, the Caucasus Edition – Journal of Conflict Transformation, initiated a series of dialogues, workshops, webinars, and other public events. The meetings aimed at critical analysis of peacebuilding in the South Caucasus, identifying the reasons for its failures, and developing revised goals and strategies for a peace process. These events were intended to, first, normalize the necessity of Armenians and Azerbaijanis coming together and forging their own future rather than resigning themselves to the role of passive observers in a geopolitical struggle that will determine their fate, and, second, to devise a conceptual framework and long-term strategy for peacebuilding.

During the first year after the war, from January to December 2021, with the pandemic still raging, the Caucasus Edition editorial team organized a series of online public discussions and webinars about the Second Karabakh War and its outcomes on topics ranging from political and geopolitical issues or the analysis of the media landscape to the gendered aspects of war. On January 17, 2022, with COVID restrictions easing, it organized its first in-person post-war symposium on “The Future of Armenia-Azerbaijan Relations” in Tbilisi, bringing together researchers and analysts from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and other countries to provide their analysis of the transforming political landscape.

In the volatile 2020s, however, the context within which the symposium participants produced their analysis was short-lived. By February, with the Caucasus Edition team working on a paper summarizing the symposium proceedings, the escalation of tensions between Russia, on the one side, and Ukraine and NATO, on the other, and the eventual invasion of Ukraine by the Russian state once again reshaped the geopolitical

landscape in the South Caucasus. The Minsk Group of mediators long co-chaired by official representatives of Russia, the US, and France de facto ceased to exist, and the EU, first with the subtle backing and later active involvement of the US, emerged as the convener of the talks putting the “West” back on the map in the South Caucasus while Moscow continued promoting a separate negotiations track. Against this background, Caucasus Edition initiated a new round of webinars focused on the war in Ukraine and its multidimensional impact on conflicts in the Karabakh context. In July 2022, it convened a five-day brainstorming meeting in Georgia titled “Re-conceptualizing peace” for 26 mostly young analysts, peace activists, and academics.

This introductory editorial article presents a synthesis of the results of the dialogues and other discussions held through 2022, starting with the January symposium and followed by a series of webinars and the “Re-conceptualizing peace” workshop. The arguments presented in this article do not represent a consensus view of all the speakers of the symposium, the webinars, or the workshop but rather lessons derived from the discussions among the authors of this article as well as their own interpretations of the recent political developments.

Regional Geopolitical Trends and Conflict Discourses in the Immediate Aftermath of the Second Karabakh War

From the end of the Second Karabakh War to the start of the Ukraine invasion, the historically strong position of Russia as a patron of the South Caucasus appeared to further strengthen considering the introduction of a peacekeeping force to Karabakh and Russia’s unilateral leadership in negotiations that sidelined the Minsk Group format. Turkey, which actively supported Azerbaijan in the war, also gained footing in the region. The diminishing role of the US and the EU, on the contrary, appeared to be a long-term trend. The viability of the national sovereignty of the South Caucasus countries, on the other hand, which for centuries had been a playground of the geopolitical rivalries of regional and global powers, once again appeared to be in danger. The unresolved conflicts continued to serve as points of entry for geopolitical actors playing out their rivalries, thereby undermining the sovereignty and self-rule of the recognized, partially recognized, or non-recognized state entities in the region. The cessation of conflicts as well as the reconciliation and normalization of

relations in the South Caucasus could be the path toward the preservation of self-rule. The local political actors, however, have continued on the path of rivalry rather than cooperation.

Both in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the nationalist and militarist discourses continued to dominate, with the once blossoming grassroots dialogue showing only fragile signs of viability. The official immediate post-war discourses in Azerbaijan revealed a dual tendency wherein the glorification of war and victory and continued dehumanization of Armenians proceeded in parallel with state-sanctioned civil society dialogue and normalization, understood in coercive terms as a 'victor's peace.' In Armenia, revanchist sentiments were present and actively promoted by the former ruling regime and the current nationalistic opposition, but were not as dominant as one would expect following the recent defeat; pro-normalization voices, while still outnumbered, grew louder than they had previously been. Despite this duality of narratives in Armenia and Azerbaijan, both societies were noticing only the other side's warmongering.

In Azerbaijan, the authoritarian regime was enjoying heightened legitimacy from the war, with many opposition voices even showing public support for the coercive methods and authoritarian methods of the government's leadership (Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev 2021, 330-331). The prospects for democratization of Azerbaijan, distant even prior to the war, now appeared to have been extinguished for the foreseeable future. Armenia, in turn, entered a period of a national identity crisis. The ethos of a victorious nation and powerful army that emerged following the First Karabakh War had been shut down following the defeat. The 'revolutionary' leaders, while still preferred to their predecessors now in the opposition, lost a significant portion of their credibility after imposing near-total censorship on the media (Freedom House 2021) and trumpeting an imminent victory throughout the entire war only to capitulate, suddenly and inexplicably for the public, on November 9.

Reconsidering Peacebuilding in the New Reality

The war in Ukraine cardinally shifted the dynamics of conflict in the South Caucasus. In the 1990s and through the era of the dominance of 'liberal democracies,' international conflicts and wars of conquest were rare as the concept of intra-state 'new wars' emerged (Kaldor 2012). Even when a

war, such as the one in Nagorno-Karabakh, had an inter-state dimension it had been usually catalyzed by a preceding state-minority or center-region conflict. However, the appetites of global and regional powers have been growing throughout the period that followed the collapse of the bipolar world. The wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Mali, Yemen, South Ossetia, the annexation of Crimea, and now the full invasion of Ukraine, just to name a few, put great power rivalry and proxy wars back at the center of the contemporary conflict. The smaller states once again turned into objects of invasion and colonization. In light of this development, the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian state transformed the perception of security threats in the South Caucasus. Even though the Armenian-Azerbaijani enmity continued, to many of the analysts and peace activists convened by Caucasus Edition for its series of dialogues in 2022, it seemed secondary compared to the existential threat of the entire region turning into another arena for great power military rivalries, proxy wars, and full-scale invasions.

Without normalization between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the South Caucasus can be further destabilized whether the military campaign by the Russian government succeeds in Ukraine or its position significantly weakens. In both cases, the South Caucasus countries can be subjugated to one or another power that could step in through the entry points left open by unresolved conflicts. The simultaneous activation of neo-imperialist powers as the US, the EU, and Iran (in addition to the previously dominant Russia and Turkey) were an indication of dangers to come. The ongoing volatility and the high probability that Armenia and Azerbaijan could be once again engaged in a military fight with each other suggest that bilateral negotiations and slow-moving institutional civil society dialogues focused on solutions through democratization and primacy of human rights regime were not enough.

The times call for the formation of transnational peace movements advocating for a comprehensive peace agreement not limited to national security and macroeconomic considerations and which includes provisions that address humanitarian challenges, water and other resource sharing, environment, gender and social justice—all laying the ground for a lasting normalization and reconciliation. To date, nearly all public voices in Armenia and Azerbaijan espouse nationalism, while schools and media continue to promote enmity. In a context where the

local war has become permanent and a larger regional war looms, closed-door and non-political NGO-led initiatives and dialogues are no longer adequate. A popular and coordinated peace movement promoting an expansive vision and discourse of social justice has become necessary.

Building a peace movement will require increasing the visibility of local voices in Armenia and Azerbaijan that spoke up against war and in favor of peace during the war itself; donors moving beyond the short-term and technocratic funding schemes by investing in longer-term programming and taking risks with non-traditional, non-institutional actors beyond big bureaucratic NGOs; engaging with people directly affected by war; and investing in the long-term infrastructure of peace education, peace research, peace activism and media advocacy of peace. Politically, conditions and spaces need to be created so advocates for peace can emerge, gain access to the public field, and engage in advocacy for institutional reform without fear of persecution. Importantly, to achieve real social change in both countries and the larger region, the discourses and practices of peace need to be re-politicized so that they speak for the everyday needs of people.

It is also important to include the refugees from Ukraine and recent migrants from Russia and Belarus, as well as partners from other parts of the wider region, in a movement to build sustainable peace. The Russian government faced anti-war protests following the invasion of Ukraine inside the country, as well as forms of hidden resistance, such as refusing to engage in combat and sabotaging the war logistics. But the state has mobilized its resources to violently suppress the anti-war protest and that pushed many anti-war activists and peace sympathizers away from the country. A considerable number of them found a safe refuge in the South Caucasus.

The increased anti-war sentiments in the region caused by the brutality of the war in Ukraine provide an opening for a social movement toward peace. The current anti-war movement and increase in anti-war sentiment is only the first step towards building a longer-term peace movement. The cold war period in Europe did not escalate into a devastating war, thanks not least to a dedicated effort from peace movements that stood against the war on the side of social justice and diplomats who chose to embrace an alternative post-war path laying the groundwork for a relatively

peaceful international order at the global scale (Chatfield and Dungen 1988; Litmanen 1998; Cortright 2008).

Everyday Socio-economic Security and Engagement with Conflict-Affected Communities

The official peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan is highly securitized. Governmental control over information has been widely normalized among the respective societies. Both official censorship and self-censorship among journalists are the norm. This, among many issues, has created a space of limited information for the peace community and media to contribute to the evaluation of the population's needs and their inclusion in the peace process. The ever-absent aspects of the state-led peace processes are the conflict's socio-economic impacts and human security dimensions, which are overshadowed by the national security agenda. Whether a cause or the consequence of violent conflict, socio-economic problems are often identified as most important by those affected by conflicts but at the same time are largely neglected in peace processes.

State policies have traditionally prioritized 'national security' over the everyday socio-economic needs of people. The monopolization of formal peace processes by the state that defines peace as a matter of national security leaves the relevant civil societies disengaged and excluded from such peace processes even though they have a great impact on the daily lives of various communities. The local peacebuilding community should be involved to provide a socio-economic perspective on peace and thus a better understanding of the corresponding needs of the wider population. A peacebuilding community focusing on and addressing the socio-economic needs of conflict-affected communities and supporting everyday practices of peace may eventually open space for more wide-ranging peace processes.

While the liberal peacebuilding framework has allowed civil society actors in Armenia and Azerbaijan to support certain democratic processes or initiate cross-border activities, they have been disabled to access, adequately support, or impact the formal peace process. Thus, the local peacebuilding community has instead tailored its actions based on relations with donor organizations and eventually has become an institutionalized segment of civil society with quite loose connections to

the wider population. In general, civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan has adopted a limited number of methods of peace work and often failed to represent the everyday concerns of conflict-affected populations, thus avoiding using local-to-local approach in its operation.

Armenian and Azerbaijani civil societies need to reclaim the space and the role of connector, mediator, translator, and facilitator among the public, the state, and various economic actors. By studying and stressing the importance of addressing the socio-economic and human security-related issues of those affected by the conflict, they would counterbalance the national security narratives, which often operate at the expense of human security. The methodologies need not necessarily mirror each other perfectly in conflict-torn societies, as the actions must be sensitive to the respective political contexts.

Likewise, the activities of the peacebuilding community need to include direct communication with and advocacy among officials and international organizations, thereby raising awareness about the everyday needs of people and general socio-economic and human security-related issues. In other words, these activities would include studying different realities in conflict-torn societies, identifying the socio-economic and human security-related issues, and developing solutions that can either resolve or raise awareness about solutions to those issues.

While most civil society initiatives are concentrated in capital cities, there are also initiatives outside capitals often implemented by professionals conducting research or training in various regions. Therefore, it is important to study existing local activities and map what has been done so far, how it was accomplished, and what could be learned from it. This mapping shall also include the identification of communities and key actors that are working or have worked in the conflict-affected communities. It is essential to cooperate with those on the ground to learn and support rather than teach. It is important to conduct long and periodic field trips for an in-depth understanding of the underlying needs of the target communities. This requires participatory action research with ethnographic approaches. This methodology would allow the launching a process of constant learning and the generation of ad hoc solutions and strategic policy changes. This research also needs to uncover the economic constraints and possibilities for conflict transformation, and so requires the presence of relevant professionals who can conduct resource

assessment for the sustainable socio-economic development of the conflict-affected territories and communities.

It is also important to change the modes of communication of the outcomes and recommendations, for example, by switching from publishing analytical articles written in professionalized language to shorter briefing articles published in local languages. This would increase the chances of reaching local government representatives and the wider population. Finally, civil society needs not only to mediate between local communities and policymakers but to give back to the communities where they conduct their work by addressing their immediate everyday needs.

The Need for a Peace Movement and Transnational Peace Community

It is telling that over the thirty years of the Armenian-Azerbaijani armed conflict, no peace movement has developed in the region. There are several reasons for this absence. *The ideology of ethno-nationalism coupled with neoliberalism* is discursively, institutionally, and economically pervasive in the region. The alternatives proposed by peace actors have been either discredited or represented as a critique without substance by policymakers. The regional peace-oriented community was deliberately deprived of its political and economic power by the elites of both countries. Moreover, regional peacebuilding has been *disconnected from the needs of populations* affected by multiple forms of violence related to ethno-national political conflicts. It was developed as an elitist endeavor, promoted mostly by either international organizations or locals who were trained within neoliberal frames and who have been culturally and intellectually integrated with the corresponding discursive fields in Europe and the US rather than with everyday perspectives on peace and social justice in their countries of origin. The absence of terms in Armenian, Azerbaijani, or Russian is a common problem for regional peacebuilders trying to translate their English-language terminology into local languages. The lack of respective language, however, should serve as a warning sign and an indication that not simply terms but the concepts and ideas of international liberal peacebuilding are foreign to local discourses and, therefore, unsurprisingly raise suspicion within the wider population. Finally, ongoing intense *competition, rivalries, and monopolization* of funding and spheres of work, absence of information

sharing and sustained collaborations, and social isolation have led to a lack of communal solidarity and individual burnout that ultimately prevent the formation of a strong regional peacebuilding community of practice.

Against the alarming geopolitical context described above, it is essential for the region to develop a peace movement or at least to create **solidarity** and improve **coordination** and **collaboration** among the peace community. This would require intentional efforts to overcome structural barriers including competition, rivalries, and lack of information sharing. The creation of communal spaces for continuous dialogues among peacebuilders, joint generation of resources, investment in building a peace community of practice that would prioritize solidarity, collaboration, and psycho-social support of its members must be the priority directions of work toward establishing an effective peace movement in the region.

Prioritizing the **engagement and consultations with communities** affected by one or more of the multiple forms of violence related to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is an integral part of programming the peace movement. These communities include but are not limited to forcefully displaced people, former combatants and their families, borderland communities, communities living in disputed areas and conflict zones, and anti-war and peace activists. It is crucial to de-marginalize and legitimize peace work—in other words, to make peacebuilding comprehensible and desirable for societies affected by the conflict—first through grounding the work in everyday needs and second by using understandable language.

The most challenging goals are to propose a viable **alternative to nationalism and re-politicize peacebuilding activities**. The de-politicization of peacebuilding in the past few decades has resulted in the marginalization of peace efforts and their distancing from a political space dominated by national security discourses (Peterson 2009; Denskus 2007). The re-politicization of peace work can start by emphasizing thinking beyond nationalist discourses, focusing on gender equality, environment protection, and professional collectivism. This can create a basis for the formation of transnational communities independent from nation-state-building policies.

Bibliography

- Chatfield, Charles, and Peter van den Dungen. 1988. *Peace Movements and Political Cultures*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.
- Cortright, David. 2008. *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Denskus, Tobias. 2007. "Peacebuilding Does Not Build Peace." *Development in Practice* 17, no. 4-5: 656-62, doi.org/10.1080/09614520701469906
- Freedom House. 2021. Freedom on the Net 2021 Country Report: Armenia. Accessed May 8, 2022. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/armenia/freedom-net/2021>
- Gamaghelyan, Philip, and Sergey Rummyantsev. 2021. "The road to the Second Karabakh War: the role of ethno-centric narratives in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict." *Caucasus Survey* 9, no. 3: 320-336.
- Kaldor, Mary. 2012. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. 3rd ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Litmanen, Tapio. 1998. "International anti-nuclear movements in Finland, France and the United States." *Peace Research: The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 30, no. 4: 1-19.
- Peterson, Jenny H. 2009. "The pervasiveness and absence of 'the political'? A consideration of the varied role of politics in peacebuilding." *Centre of International Relations Working Paper*, No. 50, Vancouver: University of British Columbia.

Armenia and Azerbaijan on the Way to Peace: The Process of Demarcation

Flora Ghazaryan, T.I.

The contemporary understanding of state borders can be dated back to the emergence of the territorial state and state system based on territoriality instead of dynasties. Besides the dividing and identity-forming functions of borders, they are also bridges that connect groups of people, enable the exchange of goods, and consequently produce cooperation. People living near a borderline suffer in particular when the two sides begin a military conflict. In a matter of days, if not hours, citizens of one country might find themselves within the de facto boundaries of another due to a territorial takeover.

This is exactly what Azerbaijanis experienced in the early 1990s and Armenians in 2020. Considering the failure of the idea of a borderless world and the risks faced by communities living on borderlands without a peace agreement and mutual recognition of boundaries, we argue that any discussion of the abolition of borders between two states previously at war is nothing but utopic. Instead, a proper process of delimitation and demarcation is likely to contribute to peacebuilding. This article is concerned with why the completion of delimitation and demarcation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan boundary is significant for peace and how it should be conducted.

"Our borders were not of our own drawing. They were drawn in the distant colonial metropolises [...] with no regard for the ancient nations that they cleaved apart. At independence, had we chosen to pursue states on the basis of ethnic, racial or religious homogeneity, we would still be waging bloody wars these many decades later. Instead, we agreed that we would settle for the borders that we inherited ... Rather than form nations that looked ever backward into history with a dangerous nostalgia, we chose to look forward to a greatness none of our many nations and peoples had ever known."

Mbugua Martin Kimani, Kenya's UN Ambassador (2022)

Introduction

The contemporary understanding of state borders can be dated back to the emergence of the territorial state and state system based on territoriality in place of dynasties. Having become increasingly common with the Peace of Augsburg and the Peace of Westphalia (Diener and Hagen 2012, 40-41), maps have not only shown what is where but also accentuated the limits of the territory under one's rule.

In spite of their function in the formation of nations, borders had long been taken for granted in social sciences, particularly prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, as the boundaries dividing nations were regarded merely as administrative instruments in stasis. Yet, the roles of borders were not completely unnoticed. For instance, as far back as 1983, Anderson mentioned "the map" as one of the three primary institutions employed for nation-building along with "the census" and "the museum" (2006, 163). However, it was not until the early 1990s that borders became a focus of academic interest on a larger scale due to two simultaneous yet contradictory trends. Along with the end of the Cold War, new states and borders appeared on the world map. In addition to their administrative functions, borders began to be acknowledged as a dividing line between the Self and the Other, and therefore a constitutive of collective identities. At the same time, the culminating exchange of goods, money, information, and people across the world intensified interdependence and

globalization, which in turn triggered a discussion on the disappearance of borders (Newman 2001).

However, the end of history (Fukuyama 1989) thesis that envisaged the peaceful coexistence of democratically ruled world nations that would make borders obsolete failed to come true. 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, border security occupied the pages of newspapers and inspired academic publications responding to the migration crisis that forced millions of people to flee their countries due to the so-called Arab Spring and other conflicts in the MENA region. Since the early 2010s, the EU has been struggling to devise an adequate border policy to ensure security without ignoring its core values prioritizing human rights, equality, and non-discrimination. The crisis on the borders of the union has not only been influential in deepening the internal divisions between the members (Crawley 2016) but has also intensified the criticism against the EU, including from those accusing the union of being an empire and exploiting its own values to stop asylum seekers from crossing its borders (Greenhill 2016).

Besides the dividing and identity-forming functions of borders, they are also bridges that connect groups of people, enable the exchange of goods, and consequently produce cooperation (Prescott and Triggs 2008, 5-6). The smooth flow of people and goods across different countries requires safety, as several circumstances can disrupt it. These include smuggling, illegal border crossing, natural disasters, epidemics, and cross-border violence (Diener and Hagen 2012, 66). People living near a borderline suffer in particular when the two sides start a military conflict. In a matter of days, if not hours, citizens of one country might find themselves within the de facto boundaries of another due to territorial takeover.

This is exactly what Azerbaijanis experienced in the early 1990s and Armenians in 2020. When the first and second wars broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan, nobody asked the people living near the border of the two countries, or within the disputed territory, whether they wanted to stay in the country they had previously resided in. Thousands of people who had ordinary lives became forced migrants. Others continued their lives under the threat of being shot by the military forces of the other side (Reuters 2017; Avetisyan 2021).

Considering the failure of the idea of a borderless world and the risks faced by communities living on borderlands without a peace agreement and mutual recognition of the boundaries, we argue that any discussion of the abolition of borders between two states previously at war is nothing but utopic. Instead, a proper process of delimitation and demarcation is likely to contribute to peacebuilding. However, these processes cannot alone be expected to build peace. Rather, they should be seen as a phase or an initial stage toward building peace. This paper is concerned with the question of why the completion of delimitation and demarcation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan boundary is significant for peace and how it should be conducted.

Azerbaijan's Position on Delimitation and Demarcation

On the political level, Azerbaijani president Aliyev has repeatedly stated that Azerbaijan is ready for the delimitation of the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, a topic he emphasized at the Sochi meeting between Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Russian leaders on November 26, 2021 (President of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2021). The issue of delimitation and demarcation was in fact the main topic of discussion at the meeting and the parties had agreed to create mechanisms by the end of that year (President of Russia 2021). Following the meeting, the parties shared their proposals with each other but no agreement on how the process should be administered was reached (ARKA News Agency 2022).

Armenia's proposal on delimitation and demarcation delivered to Azerbaijan via Russia included the mirror-way withdrawal of the two sides' armed units (JAMNews 2022). The Azerbaijani side, however, asserted that there should be no preconditions for the delimitation and demarcation of the border in order to complete the process as soon as possible (APA 2022). In short, Azerbaijan's official position is that the delimitation and demarcation of the border is a precondition for the normalization of relations and a conclusive peace agreement between the parties. This was restated in "Azerbaijan's proposal on the basic principles for the establishment of relations between the two countries" (AzerTac 2022). It is clear that, as the victor of the latest war, Azerbaijan refuses to give up direct control over the territories regained with the November 10 ceasefire statement and seeks to complete the demarcation of the boundary unilaterally in the absence of a delimitation agreement. Also,

Azerbaijan's assertive stance on demarcation appears to be a tool to force Armenia to come to terms with the former.

It can be argued that Azerbaijan's assertive policy has reached this goal. That is, the two sides announced the creation of respective delimitation commissions and their first meeting soon after the trilateral meeting among Aliyev, Pashinyan, and European Council President Michel on May 22, 2022 (European Council 2022b.). The heads of both commissions are the deputy prime ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Mher Grigoryan and Shahin Mustafayev. The Armenian commission includes 11 other members: the ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Justice and Territorial Administration; the deputy chairman of the Cadastre Committee; the commander of the Border Troops of the National Security Service; and the deputy chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces. Meanwhile, the Azerbaijani commission consists of representatives of 22 ministries, including the deputy prime minister of Nakhichevan; six deputy ministers; the first deputy head of the State Security Service; the deputy head of the State Border Guard Service; the deputy head of the Foreign Intelligence Service; as well as the mayors of Dashkesan, Kelbajar, Lachin, Ghubatlu, and Zangilan regions (No.3272 2022). The first inter-commission meeting was held on 24 May and the parties agreed to meet next in Moscow and Brussels (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2022b).

Armenia's Position on Delimitation and Demarcation

The November 10 ceasefire put an end to the 44-Day War between Armenia and Azerbaijan but created a huge wave of dissatisfaction within Armenian society. While Azerbaijan started marking the boundary unilaterally, the Armenian population saw this as direct aggression against the territory of the Republic of Armenia. The cause for this frustration was the fact that, unlike the 44-day war which was taking place in the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan, now the Azerbaijani soldiers were crossing the official border of the Republic of Armenia. Armenian society assumed that Russia would prevent such escalations based on the Armenian-Russian strategic alliance, including the agreement on military cooperation and Armenia's membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Officially, Yerevan applied separately to both the

CSTO and the Russian Federation on the matter, yet they refused to take action. This refusal further increased the fear of the Armenian population (Asbarez.com 2022).

According to the news channel Factor.am, Azerbaijani forces crossed the border in the regions of Sev Lake/Qaragöl and Gegharkunik, near the village Verin Shorja. The channel was citing the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia (Arman Tatoyan) started addressing the border crisis since it began, visited border regions where the Azerbaijani troops advanced to examine the impact on the advancement of human rights and security. Responding to his inquiry, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) issued a statement (Armenpress 2020) on December 29 that demarcation is a bilateral process that requires a joint commission to come to a bilateral agreement, only after which demarcation can be carried out. The statement continued:

Prior to the above-mentioned process, the deployment of armed forces or border troops to conduct combat duty along the state border is a purely defensive security measure [...] negotiated directly or indirectly between representatives of the armed forces [...] that cannot be interpreted as a final agreement on demarcation, or mechanical approval of existing administrative boundaries.

It is essential to state here that our issue is not to prove or disprove these transgressions, nor do we try to justify one side and blame the other. These examples are given here to once again highlight the importance of not only high-level state officials but also regular soldiers and especially the border population being aware of how the processes of delimitation and demarcation function.

As mentioned above, Azerbaijan's official position is that the process of delimitation and demarcation is the only precondition for the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the final peace agreement. The situation in Armenia is more complicated due to the stance of officials within Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, the Artsakh government declared martial law and its parliament came out with a statement that forces the Armenian government to step back from Armenia-Azerbaijan peace negotiations and any process of delimitation

under circumstances that do not ensure Artsakh entirety and independence (Azatutyun.am 2022).

After the November 10 treaty, the majority of Armenians within the Republic of Armenia as well as the diaspora accused Pashinyan of surrendering lands and treason. On various occasions both within Armenia and outside, Armenians protested against Pashinyan with banners calling him a “traitor” (Panorama.am 2022). However, even with such a wave of disagreement with his actions and hate directed toward him, Pashinyan was reelected as prime minister in the June 20, 2021 parliamentary elections. What began as general frustration in the public and a shock wave against losing the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war was picked up by the current opposition led by Robert Kocharyan and allies. The accusations against Pashinyan and the current Armenian government led by the opposition consist mainly of representatives of the former government and continue today, backfiring on the process of accepting the demarcation process (Factor.am 2022).

The clash between the supporters of and opposition to Pashinyan’s government increased after his last speech at the National Assembly on April 13, 2022. In his speech, Pashinyan expressed distrust toward Baku, adding that he sees a possibility that Azerbaijan would bring the talks to a deadlock and take the opportunity for new aggressions against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. He raised the same concerns regarding the process of delimitation, as well. However, he concluded that standing still and not making any progress is an equally great if not greater danger (Pashinyan’s speech at the National Assembly, 13.04.2022).

This means that Pashinyan is accepting international norms for the processes of delimitation and demarcation based on the de jure facts relevant to the clarification of the boundaries of the Republic of Armenia and not based on rumors, wishes, or biblical tales. He restated this also during his interview with Al Jazeera TV (Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia 2022; PanARMENIAN.Net 2022). The Brussels agreement on delimitation was based on the agreements reached in Sochi on November 26, 2021. Finally, Pashinyan stated that Armenia never had territorial claims from Azerbaijan and that the Karabakh issue is not a matter of territory but of rights. Therefore, the security guarantees of the Armenians of Karabakh, the provision of their rights and freedoms, and the

clarification of the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh are of fundamental importance for Armenia.

Based on Pashinyan's speech and interviews we can see at least at face value Armenia's official stance on the process of delimitation and demarcation. We should also note here that for the first time Armenian authorities gave their population insight into how the process of delimitation and consequently demarcation should work. However, unlike Azerbaijan, which posted a list with the names of every member of the commission publicly (No. 3272 2022), the Armenian side only announced the name of the head of the commission. No official list was available on e-gove.am or mfa.am, government websites at the time of writing

Before trying to analyse whether the process of delimitation and demarcation will fuel more conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan or result in a final peace between these two countries, below we present how these processes of delimitation and demarcation should take place in theory based on a summary of relevant literature.

The Process of Delimitation

In the ever-changing course of humankind's history, there have been no empires or polities that lasted forever. Hence, the formation of new states on the world political map is common and currently more visible given recent events in Ukraine. The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of the States signed in 1933 at the 7th Pan-American Conference (OSCE 2017, 10) is one of the few international instruments that characterize the legal personality of a new state from the standpoint of international public law. The convention established four main characteristics of a state as a subject of international law: a) permanent indigenous population, b) defined territory, c) native government, d) capacity to start civilized relations with other states.

A newly formed state does not emerge out of nowhere on a no-man's land. It generally occupies the same territories it used to but with a different legal status. One of the fundamental tasks for newly formed states is to establish their boundaries. Oftentimes such states jump into self-defense without having yet settled their boundaries. This naturally causes conflicts with neighboring states at different levels due to uncertainty about the

limits of the territory to be defended. Such is the example of Armenia and Azerbaijan after the establishment of their first republics prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Referring to the existing literature, Prescott and Triggs (2008, 12) illustrate a distinction among the concepts of frontier, border, and boundary. The former refers to the vast, uncontrolled soil dividing two political entities. These kinds of territories are now extinct as the world has been divided between states and they execute a degree of control over almost the whole terrain. Border, on the other hand, denotes a narrower strip of land along the boundary—that is, the line dividing the territories controlled by different states on two sides.

The process that establishes and ensures the maintenance of boundaries between two states is described as involving four steps, as listed by Prescott and Triggs (2008, 12):

- a) Allocation describes the initial political division between two states.
- b) Delimitation means the selection of a boundary site and its definition.
- c) Demarcation refers to the construction of boundary markers in the landscape.
- d) Finally, administration is concerned with the maintenance of those boundary markers for as long as the boundary exists.

Ideally, these four steps are all followed in sequence. However, in practice one or more steps are often ignored or they are executed in a different order.

This paper is particularly concerned with the procedures of delimitation and demarcation, although this does not mean that the other aforementioned steps are of less importance. The delimitation of a boundary is defined by OSCE as the “legal formalization in a treaty of the state boundary between adjoining states” that determines the positions of the sides on a topographic map and their written description. Demarcation, on the other hand, involves the physical marking of the boundary line (OSCE 2017, 8).

To avoid future conflicts over undelimited boundaries and act in accordance with national legislation, a political decision to start the

processes of boundary making must be taken at the initiative of the president or parliament of a country. The government must set up a working group or a commission and instruct it to prepare a report on the legal, political, economic, and technical situation regarding the status quo of the boundary. This group must include a few specialists in the fields of cartography, geology, natural resources, etc. Representatives of a president's executive personnel, parliament, government, as well as concerned ministries are also to be part of this commission.

The negotiating position is based on two principles: a) from the general to the particular, b) from the ultimate to the optimum. The latter means that negotiations should begin with an ultimate position which later should be reduced to the optimum one until it becomes acceptable for all parties. Some provisions regarding the border or territory are usually recorded in the declaration of independence, constitution, treaties of friendship, good-neighborliness, and in cooperation with adjoining states (OSCE 2017, 14). While developing its position on delimitation, a state refers to a number of sources, including international norms and customary law; international agreements; national constitution and other related laws; topographic and other types of existing maps; natural boundaries such as watersheds, rivers and lakes, artificial objects; and ethnographic division (OSCE 2017).

Delimitation is a long process. For such a process one needs to keep in mind that maps tend to age due to changing situations on the earth's surface, as well as anthropogenic and natural impacts. Yet, the main working document in the preparatory stage of delimitation and during subsequent negotiations is a topographic map, where the administrative boundaries and state boundaries are drawn up. Maps are widely used when states formulate their positions prior to delimitation negotiations. Yet the probative value of existing maps is a point of contradiction in international law and the practice of delimitation. Prescott and Triggs (2008, 194-202) review several cases including the ICJ and other courts' decisions on disputes between Burkina Faso and Mali, Eritrea and Yemen, Qatar and Bahrain, and the UK and France, concluding that maps are oftentimes ignored or assigned no value separate from the texts or other evidence accompanying them. Moreover, they mention that international courts have sometimes expressed their concerns regarding the lack of

technical capacity at the time to draw accurate maps. Finally, the maps prepared by one of the involved parties are usually discarded as evidence due to biases and deliberate manipulations.

Historical documents, especially maps, data on population censuses, and administrative maps may help in tracking the dynamics and trends of changes in boundaries. However, too much history can spoil the talks (Huseynli, Ghazaryan, 2022). While dealing with nation states and their boundaries, the parties involved should not go into the depths of history and try to justify their claims with the 'endemicity' factor. Thus, a modernist approach, i.e., focusing only on the last hundred years, is a more viable path for negotiations.

At the very onset of states' emergence, their territories were marked by natural frontiers (mountains, rivers, seas, lakes, swamps, forests, deserts). Over the course of history as more conflicts and wars erupted, borders gradually shifted to natural obstacles which turned into the first defense line, which were easy to defend. Today, the importance of natural boundaries in the practice of delimitation is still evident, as they are cheap to identify and easy to guard. Along with natural boundaries, artificial or man-made ones are also commonly used for delimitation. Such artificial boundaries can be roads and railways, bridges, power lines, pipelines, land reclamations and irrigation facilities, and dams (OSCE 2017, 23). At the preparatory stage of negotiations, it is critical to take into consideration the importance of artificial boundary making objects not only for the home state but also for the neighboring state and especially cross-border populations.

On the other hand, the international legal principle vis-à-vis state boundaries is *uti possidetis juris*, which entails the preservation of boundaries that have existed prior to the time when the state gained independence (OSCE 2017, 14). That is, the adjoining states are bound to accept each other's boundaries with previous administrative borders after a new state inherits a territory. Yet, determination of international boundaries is not strictly regulated by universally accepted procedures.

Based on the above-mentioned activities and nuances, the working group submits to higher authorities the proposal for selecting an initial negotiating position, provides models for further actions in boundary establishment, provides a list of problem areas and recommendations for

their elimination, and estimates on the consequences of the steps to be taken with regard to political, economic, defense and other interests of the state. This report is then evaluated and amended. Afterward, its final form becomes the negotiating position of the state. Besides the legal and technical aspects, the report should address the concerns of the local population near the boundary, who, after delimitation and final demarcation, may remain abroad. The same applies to the population of remote areas called “enclaves.” Many states face such problems and proclaim their intentions to annex these territories. If the relevant territories are ethnically homogenous, both countries have to stipulate terms of exchange and the problem will be solved. In practice, there are no such ‘pure territories’ in ethnic and/or religious terms. This has naturally caused and still causes conflicts on different levels and the solution to this problem remains to be found. Hence, it is recommended that the issues of setting a boundary and the problems of border/enclave populations not related to the technical and legal subtleties of delimitation should be divided and resolved separately under different commissions (OSCE 2017, 24).

Once the negotiating position is approved, the government of the country creates a delegation to work in a joint commission and appoints a leader. This process is similar to the appointment of the working group. There is a specific language of diplomacy and status asymmetry applied in the meetings of the commissions from the states negotiating over the delimitation of boundaries. The party initiating negotiations informs the neighboring state by filing a note expressing a desire to proceed with negotiations and proposes consultations on the approval of the regulations for a joint commission. After preliminary agreement on regulations, the governments approve their national version with a note that the commission should have the right to make amendments that do not change the essence of the regulations (OSCE 2017, 25).

Negotiations on establishing boundaries are a sensitive topic not only because of the attention of the press and politicians but also because the public at large and especially border populations also follow developments. Every cheerful exclamation from one side may create animosity in the other. Any premature, uncoordinated, or unverified information about future decisions on the boundary may trigger

unnecessary unrest and suspend or interrupt negotiations. Hence, people's diplomacy is not always constructive (OSCE 2017, 28). This, however, does not mean that people and especially border populations should not be aware of the basic definitions of delimitation and demarcation and how these processes work. The process of negotiations has 12 OSCE-approved/suggested commandments. Due to the limitations of this article, we will not present all of them here. However, we must note one that is related to Armenia's and Azerbaijan's negotiations before the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war. This commandment states that the sides should not resort to ultimatums or extreme slogans, such as 'not an inch of ground' (OSCE 2017, 29) or "Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenia," the latter an announcement that Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan made in Stepanakert weeks after the Velvet Revolution (Yerevantsi 2019; Badalian 2019).

The commission should use only homogeneous maps that have a common cartographic framework, from approximately the same date of issue or update, as well as the same accuracy characteristics. Delegations make a thorough comparison of the line's position on the maps, analyze legal documents underpinning these positions, and identify problematic areas. In order to identify differences that might arise, the parties can organize field visits to the sites for more detailed analyses of the issue. The commission should also discuss the possibility of and principles for applying optimization procedure to the state boundary. After the state boundary line has been optimized along the whole perimeter of the boundary, a table of compensated areas should be compiled (OSCE 2017, 38). The main element of a delimitation map is the state boundary, which, if possible, should pass within the central part of the map and be displayed with a corresponding red symbol. The agreed-upon line should be moved from working maps to updated ones that will be used to generate a final delimitation map.

Due to secrecy restrictions imposed on maps in some countries, delimitation maps usually display a border belt of a limited width of one or two kilometres on either side of the boundary, depending on the scale of the map. In international and national practices, a system of map division is used where maps are divided into separate sheets. For this purpose, a non-standard map division for delimitation maps is used that

is developed by a specialized cartography working group. These delimitation maps are then bound together in an album where the sheets are numbered, tied together, and sealed by both parties. The sealed album of the delimited map then becomes the main document of the International Treaty on the State Boundary (OSCE 2017, 40-46).

On average, negotiations on establishing boundaries last a minimum of 10 years, during which the maps used should be updated at least once. In fact, the maps used on the date the treaty is signed can be roughly 15 years old. The ratification of the treaty can take another two years and the final creation of the Joint Demarcation Commission and the start of its real work can take another five years. In general, with the most optimistic calculations, the joint processes of delimitation and demarcation can last 20 years. (OSCE 2017, 46).

To solve problems that might occur during the boundary-making process a package of treaties and agreements is used. They are signed together with the boundary treaty and include agreements on state border regime; simplified border crossing procedures for the cross-border population; checkpoints for local traffic; and joint use of transboundary water, roads, pastures, etc. Such package agreements can help resolve most of the problems that may arise and significantly speed up the overall process (OSCE 2017, 49).

In the absence of any opportunity for the successful completion of negotiations on establishing boundaries along the entire perimeter, it is recommended that the uncoordinated section/s should be “excised” from the treaty and a “grey area” formed along its outline. This area should be attributed to a special regime provided by the parties, which will be in effect until the position of a delimiting line is agreed upon and legally formalized.

The process of delimitation and demarcation can be mediated by a third party if both contracting powers agree on this. There are several types of mediation that can be used by a third party:

- a) traditional mediation, where the final decision on the point of substance is taken by the negotiating parties;
- b) consultative mediation, where a mediator can articulate its position on the issue in question through consultation; this opinion

is not binding for the parties but should be taken into consideration;

- c) mediation with arbitration elements, where in case of a deadlock in negotiations, the mediator comes up with a binding decision on the issue in question (OSCE 2017, 50-1).

The Process of Demarcation

The term “State Border Demarcation” stands for the explicit marking of a state boundary course along its entirety on the ground based on the developed demarcation documents. This is a complex process and the next stage after delimitation. However, demarcation is not just a technical execution of delimitation. It also implies the activities of state bodies and national delegations in the domain of foreign policy and international law. Demarcation work results in a well-defined, harmonized state boundary demarcated on the terrain in accordance with a treaty on state boundary and demarcation documents that fix the position of the state boundary on the landscape and confirm the consent of adjoining states to its position. The main goal of demarcating state boundaries is to provide the unambiguous identification of a state boundary course on the ground via visible boundary markers and the undisputed documentation of the state boundary on the ground in case boundary markers get lost.

Demarcation also allows for the creation of appropriate conditions to maintain law and order within the state border, giving rise to the cross-border population’s awareness of the presence and importance of state boundary, increasing the effectiveness of counteraction against illegal cross-border activities, preventing border incidents and conflicts between local populations and state services, and strengthening state border protection in accordance with recognized standards of integrated border management (OSCE 2017, 59).

The boundary demarcation process falls into six stages:

- a) creating a system for ensuring a state’s activity in the state boundary demarcation;
- b) selecting a model for marking the position of the boundary on the ground and developing the documents that regulate its implementation;

- c) transferring the delimited line in-situ and demarcating it with boundary markers;
- d) performing cartographic, geodetic, and other works for final draft documents of demarcation;
- e) preparing draft summary documents of boundary demarcation and accepting the demarcated boundary;
- f) preparing summary demarcation documents and conducting domestic procedures necessary for their coming into force (OSCE 2017, 60).

With a view to the legal regulation of demarcation works, adjoining states usually conclude an international treaty that determines the procedure for a joint commission on boundary demarcation and basic organizational issues. The organization of demarcation works largely depends on the length of the boundary to be demarcated, the geographical and physical conditions of the terrain, as well as the level of mutual relationships between the adjoining states. There are no regulations regarding the number of members to be included in the delegation for demarcation. The adjoining states should be guided by the principle of reasonable sufficiency when it comes to the number of the delegation members, having also in mind that the larger the delegation (15 or more members), the more complex the organization of the delegation's activity will be. The main task of the demarcation commission is to draw up the final demarcation documents (OSCE 2017, 71). It is during this process that a model for marking out a state boundary is decided upon. One can use boundary markers consisting of one element to be erected right on the boundary, or three elements. The later model includes a center zero-offset monument (ZOM) that is erected directly on the boundary line along with boundary pillars erected at some distance on both sides of the boundary. These boundary markers are, as a rule, erected at turning points where the course of the state boundary changes direction; at spots where the boundary is crossed by railways, dams, and other structures; at transition points of the state boundary from the land section into water one and vice versa; within zones of active economic and other activities of the cross-border population; and where the visual identification of the state boundary is hindered (OSCE 2017, 76).

The transfer of the state boundary line from the delimitation map onto the terrain is the most important stage of state boundary demarcation. It is at this point that all inappropriately adopted decisions within the delimitation stage, errors, mistakes, unclear plotting of boundary line or discrepancies between the map and a boundary description create intractable problems. The transfer is carried out by a joint working group formed by the demarcation commission and consists of two national parts (OSCE 2017, 85).

The acceptance of the demarcated boundary along with state boundary demarcation summary documents (demarcation map, protocols of boundary markers, catalogue of boundary markers' coordinates, state boundary description, summary protocol of the state boundary demarcation) are the last stage in the overall process and are carried out by the demarcation commission after clearing the state boundary strip, erecting, and coordinating boundary markers and preparing draft final documents of boundary demarcation within a section under acceptance. The OSCE advises carrying out the acceptance of a boundary in two stages: 1) by an expert group and 2) by the demarcation commission (OSCE 2017, 124-5). The summary documents on the state boundary demarcation, as a rule, come into force on the date of exchange of notifications about the completion of necessary domestic procedures mandatory for their approval, or on the date the last notification is received (OSCE 2017, 134).

How Demarcation Drives Conflict

Several possible scenarios are likely to propel the involved parties toward conflict. In the first scenario, one or both sides refuse to follow the four steps in order. For instance, one party embarks on demarcation before a political agreement of delimitation has been reached. If one side considers the ground being marked as its own territory, the marking action is regarded as an act against its territorial integrity and thus an act of aggression, which in turn leads to opposition and countermeasures.

This is exactly what happened between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Right after the November 10 ceasefire statement that put an end to the 44-day war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan started marking the boundary unilaterally. In May 2021, Armenian authorities applied to the Collective Security Treaty Organization claiming that Azerbaijani border

forces had entered Armenian territory near Lake Sev/Qaragöl. The CSTO refused to take any action (Kucera 2021a) whereas Azerbaijani authorities denied violating Armenian borders and explained that they were trying to determine the boundary, which had been impossible to do before due to the physical conditions in the region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2021). Azerbaijani border forces returned to their positions before the situation turned into a crisis. In mid-November 2021, the most serious escalation since the end of the war broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan, again around Lake Sev/Qaragöl. As a result of the skirmishes, dozens of troops were killed while others were injured or detained (Kucera 2021b).

In a second scenario, a delimitation agreement is signed but its terms are not followed adequately or the uncertainties within are exploited for the sake of acquiring a larger part of the border. Azerbaijan and Armenia have yet to agree on the terms of delimitation. Once the agreement is signed, one needs to observe whether they abide by the agreed terms.

It is also likely that adjacent states cannot reach an agreement due to reference to categorically different sources (e.g., maps or documents), which opens the way for territorial claims and pushes the parties towards dispute. A vivid example is Kyrgyz-Tajik border issues. The two countries have attempted to resolve the problem by creating border commissions but have not been able to come to an agreement as Tajikistan insisted on the 1924-1939 maps whereas Kyrgyzstan stuck to rather later maps of 1958-1959 (Kurmanalieva 2018). The dispute lingers to date and has recently escalated into a large-scale armed conflict (Buranelli 2021). Since the USSR leadership made territorial multiple alterations within the union without taking into consideration demographic factors such as ethnic and cultural composition, the states formed following the collapse of the union found themselves in intractable territorial conflicts.

How Demarcation Drives Peace

When administered properly, demarcation may prevent escalation and contribute to the peace process in a number of ways. First of all, it follows an agreement of delimitation and proceeds accordingly with a clear reference. This is of utmost importance for putting legal responsibility on the parties and averting a political crisis. Second, it takes place with the collaboration of the commissions of the adjoining states, which prevents

secret agendas, uncertainty, and thus insecurity. Third, it sustains uninterrupted communication and exchange between the sides as the process on the ground is agreed upon and excludes military involvement. This is crucial for the security of the borderline communities, as well. Fourth, the successful completion of demarcation means that the adjoining states do not have any territorial claims against each other. Last but not least, it inhibits adverse speculations and the spread of disinformation since it creates room for the public to be informed about what is taking place on the ground.

Recent history has witnessed numerous transformations from conflict to cooperation thanks to the successful completion of delimitation and demarcation. Kazakhstan's experience in border politics has possibly been the best example among the former Soviet republics. The country has to a great extent finalized delimitation of boundaries with all neighbors and their demarcation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan 2018). For instance, the Kazakh border with China had been a subject of conflict between the USSR and the People's Republic of China prior to the collapse of the former. However, with the timely diplomatic maneuvers of Kazakh President Nazarbayev and thanks to the huge economic interests of both sides, the disputes were resolved with three delimitation agreements signed in 1994, 1997, and 1998. The latter document put an end to the territorial claims and the parties shared the disputed lands evenly (BBC 1998). Two years after the first agreement, the demarcation process commenced, which was finished in 2001 and formalized in 2002 with a joint protocol (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan 2018).

The Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan border is also worth elaboration. The process of delimitation started in 2000 and lasted two years. Although the parties reached an agreement for the major portion of the border, two villages—Bagys and Turkestanets—that were populated with ethnic Kazakhs but controlled by Uzbekistan became a source of dispute between the parties and led to several clashes (Razumov 2002). The border delimitation deal came into force in 2003. However, the border dispute failed to cease and continued throughout the year (Alibekov 2003). The dispute turned into border clashes several times by 2016. Nevertheless, with the change of leadership in Uzbekistan, the official position altered. The new president, Mirziyoyev, has been more ambitious to resolve the problems with the

neighboring states (Goble 2020). Within the past two years, the two countries have shown considerable progress toward finalizing the demarcation process and launched cross-border projects. For instance, in March 2021, Kazakhstan inaugurated a Border Liaison Office on the Kazakh-Uzbek border to improve cross-border cooperation, security, and intelligence sharing (UNODC 2021). The two sides also established a corridor in 2021 to ease the access of pilgrims to holy sites (Kuandyk 2021). At the same time, the demarcation of the border continues with the regular meetings of the delegations to discuss the terms of the treaty of demarcation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan 2021).

Another reference could be the Finland-Russia border and particularly the case of Karelia. As a former part of the Russian empire, modern-day Finland had a territorial dispute with the USSR and then the Russian Federation. The so-called Karelian question constituted the core of the issue, where a portion of the local population speaking a language closely related to Finnish was under Russian control (Joenniemi 1998). The issue gained additional significance with Finland becoming an EU member and thus becoming a frontier between the EU and Russia (Parot 2007, 3). Despite the scope of the disagreement between Finland and Russia, the sides agreed on the delimitation and demarcation of the boundary in 2007 and the demarcation works were completed between 2007 and 2016. The parties signed a treaty approving the boundary marks in June 2017 and agreed that they would discuss the validity of the demarcation every 25 years (National Land Survey of Finland 2017).

Main Challenges to the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Border

The ongoing boundary determination process between Armenia and Azerbaijan is clearly not one of those we have described above as the optimal sequence of actions facilitating peace. There are a number of factors that prevent the suggested sequence of actions.

To begin with, the primary barrier to delimitation and demarcation is political in nature. The actions taken on the ground, such as Azerbaijani forces crossing the Armenian border, are not congruent with the positions expressed by Armenian and Azerbaijani politicians after the previous

meetings. This is to say that the parties have presumably adopted different agendas that are not stated openly or contradict the responsibilities they have taken on. Even after the creation of the commissions and their first meeting, the two parties are likely to still have incompatible positions on several issues related to delimitation. In addition, this stems from the vagueness of the agreements reached so far, such as the status of the Lachin corridor and the transport routes connecting Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan.

Although Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to establish border commissions and the commissions held their first meeting, the second meeting agreed to be held in Moscow the following week has not taken place as of this writing. In addition, there seems to be a diversification of the third party, Russia, which was the primary mediator prior to the war with Ukraine. However, the EU is increasingly involved and seems to be willing to take Russia's place. As a result of this ongoing shift, Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders met in Brussels under the auspices of the president of the European Council on 6 April 2022 (European Council 2022a). Nevertheless, Russia's presence is still visible as the second meeting of the commissions was scheduled to take place in Moscow and the third one to be held in Brussels again.

A related political issue is mutual recognition of the territorial integrity of the two states. Kucera (2022) argues that the Armenian side might be willing to compromise the idea of independence of the breakaway region for the sake of normalization of relations, provided that the human rights of the Armenian population of the region are guaranteed. This argument came out because of Pashinyan's speech on April 13 at the National Assembly, during which he said:

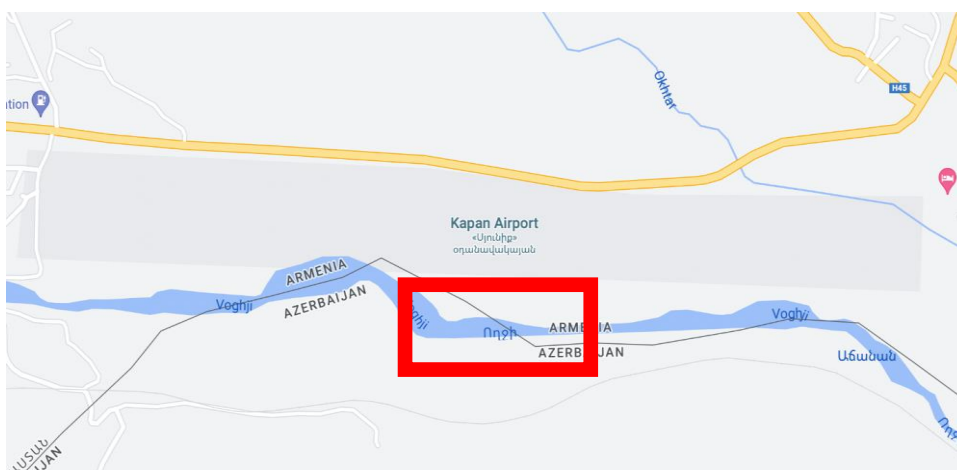
I repeat, all our friends, close and not so close friends, expect us to surrender seven famous regions to Azerbaijan in one way or another and bring down our benchmark for the status of Artsakh. I am guilty for I did not tell our people that the international community unequivocally recognizes the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, expects us to recognize it, and expect that the Azerbaijanis who left Karabakh should be fully involved in deciding the future of Nagorno-Karabakh (The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia 2022).

The speech caused domestic pressure on the Armenian leadership because it implied recognizing Nagorno-Karabakh as a territory of Azerbaijan. Although the Armenian prime minister is well aware that the international society is not likely to back Armenia against Azerbaijan and ignore the principle of territorial integrity, the increasing domestic political pressure of the opposition forced the Armenian government to step back from what the two sides agreed on at the Brussels meeting. The Azerbaijani foreign minister stated in mid-May that Azerbaijan had created the commission by the end of April whereas Armenia had failed to do so and kept postponing the date of the meeting between the two border commissions (Abdullayeva 2022). According to the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ararat Mirzoyan, Armenia had rejected to meet due to the absence of discussions regarding the status and security of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the human rights of its Armenian population (CivilNet 2022).

The technical hurdles to overcome are not insignificant. As discussed earlier, border commissions refer to various sources while establishing their national positions, including maps, previous administrative boundaries, and agreements. It is not an easy task to choose a reference document while determining the Armenia-Azerbaijan boundary and, more generally, boundaries between post-Soviet states. During the Soviet period, national boundaries mattered minimally as the republics in the union were virtually deprived of their national characters, such as sovereignty, independent governance, army, currency, as well as their borders. On the contrary, these vague borders took on a crucial role in the nation-building of the newly independent states, yet they lacked preciseness and became a subject of dispute due to clashing territorial claims (Levinsson 2006). The same is true for the Armenian-Azerbaijani boundary. Although the parties have agreed to take Soviet maps as a reference, only a few of those available can be helpful in terms of disputed zones where natural boundaries or ethnic divisions are unclear. It is known that Soviet military cartographers were assigned to map not only the states included in the union but also strategically important world cities with high precision (Miller 2017). Russian officials have stated that they would allow Armenia and Azerbaijan to use these maps if both requested to do so (News.am 2022).

The issue is not only how accurate the maps are but also the social repercussions of division according to those maps. People living near the boundary will be affected in one way or another. On the one hand, current uncertainty about where the boundary is creates insecurity among civilians living nearby. The issue is particularly critical for the Armenian population residing along the territories regained by Azerbaijan in the 44-Day War. Prior to the war, these people used the Azerbaijani territory for pasture but now they have lost their access to the resources vital for their livelihood. Just as Azerbaijanis living near the former line of contact used to risk their lives to cultivate the soil and run their daily errands (Abbasov and Jafarli 2007), some Armenian villagers and farmers unaware of the precise location of the boundary often cross the border and carry the risk of being a target of the border guards of the other side (Avedian 2021).

On the other hand, there is also uncertainty regarding what will happen to those who are bound to lose their houses and farmlands when a delimitation agreement is signed and the boundary is marked. Moreover, Armenian authorities had developed vast infrastructure without taking *de jure* borders into consideration. For instance, Balabanian (2021) argues that 116 Armenian cities and villages are as close as 5 km to the boundary with Azerbaijan and some parts of the infrastructure built in the last three decades, such as Kapan Airport, fall within Azerbaijani territories according to Soviet-era maps. Also, the road connecting Kapan and Syunik with the Goris districts of Armenia, which was built before the conflict erupted, runs through Azerbaijan in several parts. This caused no trouble during the Soviet period but now that Azerbaijan has restored control over its Qubadli district, Armenian vehicles have to pass Azerbaijani customs checkpoints (Cricchio 2021).



Having exclaves within the territory of the other side can be another matter of dispute. Exclaves are pieces of territory of one state that are surrounded by the territory of one or more other states. In other words, these regions have no direct ground connection to the state they belong to except through the territory of the state within which they are located. Nakhchivan is a typical example of an exclave as seen from Azerbaijan. There are five Azerbaijani exclave villages in Armenia—Karki to the West, Ashaghi Askipara and Yukhari Askipara to the northeast and Barkhudarli and Sofulu to the east—and one Armenian exclave village in Azerbaijan—Artsvashen to the west. The problem is that these exclaves have been under the control of the host states since the 1990s and no Armenians or Azerbaijanis live there although they have never been removed from the official maps. The two sides appear to agree that the future of the exclaves should be settled if delimitation and demarcation are to be completed (Khachatryan 2022).

Policy Recommendations

In light of the aforementioned issues, we recommend the parties take measures to ensure a smooth completion of delimitation and demarcation. First of all, the high-level political leaders of the two sides must show willingness to further the progress achieved so far, particularly with regard to forming a Joint Border Commission. On April 11, 2022, the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan had a phone call and discussed the issue (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2022a), which should be regarded as a step forward since this

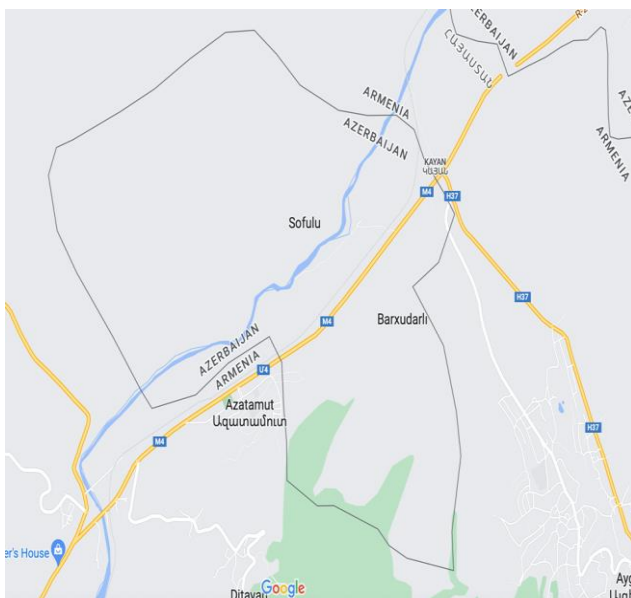
was the first time since the end of the latest war that the parties have contacted each other directly.

Although the future of Nagorno-Karabakh has been the main source of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the sides are recommended to refrain from bringing up the issue as a prerequisite for delimitation and from trying to establish a connection between borders and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. The two issues should be handled separately for the sake of achieving a negotiated result for both issues. The point is that bringing up the question of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh—Armenia's insistence on independence or Azerbaijan's no-status rhetoric—might endanger the process of delimitation and demarcation. On the contrary, the delimitation and demarcation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border is crucial for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia in that it is likely to eliminate the question of an existential threat from Azerbaijan.

In terms of the technical barriers listed above, the parties may make use of the topographical maps drawn up in the Cold War period, however without relying solely on them. We discussed above how maps are not referred to as the single most important source without accompanying documents. We do not know whether the maps offered by Russia are accompanied by thorough texts that provide a precise description of the boundary. It should also be acknowledged that over four decades have passed since those maps were prepared and there are new political and social realities on the ground. For the disputed parts of the border, the parties should agree on a mutually beneficial solution. For instance, the issue of Lake Sev/Qaragöl could be solved with the creation of a transboundary conservation site monitored by a joint body. According to UNESCO (2019), there are 21 such reserves around the world.

For the security of the residential sites in the proximity of the boundary, the best practice is the mirror withdrawal of the two sides' military forces. It is obviously impossible to complete the demarcation of the boundary without any impact on the people living nearby. However, a human-centered approach should be taken. That is, borderland communities must be informed about the process of demarcation before its implementation. This would eliminate unwanted speculations such as one side committing aggression against the other. People need to be guaranteed that their property rights will not be disregarded. Moreover, those whose livelihood

depends on the territory that falls on the other side according to the delimitation agreement should be compensated or allowed to retain their rights to use it, as in the case of the Russian-Finnish border agreement, for



example. The noteworthy feature of the agreement is that Finnish reindeer herders are allowed to use the lands under Russian control as summer pastures (OSCE 2017, 15).

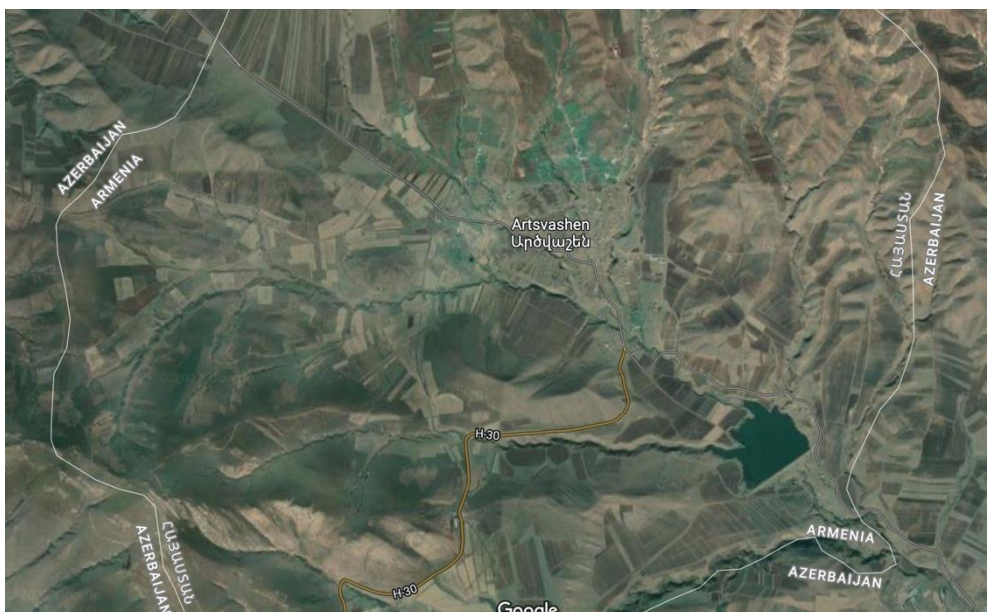
The problem of established infrastructure should be handled in a way that fosters the economic benefit of both sides. The Kapan-

Goris Road and Kapan Airport do not need to be relocated. Rather, Armenia and Azerbaijan could both benefit from the capacity of these structures for the development of the territory destroyed during the 30 years of conflict. Moreover, these structures can contribute to local trade and consequently to the prosperity of people residing in the region. On the other hand, in order to ensure security and prevent cross-border crime, there must be increased safety measures, which requires completion of demarcation.

To find a common ground for the exclaves issue the key might be looking back at history. In the 1980s, at the outset of early violent acts, some Armenian and Azerbaijani villagers swapped their houses located in the territory of the other side. This is described as a completely voluntary solution, as the Azerbaijani mayor of the Qizil Shafag/Dzyunashogh village in Armenia came up with the idea and the locals accepted it. People agreed to maintain each other's cemeteries so that they could pay a visit once a year, which have been protected to date on both sides (Huseynova, Hakobyan and Rummyantsev 2012; Furiong 2022). Land exchange rather

than returning the control of these regions to their *de jure* owners could be a better solution for several reasons. Most importantly, the sides might attempt to militarize their exclaves, which in turn would endanger the civilians living in nearby villages such as Azatamut. The village is located so close to the Azerbaijani exclaves of Askipara that Azerbaijani military posts could be seen with a naked eye prior to the 1990s war.

Moreover, the future of the Azerbaijani exclaves in Armenia matter due to the fact that several important roads pass through or near these settlements (Khachatryan 2022) including the Sarigyugh-Baghanis road to the northeast and Zangakhatun-Yeraskh to the southwest. The Armenian exclave Artsvashen in Azerbaijan is also crucial for the host country since its territory and the lake located in the village have been used by the population of the neighboring Azerbaijani villages as crop fields.



To summarize, delimitation and demarcation is usually a drawn-out, labor- and cost-intensive process. It requires political will, mutual compromise, and expertise. The result, however, will bring security and stability, thus contributing to the peace process.

Bibliography

“Azərbaycan Respublikası ilə Ermənistan Respublikası Arasında Dövlət Sərhədinin Delimitasiyası üzrə Dövlət Komissiyasının Yaradılması

Haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin Sərəncamı” [Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan On the Creation of the State Commission for the Delimitation of the State Border Between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia] No. 3272 e-qanun.az Accessed October 7, 2022. Accessed October 15, 2022. https://e-qanun.az/framework/49654?fbclid=IwAR0Tu48H2w1HgpSa5SCOLQx-Cc5JgGa_5zVV9wWtcSSSbTWjRGlcOJu46HA

“Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Speech at the National Assembly during the Discussion of the Performance Report of the Government Action Plan for 2021.” Հայաստանի Հանրապետության վարչապետ [Prime Minister of Republic of Armenia]. Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2022/04/13/Nikol-Pashinyan-Speech/>.

Abbasov, Idrık, and Bala Jafarli. 2007. “Azerbaijan: Farming in no-man's land.” *Reliefweb*. July 5, 2007. Accessed May, 31, 2020. <https://reliefweb.int/report/azerbaijan/azerbaijan-farming-no-mans-land>

Abdullayeva, Samira. “Sərhədin Delimitasiyası ilə Əlaqədar Komissiyanın Tərkibi ilə Bağlı Azərbaycan-Ermənistan Arasında Razılıq Əldə Olunub.” Report İnformasiya Agentliyi. [“An agreement was reached between Azerbaijan and Armenia on the composition of the commission related to border delimitation.” Report Information Agency] Report.az Accessed November 16, 2022. <https://report.az/xarici-siyaset/azerbaycan-serhedlerin-delimitasiyasi-ile-elaqedar-komissiyanın-terkibi-ile-bagli-ermenistana-teklifler-verib/>.

Alibekov, İbragim. 2003. “Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan clash over border policy.” *Refworld*. September 29, 2003. Accessed March 8, 2020. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/46c58efec.html>.

Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

APA. 2022. “Azerbaijan is ready to begin unconditional delimitation process with Armenia.” February 4, 2022. Accessed July 9, 2022.

<https://apa.az/en/foreign-policy/azerbaijan-is-ready-to-begin-unconditional-delimitation-process-with-armenia-367615>

ARKA News Agency. 2022. "Azerbaijan rejects Armenian proposals on border delimitation, but negotiations continue- FM Mirzoyan says." February 3, 2022. Accessed July 6, 2022. http://arka.am/en/news/politics/azerbaijan_rejects_armenian_proposals_on_border_delimitation_but_negotiations_continue_fm_mirzoyan_s/

Armenpress. 2020. "Armenia MFA Issues Official Position over Demarcation Processes in Response to Ombudsman's Inquiry." December 30, 2020. Accessed April 8, 2021. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1039352.html>.

Asbarez.com. 2022. "CSTO Called Out for its Lackluster Response to Yerevan's Appeal for Assistance." May 16, 2022. Accessed August 11, 2022. <https://asbarez.com/csto-called-out-for-its-lackluster-response-to-yerevans-appeal-for-assistance/>

Avedian, Lillian. 2021. "Sharing pastures with the enemy" in Armenia's borderlands." *The Armenian Weekly*. February 17, 2021. Accessed May 18, 2021. <https://armenianweekly.com/2021/02/17/sharing-pastures-with-the-enemy-in-armenias-borderlands/>

Avetisyan, Ani. 2021. "Nagorno-Karabakh civilian shot dead in apparent ceasefire violation." October 11, 2021. Accessed December 4, 2021. <https://oc-media.org/nagorno-karabakh-civilian-shot-dead-in-apparent-ceasefire-violation/>

AzerTac. 2022. "Foreign Ministry: Azerbaijan has announced basic principles proposed for establishment of relations with Armenia." March 14, 2022. Accessed July 22, 2022. https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Foreign_Ministry_Azerbaijan_has_announced_basic_principles_proposed_for_establishment_of_relations_with_Armenia-2052467

Badalian, Anna. "Նիկոլ Փաշինյան. Արցախը Հայաստան է և Վերջ." [Nikol Pashinyan. Artsakh is Armenia and Period]. 1TV, August 6, 2019. <https://1tv.ge/lang/am/news/nikol-phashinyan-arcaxeh-hayastan-ev-verj/>.

- Balabanian, Pakrad Sarkis. 2021. "Historic Secret Soviet Maps Decide The Faith of a Nation." January 7, 2021. Accessed August 3, 2021. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f22c38d694c5498882e850848b8fc795>.
- BBC. 1998. "China ends Kazakh border dispute." July 4, 1988. Accessed December 6, 2021 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/126276.stm>
- Civilnet. "Mirzoyan Visits Brussels to Talk Karabakh, as Yerevan and Baku Seem Deadlocked over 5+6 Plan, Border Commission." CIVILNET. CIVILNET, May 19, 2022. <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/662078/mirzoyan-visits-brussels-to-talk-karabakh-as-yerevan-and-baku-seem-deadlocked-over-56-plan-border-commission/>.
- Crawley, Heaven. 2016. "Managing the Unmanageable? Understanding Europe's Response to the Migration 'Crisis'." *Human Geography* 9, no. 2: 13-23.
- Cricchio, Emilio Luciano. 2021. "New highway crisis emerges as Azerbaijan sets up checkpoints on strategic Armenian road." November 11, 2021. Accessed June 9, 2022. <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/639277/new-highway-crisis-emerges-as-azerbaijan-sets-up-checkpoints-on-strategic-armenian-road/>
- Diener, Alexander C, and Joshua Hagen. 2012. *Borders: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- European Council. 2022a. "Statement of European Council President Charles Michel following the Second Trilateral Meeting with President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan." April 6, 2022. Accessed June 4, 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/04/06/statement-of-european-council-president-charles-michel-following-the-second-trilateral-meeting-with-president-ilham-aliyev-and-prime-minister-nikol-pashinyan/>
- European Council. 2022b. "Press statement by President Michel of the European Council following a trilateral meeting with President Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia."

- May 23, 2022. Accessed June 4, 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/05/23/press-statement-by-president-michel-of-the-european-council-following-a-trilateral-meeting-with-president-aliyev-of-azerbaijan-and-prime-minister-pashinyan-of-armenia/>
- Factor.am. “Գնում էք Դեմարկացիա Անելու Մի Երկրի Հետ, Որն Էթնիկ Չտնօրէն է Իրականացնում Արցախում. Արամ Վարդևանյան. [You Enter Demarcation Process With a Country that is Committing Ethnic Cleansing in Artsakh. Aram Verdevanyan] ՏԵՍԱՆՅՈՒԹ [Video].” factor.am. Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://factor.am/496697.html>.
- Fukuyama, Francis. 1989. “The End of History?” *The National Interest* 16: 3-18.
- Furiong, Ray. 2022. “Village Swap: How Armenians and Azeris Switched Homes Amid 1980s Ethnic Tension.” *Rferl*. February 13, 2022. Accessed July 21, 2022 <https://www.rferl.org/a/azerbaijan-armenia-villages/31697529.html>
- Goble, Paul. 2020. “Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan Likely to Sign Border Treaty Soon to Avoid Worse Problems.” March 26, 2020. Accessed May 11, 2021 <https://jamestown.org/program/kazakhstan-and-uzbekistan-likely-to-sign-border-treaty-soon-to-avoid-worse-problems/>
- Greenhill, Kelly M. 2016. “Open Arms Behind Barred Doors: Fear, Hypocrisy and Policy Schizophrenia in the European Migration Crisis.” *European Law Journal* 22(3): 317-332.
- Huseynova, Sevil, Arsen Hakobyan, and Sergey Rumyantsev. 2012. *Beyond the Karabakh Conflict: The Story of Village Exchange*. Tbilisi: Heinrich Böll Stiftung South Caucasus.
- JAMNews. 2022. “Armenia proposed border demarcation concept to Azerbaijan - What went wrong?” January 21, 2022. Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://jam-news.net/armenia-proposed-border-demarcation-concept-to-azerbaijan-what-went-wrong/>
- Joenniemi, Pertti. 1998. “The Karelian Question: On the Transformation of a Border Dispute.” *Cooperation and Conflict* 33(2): 183-206.

- Khachatryan, Arthur. 2022. "Enclaves - islands of Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontation." March 21, 2022. Accessed July 8, 2022 <https://jam-news.net/enclaves-islands-of-armenian-azerbaijani-confrontation/>
- Kuandyk, Abira. 2021. "New Tourist Corridor to Connect Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's Main Pilgrimage Sites." January 27, 2021. *The Astana Times*. Accessed October 12, 2022. <https://astanatimes.com/2021/01/new-tourist-corridor-to-connect-kazakhstan-and-uzbekistans-main-pilgrimage-sites/> .
- Kucera, Joshua. 2021a. "Armenia and Azerbaijan in new border crisis." *EuroasiaNet*. May 14, 2021. Accessed November 22, 2022. <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-and-azerbaijan-in-new-border-crisis>
- Kucera, Joshua. 2021b. "Heavy fighting breaks out between Armenia and Azerbaijan." *EuroasiaNet*. November 16, 2021. Accessed March 11, 2022. <https://eurasianet.org/heavy-fighting-breaks-out-between-armenia-and-azerbaijan>.
- Kucera, Joshua. 2022. "Armenia signals willingness to cede control over Karabakh." *EuroasiaNet*. April 1, 2022. Accessed July 17, 2022. <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-signals-willingness-to-cede-control-over-karabakh>
- Levinson, Claes. 2006. "The Long Shadow of History: Post-Soviet Border Disputes—The Case of Estonia, Latvia, and Russia." *Connections* 5(2): 98-110.
- Mfa.am. 2022. "Հայաստանի և Ադրբեջանի Փոխվարչապետերի Հանդիպումը." [The meeting of Deputy Prime Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan] Հայաստանի Հանրապետության արտաքին գործերի նախարարություն [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia]. Accessed October 7, 2022. https://www.mfa.am/hy/press-releases/2022/05/24/Arm_Az_commission/11467.
- Miller, Greg. 2017. "The Soviet Military Program that Secretly Mapped the Entire World." October 13, 2017. *National Geographic*. Accessed July 17, 2022. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/maps-soviet-union-ussr-military-secret-mapping-spies>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. 2018. "Delimitation and Demarcation of State Border." October 1, 2018. Accessed January 17, 2022.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200122102014/http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/delimitatsiya-i-demarkatsiya-gosudarstvennoj-granitsy>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 2021. "No:165/21, Information of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan." Accessed January 2, 2022. <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no16521-information-of-the-press-service-department-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 2022a. "No:174/22, Information of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on telephone conversation of Minister Jeyhun Bayramov with Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan." April 11, 2022. Accessed July 17, 2022 <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no17422>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 2022b. "No:250/22, Information of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan." Accessed July 17, 2022. <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no25022>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. 2021. В г. Алматы состоялось заседание Правительственных делегаций Узбекистана и Казахстана. [A meeting of the Government delegations of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was held in Almaty] October 29, 2021. Accessed May 12, 2022. <https://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2021/v-g-almaty-sostoyalos-zasedanie-pravitelstvennyh-delegaciy-uzbekistana-i-kazahstana---30712>

National Land Survey of Finland. 2017. "Boundary demarcation on the border between Finland and Russia." June 20, 2017. Accessed April 8, 2022. https://www.maanmittauslaitos.fi/en/topical_issues/boundary-demarcation-border-between-finland-and-russia.

- Newman, David. 2001. "Boundaries, Borders, and Barriers: Changing Geographic Perspectives on Territorial Lines." In *Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory*, edited by Mathias Albert, David Jacobson and Yosef Lapid, 137-152. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- News.am. 2022. "Lavrov: We are in favor of soonest start of Armenia-Azerbaijan border demarcation." January 14, 2022. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://news.am/eng/news/682015.html>
- OSCE. 2017. *Delimitation and Demarcation of State Boundaries: Challenges and Solutions*. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. December 19, 2017. Accessed February 2, 2022. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/2/363466.pdf>
- PanARMENIAN.Net. 2022. "Վարչապետ. Սահմանազատման Հանձնաժողովը Որևէ Կապ Չունի ԼՂ Խնդրի Հետ." [Prime Minister. The Demarcation Committee Does Not Have Any Connection to the Nagorno-Karabakh Issue] June 14, 2022. Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://www.panarmenian.net/arm/news/300887/>.
- Parot, Jocelyn. 2007. "Outer Borders, Inner Boundaries in Finland. The Reconstructed Russian Border and the Changing Geography of Memory. Borders of the European Union: Strategies of Crossing and Resistance." *HAL Open Science*. Accessed May 16, 2022. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01170405/document>
- Prescott, Victor, and Gillian D Triggs. 2008. *International Frontiers and Boundaries: Law, Politics and Geography*. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- President of Russia. 2021. "Statements by leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia following trilateral talks." November 26, 2021. Accessed January 8, 2022. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67203>
- President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 2021. "A trilateral meeting was held among Russian President Vladimir Putin, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan in Sochi. 26 November, 2021. Accessed January 8, 2022. <https://president.az/en/articles/view/54420>

- Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. 2022. "Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's interview to Al Jazeera TV." June 14, 2022. Accessed August 6, 2022 <https://www.primeminister.am/en/videos/item/b6Kl-dRWQ3Q/>
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Արցախի Խորհրդարանը Հայաստանի Իշխանություններից Պահանջում է Հրաժարվել 'Աղետալի Դիրքորոշումից.'" "Ազատ Եվրոպա/Ազատություն" [The Parliament of Artsakh Demands from the government of Armenia to opt out from its "Disastrous Position"] April 14, 2022. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/31803753.html>.
- Razumov, Yaroslav. 2002. "Kazakhstan-Uzbek border flap threatens to stoke regional tension." *Refworld*. February 26, 2002. Accessed March 1, 2021. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/46c58edd465.html>.
- Reuters. 2017. "Azeri woman and child killed by Armenian forces near Nagorno-Karabakh boundary: defense ministry." July 5, 2017. Accessed August 8, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-armenia-azerbaijan-conflict-idUSKBN19Q1VG>
- Sahakyan, Nane. 2022. "Սահմանազատման և Սահմանային Անվտանգության Հարցերով Հանձնաժողովները Կզիսավորեն Միեր Գրիգորյանն Ու Շահին Մուստաֆաևը." "Ազատ Եվրոպա/Ազատություն" ռադիոկայան. Ազատություն n/կ [In Charge of The Committees on Demarcation and Border Security will be Mher Grigoryan and Shahin Mustafaev], May 24, 2022. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/31864830.html>
- UNESCO. 2019. Transboundary biosphere reserves. May, 2019. Accessed June 4, 2019. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/biosphere-reserves/transboundary-biosphere-reserves/>
- UNODC. 2021. UNODC supports the opening of a new Border Liaison Office and computer-based training class on the Kazakh-Uzbek border. March 30, 2021. Accessed February 8, 2021. <https://www.unodc.org/centralasia/en/news/unodc-supports-the-opening-of-a-new-border-liaison-office-and-computer-based-training-class-on-the-kazakh-uzbek-border.html>.

Yerevantsi Voskan. “Արցախը Հայաստան է, և՛ Վերջ...” [Artsakh is Armenia and Period...] Aravot. Accessed November 16, 2022. <https://www.aravot.am/2020/08/14/1129354/>.

Formal and Non-Formal Peace Education Programs for Youth in Armenia and Azerbaijan: Challenges and Opportunities

Marina Danoyan, Gul Khanim Mammadova

During the decades-long conflict, Armenia and Azerbaijan have promoted ethno-nationalist conflict narratives in all spheres of political and social lives, including public education, contributing to radicalizing positions and excluding reconciliation and dialogue as means to achieve sustainable peace. As a milestone for lasting peace, peace education can contribute to reconciliation processes by instilling values of peace and tolerance from an early age. In this regard, this paper explores formal and informal peace education initiatives, programs, and projects, as well as the current situation of peace education in schools in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The analysis is based on data gathered from personal interviews with peace education experts, practitioners, and educational specialists from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Finland. The findings demonstrate that despite of the existence of various peace education programs, they have not been widely promoted in both countries due to dominant nationalist discourses and policies that consider peace education a sign of weakness and even a threat to national security. The paper also identifies challenges to promoting peace education and opportunities for the integration of informal initiatives into school curricula in Armenia and Azerbaijan. It also provides policy recommendations addressed to international donors, local and international CSOs experts in education and peacebuilding, and

policymakers, which can help to improve the field of peace education in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Introduction

Since the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan and Armenia have stepped into enormous political uncertainty. Even though the trilateral statement signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia on November 10, 2020 presupposed the cessation of hostilities and the implementation of a number of measures on the road to the peaceful coexistence of the three-decade-long rivals, the lack of mutual trust since the military conflict poses serious obstacles to the achievement of “positive peace” (Galtung 2001, 3) between the two nations in South Caucasus. In fact, during the decades-long conflict, both Armenia and Azerbaijan promoted conflict narratives that nurtured polarization and hatred toward each other. The ethnonationalistic conflict narratives were promoted in all spheres of political and social life, including public education, contributing to radicalizing positions and excluding reconciliation and dialogue as means to achieve sustainable peace (Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev 2021). In this regard, we believe it is crucial to use the experience of informal peace education initiatives and apply it to the formal educational institutions of both countries. This, in turn, will help to restore trust between Armenian and Azerbaijani societies, as well as prevent possible escalations.

Since we consider peace education a milestone for lasting and sustainable peace, in this article we discuss the problem of peace education initiatives in Armenia and Azerbaijan and formulate recommendations that might help to integrate informal peace education initiatives and their methodologies into formal education programs. We have analyzed various programs with different goals, such as improving critical and analytical thinking to instill peace values or changing attitudes, stereotypes, and increasing tolerance to contribute to the normalization of relations between the two neighboring societies. It is worth mentioning that by referring to educational institutions we imply primary and secondary schools, as we consider it important to instill values of peace, tolerance, and understanding from an early age. It is difficult to achieve development or progress in peace education without a clear definition of it. We believe peace education should be based on the needs and characteristics of the community in which it will be implemented (Harris

2002; Salomon 2002). Therefore, for the purpose of our analysis, we rely on a definition of peace education developed by Betty Reardon (1988), which includes educational policies, pedagogy, and the practice of teaching essential skills and values, as well as the development of the awareness necessary to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way and live together in mutual respect and harmony.

The primary data for our analytical research was collected through individual interviews with peace education experts, practitioners, and educational specialists from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Finland. We conducted 11 interviews to gather information about the programs and projects implemented in the peace education field, as well as the current situation with peace education in schools, and to identify the challenges for promoting peace education and creating opportunities for the integration of informal initiatives into school curricula in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Our secondary data is related to the peace education models that have been implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Finland. The Finnish educational system is often referred to as a successful model that encompasses values of peace within various subjects in school curricula, often referred to as “Global Education”, “Human Rights Education”, “Intercultural Education”, or “Active Citizenship Education” (Saleniece 2018; Demos Helsinki 2021; Niittymäki 2014). In addition, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Armenia has shown interest in the Finnish educational model for the ongoing educational reform in Armenia (ESCS 2022a). Therefore, we found it relevant to study this model in our research. On the other hand, the Bosnia and Herzegovina case is relevant to Armenia and Azerbaijan due to a similar conflict-related context, particularly the high level of ethnonationalist antagonism deeply internalized by the respective societies (Babayev and Spanger 2020). Thus, we consider it important to study the experience of this country and determine the pros and cons of various peace education programs carried out there.

The article is structured as follows: First, we identify the prevailing concepts of peace education in the literature. Further, we discuss peace education models in formal studies implemented in Finland and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Subsequently, we present our empirical findings from Armenia and Azerbaijan, which are based on interviews with experts and

practitioners. The findings section describes the current situation in the field of peace education in both countries, ongoing formal and informal peace education initiatives, as well as challenges and opportunities for formal peace education. Finally, we present policy recommendations based on the analyses of the gathered data that can be applied to promote peace education in schools in both countries.

Concepts of Peace Education

The origins of peace education date to ancient times and relate to religious attitudes. Religious leaders such as Buddha in antiquity taught and emphasized that individuals should promote peace in their daily lives and avoid violence (Rahula 2003). With the development of science in the Middle Ages, peace education was also disseminated through education and philosophy.

Later in the twentieth century, in response to numerous violent events such as wars and genocides, scholars around the world emphasized the necessity of modern innovation in education (Vriens 1999) to fight discrimination and intolerance and foster a culture of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect (Bar-Tal 2002; Reardon 2000). They argued that it is necessary to teach children from an early age how to make independent decisions and not to follow belligerent and militaristic governments that use violence to achieve their goals (Montessori 1959). The logic behind these arguments lies in a strategy of peace education, which “depends upon millions of students being educated, who first transformed their inner hearts and minds and then must turn it to work to transform violence” (Harris and Morrison 2013).

Peace education evokes the ‘instincts’ of peaceful coexistence and highlights the values necessary for this (Harris 2009). To achieve the goal of building a more peaceful and sustainable world, various concepts of peace education with different goals, practices, and principles have been developed (Bar-Tal 2002). Due to the variety of concepts, scholars and practitioners divide peace education programs according to their primary objectives, such as human rights education, democracy education, and training for conflict resolution (Agarwal 2014). Peace education can focus on conflicts between individuals or conflicts between collectives. The former approach provides people with information about peace values and behavioral competencies to achieve compromise and find solutions to

interpersonal conflict (Deutsch 1973; Johnson and Johnson 2005). The latter approach aims at bringing lasting changes in people's minds by legitimizing and humanizing other collective's history and narrative, recognizing each other's crimes, and developing cognitive/emotional empathy and positive attitudes (Salomon 2009). In this regard, some peace education programs implemented in, for instance, Rwanda, Kosovo, or Northern Ireland, were oriented particularly toward resolving and preventing group and collective conflicts (Coleman 2003).

Along with the different focus of peace education, scholars have also defined several categories of peace education based on their objectives: peace education for changing mindset, for inculcating new skills, for the promotion of human rights, and for the promotion of the culture of peace and disarmament (Salomon 2002). At the same time, despite the numerous concepts and approaches to peace education, all these programs are unified in their goals to instill peaceful values in children and make them "agents of change" (Bajaj and Chiu 2009) to achieve equity, social justice, and promote human rights.

Peace education initiatives can be also distinguished between formal and informal, which according to some scholars are called, respectively, "integrative" and "additive" peace education (Carson and Lange 1997). Even if both forms can have written curricula, the method of the programs is different. Formal, or integrative, peace education entails the schooling system; informal or additive peace education is an initiative implemented by non-governmental grassroots organizations.

Peace Education as Part of Formal Studies: The Cases of Finland and Bosnia Herzegovina

There is strong evidence that schools can play a key role in advancing the values of peace when peace education is included in formal studies curricula (Brooks and Hajir 2020). School is a site that shapes social behaviors, norms, and attitudes, and where the culture of peace can be developed. Research suggests that peace education programs have resulted in improving relationships between students and creating a safe environment where they achieve better results (Brooks and Hajir 2020). Moreover, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) considers peace education a fundamental right of children and not just an optional subject in curricula (Fountain 1999). In this regard, the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has developed special curricula to promote tolerance and non-violence (UNESCO 1998).

Peace education in formal schools has a multidimensional nature: it starts with creating an inclusive space in the classroom, encouraging students' cooperation, developing analytical skills and critical thinking, and teachers' training. The second level looks at the school environment and how students interact with their immediate environment on a day-to-day basis. Here, the skills of peacemaking and leadership play an important role. Finally, to increase the impact on the wider community and environment, peace education seeks to foster formal-informal collaboration, which can be linked to policy and legislation (Brooks and Hajir 2020).

Peace education, in this case, is not considered a separate program but is incorporated into the school curriculum and integrated into various subjects. One of the countries that has adopted this framework is Finland. According to Hanna Niittymäki, a peace education expert from Finland, in the country's primary school (grades 1-9), topics such as "cultural understanding", "interaction and cooperation skills", "participation", and "active citizenship and building a sustainable future" are part of the national curriculum and are supposed to be involved in all the subjects' studies (Interview with Niittymäki 2022). In general, in Finnish national curricula from various periods starting in 1970, peace education has held a central place (Niittymäki 2014). The 1985 curriculum stated that "goals are guided by values." These goals included the diverse development of the student's personality, nature conservation, national culture and national values, gender equality, and international cooperation and peace. The 1994 curriculum called for the following to be considered when building the value base for education: promoting sustainable development; cultural identity; multiculturalism and internationalization; and physical, mental, and social well-being.

According to Liisa Jääskeläinen, education counselor at the Finnish National Board of Education, who also worked as a UNESCO school coordinator for a long period, any subject can include topics related to peace. Accordingly, "[e]xamples in math books are often quite indifferent in content, but those could, for instance, include the distribution of money and food in the world or calculate how much money is spent on education

in Finland and how much on defense.” As Jääskeläinen puts it, “People who hold values, global perspectives and critical thinking, are at the center of everything” (Niittymäki 2014). It is important to stress that corresponding policies and pedagogical approaches are essential for the understanding of conflict and violence. However, policies are shaped and adopted by social and political elites who can adopt policies that either maintain structural violence in school and foster inequalities or, on the contrary, promote equality and peace (Jenkins 2019). When education policies and legislation support peace education, it helps to achieve full integration into formal school settings (Brooks and Hajir 2020).

In the Finnish context, the defining concepts for educational reforms were the principles of reconciliation and national integration (Pakkasvirta and Tarnaala 2018). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Republic of Finland, as a newly independent country, experienced a violent civil war between the “Reds” and the “Whites.” In the wider context, war, revolution, and the breakdown of empires in preceding years opened up possibilities for national transformations. Those processes impacted both ordinary people and political regimes. Since 1918, rebuilding trust in all spheres of social and political life became fundamental for the new polity in Finland. This led to the gradual modernization of health, welfare, and educational systems. In the post-World War II period, Finland has reinforced its reforms towards securing independence and democracy and building a welfare state capable of providing stability inside and outside the countries’ borders. Pakkasvirta and Tarnaala (2018) argue that the Finnish comprehensive and equal school system after WWII reflected the need for political stabilization in Finland, as well as securing the interests of different economic sectors; therefore, it has had strong political, economic, and social motives underlining it. To achieve this goal, educational reform was undertaken with the principle of equality at the center. This meant that regardless of their family background, every child would have a right to high-quality education.

According to Jenkins (2019), *collaborative partnerships* are essential to influencing policy-making. Peace education programs in non-formal settings have a solid ground and have proved their efficiency with the potential to influence change on a higher level. When bridges are created to connect formal and non-formal dimensions, they can set a path for constructive dialogue. According to Hanna Niittymäki (reference?)

Interview (2022) or online article (2014)), the Finnish national school curriculum heavily encourages cooperation between the formal schools and NGOs that often provide free courses to schools on different topics related to peace education (such as diversity, gender equality, media awareness, emotional intelligence, conflict and peace mediation, etc.) as well as teachers training. The Finnish educational policies state that schools are supposed to educate active citizens and thus need to widen the learning environment outside of schools. Niittymäki stresses that one critical issue is to make sure that this expertise and opportunities are also available in remote areas and not limited to the capital and large cities.

Another example of a country with an integrative curriculum is Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is populated by Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslim Bosniaks. The country went through an ethnic war during 1991-1995. During the war, the education system was used as a tool for dividing people according to their nationalities, religions, and language (Pasalic 2008). After the war, various international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Open Society, United World College (UWC) in Mostar, and others started to play a leading role in improving the education system by bringing new reforms (Clarke-Habibi 2019). The pilot program "Education for Peace" (EFP) was launched in six schools in June 2000. It can be considered as one of the main initiatives implemented in formal peace education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Based on integrative peace theory (ITP), the main goal of the EFP was to contribute to the creation of a culture of peace among all three ethnic groups. The curriculum of the program was built on a combination of the principles of unity, worldview, and peace, in which peace is considered the main result of a unity-based worldview (Emkic 2018). At the same time, it also promotes emotional insight, critical thinking, and creative experience.

The program itself emerged out of a teachers' training at the Pedagogical Institute for educators assigned with implementing this program in schools (Emkic 2018). Later, since the pilot project demonstrated efficient results and received support from education ministries and municipal leaders, it was implemented in 112 primary and secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Danesh 2008). The integration of the program into the formal school system and curriculum started with the removal of

potentially offensive context from the primary and secondary school textbooks on history, geography, mother languages, and music (Torsti 2003), and the creation of teaching manuals (Emkic 2018). Eventually, the Education for Peace project was fully recognized and supported not only by the local community and the international community, but also by the government in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Further, the state-level Education Reform Strategy (2002) was applied to create depoliticized and “integrated multicultural schools free from political, religious, cultural and other bias and discrimination” (Clarke-Habibi 2019). Consequently, since September 2003, the program had been conducted in 100 schools throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. The conducted research showed that the EFP yielded positive results and contributed to the healing and creation of cultures of peace (Danesh 2008). Notwithstanding, the program was not continued due to a lack of financial support (Emkic 2018).

Another peace education project, which was carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2017 to 2020 is the “Restoring the Civic Mission of Education—a window of opportunity for change.” This project was implemented by the Association of Democratic Initiatives in cooperation with the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation Programs and Activities (Global Reconciliation Fund). Its main methodology aimed to expand the capabilities and skills of teachers in the country to make them agents of social peace and reconciliation, as well as to support primary and secondary educational institutions in the creation of peace education programs. According to the statistics of the Regional Cooperation Council, as of 2019, 419 teachers, 832 students, and more than 200 school representatives had participated in this project to integrate the concepts of peace, mediation, and conflict mitigation into formal education in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Peace Education in Armenia

Peace Education Programs in Schools

Peace education curriculum materials were introduced to the Armenian national curriculum as early as 1995. These are supplemental materials to the national curriculum as peace education is not given space as an exclusive subject. According to Garine Palandjian (Interview with

Palandjian 2022), the Armenian national curriculum is demanding of the teachers' time and focus—prioritizing time for math, science, mother tongue, etc. Therefore, peace education is often utilized as supplementary materials and taught during free periods such in classes with the head teacher. One of the more successful initiatives in Armenia has been the Women for Development (WFD) programme, a locally-based initiative that began in 1995 and has been providing support, training, and materials for teachers across Armenia. Aside from the WFD curriculum, other initiatives have been introduced in Armenia including the UNICEF Diversity and Tolerance manual. However, this manual has not been as successfully implemented across the country due to a variety of reasons including providing follow-up, proper training, and materials. Both of these curricula were received differently by teachers in large part due to the implementation and timed approaches. For example, the UNICEF Diversity and Tolerance material was launched at a time when tolerance was misinterpreted by the Armenian government officials in their approach to the local LGBT community. On the other hand, WFD's material responded to young people's demands for new pedagogical practices and curricula as a result of the collapse of the USSR. WFD's "Peace and conflict resolution education" programme was incorporated in the school program and proved its efficiency over years (Batton 2019).

According to Gohar Markosyan, president of the Women for Development, this program was incorporated into the formal school curriculum as part of an optional weekly course with the head teacher. Between 2002 and 2018, the program was implemented in 850 schools across Armenia, trained 6,000 teachers, and provided about 70,000 students with lessons and trainings in peace education (Batton 2019). The program has been institutionalized and supported by the National Agency of Education (NAE). Together with the WFD, the NAE conducted teacher trainings, regular monitoring, and evaluation. As Markosyan explains, when the project began in 2002, it was called peace education. Later, the name changed to education for conflict management because the term 'peace education' supposedly had a 'political connotation', while conflict management, especially interpersonal conflict management, was more neutral. According to Markosyan, stress was put on interpersonal conflict management and thus avoided touching on inter-state conflicts, including the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Interview with Markosyan 2022).

The program aimed at spreading the culture of peace to children and educators at schools throughout the country (Batton 2019). As Markosyan explains, the program was popular because it allowed interactive discussions and encouraged children to share their views and opinions, which was not a common approach in the Armenian educational system. This has been an important tool for the teachers to manage conflicts between children. Several evaluations conducted during the implementation of the project showed positive changes in teacher-pupil relations during the implementation of the project. Students became more tolerant and applied skills gained during the course to resolve everyday conflicts (Interview with Markosyan 2022). At the same time, teachers also noticed changes in their own behavior as they became more patient, tolerant, calm, and had better tools to act in conflict situations (Batton 2019).

According to Markosyan, the program has been translated into English and Georgian because the WFD was partnering with Youth Centers in Georgia that tried to introduce this initiative into school programs there. They have also collaborated with educational experts in Kazakhstan. In general terms, over the years, the WFD became part of a large network of professionals in the field of peace education all around the world. However, after the reforms in the education system in Armenia, the NAE was dissolved in 2019 and there has been no clarity about whether conflict management education would remain in the school program. According to Markosyan, without support from official bodies, it became impossible to continue the program and it was eventually suspended. At the same time, Markosyan stressed that the project had been running for a long time and could not continue as part of WFD programs. After many years of the operation, the project was supposed to sustain itself. Yet, the educational materials have been distributed to the schools and it is possible that the initiative continues to be implemented to a certain degree, but the WFD does not oversee it any longer. However, Markosyan noted that several teachers across the country contacted the organization and expressed interest in continuing to teach this program, so interest is still present. According to Markosyan, no NGO in Armenia has had such a long engagement with peace education. In general, she evaluated the project as successful (Interview with Markosyan 2022).

Another important and recent peace education initiative in Armenia is the Peace Education Manual for schools created by the Frontline Youth Network (FYN), an NGO based in the Tavush region, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (ESCS). According to the co-founder of the FYN, Lusine Kosakyan (Interview with Kosakyan 2022), the organization has been created to provide a platform for youth to support youth development in the Tavush region. The themes around which the NGO has worked have been human rights and democracy. However, with the Second Karabakh War in 2020, it has shifted its activities towards peacebuilding, which is currently the priority area of the FYN. Education has been part of its program as a non-formal education for youth. However, in order to make a more substantial change, they started cooperating with formal educational institutes to integrate quality education in schools specifically in the aforementioned region.

As Kosakyan noted, the six-month project has been supported by a Czech organization People in Need through EU funding. The project included the elaboration of the manual on peace education and the training of 20 teachers and media campaigns to reach a wider audience. The manual is designed for the students of grades 7-9 (12–14-year-olds). The topics in the peace manual are built around three main blocks: 1) Understanding peace and conflict, including different types of conflicts, peaceful communication, and an introduction to peacebuilding; 2) Human rights and peacebuilding, focused on democracy and peace; 3) State and peacebuilding, which teaches about politics as a tool for peacebuilding, focusing on the topics “State and state politics” and “State and culture.” Each of these blocks takes one to three hours to teach in the framework of the social sciences subject. It is designed in a way that gives flexibility to the teachers to decide how much time they want to dedicate to this subject (Interview with Kosakyan 2022).

It is noteworthy that the current educational reform in Armenia, implemented by the World Bank and funded by the EU, has opened space for introducing peace and conflict-related topics in various subjects in secondary school. According to Avetisyan, an expert on public education (Interview with Avetisyan 2022) before adopting the state standard for general education, a lot of studies have been conducted to examine the different existing international models. The new standards have been adopted based on international practices including Finland, Singapore,

Israel, Baltic States, as well as some American states, such as Massachusetts. At the same time, the new standards imply a revised educational toolkit that specifically targets Armenia's needs (Ajazi 2019). Avetisyan highlighted that the current reform pursues two main goals. First, it aims at empowering subjects from the natural sciences in order to develop pupils' abilities to supply sector-specific skills required in the context of the high-technology industries' development. Second, in contrast with the previous knowledge-centered education system, the reform aims at developing skills, attitudes, and values that will allow pupils to apply the acquired knowledge in everyday life situations and to develop analytical thinking regarding any phenomena (Interview with Avetisyan 2022).

As Avetisyan noted, within the new state standard for general education, elements of peacebuilding are introduced already in the second grade within the subject "I and the World Around Me." Children at this age discover who they are, which then expands to discovering the community, the country, and then the world and the universe. At this stage, children learn about interpersonal conflicts and relationship-building. They acquire practical skills on how to resolve conflicts with their immediate environment. In higher grades, besides interpersonal conflicts, students start studying inter-state and inter-ethnic conflicts. Since 2021, the pilot program has been tested in the Tavush region of Armenia. In May 2022, the feedback from the teachers was collected and the first phase of the reform was concluded. The outcomes of the reforms are currently being evaluated. The program will be adjusted based on the evaluation and applied on a larger scale in secondary schools across Armenia starting in September 2023 (ESCS 2022b).

Challenges and Opportunities for Peace Education Programs in Schools

Such terms as "peace" or "peacebuilding" are not easily accepted by the wider Armenian society, especially after the Second Karabakh War, as peacebuilding is associated by some with weakness and even considered a threat to national security (Palandjian 2013). Nevertheless, in Lusine Kosakyan's opinion, it is now the right time to work with youth in this direction to raise awareness about peacebuilding so as not to let this theme be manipulated. The YFN is actively working with youth on the topics of peace and peacebuilding. Kosakyan stresses that if presented properly, the youth accept these concepts rather easily. She said that it is crucial that she

is herself from the Tavush region and she and her colleagues are considered as one of “ours,” even when they talk about peace and peacebuilding. They introduce the idea through personal storytelling which is usually accepted very positively. At the same time, she stressed that if a foreigner came and promoted those ideas, the reaction might be different and not so positive (Interview with Kosakyan 2022).

Often, the question that comes from youth when talking about peace is whether promoting peace values is not a sign of weakness. Kosakyan acknowledged in the interview that there is no easy answer to this question:

On the one hand, it needs to be acknowledged that peace education is not widely promoted in Armenia either. On the other hand, we are not aware about what is done in the area of peace education on the Azerbaijani side, and this allows people to assume that peace education does not exist, which certainly is not the case.

She stressed the importance of knowing what programs in peace education exist in Azerbaijan and when and how they are being implemented. Kosakyan is concerned that often society is not well informed on what is done in the field of peacebuilding on the other side because those initiatives are not openly spoken about. Therefore, without having a full picture of reality, it is easy to make false assumptions.

Similarly, during her research on peace education in Armenia, Garine Palandjian observed that in certain cases, there has been resistance from the Armenian teachers and schools’ principles to the idea of “preaching peace”, which is considered by some as a sign of weakness. The assumption was that Armenians would teach peace while the Azerbaijani side is preparing for war. At the same time, Palandjian observed that when the Armenian and Azerbaijani teachers were meeting in a third country in the context of a conference or teacher training events, they were able to overcome the fears and mistrust against working together. She therefore stressed the importance of contacts between Armenian and Azerbaijani educational professionals. According to Palandjian, the main issue with not only the peace education programs but education more broadly is the lack of trust between the conflicting sides. She explains: “Teaching about peace should come up in diverse disciplines (history, sciences, geography, etc.). In order to be efficient, we should take a holistic approach, look at the whole school curriculum critically, and encourage a joint and sincere

discussion with the specialists from both sides” (Interview with Palandjian 2022) .

In our interview, Gohar Markosyan also highlighted the value of peace educational programmes on a regional level. Although the conflict management program developed by the WFD was mainly focused on interpersonal conflicts without touching upon regional conflicts, Markosyan noted that when children acquire skills in conflict management, they are likely to use them on many different levels, including in relation to regional conflicts. In this regard, it is necessary that those programs are implemented in all countries of the region where there is a political conflict. She stressed that the program developed by the WFD could be an important basis to achieve peace on a broader level, but it is not efficient if implemented only in one country (Interview with Markosyan 2022).

One of the core ideas behind the WFD’s peace education program has been that it was designed not only for the children but also for the teachers, the school as a whole, and also the family, i.e. the environment in which the child lives. Markosyan strongly believes that the whole environment should be similarly approached in order not to leave the children in isolation with the acquired skills. In this regard, special attention was given to the training of teachers: specialists were trained abroad and after the training, they adapted the program and its material to the Armenian context.

The holistic approach has been also a core principle for YFN while developing the Peace Education Manual for schools. Thus, the first component of the project included the needs assessment they did through working meetings with relevant experts which served as a basis to elaborate the content of the manual. They involved both peacebuilding and educational experts. The working meetings have been very participatory, including also civil society organizations and the National Agency for Educational Development and Innovation (an agency affiliated to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport [ESCS] that replaced the National Agency of Education) which is specifically responsible for the development of the curriculum of social sciences subjects at school. According to Kosakyan, the involvement of ESCS ministry officials since the beginning has been very important to ensure their buy-in. Also, the training of the teachers has been crucial to ensure

their ownership of the program. In this regard, Palandjian (Interview with Paladjian) noted that because peace education has been part of the extra subject curriculum and not a separate subject, the teachers' willingness and motivation were crucial for including this topic in their program. In this regard, Serine Avetisyan also stressed that the reaction of the teachers towards the new programs at school is very different. Her experience shows that the implementation of a new program in schools depends greatly on the principals' openness and readiness to accept it (Interview with Avetisyan 2022).

As noted above, peace education is included in the social sciences subject. According to Kosakyan, the program for this subject has now changed and currently opens more space for alternative teaching and learning materials. Previously, the teachers had obligatory material and any other manual or textbook could be used only as secondary learning and teaching material to support the main program within this subject. Now, the teachers have the freedom to use any learning and teaching material they find appropriate for this subject if it contributes to the learning outcomes defined by the ESCS Ministry. However, there is an issue with such freedom for content as there is not much quality material available in Armenian that the teachers can use.

Another challenge for peace education programs is that their funding is often temporary and it is therefore difficult to ensure their sustainability. For instance, presently, the YFN is trying to fundraise for the continuation of their peace education program. At the same time, as noted by Kosakyan, NGO expertise in peace education is very valuable and could support formal education programs. However, this resource is usually under-utilized and the knowledge and expertise of the NGO sector do not reach formal education. Therefore, building bridges to connect the non-formal and formal fields of education is crucial for developing peace education in the country.

Peace Education in Azerbaijan

Formal and Informal Peace Education Initiatives

Even though the term "peace education" is rarely used, currently several peace education initiatives both in the capital and various regions of Azerbaijan are being conducted by civil society representatives. One of the vivid examples of such initiatives is Conflict School, which is organized

by the Eurasia Partnership Foundation in Azerbaijan within the framework of the EU-initiated “Peacebuilding through Capacity Enhancement and Civic Engagement” (PeaCE) program. According to Namig Abdullayev, Conflict School facilitator and European Council Peace Program consultant (Interview with Abdullayev 2022), the lectures delivered by experts, researchers, and representatives of public institutions cover different topics related to the sociology of peace, conflict theory, collective memory, the culture of peace, feminist peace, media and conflict, peacebuilding initiatives during First and Second Karabakh wars, the humanitarian aspect of the conflict, and public diplomacy. Abdullayev also highlights that the primary methodology of the Conflict School is based on the theory of intersectionality, which is considered by his team as most suitable for sharing local experience. The theory of intersectionality is defined as the inclusion of the interaction of different perspectives and experiences (Stavrevska and Smith 2020). In conflict-affected societies, it helps to understand different needs and interests, as well as views of sustainable peace. In this regard, the Conflict School, which is conducted every year, is pitched not only to students from social studies disciplines but also youth above 18 years old from different specialties.

Another example of an informal peace education initiative is the Memory and Alternative History in Azerbaijan dialogue project conducted in the country since 2017 by the Berghof Foundation. According to the project manager at the Europe Unit of the Berghof Foundation, Bakhtiyar Aslanov, the main methodology of this project consists of collecting individual biographies of people affected by conflict and who witnessed the Karabakh wars and sharing these experiences with different groups including children from different regions of the country. In his belief, the use of individual biographical stories is important to foster, promote, and facilitate group discussions about social, historical, humanitarian, and individual issues. In this regard, the team of the Berghof Foundation in Azerbaijan has also created the Baku Biographical Salon, which became a physical space for the project. The Memory and Alternative History in Azerbaijan dialogue project itself is a long-term initiative with no criteria for participation, which, in turn, makes the project inclusive and helps it to interact with different grassroots and community groups from different regions of the country. According to Aslanov, the transformation goals of these initiatives are long-term (Interview with Aslanov 2022).

Independent facilitator and civil society activist Asiman Gojayev is also organizing and conducting different informal peace education initiatives in the regions of Azerbaijan. According to him (Interview with Gojayev 2022), with the help of local stakeholders - for example, the Regional Development and Career Centers, which have representatives in 55 regions of Azerbaijan - his team conducts various trainings for children between the ages of 12 and 18. During these three-to-four-day trainings, role-playing, theatre, and other interactive training methods are mainly used to explain to children the definitions of friend and enemy, as well as to pose the question “Do we need an enemy at all?” He points out that it is possible to observe the change in values and the mindset of children who participate in the training. He also noted that along with short-term strategy, they were able to see how participants began to share their values with their friends. Along with children, these projects are also aimed at primary and secondary school teachers and principals, since teachers have the power to instill new values to hundreds of their students, which, in turn, helps to achieve tangible results within a relatively short period.

When it comes to formal peace education, the initiatives in this setting are mostly implemented within one course in both schools and higher educational institutions. For instance, primary and secondary school students take the “social studies” (‘Həyat bilgisi’ [‘Life skills’]) course, which includes the basics of social sciences (philosophy, sociology, law, economics, and politics) and teaches students about people’s rights and responsibilities as well as how to live in society and form a civic position. In turn, the curricula of higher education institutions include the “Conflict Studies” course, which, according to Abdullayev (Interview with Abdullayev 2022), includes mostly theoretical input and lacks practice-oriented content on the subject.

Although currently the peace education initiatives in Azerbaijan are mostly conducted by local and international NGOs, in the past there were also several projects in the country that involved formal educators and students from schools. For instance, during the 2004-2005 academic year, secondary school teachers in Azerbaijan were trained to apply ‘controversy procedure’ in the teaching process within the Deliberating in a Democracy Project (Avery et al. 2006). In turn, the controversy procedure technique is included in peace education programs and teaches students how to deliberate about controversial public issues to understand the

opinions and ideas of others (Johnson and Johnson 1995). According to the research conducted, the use of this procedure was positively perceived by teachers and pupils in Azerbaijan (Johnson and Johnson 2006).

It is worth mentioning that higher education in Azerbaijan is currently based on the principle of multiculturalism, which is officially stated as one of the core values of the country. Most of the higher education institutions across the country have the “Multiculturalism” course among other subjects in the curriculum (Bayramov 2017). In addition, followed by the establishment of the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre in 2014, the year 2016 was officially declared “the year of multiculturalism” in Azerbaijan. All these state initiatives were implemented to promote and develop traditions, values, and culture of multiculturalism.

Challenges and Opportunities

Regarding the 30-year conflict and the hatred produced from it, it is a kind of taboo to talk about peace and peace education in Azerbaijani society. That, in turn, can be considered one of the biggest challenges to promoting peace education. This challenge creates additional obstacles for peace education initiatives both in formal and informal sectors.

As mentioned in the previous section, in primary and secondary schools and higher educational institutions in Azerbaijan, peace education is mostly based on “Social studies” and “Conflict studies” courses. However, to instill the values and culture of peace in countries affected by conflict it is essential to include peace education in formal studies as a program of its own. According to Asiman Gojayev (Interview with Gojayev 2022), currently schools in Azerbaijan do not organize propaganda events aimed to instigate hatred toward the “enemy”, which makes it possible to believe and hope that also informal peace education initiatives will have greater opportunities to impact children. In addition, another educational expert who was interviewed during our research and preferred to stay anonymous mentioned that this year they organized an event dedicated to peace in a secondary school. The main purpose of this small event, which was conducted by a group of pupils, was to spread the message of peace.

In our interview, peace education researcher Abbas Abbasov (Interview with Abbasov 2022) noted that by means of peace education it is possible to deactualize the history of conflict and consequently mitigate the hatred

produced from it. According to him, starting from first or second grade, children should be involved in peace education programs, since at this age it is easier to instill values and form children's mindsets with a more constructive, long-term, and sustainable position toward the conflict and to show another side of the conflict and a new perspective on it. Abbasov believes that peace education should include alternative history, which means that children should learn not only the tragedies experienced by their society but also the tragedies the other side faced during the conflict. However, since it will be difficult to teach about tragedies in primary school, according to Namig Abdullayev (Interview with Abdullayev 2022), the program can be started with human rights education. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the Local Youth Peace Camp, which was organized in 2021 in Azerbaijan by the Council of Europe. The methodology of the four-day camp program was based on non-formal human rights education, which included promotion of skills such as non-violent communication, active listening, reconciliation, and empathy. In turn, the main goal of the event was to increase participation in the promotion of peace values among young people from the regions of Azerbaijan directly affected by the conflict.

Recently, there has been a particular trend leading to the establishment of connections between informal and formal institutions. In this regard, Asiman Gojayev, Namig Abdullayev, and Bakhtiyar Aslanov said in our interviews that during the implementation of peace education projects they often collaborate with various public institutions, such as regional youth houses, schools, universities, and local stakeholders. The format of these collaborations is mostly based on recruitment of participants, provision of training facilities, and sharing of experiences. For instance, Abdullayev mentioned that while organizing the projects in the field of peace education in regions of Azerbaijan such as Agdam, Barda and Mingechevir; local stakeholders, youth centers; and colleges helped them with the recruitment of participants and provided space for the implementation of these initiatives. In turn, Aslanov noted that since the education component is very strong in the strategy of their project, they often meet with officials and different institutions, for instance with local universities, to exchange experience, plans, and project outputs. He also believes that in near future these initiatives will be more open to the public and it will be possible to create connections with both public and private educational centers, even if this will take some time. In his opinion, after

the establishment of these ties, it will be feasible to include elective courses in universities based on their project. However, since the methodology of the “Memory and Alternative History in Azerbaijan” dialogue project is very convoluted and the collected stories are very traumatic, for now it cannot be implemented in primary and secondary schools.

Another challenge mentioned during interviews was the lack of expertise in the peace education field. Consequently, one of the main reasons for a relatively small number of local peace education programs and initiatives is the lack of peace education experts. According to Aslanov:

[E]ven though Azerbaijan is a conflict-affected country, we do not have enough experts or organizations who could assist in creation of such programs, so there is a certain need to increase the numbers of peace education experts, researchers or think tanks, which will be focused on this topic.

Moreover, the important research produced by Anar Valiyev (Interview with Valiyev 2022) in his study of various peace education models implemented in universities around the world has not received enough attention and was not used for universities in Azerbaijan. Still, it is essential to encourage these kinds of research projects and initiatives and to apply their results locally.

Peace education initiatives should be aimed not only at children but also teachers since they are able to promote peace values among their students. In our interview (2022), Abbas Abbasov highlighted that along with peace education itself, it is important that teachers in primary and secondary schools undergo special training. Such trainings can be part of professional solidarity cooperation. For instance, in 2016 the conference entitled “Strengthening the capacity of teacher trade unions to contribute to the promotion of education as a tool for creating friendly, tolerant and peaceful education environments” organized by the European Trade Union Committee for Education in cooperation with its member organization in Azerbaijan, the Independent Trade Union of Education Workers of the Azerbaijan Republic in Azerbaijan, addressed issues related to conflict resolution and the promotion of peace education, as well as the values of peace, tolerance, nonviolence, and respect.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Our research explored the formal and informal peace education programs and their interlinkages in Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the challenges and opportunities for peace education in both countries. Some peace education programs exist both in Armenia and Azerbaijan, although in various forms and using different methodologies. However, they have not been widely promoted in both countries due to dominant nationalistic discourses and policies that have considered peace education a sign of weakness and a threat to national security. Moreover, the issue of 'trust' is a great challenge to promoting peace education programs. Our interlocutors brought up several suggestions on how to improve the programs and described the importance of establishing connections between existing practices among Armenian and Azerbaijani experts. In this section, we develop recommendations based on the suggestions that emerged from the interviews as well as from our analysis of peace education practices in Finland and Bosnia-Herzegovina. These recommendations are addressed to international donors, local and international CSOs experts in education and peacebuilding, and policymakers. Our main recommendations to improve the field of peace education in Armenia and Azerbaijan are the following:

- **Conflict-sensitive and context-specific approach.** International donors and NGOs should be cautious and not to bring ready-made examples from other countries but carefully consider the elements of peace education principles in other countries and their relevance to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict context, together with the local partners, so as to make sure these approaches are context-specific and conflict-sensitive. In this regard, it is also very important to ensure that the peace education programs are developed by local NGOs, as they have better chance at introducing such sensitive topics to their constituencies.
- **Long-term support and engagement.** For the peace education programs to be sustainable, the donors should engage in long-term projects which in addition to regular monitoring and evaluation would include continuous feedback from teachers, pupils, and parents to continuously improve their work with local beneficiaries over the years.

- **Conducting a pre-assessment.** A pre-assessment should be conducted in order to identify children's needs and assess their readiness for the planned peace education program. Only then, based on local needs and perspectives, the peace education program can be created. This pre-assessment can be done, for example, through pilot projects as part of some summer schools, which could include trips for local children to travel to other conflict-affected areas, where they can meet communities affected by another conflict. The documented results from summer schools could form a basis for the pre-assessment.
- **Adopting a holistic approach.** Peace education should be included in every subject of curricula. Therefore, some textbooks, methodology, and pedagogical approaches need to be modified according to the intended program.
- **Adopting an inclusive approach.** Personnel who will be directly involved in the program should also include people with a background in peace education or peacebuilding, as well as representatives from conflict-affected communities. It will help to make the process of peace education more inclusive and take into account different perspectives, including from those who were directly affected by the conflict.
- **Creating interlinkage with human rights.** Since human rights are one of the pillars for peace and sustainability, the peace education program can be based on education in human rights, which will help to promote friendship, mutual understanding, tolerance, and non-violence. The program should include both theoretical and practical inputs. Accordingly, the topics related to the culture of peace, theories of peace, and conflict resolution practices need to be part of the human rights education curricula. Thus, the school program for younger age children can be based on non-formal education methodology helping to answer a general question such as "How to solve the conflict between people?" In higher grades, pupils could start analyzing more complicated cases, including the Karabakh issue.
- **Promoting cooperation and exchange between the formal education institutions and the NGOs specialized in education** (i.e., linkages between formal and non-formal education programs). As mentioned above, there is a lot of information and

knowledge about peace education in the non-formal field (mainly developed by NGOs), which is not synchronized with and does not reach formal education. Building bridges to connect non-formal and formal education is important so that the knowledge of non-formal education can be institutionalized.

- For the NGOs developing peace educational programs, **involving the teachers and the relevant official institutions** (such as Ministry of Education and agencies affiliated to the Ministry) starting from the initial phase is crucial so as to develop a program in cooperation with state institutions. In this way, there will be greater likelihood that the program is accepted and implemented, and so will make its way into the formal curriculum or at least influence educational policies.
- **Promoting exchange of peace educational practices** among professionals from Armenia and Azerbaijan. In both countries, there is a lack of understanding and information about various peace education initiatives on the other side of the conflict. Opening channels to exchange practices would fill this gap and inform relevant parties about the efforts made in this direction on both sides of the conflict divide. The positive examples of colleagues from 'the other side' would motivate professionals working in peace education.
- **Developing peace educational programs within the South Caucasus region.** In this regard, practices of peace education in Georgia could be also studied and linked to the existing practices in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Cross-border initiatives would foster regional cooperation, contribute to restoring trust between the conflicting parties and, consequently, make those programs more acceptable to the wider public.

To conclude, the three-decade rivalry between Armenia and Azerbaijan and hatred produced by it create challenges for the implementation of both formal and informal peace education programs. In turn, collective trauma is one reason for the distrust and reluctance of the population to create good neighborly relations. In addition, the dominance of nationalist discourses throughout the decades of the conflict has not allowed people to be fully inculcated the values of peace and tolerance—on the contrary, these discourses have instilled certain reflexes regarding the 'enemy' and

its 'threats.' Despite the frequent escalations of the military conflict at the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and uncertain prospects for peace in the South Caucasus region, the currently regular meetings between the officials of the two countries, as well as the creation of liaison groups between Armenian and Azerbaijani expert communities offer hope that there is a space for dialogue that can pave the way for conflict transformation. In this context, peace education initiatives and programs can play an important role in promoting mutual acceptance, understanding, and non-violent communication. We believe that the increase and promotion of peace education initiatives and their inclusion in school curricula will help educate a new generation with peace values and break the vicious circle of ethnocentric hatred and violence between Armenian and Azerbaijani societies.

Bibliography

- Agarwal, Anjna. 2014. "Human rights awareness among the people of Agra city: a comparative study." *Journal of Culture, Society and Development* 3: 36-42.
- Agarwal, Anjna. 2014. "Human rights awareness among the people of Agra city: a comparative study." *Journal of Culture, Society and Development* 3: 36-42.
- Ajazi, Ina. 2019. "Toward better - on Armenia's education reform journey." *World Bank blogs*, July 8, 2019. Accessed May 2, 2021. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/toward-better-armenias-education-reform-journey>
- Avery, Patricia, Freeman, C., Greenwalt, K. and Trout, M. 2006. "The 'deliberating in a democracy project.'" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, April 10, 2016.
- Babayev, Azer, and HansJoachim Spanger. 2020. "A way out for Nagorno-Karabakh: autonomy, secession – or what else?" In *The Nagorno-Karabakh deadlock*, edited by Azer Babayev, Bruno Schoch, and Hans-Joachim Spanger, 277-320. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Bajaj, Monisha, and Belinda Chiu. 2009. "Education for Sustainable Development as Peace Education." *Peace and Change* 34, no. 4: 441-455.

- Bar-Tal, Daniel. 2002. "The elusive nature of peace education." In *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world*, edited by Gavriel Salomon and Baruch Nevo, 27-36. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Batton, Jennifer. 2019. *Armenia's Peace and Conflict Resolution in Schools Program*. Peace Education Case Studies. GPPAC and WFD. Accessed June 12, 2021. https://gppac.net/files/2019-08/PEWG%20Armenia%20Case%20Study_July%202019.pdf
- Bayramov, Shahin. 2017. "Multiculturalism: higher education approach and Azerbaijani case." *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 1: 66-71.
- Brooks, Caroline, and Basma Hajir. 2020. *Peace education in formal schools: what is important and how can it be done?* International Alert, British Council. Accessed March 4, 2021. <https://www.international-alert.org/publications/peace-education-formal-schools-why-is-it-important-and-how-can-it-be-done/>
- Carson, Terry, and Elizabeth A. Lange. 1997. "Peace education in social studies." In *Trends and issues in Canadian social studies*, edited by Ian Wright and Alan Sears, 208-227. Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press.
- Clarke-Habibi, Sara. 2019. A Mapping of Educational Initiatives for Intercultural Dialogue, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation among Young People in the Western Balkans 6. UNICEF and Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).
- Coleman, Peter T. 2003. "Characteristics of protracted, intractable conflict: Toward the development of a metaframework-I." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 9, no. 1: 1-37.
- Danesh, Hossain B. 2008. "The Education for Peace integrative curriculum: concepts, contents and efficacy." *Journal of Peace Education* 5, no. 2: 157-173.
- Demos Helsinki, 2021. "Finnish education system: a success story rooted in humility." *Demos Helsinki*, June 9, 2021. Accessed April 10, 2021. <https://demoshelsinki.fi/2021/06/09/finnish-education-humble-governance/>

- Deutsch, Morton. 1973. *The resolution of conflict: constructive and destructive processes*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Emkic, Eleonora. 2018. *Reconciliation and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Heidelberg: Springer.
- ESCS. 2022a. "Vahram Dumanyan receives Ambassador of Finland to Armenia Kirsti Narinen." *The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia*. April 25, 2022. Accessed May 11, 2022. <https://escs.am/en/news/12328>
- ESCS. 2022b. "«Միայն շարունակական համբերությամբ ու հետևողականությամբ ձեր՝ արդեն իսկ դրած հիմքով կհասնենք մեր ակնկալած արդյունքին» Ժ. Անդրեասյան." [Only with persistent patience and consistency, with a basis laid by you, we will achieve the expected outcomes] *The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia*, June 27, 2022. Accessed July 8, 2022. https://escs.am/am/news/13061?fbclid=IwAR2t7ID5VUohxJhixUtVMbRO7TSb8BYWVKnLW9n1s_4fZs1bOsVfitDTTNU
- Fountain, Susan. 1999. *Peace Education in UNICEF*. Working Paper Education Section Programme Division UNICEF. Accessed October 12, 2020. https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/UNICEF_Peace_Education_1999_en_0.pdf
- Galtung, Johan. 2001. "After violence, reconstruction, reconciliation and resolution." In *Reconciliation, justice and coexistence: Theory and practice*, edited by Mohammed Abu-Nimer, 3-23. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Gamaghelyan, Philip, and Sergey Rummyantsev. 2021. "The road to the Second Karabakh War: the role of ethno-centric narratives in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict." *Caucasus Survey* 9, no. 3: 320-336.
- Harris, Ian. 2002. "Conceptual underpinnings of peace education." In *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world*, edited by Gavriel Salomon and Baruch Nevo, 15-25. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum .
- Harris, Ian. 2009. "Peace education: Definition, approaches, and future directions." *Peace, Literature and Art*, vol. 1, edited by Ada Aharoni, 77-96. UNESCO-EOLSS.

- Harris, Ian M., and Mary L. Morrison. 2013. *Peace education*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland.
- Jenkins Tony. 2019. "Comprehensive Peace Education." In *Encyclopedia of Teacher Education*, edited by M. Peters, 1-6. Singapore: Springer.
- Johnson, David W., and Roger T. Johnson. 1995. *Creative controversy: intellectual challenge in the classroom*. Edina, Minn.: Interaction Book Company.
- Johnson, David W., and Roger T. Johnson. 2005. "This Issue: Peace Education." *Theory Into Practice* 44, no. 4: 275-279.
- Johnson, David W., and Roger T., Johnson. 2006. "Peace education for consensual peace: the essential role of conflict resolution." *Journal of Peace Education* 3, no 2: 147-174.
- Niittymäki, Hanna. 2014. "Rauha palaa! - Ainakin peruskoulun opetussuunitelmaan" [Peace returns! - At least for the elementary school curriculum]. *Rauhanpuolustajat* no. 2. Accessed August 18, 2020. https://rauhanpuolustajat.org/rapu-artikkeli/rauha_palaa_ainakin_peruskoulun_opetussuunnitelmaa_n/.
- Montessori, Maria. 1959. *The absorbent mind*. New York: Dell Pub. Co.
- Pakkasvirta, Jussi, and Elisa Tarnaala. 2018. "When Equality Produced Quality Development: Reforms and Change in Finnish Educational System." *Journal of Education and Human Development* March 7, no. 1: 125-134.
- Palandjian, Garine. 2013. *Educating Peace: A Case Study of Peace Education Curricula in Armenia*. IREX Scholar Research Brief.
- Pasalic, Adila K. 2008. "The War and Post-war Impact on the Educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *International Review on Education* 54, no. 3-4: 353-374.
- Rahula, Walpola. 2003. "The social teachings of the Buddha." In *Liberating faith: Religious voices for justice, peace, and ecological wisdom*, edited by Roger S. Gottlieb, 145-149. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Reardon, Betty A. 1988. *Comprehensive peace education: Educating for global responsibility*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Reardon, Betty A. 2000. "Peace education: a review and projection." In *Routledge international companion to education*, edited by B. Moon, S. Brown and M. Ben-Peretz, 397-425. London-New York: Routledge.
- Saleniece, Ilze. 2018. *Global citizenship education in Europe: How much do we care?* CONCORD Europe. Accessed April 10, 2021. https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CONCORD_GCE_FundingReport_2018_online.pdf
- Salomon, Gavriel. 2002. "The nature of peace education: Not all programs are created equal." In *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world*, edited by Gavriel Salomon and Baruch Nevo, 3-13. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Salomon, Gavriel. 2009. "Peace education: Its nature, nurture and the challenges it faces." *Handbook on building cultures of peace*, edited by Joseph Rivera, 107-121. New York: Springer.
- Sargsyan, L. et al., 2010. "Diversity and tolerance". *Manual for master-teachers of secondary school 5th-9th grades*. Yerevan: Asoghik.
- Stavrevska, Elena B., and Sarah. Smith. 2020. "Intersectionality and peace." *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*, edited by Oliver Richmond and Gëzim Visoka, 1-8. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Torsti, Pilvi. 2003. "Divergent stories, convergent attitudes: Study on the presence of history, history textbooks, and the thinking of youth in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina." PhD diss., University of Helsinki.
- UNESCO. 1998. *Transdisciplinary project: Towards a culture of peace. Donors' information meeting: project summaries*. CAB.98/WS/06 REV. December 4, 1998. Accessed November 18, 2020. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114692>.
- Vriens, Lennart. 1999. "Children, war, and peace: a review of fifty years of research from the perspective of a balanced concept of peace education." In *How children understand war and peace: A call for international peace education*, edited by Amiram Raviv, Louis Oppenheimer, and Daniel. Bar-Tal, 27-58. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Re-Introducing Water to the Armenia-Azerbaijan Agenda: Prospects for Transboundary Water Cooperation in the Post-2020 Peace Processes¹

Sofya Manukyan, Heydar Isayev

While negotiations are progressing between Armenia and Azerbaijan as a result of different mediation attempts following the 2020 war and even bilateral communication has been launched at the level of the military and foreign ministers of the two countries, the very important issue of water management remains left out of the discussions. Different communities in Armenia, Azerbaijan, as well as Nagorno-Karabakh have been experiencing difficulties with access to water for drinking and irrigation, which are problems now further complicated in the aftermath of the war. This paper looks at water-related problems, possible solutions drawing on cases in other regions, and prospects for transboundary water management between Armenia and Azerbaijan involving the water specialists of the two countries.

Introduction

The November 9, 2020 ceasefire agreement signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia ended the 2020 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and also laid the foundation for negotiations to resolve multiple humanitarian issues stemming from the war and the decades-long conflict in general. The return of Armenian and

¹ This article was written before September 2022.

Azerbaijani displaced populations to their homes, the exchange of prisoners of war, the return of the bodies of dead military servicemen, and the unblocking of economically important transport routes were some of the points of that agreement. While some of them are still far from being accomplished, there is indeed notable progress in the sense that there are at least negotiations taking place between Armenia and Azerbaijan considering the years of clashes and the prolonged absence of communication (Isayev, Kucera, and Mejlumyan 2022).

However, there is one issue, no less important than other points of the agreement, that has been omitted from official discourse. That is the issue of transboundary waters and the need for cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This is important considering that civilian populations in Nagorno-Karabakh (Mnatsakanyan 2021), as well as rural Armenia (1lurer.am 2021) and central Azerbaijan (Eurasianet 2020), have been suffering from the decline in drinking and irrigation water in recent years. Even though there have been follow-up meetings, statements, and trilateral working groups (Kucera 2021) for addressing the shortcomings of the November 9 statement regarding a variety of issues including border delimitation, mine clearance, and the construction of regional transport routes, the basic necessity of human life, water—which is also dubbed by some (Kuyumjian 2021) as one of the reasons for the war—was left out of the discussions.

The Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh in particular has been experiencing trouble with access to drinking water in the aftermath of the 2020 war, given that Azerbaijan took control of large territories including the majority of dams and hydropower plants in the region. At the same time, people in central Azerbaijan, who have been suffering from decreasing water in the Kura River for the last couple of years, have not seen an improvement in water supply despite of retaking the dams. Also, Azerbaijan has long been complaining about polluted transboundary rivers crossing from Armenia to Azerbaijan (Mehdiyev 2021). Therefore, there needs to be cooperation to identify the scale of the problems and what can be done to resolve the water-related issues. However, there is no norm or treaty regulating water flows between the three countries of the South Caucasus. While Azerbaijan and Georgia have started working (UNECE 2014) in that direction by drafting an agreement, Armenia and

Azerbaijan have not even discussed the possibility of it, although the climate crisis is increasingly imposing such an agenda.

Despite the end of the 2020 war and steps toward a peace agreement, the prospects for cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan seem to be hindered by traumas and hostility between people, even if it is for such an important issue as water. On the other hand, as our study shows, there are specialists, water experts, who could readily start a narrow-specialized professional process. In this way, they can not only solve water-related problems in the region in response to a much bigger challenge, the climate crisis, but also pave a way toward reducing hostility and preparing the ground for other types of cooperation. For this article, we have interviewed experts in water management from Armenia and Azerbaijan. We tried to understand the possibilities for starting such cooperation and which exact transboundary water issues cooperation could help solve.

Considering that transboundary water problems have been common in other regions of the world as well, including in countries with conflicts, we also look at some cases to bring a more global perspective to our regional problems. Combining regional and global experiences in our article, we provide recommendations that we hope will reach the decision-makers in and beyond our region. Thus, our article covers the issues of domestic water (mis)management, the past and future of regional water cooperation, and global experiences of transboundary cooperation in the context of conflict. It concludes by summarizing the recommendations of experts for regional cooperation in the South Caucasus.

Environmental Peacebuilding Cases from the World

Cooperation on environmental issues between countries with a mutual history of conflict, known otherwise as environmental peacebuilding, is a broad and growing field of research and practice. The scope of environmental peacebuilding varies from efforts to prevent or mediate environment-related conflicts to managing natural resources as part of peacebuilding processes and integrating climate change concerns into peacebuilding (Ide 2020). Water is among the top environmental peacebuilding priorities due to its cross-border nature, on which peace processes usually concentrate, although other issues such as nature conservation can also create a platform for cooperation.

With the advantages of environmental peacebuilding, however, also come various drawbacks. In view of the climate crisis, environmental peacebuilding can lead merely to coordinated resource exploitation, as was the case in Aral Sea basin (Ide 2020). While this international water cooperation aimed at promoting peaceful relations among the basin countries, the over-extraction of water from transboundary rivers feeding the Aral Sea for water-intensive cotton cultivation, for example, resulted in its partial dry-up. Therefore, long-term environmental peacebuilding initiatives have to consider climate change and in no way concentrate solely on peace at any cost. Otherwise, it will tend only toward short-term peacebuilding.

Even after 30 years of independence, countries in Central Asia have not solved their border delimitation and demarcation issues and therefore territorial disputes often prevent them from wider cooperation (Baisalov 2021). The latest clash over water distribution in the region in 2021 between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was caused by disputed sections on the border between the two countries. Therefore, mismanagement of transboundary rivers (such as major transboundary rivers like Syr Darya, Amu Darya, and some of their tributaries) and border conflicts in the region are mutually conducive.

The year 2021 turned out to be specifically dry for Central Asia. One of the two upstream countries, Kyrgyzstan, had to struggle with at least three challenges: providing water for irrigation to its farmers, collecting enough water in reservoirs for the operation of hydropower plants to produce electricity, and leaving enough water in rivers (especially the River Naryn) for use by downstream countries (Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan). Kyrgyzstan addressed one of the challenges by releasing enough water for its downstream neighbors in return for electricity (Pannier 2021). While in terms of conflict prevention this can be considered a positive occurrence, for many Kyrgyzstanis this is as well an unpopular and even an undemocratic step, considering that farmers in Kyrgyzstan themselves suffered from lack of irrigation water (Kopytin 2021). Moreover, the public seemed to be unaware of the amount of water released to neighboring countries, receiving news of this only when Kazakhstan's prime minister thanked Kyrgyzstan for its generosity. Additionally, even though Kyrgyzstan received electricity in return, it has paid for it (Pannier 2021).

Apart from Kyrgyzstan, climate change is impacting Tajikistan as another upstream country in the region. Some of the major rivers in both Tajikistan (the Vakhsh river; UNDP 2012) and Kyrgyzstan (the Naryn river; Stagni et al. 2011) are fed by glaciers that are melting due to climate change. Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Energy has announced that in the past several years, more water has flown out rather than into the country's largest Toktogul reservoir and that every year there is a gradual decrease in water level in the reservoir by about 1.5-1.8 billion c/m (Pannier 2021). And yet, both countries look forward to constructing more dams for hydropower. This can be not only economically unsustainable but also a potential source of conflict with neighbors. This case demonstrates that any short-term solution to environmental problems, especially of a transboundary character, is only a form of short-term prevention of political crisis and conflicts among countries. Environmental cooperation and peacebuilding have to take into account the current global and local climate challenges.

India and Pakistan represent another region with conflicts over water distribution problems. Their territorial dispute is over the Kashmir and Jammu regions, through which the Indus, Chenab, and Jhelum rivers pass while flowing into the fertile lands in northern India and eastern Pakistan (Snedden 2019). In addition to the problem with the management of these transboundary rivers, India and Pakistan both depend on Himalayan glaciers which are, in turn, shrinking due to climate change, thus threatening the long-term water security of the communities and the Indus Waters Treaty. The latter was signed in 1960 between India and Pakistan, fixing and delimiting the rights and obligations of both countries concerning the use of waters of the Indus River system. Despite the treaty, several challenges in this region threaten not only environmental-socio-economic situation of the locals but the fragile stability in the region (Climate Diplomacy n.d.). In addition to the melting Himalayan glaciers, overextraction and declining groundwater resources are other major challenges in the Indus Basin. Agriculture in both Pakistan and Northern India heavily depends on these sources. Moreover, India is interested in building more dams, which is not supported by Pakistan (Climate Diplomacy n.d.). Overall, this treaty has shortcomings. For example, it was drafted at a time when climate change was not considered and includes provisions only for surface but not ground water.

However, the regular meetings of the Permanent Indus Commission, a bilateral commission created to implement the Indus Waters Treaty, have allowed for solutions to water disputes and the avoidance of water wars in the past via legal procedures provided within the framework of the treaty (Express News Service 2022). While the sides continue blaming each other and presenting the other side as the root of such problems as floods due to water mismanagement (Climate Diplomacy n.d.), in its 118th meeting in spring of 2022 the Permanent Indus Commission, for example, agreed to implement inspections as well as to share flood information in advance.

The aforementioned examples, and in general the literature on other cases of transboundary management of water resources especially in conflict regions, demonstrate that environmental peacebuilding can be a tool in the hands of politicians and diplomats for manipulations and disputes. And yet water can and has helped pave the way for cooperation even between hostile states. Therefore, we believe that the negotiating of a water treaty could be a good start for collaboration between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Expert Opinions on Water Management in Armenia and Azerbaijan and Prospects for Cooperation

Management of the water sector is a real problem for both Armenia and Azerbaijan due to factors such as state bureaucracy and political unwillingness to recognize environmental protection as a priority issue. Regional or transboundary cooperation for better water management seems to be a challenging task for the bureaucratic institutions of both countries, primarily because of the recent escalation of the conflict between them in 2020. And yet, cooperation was possible in past decades. Experts interviewed for this article elaborate on past experiences and post-2020 prospects. To start with, we present below a general overview of some of the problems with water management in each country as highlighted by experts.

Expert Views on Domestic Water Mismanagement

One of the water management problems Armenian experts mention is the inadequate use of water from rivers as well as from Lake Sevan. Lusine Taslakyan, a water management expert and doctoral research assistant in

the Department of Soil and Water Systems at the University of Idaho in the USA, mentioned in our interview that although the war in 2020 resulted in the loss of some streams near the borders, state bodies should pay more attention to the usage of water sources in Armenia. Taslakyan comments:

We don't take care of what we have. Since water is not equally distributed in Armenia both spatially and seasonally, the need for reservoir construction was highlighted and prioritized by the National Water Program adopted in 2006. Currently, the per capita storage capacity is about 450 cubic meters, which is very low for a semiarid country and is less than 20 percent of the storage capacity of Azerbaijan and Turkey. Yet despite this priority, few actual steps were taken. We need to put more efforts for saving resources within our borders and for better management. Meanwhile, there is also decrease in river flow from Turkey, since they continue dam construction, including on the River Kars which flows to the Akhuryan dam which both countries use 50-50% according to agreements between the USSR and Turkey (1927 and 1973). (Interview with Taslakyan 2022)

Additionally, Taslakyan highlighted the mismanagement of Lake Sevan, since wastewaters flow to Sevan untreated, although for years funds have been allocated to solve the problem. She also mentioned the depletion of groundwater sources in the Ararat valley as a result of the overuse of water by fish farms there. Another expert, the hydrologist Benjamin Zakaryan, pointed in particular to the problem of unsustainable water use in Armenia by fish farms. He also noted that the transboundary water problem is not limited to Armenia and Azerbaijan as Turkey is actively constructing dams that threaten the Akhuryan reservoir jointly used by Armenia and Turkey and harming the flow of the Araks River.

In Azerbaijan, as Jeanene Mitchell, an international development and area studies expert in the South Caucasus and Turkey, highlights, there are also problems of mismanagement on the institutional level, as well as a clash of interests of various stakeholders, especially in dam management resulted from lack of cooperation among state agencies. As an example, she mentions a contradiction between the state energy company Azerenergy, which has incentive to keep the water in the dams very high

to generate electricity, and the state water supply company Azersu, which has the mandate to provide drinking water to the local populations and to continue developing the corresponding infrastructure. Therefore, Mitchell notes that while Azerenergy tries to keep the water in reservoirs to build hydropower, it is in Azersu's best interest to take that water from reservoirs to people and businesses. In addition, she points out that another actor, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, urges other stakeholders to keep the water levels low at reservoirs not to let flooding happen. In 2010, floods occurred at the confluence of the Kura and Aras, exposing the lack of coordination and cooperation among these state entities (RFE/RL 2010).

As Mitchell says, a problematic outcome of this non-cooperation is the absence of data sharing between relevant ministries involved in water management. She believes that if authorities and scientists cannot organize the process at the domestic level, it is even harder to do so at the transboundary level. The transboundary complications combined with the already strained domestic situation intensify the problems further. Mitchell is also concerned about the problems of water pollution, waste, and drought in Azerbaijan. For example, she mentioned that over 50% of irrigation water is lost due to evaporation and leaks.

Expert Experiences from Pre-2020 Transboundary Cooperation

Cooperation between Armenia, Azerbaijan and other countries of the Kura-Araks river basin, specifically Georgia, was not uncommon prior to the war in 2020. Speaking of such cooperation experience in the past, Lusine Taslakyan mentions different projects related to transboundary water management in the Kura-Araks basin and joint monitoring there. For example, the EU-funded transboundary river management project supported this activity in the past. It allowed for specialists from the three countries to take water samples, analyze them in their national laboratories, and verify the results. Such joint projects allowed for an understanding of where the pollution sources of transboundary rivers were. This prevented reciprocal blaming.

Taslakyan notes the gradual deterioration in communication between the two countries in the coming years:

In 2004, I was working in the USAID project Water Management in the South Caucasus. We used to work in an office where there was a landline phone. With that phone we could directly call our colleagues in Baku. Now, this is unimaginable. The relations between the two countries aggravated through time. Already after 2011, a meeting was held in Tbilisi within a UNDP project in which, apart from project experts, government representatives were present too. During that meeting the representative of their [Azerbaijan's] Ministry of Nature Protection started complaining about our maps and that Nagorno-Karabakh was visible on that map. They were also complaining that they had no access to carry out water monitoring in those territories. I don't understand when that shift took place and things changed. But initially it wasn't like that. Within our projects we were trying to speak strictly on subjects related to our specializations—nothing about the conflict.

Taslakyan is especially skeptical about the post-2020 situation: “Now I am afraid that after this shift of attitude and especially after this [2020] war, I don't imagine any relations considering the current tension.”

Shahana Bilalova—PhD fellow in the NEWAVE project and member of the research group Governance, Participation, and Sustainability at Leuphana University—has noticed that since November 2020 there has been no proper communication on water management topics even between Georgia and Azerbaijan, not to mention Armenia and Azerbaijan. But she hopes that especially after the signing of the peace agreement, there will be more peacebuilding efforts and eventually a better political atmosphere for water management between the two sides will emerge.

Jeanene Mitchell, who directed stakeholder engagement for a UNDP-Global Environment Facility water project in the Kura River Basin of Azerbaijan and Georgia, remembers the times when Armenian and Azerbaijani water specialists sat together at transboundary project events. Recalling their interactions, Mitchell concludes that there was actually a basis for cooperation, at least on the human level. In this regard, she suggests: “Part of that came from the fact that many of them, at least in the former generation, personally knew each other. They spoke the same language in the context of water.”

Mitchell points to the situation of low trust between Armenia and Azerbaijan, especially in the post-2020 period, when a lot of water resources and infrastructure of disputed Nagorno-Karabakh ended up under Azerbaijani control. She remembers that there was some conversation that mutual trust would increase if there was an exchange of water for energy, as was happening in Central Asia, and there are many local level contexts where she thinks there would be potential for cooperation and confidence building. Nevertheless, she sees “a highly securitized approach to management of the returned territories” due to the low level of trust.

Another expert in Water Resources Management, Vahagn Tonoyan, mentions that mediated meetings in the past decades faced obstacles for political reasons but accomplished successes as a result of technical cooperation. Such success stories include: tripartite monitoring of water quality (Georgia included) with exchange of data among all participants; participation in inter-laboratory analyses and joint discussion of the results; vulnerability assessment of water resources in the Aghstev river basin in the context of climate change, etc. As Tonoyan sees the situation, “despite the willingness on the Armenian side to expand cooperation, the Azerbaijani side avoided direct (non-mediated) and more comprehensive cooperation due to political reasons.” After the war in 2020, not even mediated cooperation has taken place, though this was also due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

Another expert who spoke of past experiences of cooperation is Rovshan Abbasov, leading specialist at a UN Water governance project in Azerbaijan, representative of the Global Alliance for Pollution and Health in Azerbaijan, and head of the water group at a state program on ecosystems assessment. Abbasov believes that transboundary water cooperation projects should not only be management projects but also scientific. He is certain that such projects in the past should have produced not only reports but also a positive physical change in terms of water abundance and ecosystem. Expressing readiness for getting involved in such scientific cooperation, Abbasov acknowledges the previous efforts of Armenian authors who conducted extensive research on the pollution of such transboundary rivers as Voghji/Oxchu and Vorotan/Bazar. Abbasov emphasized the value of these rivers, especially for the populations of

goldfish and sturgeon, which in case of joint efforts might increase once again throughout the area.

Expert Opinions on Post-2020 Water Cooperation Prospects

The war between the two countries in 2020 has complicated the prospects for cooperation on any issue. However, the vitality of water and the challenges posed to people's everyday lives by water mismanagement as well as by climate change push for more flexibility and readiness to tackle transboundary water issues. Despite experts' differing views on the mode of cooperation--whether it should be on the community, government, or other level, or whether it should involve legal or other mediums—the need for cooperation itself is hardly excluded.

According to Taslakyan, there are already some water management tools that could be beneficial not only within Armenia but also for regional cooperation. For example, ratifying the Water and Health Protocol under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and Lakes by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE Water Convention), even without signing the convention, would allow the funding of projects related to the quality and supply of drinking and irrigation water. Meanwhile, its ratification would also allow for regional cooperation and dialogue. Recognizing the important role of international organizations in transboundary water management projects, Taslakyan advocates for collaboration mediated by international actors on such issues as access to cross-border river basins and monitoring water quality and quantity of the rivers that flow across the borders. Such joint monitoring should be organized outside of the political context. The role of international organizations in mediating this process is thus important. For many years, USAID, UNDP/GEF, EU, and SIDA mediated and coordinated dialogue on this issue between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The idea was that states would then continue this process on their own. But it did not happen, as donor support was not sufficiently sustainable. According to Taslakyan, "The 2020 war was to some extent war for water, but good management of water could also be the joint goal and ground for dialogue."

Mitchell sees the necessity for Azerbaijan of cooperation as a downstream country, also considering the additional problems it has with floods that need to be dealt with. Thus, she argues that information exchange between

upstream and downstream countries is extremely important from a water management perspective as well as from a human safety perspective. She points out that hydrological data exchange is an issue that is easier to start with when it comes to launching transboundary cooperation and concluding corresponding agreements. The expert also mentions that the contribution of a downstream country to the upstream country in return for water should also be considered in this process. As an example, Mitchell recalls the case of Central Asia where downstream countries provided the upstream ones with energy in exchange for water. Another idea proposed by Mitchell is to implement some sort of pilot project for border communities, from which some community or group of communities would benefit. This can be arranged in the form of cooperative management of water resources, for example, on water exchange between farmers in Tovuz and Tavush regions.

However, Shahana Bilalova notes that the war happened very recently and people still have emotionally difficult memories of hostility: “even though experts say that the transboundary water management should start at the local governance level, it is always better to involve neutral actors, so that they would moderate the process.” She believes “it is risky to put together the local communities of the two countries and make them discuss water issues, although it could work with proper moderation.” Bilalova mentions the contexts of India-Pakistan and Israel-Palestine conflicts as examples. The expert suggests, “mediators should be not those that are known for their sympathy towards Armenia or Azerbaijan, such as Turkey, but really neutral actors.”

Beniamin Zakaryan, however, expresses his skepticism regarding cooperation: “I don’t imagine any cooperation at this stage, not until there is an international legal tool preventing harm. We need time because now dialogue is impossible. There is the hatred of 20-30 years. So, time is necessary, as well as education before any dialogue. Now only international laws can work, if these (corresponding agreements) are signed and ratified.” Nevertheless, Vahagn Tonoyan believes that small steps could be taken in the short run and they would benefit both Armenia and Azerbaijan considering the vulnerability of regional water resources to climate change. These small steps should be such that would strengthen trust between experts, also considering priorities in water management.

Tonoyan mentions some of the tools that can be used on this path, since both countries aim at integrating their legislation and management principles with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). In this regard, both sides could work on transitioning from separate water monitoring and assessment systems to developing a joint approach based on EU WFD principles. Synchronization of environmental flow assessment methodologies is another area where hydrologists from both countries could work. Another possibility for cooperation is joint assessment of water resource vulnerability due to climate change in transboundary water basins (Aghstev, the tributaries of Kura River, Arpa, etc.) which would provide more reliable results when used with existing hydrological and meteorological data from both countries.

And yet, Tonoyan also highlights the need for wider regional cooperation considering that rivers recognize no borders and that it will hardly be enough for Armenia simply to ratify the UNECE Water Convention for the sustainable management of shared water resources (UNECE n/d). Among the countries of the Kura-Araks water basin (covering territories of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey), only Azerbaijan has signed and ratified it. Until this convention is signed by Turkey, where the Kura and Araks rivers are formed, it does not make much sense for other countries to sign it, as it will be impossible to fully use this international legal tool for regulating transboundary water cooperation. Furthermore, according to Tonoyan, currently Turkey is actively constructing dams on the Araks river basin for irrigation purposes, which will result in an estimated 56% reduction of the average annual flow in Araks transboundary river on the border with Armenia.

Rovshan Abbasov sees the ratification of the Water Convention by Azerbaijan as a sign of readiness to work together in the management of transboundary rivers. According to him, cooperation on water management is in the national interest of Azerbaijan. As a study conducted by Abbasov and his team shows, Azerbaijan will experience water stress in the near future. That is the reason why such cooperation is pivotal for the country. He also highlights that Georgia and Turkey already “keep much of the water” that could come to Azerbaijan. Without the regional cooperation on water management, the situation in Azerbaijan would be much more difficult.

Our key conclusion from the summary of the expert interviews is that Armenian experts agree that a narrow specialized approach to water cooperation particularly between Armenia and Azerbaijan should be among the first steps toward the regional cooperation that need to eventually involve all five countries of the Kura-Araks river basin (including Turkey and Iran). Such cooperation can be initially focused on the monitoring of water quality and quantity of transboundary rivers or on developing joint approaches for harmonizing each other's legislations and principles with wider international documents such as the EU Water Framework Directive. Still, considering the role of Turkey as the formation area of the Kura-Aras river basin, its involvement in regional cooperation even if at later stages would be an important step towards addressing climate challenges in the region as well as for water conflict prevention. Interviews with experts from Azerbaijan also show readiness on their side for cooperation on water issues, especially at the level of experts and scientists. Moreover, such options as exchanging water for energy were suggested based on the case in Central Asia, which could be a parallel or subsequent step of cooperation taken at the diplomatic level. This can also create further incentives for both sides to get involved in the process as well as for subsequent implementation of the agreed principles.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Possible Cooperation

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have domestic problems with water management. While water management can create additional obstacles for transboundary cooperation, it can also create opportunities for improving water quality and quantity in rivers through joint monitoring which could also involve foreign companies operating in the region that have their share in impacting water quality in rivers. The potential of transboundary cooperation resulting in improving domestic management is viable.

Another important necessity is the gradual transformation of cooperation format in terms of translating technical cooperation, such as river monitoring, to legislative amendments. Gradual transformation should also include the shift from bilateral cooperation to multi-stakeholder and multi-national cooperation, i.e. from the collaboration of narrow specialists between the two countries at the initial stages to increasing the number of participating stakeholders, e.g. communities and industries, as

well as working on shifting from cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan to involving all five river basin countries.

It is worth mentioning that although water quality flowing from Armenia to Azerbaijan (directly or via Georgia) might be compromised due to industrial activities on the Armenian side, Armenia's state has hardly ever had a policy of pressuring Azerbaijan through deteriorating water quality and quantity for two obvious reasons. First, any water reaching the border goes through various communities in Armenia itself. Second, as we can conclude from Armenian experts' interviews, the policy of construction of reservoirs in Armenia for satisfying its own population's needs has never been realized to a full extent. Therefore, this aspect of water quality and quantity management could serve as a starting point for avenues for dialogue diverting from inter-state hostility.

Considering the impacts of climate change on the environment and economics but also on peace processes, one more platform for collaboration could be the joint drafting of National Adaptation Plans (NAP) to climate change. Although this process is usually led by a state itself, impacts of climate change are transboundary, thus harmonized transboundary adaptation plans between neighbor states assessing the risks and suggesting joint steps would be a form of peacebuilding (Crawford and Church 2020).

Finally, although the decrease in quality or quantity of water in transboundary rivers can be a source of further tensions and conflicts, decades-long political and military tensions have already drained societies on both sides. The transboundary character of rivers meanwhile provides a unique avenue for dialogue and cooperation, even if at initial stages only narrowly specialized experts are involved. Clearly, it will take a long time before a wider process engaging multiple stakeholders begins.

Therefore, to conclude, we propose the following possible activities around which Armenia and Azerbaijan can join efforts and gradually work together for preventing further conflicts as well as for more successfully dealing with the challenge of climate change:

- Create working groups of Armenian and Azerbaijani scientists, with the involvement of foreign experts as mediators, to study and monitor water quantity and quality in transboundary rivers. These

working groups could also work on synchronizing river flow assessment methodologies as well as on assessing the vulnerability of water resources to climate change in transboundary water basins providing more reliable results of hydrological and meteorological data to each other;

- Set up a working group for developing joint approaches in national legislation and water management principles based on the EU Water Framework Directive;
- Develop a joint design of National Adaptation Plans to deal with the regional impacts of climate change;
- Consider a pilot project of exchange water for energy (or for some other commodity) as a platform for cooperation whether in bordering rural communities of the two countries or at the inter-state level;
- Involve all other countries of the Kura-Araks river basin in the cooperation for more sustainable use of water in the region, including through international legal mechanisms, such as the UNECE Water Convention.

The list of interviewees

Abbasov, Rovshan – A leading specialist at a UN Water governance project in Azerbaijan, representative of the Global Alliance for Pollution and Health in Azerbaijan, and the head of the water group at a state program on ecosystems assessment. March 2022.

Bilalova, Shahana – PhD fellow in the NEWAVE project and member of the research group Governance, Participation, and Sustainability at Leuphana University. March 2022.

Mitchell, Jeanene – International development and area studies expert in the South Caucasus and Turkey. March 2022.

Taslakyan, Lusine – Water Management Expert and Doctoral Research Assistant in the Department of Soil and Water Systems at the University of Idaho, USA. February 2022.

Tonoyan, Vahagn – Water Resources Management Expert, MA in International Environmental Policy. February 2022.

Zakaryan, Beniamin – Hydrologist, PhD in Geographical Sciences.
February 2022.

Bibliography

- 1lurer.am. 2021. “Ոռոգման ջրի խնդրի պատճառները մարզերում.” [Causes of irrigation water problem in the regions] June 29, 2021. Accessed August 2, 2021. <https://www.1lurer.am/hy/2021/06/29/Ոռոգման-ջրի-խնդրի-պատճառները-մարզերում/506341>
- Baisalov, Ermek. 2021. “Territorial disputes in Central Asia on the threshold of the 30th anniversary of independence.” *Cabar.asia*. May 31, 2021. Accessed August 4, 2021. <https://cabar.asia/en/territorial-disputes-in-central-asia-on-the-threshold-of-the-30th-anniversary-of-independence>
- Crawford, Alec, and Clare Church. 2020. *The NAP Process and Peacebuilding*. Brifieng Note, NAP Global Network. February 2020. Accessed April 8, 2021. <https://napglobalnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/napgn-en-2020-the-nap-process-and-peacebuilding.pdf>
- Climate Diplomacy. n.d. *Water conflict and cooperation between India and Pakistan*. Accessed March 11, 2021. <https://climate-diplomacy.org/case-studies/water-conflict-and-cooperation-between-india-and-pakistan>
- Eurasianet. 2020. “Azerbaijan faces growing water shortage.” *Eurasianet.org*. August 21, 2020. Accessed December 5, 2020. <https://eurasianet.org/azerbaijan-faces-growing-water-shortage>
- Express News Service. 2022. “India, Pakistan discuss river water issues at Permanent Indus Commission meeting.” *The Indian Express*. June 1, 2022. Accessed September 7, 2022. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-pakistan-news-discuss-river-water-issues-at-permanent-indus-commission-meeting-ministry-of-external-affairs-7946216/>
- Ide, Tobias. 2020. “The dark side of environmental peacebuilding.” *World Development* 127: 104777. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104777>

- Isayev, Heydar, Joshua Kucera, and Ani Mejlumyan. 2022. "EU emerges as major player in Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations." *Eurasianet.org*. May 25, 2022. Accessed September 8, 2022. <https://eurasianet.org/eu-emerges-as-major-player-in-armenia-azerbaijan-negotiations>
- Mehdiyev, Mushvig. 2021. "Azerbaijani River Under Threat from Armenian Pollution." *Caspiannews.com*. July 8, 2021. Accessed November 25, 2020. <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/azerbaijani-river-under-threat-from-armenian-pollution-2021-7-5-9/>
- Mnatsakanyan, Gevorg. 2021. "Heatwave, drought and war leave Nagorno-Karabakh short of water." *Eurasianet.org*. September 8, 2021. Accessed February 9, 2022. <https://eurasianet.org/heatwave-drought-and-war-leave-nagorno-karabakh-short-of-water>
- Kopytin, Yuri. 2021. "Lack of irrigation water: Farmers protest in Chui region." *24.kg*. June 17, 2021. Accessed December 6, 2021. <https://24.kg/english/197983-Lack-of-irrigation-water-Farmers-protest-in-Chui-region/>
- Kucera, Joshua. 2021. "Leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan meet, agree to work bilaterally." *Eurasianet.org*. November 26, 2021. Accessed March 15, 2022. <https://eurasianet.org/leaders-of-armenia-azerbaijan-meet-agree-to-work-bilaterally>
- Kuyumjian, Nareg. 2021. "Perspectives | Don't water it down: The role of water security in the Armenia-Azerbaijan war." *Eurasianet.org*. December 22, 2021. Accessed April 22, 2022. <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-dont-water-it-down-the-role-of-water-security-in-the-armenia-azerbaijan-war>
- Pannier, Bruce. 2021. "Water Under the Bridge? Kyrgyzstan's Liquid Transfer to Kazakhstan Causes Controversy Amid Major Shortages." *Rferl.org*. December 11, 2021. Accessed June 8, 2022. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-kyrgyzstan-drought-water-pannier/31604634.html>
- RFE/RL. 2010. "Flooded Azerbaijani Villagers Want Dam Dismantled." *Rferl.org*. June 16, 2010. Accessed October 26, 2020.

[https://www.rferl.org/a/Flooded Azerbaijani Villagers Want Dam Dismantled/2073548.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Flooded_Azerbaijani_Villagers_Want_Dam_Dismantled/2073548.html)

Snedden, Christopher. 2019. "What Kashmir's Looming Water Crisis Means for India-Pakistan Relations. Interview for Mary Hamilton". *The National Bureau of Asian Research*. April 9, 2019. Accessed January 11, 2020. <https://www.nbr.org/publication/what-kashmirs-looming-water-crisis-means-for-india-pakistan-relations/>

Stagni, Annalisa, Giulia Franchi, Cristina Sossan, Rosaria Lembo, Marco Iob, Olexi Pasyuk, and Sylvain Angerand. 2014. "The Great Rush: European Union Responsibility in Natural Resources Grabbing." *CEE Bankwatch Network*. Accessed August 26, 2020. <https://bankwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/the-great-rush.pdf>

UNDP. 2012. *Tajikistan: Poverty in the Context of Climate Change*. National Human Development Report. Accessed July 9, 2020. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/tj/UNDP_TJK_HDR_2012_Eng.pdf

UNECE. 2014. "UNECE assists Azerbaijan and Georgia to make another step towards sustainable management of the Kura River Basin." *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe*. January 16, 2014. Accessed September 8, 2020. <https://unece.org/press/unece-assists-azerbaijan-and-georgia-make-another-step-towards-sustainable-management-kura>

UNECE. n.d. "The Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health." *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe*. Accessed September 8, 2020. <https://unece.org/environment-policy/water>

Conceiving Armenian-Azerbaijani Relations through the Lens of Cinema: From Perestroika until the Present Day

Leon Aslanov, Togrul Abbasov

Cinema has had an indelible impact on the development of national consciousness in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The narratives and codes propagated in Armenian and Azerbaijani films have often gone hand in hand with the general political discourse adopted by their respective national governments, especially when it comes to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations since the first Karabakh war to the present day. Nevertheless, there have been instances of disruptions to mainstream political narratives in certain films produced in both countries. This article sets out to outline how Armenian and Azerbaijani films have the potential to go beyond mainstream narratives and to investigate how this potential can be harnessed to impact the conflict parties. Thus, it explores possible spaces and opportunities for cooperation in the field of cinema, taking into account the continued strain in political relations between both countries and the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Introduction

As much as cinema, as an art form, began to establish itself in earnest after the 1950s, its ideological power was discovered from its very inception. As an ideologue, Lenin stated that “of all the arts, the most important for us

is the cinema” (Lenin 1934). By this, he meant that cinema had the power to spread ideology to the masses. However, the capitalist West had reached this conclusion even earlier. Hollywood’s great studios made use of mass entertainment as an ideological tool. The ideological power of films does not come from directly dictating people’s thoughts; rather, it comes from the ability to “create the illusion” that it reflects reality objectively by means of the camera. This ideological power has been an important part of nation-states’ policies to create their desired type of citizen and nation (Williams 2002).

This article uses the term “national cinema” to refer to films used as a means of social communication to disseminate certain values, ideas, and discourses that feed into a constant process of national identity construction within the political framework of the nation-state. The cases in question are the Armenian and Azerbaijani film industries in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and questions regarding national identity construction arising from it. The main aim of this study is to explore how the Armenian and Azerbaijani film industries play their respective roles in national identity construction, especially in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and to explore any possible disruptions to the production of nationally exclusive rhetoric. The purpose of this research is to gauge any possible channels through which elements of the film industries of both countries could go beyond their “national cinemas” and together produce more nuanced content to challenge the politically antagonistic representation of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations.

The formation of national cinemas in Armenia and Azerbaijan from the early Soviet period to the present day has provided ample ideological capital for the process of national identity construction in both countries. However, the period of *perestroika* in the late 1980s, the political break from the Soviet Union in 1991, and the declaration of independent nation-states represent a breaking point when it comes to the film industry as well as the process of national identity construction in both countries. This was the period in which the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict erupted and a wave of so-called “national sentiments” spread across both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The outbreak of this conflict has had a deep impact on people’s national consciousness and, thus, on their respective culture industries, which have incorporated those experiences into their productions. It is for

this reason that we focus on the period between *perestroika* and the present day.

Following this introduction, the second section of this paper provides the general theoretical approach to this study, focusing on the concept of “national cinema.” It will also provide the general context of the film industry’s transition in Armenia and Azerbaijan from the end of the Soviet Union to the post-independence period. The third section provides examples of Armenian and Azerbaijani films that touch on national identity and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including brief analyses of these films and observations from people working in the film industries in both countries. The fourth section situates the preceding sections within the framework of possible avenues for cooperation between the Armenian and Azerbaijani film industries in the hope of providing a more nuanced understanding of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations through the medium of film. The final section offers concrete recommendations geared towards the development of cooperation in this field.

Methodology and Theory

The research in this article employs a two-pronged approach of first-hand film analysis and interviews with Armenians and Azerbaijanis working in the film sector. Two Armenian and two Azerbaijani films were chosen for analysis. In keeping with the objective of this article to find “room for cooperation,” the chosen films included elements that shifted away from the strict contours of national cinema developed in both countries and towards a more nuanced understanding of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in the context of conflict. The analysis was conducted with an interpretivist approach, emphasising the (inter-)subjective presentation and the manifestation of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in these films while shying away from essentialist tropes found in much of the national cinema of both countries.

Three interviews were conducted on the Armenian side (two interviewees are currently based in Armenia and one in the diaspora) and two on the Azerbaijani side (both of whom are the directors of the films chosen for analysis). The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner that opened up the discussion to a range of topics regarding the role of film not only in the context of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict but also

in relation to national identity construction and the institutional particularities of the film industry in both countries.

The theoretical framework of this article is based on the concept of “national cinema.” The concept is itself ambiguous and open to interpretation depending on the context in which it is deployed. National cinema can be viewed in various terms: economic (how films are funded and distributed), political (how films are used to propagate certain political viewpoints, especially when geared towards the nation-building process), and socio-cultural (the effect of films on the development or degradation of critical thought among the population and the formation of cultural references). Nevertheless, national cinema intrinsically denotes the manifestation of a “unique identity” that is involved in the “production and assignation of a particular set of meanings, and the attempt to contain, or prevent the potential proliferation of other meanings” (Higson 1989, 37). Indeed, the idea of national cinema is intimately linked to the modernist ideology of nationalism, the idea of self-determination, and the political unit of the nation-state. Following the printing press and telecommunications, the medium of visual representation has played a tremendous role in diffusing ideas, mores, aesthetics, stereotypes, tropes, and all sorts of social representations within the parameters of the nation-state. This would imply that the role of such forms of social communication within nation-states is to create a homogeneous citizenry by subjecting it to visual representations that carry subliminal or overt messages conducive to forging a unique national identity over which the citizenry can bond. This is, however, simply an assimilationist approach to national cinema that is at odds with integrationist approaches (Hjort and MacKenzie 2000).

The repertoire of a national cinema is innately steeped in a certain “historical specificity” that informs its productions (Vitali and Willemsen 2006). Interpretations of this historical specificity will largely define the direction that national cinema takes—whether towards an assimilationist or integrationist path. Indeed, this will also impact representations on screen of elements introduced into films that are deemed to be ‘foreign’ or about ‘foreign’ things. This becomes an especially acute issue when such ‘foreign’ elements are represented by politically antagonistic entities, which is indeed the case when it comes to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations.

In such situations, the pathological elements of nationalism are represented to a relatively greater degree in national cinema. Such experiences across the globe of antagonistic nationalisms leading to political and military conflict, along with increasing globalisation, have encouraged the development of post-modern and transnational approaches to artistic forms, including film. Nevertheless, this has thus far not changed the contemporary political reality in which the nation and nation-state continue to be our primary frames of reference (Christie 2013). Despite the increasing interdependence between societies and the interexchange of goods, knowledge, and experiences, cultural productions are still largely funded nationally, thus they tend to tackle issues of national interest and relate to the historical and contemporary experiences of the nation. “National cinema” is thus a concept that continues to be relevant (Choi 2011) and helps guide our analysis of Armenian and Azerbaijani cinemas in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Background

The national cinemas of both Armenia and Azerbaijan trace their roots to the Soviet Union, and they developed within the contours of the Soviet nativisation policy, leaving room for the development of so-called “national themes” in film. The funding and approval of films were dictated by the state and so the content of films often reflected the political stances adopted by the state regarding the intertwined process of modernisation and nation-building. One may argue that the so-called rupture that took place in 1991 when Armenia and Azerbaijan declared independence has not eliminated the previous relations between the state and the culture industry. With nationalism at the ideological forefront of filmmaking over the past century, despite the internationalist rhetoric of the Soviet Union, there are certain motifs and values that are more readily accepted by the state and society within the framework of the nation-state, whatever political regime is in place. It is thus worth providing a short outline of the chronology of the development of the Armenian and Azerbaijani film industries in order to have a broad understanding of the current situation and environment.

Armenia

The Armenian State Committee was established in 1923, when Armenian cinema was “officially” born. That same year, the film studio Armenkino was established, later renamed Armenfilm, also known as Hayfilm. Films in the 1920s and '30s largely touched upon socio-cultural issues with elements of political satire, drama, and comedy as well. Such films were indeed part of the initial development of the aesthetic of Armenian national cinema; however, as our analysis of films belonging to that period shows, there was relatively little effort or space to directly develop themes related to a certain national consciousness during those decades. Perhaps one of, if not the first, film to touch upon so-called historical “national” topics was *Davit Bek*, shot in 1943, about the eponymous historical figure who led a rebellion in Syunik province against the Ottomans and Safavids in the early eighteenth century (Galstyan 2016).

The “Khrushchev Thaw” period in the 1950s and '60s allowed for the development of films purposefully geared towards national consciousness narratives, including films such as *We*, directed by Artavazd Peleshyan in 1969 (Galstyan 2016). This period also saw a significant role played by an Azerbaijani in the development of Armenian cinema—Sabir Rizayev. He occupied the position of Head of Screenwriting at Hayfilm from the year 1954 and served as the screenwriter for several films, including as co-screenwriter for *Called to Live* (1960), which touches on the Armenian Genocide (Agos 2020). Rizayev is known to have been one of the founders, if not the founder, of film studies in Armenia and influenced a number of Armenian film critics of his time, such as Karen Kalantar, Suren Hasmikyan, Mikayel Stamboltsyan, and Evert Payazatyan. In 1963, Rizayev wrote a piece called “Armenian Artistic Cinematography”, which is said to still influence the study of Armenian film at an academic level, even if his name and personal contribution are not mentioned.

The film industry expanded in the 1970s and early '80s during a somewhat stable political situation in the Soviet Union, and so film production in Armenia increased, with Hayfilm releasing around six or seven films per year (Galstyan 2016). The breakup of the Soviet Union and the independence of Armenia in 1991, as well as the ensuing Nagorno-Karabakh war of that period, were watershed moments for the political,

cultural, social, and economic life of the country. This, naturally, impacted the film industry enormously, as it was in a sense both empowered and disempowered simultaneously as it gained independence from Soviet control, on the one hand, but found itself in dire economic circumstances in which funding for films became hard to come by. Very few films were produced in the 1990s and mostly by the older generation of directors who had been trained in the Soviet period.

Armenian cinema began to stand on its own feet in the early 2000s when the Ministry of Culture re-developed its system of state support for the culture industry. Other important developments in this decade include the establishment of the international Golden Apricot film festival in 2004 (Harutyunyan 2016), which has played an important role in showcasing films from various cultures across the world to both Armenian and non-Armenian audiences. Another significant development was the founding of the National Cinema Centre of Armenia (NNCA) in 2006, whose role is to “set state cultural policy in the film sector and provide state support to national cinematography in the following four sectors: assistance in the production of domestic filmmaking; national project implementation; participation in international festivals; and promotion of the national cinema at international film markets” (Paytyan 2016).

The liberalisation of the economy and privatisation of state assets have also naturally impacted the film industry in Armenia since independence from the Soviet Union. The NNCA is actually a re-branding of the former Hayfilm, which was privatised in 2005 and sold to Armenia Studios, a subsidiary of CS Media City, a media company that owns several major Armenian media outlets. The building that houses NNCA, which was for decades the home of Hayfilm, was put up for auction in 2016 by the Council of Public TV and Radio. It was purchased in 2017 and then demolished, now replaced by a residential apartment block. This happened to the famous Hayfilm building despite a public campaign organised by film specialist Melik Karapetyan that tried to convert the building into a media museum (Galstyan 2019).

Armenian filmmaking is not restricted to the film industry of the Republic of Armenia. The Armenian diaspora began producing films even earlier than Soviet Armenia. The film industry in the diaspora has taken a

different course, as it was established by survivors of the Armenian Genocide in the early twentieth century in comparatively different social and political environments to the Soviet Union, most notably in the USA. The majority of films produced in the diaspora touch upon the deportations and massacres in the Ottoman Empire. Those films have played an important role in developing a kind of national consciousness that bases its ontology on a lost homeland and the permanent yearning for it (Kouymjian 1984).

Azerbaijan

Until 1976, “National Cinema” in Azerbaijan was thought to have started at the same time as Soviet cinema. Then a decision was made by the local Azerbaijani government to mark the start date in 1916, i.e. before the revolution. This was the generally accepted date from then on until 2000, when the starting date was moved further back to 1898 (KazıMZadə 2016). These symbolic decisions and varying historiographies on national cinema in a way follow the process of national identity formation and the twentieth-century discussion about it, as well as the history of national identity and the failure to clearly define it.

The first feature-length film shot in 1916, *In the Kingdom of Oil and Millions*, showed how Azerbaijan's modernisation process was based on the oil industry. This film was born out of this relationship between the oil industry and modernisation. Once Soviet authority was established in Azerbaijan in 1920, one of the first acts by the leader of the People's Commissars' Soviet, Neriman Nerimanov, was to sign the decree on the nationalisation of cinema on the July 4, proving the importance he attached to cinema in a similar vein to Lenin. That same year, we see a number of newsreels such as *The Ceremony of the 11th Red Army Troops*, *The 1st Congress of the Eastern Peoples* and *The Funeral of 26 Baku Commissars*. In accordance with the nationalisation programme under state control, a decision was made to transfer all cinema matters to the People's Commissariat of Education. In 1922, the Photo-Cinema Administration (FKİ) linked to the Commissariat, was established, as well as the Azerbaijan Photo-Cinema Corporation (AFKİ) in 1923, and the first film studio linked to the corporation (Sadıxov 1970, 19).

The first feature film to come out of Soviet Azerbaijan, *Maiden's Tower* (dir. Ballyuzekin, 1923), told one of the tales connected to the Maiden's Tower in Baku. This first film was criticised by the publications of the time on the grounds that it emphasised Eastern exoticism and espoused an orientalist perspective (Sadıxov 1970, 25-26). Following this first film, AFKİ began to shoot films that included themes such as the war against traditional structures and religion, criticism of backwardness and ignorance, and women's freedom and rebellion. These were all themes that had already been referenced by the enlightenment movement of the Azerbaijani intelligentsia even before the Soviet period, albeit not through film (Smith 1997, 655).

Armenian filmmakers and staff in the cinema industry also played an active role in Soviet Azerbaijani cinema in the 1920-30s. For example, the film "Sevil," which occupies a significant place in Azerbaijani national memory, was directed by Hamo Beknazarov who was invited from Armenia. In addition, the film *The House on Top of the Volcano* (1929), despite being financed by Azerkino, was produced in its entirety by Armenkino. Armenians played an active role in the leadership of the Azerbaijani film studio in the 1930s (Cabbarlı 1996; Kazımzadə 2016; Sadıxov 1970).

There was a related dilemma connected to people working in the film industry. On the one hand, local staff were seen as incompetent and so most films were produced by filmmakers from Russia. For instance, the first director of AFKİ was Aleksandr Litvinov and there were only three Azerbaijani members of staff at Azkino; most were Russians, Jews, and Georgians (Smith 1997, 653). On the other hand, there was an effort to produce local filmmakers. Training courses for local directors, writers, and actors were organised between 1924-25 in order to develop local filmmakers such as C. Cabbarlı, M. Mikayılov, A. Guliyev, R. Çobanzade, who started studying with teachers from Moscow (Sadıxov 1970, 27).

There was an interim period in cultural politics during World War II when epics, folk songs, and stories recounting local heroism and defenders against invaders of the homeland were encouraged. Films produced in this period supported a Soviet military victory in the conflict. This opened the way for national sentiments to manifest themselves during this period.

However, the central authorities in Moscow sought to take back control of these sentiments after the war. The clearest response to this made by Soviet Azerbaijani cinema was attempts to incorporate the idea of "nationality" into the theme of "historical heroism" for the defence of the homeland, as was the film *Fətəli Xan*, the production of which started in 1941 and ended in 1947. The subject of the film was the dream of Fatali Khan, a leader of one of the Khanates of Azerbaijan in the eighteenth century, "uniting a disintegrating Azerbaijan against foreigners." Thus, for the first time in the history of Soviet Azerbaijan cinema, a historical story was incorporated within the framework of the imagination of "Azerbaijani unity." However, once the film was shot, it was banned from screening. Nevertheless, it was shown in 1959 in the post-Stalin period.

Towards the end of the 1950s, Azerbaijani cinema celebrated a new birth. A new generation of producers who were educated at the film school in Moscow contributed to the peak in Azerbaijani cinema in the 1960s and '70s. This period saw an increase in the number of films and led to the expansion of the range of themes touched on by Azerbaijani cinema. The presence of workers, villagers, and ordinary people in daily life became more prominent. This period also saw an increase in the number of films related to the Second World War. According to our own observations, most of these depicted civil life at the time of war.

In the 1960s, Azerbaijani literature experienced a transformation and young writers were in frequent contact with the film industry, which had a major impact on the industry. These writers adapted stories and novels to film and wrote scripts, as they tried to enrich the themes and styles of Azerbaijani cinema. One of the best examples of this is the cooperation between film producer Hasan Seyidbeyli and writer Isa Huseynov on the film *Nasimi* (1973). In addition, films concerning the conflict between new and old, i.e. the tensions produced by modernisation, continued to be produced. Such films as *Uşaqlığın Son Gecəsi* [*The Last Day of Childhood*] (1969), *Xoşbəxtlik Qayğıları* [*Happiness Concerns*] (1976), *Gün Keçdi* [*The Day Passed*] (1971), and *Bir Cənub Şəhərində* [*In A Southern City*] (1969) are representative of this genre.

Post-Soviet Azerbaijani cinema saw a new style with new themes being introduced in the '90s. Arthouse films such as *Köpək* [*A dog*] (1994), *Yarasa*

[*A Bat*] (1995), and *Özgə Vaxt [Another Time]* (1996) were made independently of the state. However, this experience of independent production in the 1990s lasted only a short time. In the 2000s, two or three films were being made every year exclusively with the support of the state. Nevertheless, in the recent period, independent productions, such as *Biləsuvar [a name of town in Azerbaijan]* (2020) and *Səpələnmiş ölümlər arasında [Among the Scattered Deaths]* (2020) were presented alongside state-supported films at international film festivals. Whether or not this is a sign of things to come in Azerbaijani cinema will become clearer in the coming years.

Armenian Films on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and Armenian-Azerbaijani Relations

As mentioned above, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and, in general, the issues of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations have had a more than significant impact on the national cinema of Armenia. Several fictional and documentary films were produced in the three decades preceding the 2020 Karabakh war that reflected aspects of the “Armenian story and experience” in the period between the two wars. This section will outline some of the films from Armenian national cinema connected to this topic, followed by a focus on two films that specifically include elements of humanisation of the “other side.”

The majority of films produced in Armenia during the interwar period were made with a one-sided perspective to evoke empathy for Armenian losses, victories, and justifications in line with the tenets of national cinema, especially at a time of conflict with a perceived and real external force. Due to the aforementioned difficulties experienced by Armenian cinema in the years following independence, the first popular films produced about the conflict began to be released over a decade after the first war had ended in 1994.

The first Armenian feature film about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is “Destiny” (Ճակատագիր), released in 2006. The film tells the “heroic” story of a man whose family participated in four different wars through four generations: the Second World War, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, and Karabakh. This series of wars leading up to the war in Karabakh was

meant to represent the “destiny” of the family and the Armenian nation as a whole. The film’s producer and leading actor, Gor Vardanyan, openly stated in an interview that the film was geared towards the promulgation of patriotism (Armenpress 2012). He stated that the other main objective of the film was to introduce Armenians, their history, and their experiences to an international audience (1in.am 2013).

The next feature film about the first Karabakh war was released a year later in 2007. “Do not be Afraid” (Մի վախեցի՛ր), directed by Aram Shahbazyan, has a plot in some ways similar to “Destiny” in that it tells the story of a young man who participates in the Karabakh war. The film shows his journey from “ordinary man to hero.” The actor playing the lead role, Khoren Levonyan, gave an interview in 2021 after the second Karabakh war. In response to a question about whether it was already time to make films about the second war, Levonyan laments the fact that very few films were made about the first war: “We could have cultivated good citizens, good Armenians, good parents through culture, theatre and films. But we are continuing to do nothing” (Gevorgyan 2021). This statement embodies much of the motivation with which people in the film industry work in the framework of a national cinema that finds itself in an ethno-nationalist socio-political context at a time of conflict with a neighbouring ethno-nationalist state.

Perhaps the most watched Armenian feature films about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the duology “Life and Fight” and “Life and Fight 2: 25 Years Later,” both directed by Mher Mkrtchyan. As with the two aforementioned films, the main characters in the first film of the duology, released in 2016, included young men who, through the trials and tribulations of the first Karabakh war, as well as other side plots, become heroes in the eyes of the nation. The target audience of the first film was clear from the very outset at the film’s premiere when young conscripts from the army gathered at the theatre. Moreover, the film’s director stated at the premiere that the film was produced with support from the Ministry of Defence (Margaryan 2016). Just to add to the national symbolism, the first public screening of the film took place on September 21 (Meytarjyan 2020), the day marking Armenian independence from the Soviet Union.

The motivation for the shooting of the second film in the duology was also explicit. It was produced just a year after the first film, with the “four-day April war” in 2016 in mind, and it was openly dedicated to the Armenian army. In fact, the premiere of the film took place just a day before “Army Day” (January 23), which commemorated the 25th anniversary of the creation of the independent Armenian army (Yerkir Media 2017). These films demonstrate the inextricable link in Armenia between national cinema and the Nagorno-Karabakh war, the army, and, ultimately, national statehood in its ethno-nationalist form. Characteristics related to love, sacrifice, and heroism are ascribed to only Armenian characters as an ideological tool to humanise one side of the conflict. The other side is reduced to belligerent aggressors who have no story of their own.

Two other films discussed below represent diversions from the typical traits of national cinema demonstrated in the abovementioned films. Both films also directly concern the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; however, they include themes, characters, and symbolism that seem to humanise both sides of the conflict line, not just one. Characters on both sides of the conflict line are shown to have personal stories and not only broad national ones, thus allowing for humanisation of the characters.

Zemlyak (2010, Director: Edgar Baghdasaryan)

The first one of these two films is *Zemlyak*. The title of the film itself is already an indication of the film’s meaning and motive. *Zemlyak* is a Russian word meaning “compatriot,” or, more literally, “somebody who shares the same land.” The story, which is allegedly based on a true one, tells of an Armenian soldier, Harut, stranded in the desolate mountains of Karabakh in the blistering winter cold at the very height of the war, alone with the corpse of an Azerbaijani soldier who was shot dead. Harut takes off some of the Azerbaijani soldier’s clothes to warm himself up. Later, Harut begins speaking to himself and conversing with the dead body. He recalls an Azerbaijani boy from his neighbourhood called Tofiq and remembers him as a “good guy.” Harut then asks whether the dead soldier is Tofiq and whether he has any identification on him. He rummages through the Azerbaijani soldier’s pockets and finds an identification card on which his name “Samed” and the address “11 Japaridze Street, Kirovabad” are written. Upon reading the address he realises that they are

from the same city, Kirovabad (Ganja), and so the dead man is his *zemlyak*. Harut tries to recall the exact location of the address, which he believes is situated in a churchyard. He then finds a photograph of Samed with his parents and says that Samed's father resembles his old physics teacher.

Amidst the shelling, Harut uses Samed's body as a cover. Once the dust settles, Harut expresses his wish to bury Samed but finds that the ground is too frozen for a burial. He conjures a plan to take off Samed's Azerbaijani army uniform, which Harut then puts on, and to wait for his fellow soldiers to arrive and tell them that the dead body is that of an Armenian. Harut finds a Quran in Samed's uniform and asks Samed whether he wants it read to him. Harut finds that it is written in Arabic and so cannot read it for him; instead, he reads out the Lord's Prayer in Armenian, stating that there is no difference since God understands all languages.

Moments later, an Armenian sniper sees Harut donning the Azerbaijani army uniform from afar and shoots him dead, mistaking him for an Azerbaijani soldier. Armenian soldiers then find the two dead bodies lying side by side, and they take Samed's body for burial, leaving behind Harut's body, which they believe is the corpse of an Azerbaijani soldier because of the uniform.

The whole interaction between Harut and Samed humanises the two enemy soldiers, one of whom is dead (which points to a sense of irony in the film). Very early on in the interaction, Harut recalls a "good guy" from his neighbourhood, already attributing a common trait to an Azerbaijani from his childhood memories. Then when Harut finds the photograph of Samed with his parents, which shows their trip to Baku, in Harut's (and so the audience's) mind it represents the starting point of Samed's personal life story.

The mix of childhood memories and the fact that both overlap temporally seem to compel Harut to pay his respects to Samed by burying him. The religious reference to the equal nature of the Muslim and Christian holy texts reinforces the universal humanistic value that the film seeks to convey. The final scene, which shows the Armenian soldiers mixing up the dead bodies and assigning national identities according to their military uniforms, demonstrates the near triviality of national identity in

that moment. The two corpses seem to have transcended national identity while the soldiers who are alive continue to differentiate people based on national symbolism (the Azerbaijani flag and the Christian crucifix appear on the respective army uniforms).

An interview conducted by *Aravot* with the director Edgar Baghdasaryan in 2012 claims that the film *Zemlyak* was banned from public screenings in Armenia and Baghdasaryan was asked to confirm this. He did not deny the claim and stated that he would discuss it in the future, but, there seems to be no publicly available information about it (Danielyan 2012). If this claim is true, it draws a line beyond which national cinema in Armenia in the post-independence climate is able to accept the kind of humanisation of the “enemy” demonstrated in *Zemlyak*. In a 2018 interview with *Irates*, Baghdasaryan states that in the film he sought to tell a story of something beyond conflict between nations that focuses on the humanistic element. “The emphasis was on the fact that if you are able to find a common language with a dead person then you are obliged to do so with a living person,” he asserts (Rafayelyan 2018).

Broken Childhood (2013, Director: Jivan Avetisyan)

Broken Childhood tells the story, allegedly a true one, of a relationship that develops between an Armenian girl who was kidnapped during the 1992 Maragha massacre in the first Nagorno-Karabakh war and an Azerbaijani woman who has lost her son in the war and looks after the Armenian girl in the hope that she will be exchanged one day for her son. The overall plot of the film is set against the background of the Maragha massacre against Armenians and so in that sense is the portrayal of loss and victimisation of one side. However, the story of the relationship between the Armenian girl, Lena, and the Azerbaijani woman, Fatima, humanises and emphasises loss on both sides of the conflict.

The initial part of the film where Lena and Fatima meet shows a certain level of mistrust between the two characters. Despite Lena’s young age, she has witnessed violence committed from the other side and so she has already made negative associations. Nevertheless, with time, Fatima begins to show what is depicted as “maternal” qualities and cares for Lena as if she were her own child. Scenes of the Maragha massacre are characterised by “Azerbaijani male aggression,” as soldiers are shown to

mercilessly kill civilians and loot the village. This is juxtaposed by the wholesome “female” relationship between Lena and Fatima with the focus on the human aspects of children and mothers. At the end of the film, Lena rejoins her family and Fatima makes an emotional farewell, as if she were leaving behind her own daughter. The last line of the film is: “Fatima is still waiting for her son, like all the mothers who had lost their sons in all wars.” The figure of the mother in this conflict is a double-edged sword; on the one hand, from a nationalist perspective, mothers are often depicted as bearers of newly born “brave men” and future soldiers who will defend the nation; on the other hand, they are characterised as innocent victims of a war that is not of their doing.

In an interview with *Hetq* in 2013, just before the film’s premiere, the screenwriter, Karine Khodikyan, stated that “it’s important for me that the audience leaves the cinema hall hating war.” Moreover, responding to a question about why one of the two main characters was an Azerbaijani who was not shown in a negative light but even positively depicted, Khodikyan and the director Avetisyan responded saying that the film was first and foremost about human relationships. They also specified that it is a relationship between two females. Khodikyan admitted that while writing the script for the film she was concerned that the film would be interpreted in such a way that would “benefit the Azerbaijanis.” Her counterargument was that all wars end eventually and that if there is a lack of human, and particularly maternal, goodness then the world will come to an end (Aleksanyan 2013). There is a sense, according to these comments, that peace is linked primarily to the role of women, whereas men are depicted as the agents of war.

A key difference between the film *Zemlyak* and *Broken Childhood* is in the gender aspect. The former is a story solely between men and soldiers whereas the latter puts the focus on women. In a sense, *Broken Childhood* fits more neatly into the condoned aspects of national cinema in Armenia as the plot background relates to a one-sided massacre against Armenians and there is a gendered insinuation that women are natural peace lovers and holders of humanistic values, regardless of their national affiliation, whereas the men and soldiers in the film are devoid of humanistic qualities. *Zemlyak*, on the other hand, raises the stakes even further and, it can be argued, goes beyond the contours of national cinema. The

humanisation of an enemy soldier is an added layer of empathy that breaks the rules of bilateral enmity. Representatives of the enemy's army are viewed as the highest threat to "national security" and so the humanisation of such individuals can be considered contrary to the logic of national cinema, which generally seeks to encourage a sense of national security as an inner strength against the opposing side.

Azerbaijani Films on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and Armenian-Azerbaijani Relations

The production of films about the conflict in Azerbaijani cinema did not start in the *perestroika* period but rather when the conflict was beginning. The most well-known of these is the documentary film *Meydan* (1989). The film shows events that took place in the former Lenin Square in Baku, now Freedom Square, where mass demonstrations against the developments in Karabakh took place. The film is important for providing insights into what took place at the square at that time. The film lacks any particular conceptual framework; it simply shows the demonstrations and speeches made by the protestors.

Azerbaijani cinema did not pay attention to the conflict until the Karabakh war started to intensify. Three films were released in 1993: *Fəryad* ("Bawl"), *Haray* ("The Whoop"), and *Laçın Dəhlizi* ("Lachin Corridor"). "The Whoop" and "Lachin Corridor" did not become very well known among public audiences, but "Bawl" was frequently shown on television immediately after its release during the war. The themes of each film are different, but they share the common feature of focusing on Azerbaijanis as the victims of the war. "Lachin Corridor" was a non-governmental co-produced film with Azerbaijani and Turkish cooperation. The film tells the story of a military operation conducted by a group of Azerbaijani soldiers in the Lachin Corridor, which ultimately fails. The film "Bawl" is a story of an Azerbaijani soldier who falls captive to Armenians. It shows the conditions in which he lived and his observations and memories about those experiences. The film represents Armenians as oppressors and Azerbaijanis as humanists. It has occupied such a significant place in Azerbaijani society that it led to the production of its sequel, "Bawl 2", after the 2020 war.

Several films were produced in the period after the ceasefire emphasising that the war had not yet ended and that Azerbaijan would later be victorious. In the film *Ağ Atlı Oğlan* ("Boy with the White Horse", 1995), a 12-year-old boy, whose favourite fairy tale is called "Boy with the White Horse," runs away from home to fight in Karabakh after seeing a war martyrs' ceremony. He engages in "patriotic" acts on the frontline and paints his tank white at the end of the film to symbolise future victories. *Biz Qayıdacağıq* ("We Will Come Back", 2007) tells the story of a refugee child from Khojaly who has lost his father in a massacre and lives with his mother and younger brother. He lives a hard but honest life to support his family and dreams about returning to their home in Khojaly. He has a pleasant voice and so one of his music school teachers helps him to join a *mugham* competition. Despite winning the competition, he decides to go to military school to train as a military officer with the aim of taking back his homeland from the adversary. *Dolu* ("Hail", 2012) is about the "heroic" acts and deaths of a group of Azerbaijanis, mostly fighters. At the end of the film, the souls of the deceased return to Karabakh.

There are also drama films that touch on the lived experiences of Azerbaijanis during the war. For example, the events in the film *Ümid* ("Hope", 1995) take place not in Karabakh but in a military hospital in Baku. An unknown wounded fighter is lying at the hospital and there are several people outside hoping that that person is their son or husband from whom they had not heard for some time. As they all wait outside the hospital, they recount their stories to one another.

Qırmızı Qar ("Red Snow", 1998) presents the "ruthless killings" by Armenians against Azerbaijanis in Khojaly and the hopelessness experienced by the town's inhabitants. *Yalan* ("Lie", 2005) is a film inspired by the famous Soviet Georgian film "Father of a Soldier" (1965) with a similar story but taking place during the Second World War. A father who goes to visit his son on the frontline receives the news of his son's death as he waits with other fighters in the camp for his son to return from a military operation. The father returns home and avoids telling the truth to the mother. Instead, he tells her that their son is doing fine and will come home soon. The film continues with the father suffering from his son's loss.

Gırov ("Captive", 2005) tells the story of an Armenian captive held for exchange in the house of an Azerbaijani woman whose husband is a captive on the Armenian side. The Armenian side requests money instead of a prisoner exchange. Although her husband ends up being killed as the necessary money was not given, the woman does not let the villagers kill the Armenian captive and sets him free despite her anger and hate. *Yaddaş* ("Memory", 2010) tells the story of a former fighter who loses his memory as a result of a trauma he received fighting in the Karabakh war and continues to believe that his comrades are alive. Along with these films, there are a number of other films that depict the "heroism" of Azerbaijanis and "cruelty" of Armenians, including *Xoca* ("Khodja", 2012) *Xüsusi Təyinatlı İbad 1-2* ("Special Forces İbad" 1-2, 2017-2019), and *Son Nəfəsədək* ("Until the Last Breath", 2018).

Nevertheless, there are also films that seek paths to dialogue and peace, such as *Hər Şey Yaxşılığa Doğru* ("All for the Best", 1996), *Sarı Gəlin* ("Yellow Bride", 1998), *Ailə* ("Family", 1998), and *Yol* ("The Road", 2011). It is worth looking at the films "Yellow Bride" and "The Road" since it is in these films that we observe some form of friendship between the main Armenian and Azerbaijani characters.

Yellow Bride (1998, Director: Yaver Rzayev)

"Yellow Bride" is a film produced by screenwriter and director Yaver Rzayev, financed by the state, and produced by "Azərbaycanfilm" studios. The film tells the story of the friendship that develops between an Azerbaijani and Armenian character. The Azerbaijani (Gadir), who, filled with patriotic feelings, goes as a volunteer to fight at the front in Karabakh but is himself an extremely soft-hearted person (so much so that he cannot kill a chicken) and so "naïve" that he finds the harshness of war to be strange, leading him to refuse to participate in the fighting. He is instructed to kill the Armenian captive Artavas by his commander, but he does not manage to do so and he himself then falls captive to the Armenian intelligence officers who save Artavas. Artavas is then ordered by his commander to kill Gadir, but instead of killing him, he escapes with Gadir from the war.

In our interview with him, director Yaver Rzayev mentioned that the idea to write the screenplay was born in 1994 with the aim of "present[ing]

Azerbaijanis in the right way to the world” and his team began shooting in 1995: “I knew that the only way for us to tell the world about our pain was through such a film.” One of the Azerbaijani characters in the film notes that “we have been left alone.” This statement hints at the motivation behind the production of Rzayev’s film. However, the yellow bride -after which the film is titled and which frequently enters Gadir’s dreams- is also a character from a song shared by Azerbaijani, Armenian, and other cultures (e.g., Turkic, Kurdish, and Persian) and is related to the idea of death. In one of the scenes, Gadir and Artavas arrive at an Azerbaijani village where Artavas’ sister, who is married to an Azerbaijani, lives. There, they witness the dead bodies of its inhabitants. The camera shows the corpses scattered in the courtyard and the shot slowly moves upward to show “a scene of a carpet design decorated with the dead bodies” (Interview with Rzayev 2022). “‘The Yellow Bride’ is neither mine nor yours, it belongs to all of us, and it is the death that awaits all of us,” mentions Gadir close to the final scene. That is why Gadir and Artavas, who have fled the war together, sing the song “The Yellow Bride” at the end of the film.

Rzayev notes that he grew up in Baku, thought and spoke in Russian, learned to be a director in Moscow, and held cosmopolitan opinions. However, those opinions were taken over by his patriotic feelings following deep-seated changes that occurred after the “Black January” events of January 20, 1990. This contradiction between patriotic feelings and cosmopolitan opinions is made clear in the film. On the one hand, the film points to how the Azerbaijani position is justified; on the other hand, it makes calls against the cruelty of war and promotes the peaceful coexistence of peoples.

The film focuses not on the Armenians and Azerbaijanis who have been polarised against one another but rather on an Armenian-Azerbaijani duo who have escaped the war and are being chased by an antagonised group of Armenian and Azerbaijani military men. Interestingly, just as Gadir and Artavas form a cooperative relationship based on their friendship, the Azerbaijani commander (Rasim) and Armenian commander (Samvel), who agreed to search for the deserters together, also form a cooperative relationship despite being formally at war with one another. According to Rzayev, with this choice, he attempted to maintain a balance: “The

Azerbaijani (Gadir) helps the Armenian (Artavas), and when the Azerbaijani harms his leg, the Armenian carries him on his shoulders and helps him escape.” He adds that “on the other hand, the Armenian commander is feeble and weak, whilst the Azerbaijani commander is not.” At the same time, the tanks used by the Azerbaijani commander are frail and old, while the one used by the Armenian commander is more powerful, which shows how the Armenians were better armed. It is not only this difference between the commanders that spoils the balance in favour of the Azerbaijanis but also the fact that the massacre occurs in an Azerbaijani village. The ‘moral balance’ is restored in favour of the Azerbaijanis when the Armenian soldiers listen to and are touched by the performance of Azerbaijani *kamancha* player Habil Aliyev. So, the Azerbaijanis are depicted in a more peace-loving light, as Gadir is shown to be an artist and a gentle character, and the *kamancha* player, representing Azerbaijani culture, is shown as enchanting the Armenians with his music. However, not all Azerbaijanis are presented in this light. For instance, the Azerbaijani soldiers who capture Armenians treat them in a less than humanistic manner by humiliating them.

As weak and cruel as Samvel is shown to be, he refuses to break the conditions of the agreement regarding the exchange of captives. He was meant to return Rasim’s captive brother to him in exchange for Samvel’s lover, but Rasim’s brother was killed and so he had nothing to exchange with for his partner. Consequently, when Samvel receives his partner back, he kills her, so that the conditions of the exchange are not broken. Rzayev claims that it is likely due to these dualities that some in Azerbaijan accused him of favouring Armenians in the film. On the other hand, those who showed this film in Stepanakert were punished by Armenians “because smart Armenians understood what I wanted to say with this film” (Interview with Rzayev 2022).

Another particularity of the film is its surreal scenes. These are, for instance, a scene when the “yellow bride” enters Gadir’s dreams, a scene with a dream-like presentation of the massacre of Azerbaijani civilians, and a scene where the “yellow bride” joins Gadir and Artavasa in their journey. These surreal scenes create the impression that the enmity and war take place in a frightening dream. Rzayev himself states that he in no way expected the events of Black January on January 20, 1990 and could

not imagine that the ensuing war would ever take place: "I cannot understand war, in general. I find it difficult to understand and believe in it." This inability to believe in war is reflected in one of the film's scenes: "Whoever speaks of war cannot have participated in it. Those who participate in war don't have the heart to talk about it." Rzayev himself did not participate in the war and so he only has the capacity to "talk" about it in the form of a dream. It is in this regard that the film ends in a surreal scene. Gadir, Artavas, and the yellow bride ride on the roof of a steam train and travel in an indeterminate direction. The commanders Rasim and Samvel follow the train but do not manage to catch them. As Gadir and Artavas are saved and travel in an exhausted state to an unknown destination, they start singing the song "Yellow Bride." Gadir, who then appears to come out of nowhere, says the following to the audience: "The Yellow Bride can come at any time. Don't ask who she is."

The Road (2011, Director: Fehrüz Şamiyev)

The film "The Road" tells the story of an aged Azerbaijani doctor suffering from cancer who wishes to die in the village from which he was displaced. He purposefully crosses the line of contact and enters his village, where he is taken captive by Armenian troops. The Armenian officer supervising him at the military post speaks to him in a harsh and hateful tone. However, the officer then suddenly falls sick and is on the verge of death, but the captivated Azerbaijani doctor saves his life. The Armenian officer, who previously treated the doctor harshly, now changes his attitude. The officer informs the doctor that he will be taken to the other captives. But then the doctor's condition worsens and the Armenian officer helps him to lie in the bed. The officer provides false information to his superiors that the captive has died. He accepts the doctor's last wish to take him to the tree planted by his grandfather. The next morning, the Armenian officer breaks the formal rules and takes the doctor to the tree. So, in the film the Armenian and Azerbaijani characters each face their deaths, and in both situations they help each other to the best of their abilities despite the conditions of war. Thus, the film is based not on "the rules of war" that imply an insurmountable enmity but on "the rules of humanity" that provide room for compassion.

The film's director, Shamiyev, was displaced from the Jabrayil district at the age of 15. He was then settled to the city of Ali Bayramli with his family as an IDP. After his graduation from the local high school, he decided to study at the Cinema Faculty of National Art University in Azerbaijan. Shamiyev remembers how he used to watch Bollywood films and, very rarely, European art films in his village in Jabrayil. He considers these films to be the first influences on his personality, leading him to become a filmmaker. He obtained his bachelor's degree as a scriptwriter and then a masters' degree as a producer at the same university. He now lives and works in Baku as a filmmaker and producer. The film thus has a special meaning for him personally. In our interview, Shamiyev noted that making a film about Karabakh and displacement became a kind of moral duty for him since his displaced family and relatives expected a film about the events of that time. After reading the story written by Elchin Huseynbeyli about a doctor nearing death and wanting to die on the land he was born, Shamiyev decided to slightly alter the story and write a script for the young film directors competition called "This arena, this screen" run by the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan. Out of three scripts, Shamiyev's was selected to receive funding to produce the film.

A noteworthy element of the film is how the characters go beyond hard-line positions. For example, even though the Armenian officer sees the Azerbaijanis as enemies and is depicted as a harsh character, a stereotypical description of military men, his image as an Armenian character is not as negatively exaggerated as in many other films produced in Azerbaijan. In our interview Shamiyev emphasises this point: "I look at this issue through art. The job of the artist is to observe events and people and to present them in a believable manner. To present Armenians with exaggerated cruelty and hyperbolic characteristics is not something an artist should do."

The main change in the image of the main characters takes place after the doctor saves the officer's life. It is at this point that his human side begins to emerge. He, like the doctor, is sick. And the doctor notes that "war is not his thing." On the other hand, the Azerbaijani character is not depicted in a special kind of heroic light. Although he does not submit to the officer and asserts that the village is his land, his image is one of a hopeless and decrepit man on the verge of death.

The characters agree on people's right to die on the land they were born and grew up in, putting aside national animosity. At the end of the film, once the doctor reaches the tree, the camera shows the officer's empathetic look and so humanises him. The officer moves in an indeterminate direction, and this is meant to be his way of going to die in the place he was born. Shamiyev asserted in our interview that this path should be a possibility for everybody: "For instance, I think that Armenians living in Hadrut and Khankendi (Stepanakert) should continue to live there. It has been their home for hundreds of years. Moreover, children born to parents living in Lachin and Kalbajar for the past 30 years should also have the right to live there."

The importance of people's birthplace and their connection to childhood memories are reflected in the film. The doctor wishes to be buried in the place where he believes his grandfather's soul lives. The tree under which he sits and is going to die is the one he planted with his grandfather. This tree is not only part of a collective (familial) identity for the doctor, but also an important part of his individual memory. Homeland in this case is not depicted as a piece of land but as one's childhood and memories of a place.

The doctor faces his death only by "returning" to his childhood. The return to childhood is not limited to this tree; when the doctor arrives at his village and walks among the ruins, we simultaneously hear the sounds of his childhood. It is for this reason that there is another possible reading of this film: the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan can only be resolved if both peoples face their fears by returning to that period when the "childhood trauma" was caused by the nation-state-building process of the early post-Soviet period.

Towards Cooperation

The discussed films that promote humanistic values demonstrate the possibility of touching on sensitive topics in films about Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and opening up channels for dialogue. Nevertheless, even those films were one-sided productions with, to a certain extent, an objective of showing the humanistic approach of one's respective "side." There has yet not been any multilateral and local initiative that would bring together members of

each society's film industry with the aim of co-producing and presenting a joint fiction film. In this section, we will attempt to envisage possible cooperation between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in their respective film industries based on our interviews with Armenian and Azerbaijani filmmakers and critics.

The main platform in the region for both Armenian and foreign films is the Golden Apricot Festival. In the last few years, the festival has played a significant role in cultural exchange between Armenia and Turkey by showcasing films from Turkey, some of which directly touch upon Armenian-Turkish relations. This has somewhat contributed to the political process of normalisation between both states. After 2018, the festival has increased its focus on the South Caucasus. In 2019, there was even a showing of a Russian-Azerbaijani film called "The Molokans" about the Molokan community in Azerbaijan. However, according to Project Manager at the Golden Apricot Festival, Sona Karapoghosyan, the showing was met with plenty of public criticism, even though the film depicted a minority community in Azerbaijan not directly involved in the conflict (Interview with Karapoghosyan 2022).

Karapoghosyan stated that in general it is difficult or even impossible to envisage cooperation within the framework of the Golden Apricot Festival. She asserted that, for the time being, closed screenings are the only possible option. Film critics are open to being part of joint screenings and discussions abroad with Azerbaijani counterparts. Such sessions have already taken place in Georgia, although the results have been ambiguous, as certain participants have reacted both positively and negatively to proceedings. A variety of personal and social factors affect the nature of reactions to joint initiatives, including education, personal and family history, one's relationship with the state, and the politically constructed national identity, etc.

Filmmakers in Armenia currently seem to be reluctant to be part of joint projects with Azerbaijani colleagues. Since the 2020 war, Armenian filmmakers' focus has shifted even more towards the preservation and perpetuation of Armenian culture and people in Karabakh. And in general, according to our interviewees, societal pressure in Armenia has increased against cooperative efforts with Azerbaijanis and this has had

an impact on members of the film industry, who now approach the issue even more sensitively than before.

In this regard, the Armenian diaspora may have an interesting role to play as it finds itself outside of the restrictions created by the Armenian state and less exposed to the societal pressure emanating from people who have suffered directly or indirectly from the wars. In our interview, Nana Shahnazaryan, an independent researcher on late Soviet media, noted that the narrative of the conflict is not strictly controlled by any central force in the diaspora, and so there is more room for experimentation. This has also been the case for critical films about Armenians themselves (e.g. the film “Red Apples” about the issue of female virginity in Armenia, funded and produced by people outside of Armenia). Diaspora filmmakers, although they themselves inhabit nationalist spaces and discourses in their communities, may thus be better placed in a practical sense to produce nuanced films in cooperation with Azerbaijanis. One of the primary issues here, says Shahnazaryan, is the financing of such films as there is a lack of donors interested in supporting the production of multilateral films in the Armenian-Azerbaijani context.

Gary Gananian, a filmmaker from the Armenian community in Brazil now based in the United States, says he wishes to change the perceptions of the conflict among the Armenian diaspora, which, according to him, lacks in-depth and multi-perspective knowledge of the conflict. He states that people in the diaspora are more inclined to see Armenians only in a positive light and so have been sheltered from self-criticism over the years. Nevertheless, in his view, outright negative criticism will be counterproductive. Instead, also showing elements of Azerbaijani communities in a more positive light, such as well-meaning memories of former co-existence, can contribute to a more transformative response to the conflict. A balanced introspective form of criticism, which sees both flaws and positive traits in both the self and the other, is more likely to produce the desired effect as viewers react differently to visuals.

The interviewed Azerbaijani film directors had various thoughts about cooperation with Armenian colleagues. Both Yavez Rzayev and Fehrüz Shamiyev noted that the Azerbaijani film industry is not completely ready for such cooperation. Shamiyev, a film director and producer, stated that

it would require several years for the Azerbaijani film industry to be prepared for this: "Right now, there are discussions in the industry mostly related to the victory [in the last war]. So be it, I am not against it [this trend] and I understand it, but if 70% of films are going to be about that [victory] then 30% of films should be made about peace".

It is for this reason that Shamiyev himself says that he is ready to work on a joint project. He even recalls that there was such an opportunity in the past. He planned to make a film about Azerbaijanis and Armenians who exchanged villages and protected each other's graves: "I wanted to shoot a documentary film about this in 2013 in Shamakhi and it would be good if someone could get the relevant footage from the village in Armenia. I later found out that some filmmakers in Armenia had already started working on such a project and so it was pointless for me to get in touch with this initiative. My idea was left half-baked, but I still want to complete that project in Shamakhi as a producer and I am thinking of doing that".

Shamiyev also has another idea for a film about an Azerbaijani family who return to Karabakh and live in their old house with the Armenian family who moved in there after the Azerbaijani owners had to leave: "It is true that that place would be the Azerbaijanis' own house, but an Armenian family has already made it their home for the past 30 years. The purpose of the film would be an artistic pursuit of the truth by observing the lived experiences of these families in the same house. [...] Because as Azerbaijanis have their truth, Armenians also have their own truth."

Shamiyev believes that the implementation of such Armenian-Azerbaijani film projects is more possible if it is done by people under the age of 45–50 than by the older generation: "Because the younger generation has not seen the war directly and they have received less trauma from the conflict. Those who have received the most [direct] trauma from the war are aged 50 and above. Because all their youth and dreams were ruined as a result of the war, it would be difficult for them to forget it. I understand that."

These words by Shamiyev reflect Yaver Rzayev's differing position on Armenian-Azerbaijani cooperation for joint film production. Rzayev says that participation in cooperative projects would not be his own wish, but, on the other hand, he feels obliged to participate in this: "Honestly, it's not something I wish for myself, but I know that I would be the best person to

do this. So, if the need arises then I would be obliged to be part of it, because I have been with Armenians a lot and I know them well.”

Recommendations

Considering the abovementioned challenges regarding cooperation now, when memories of the wars are still fresh, it is necessary to be sensitive to recent traumas and the ensuing tense socio-political environment in order to have an effective approach to peacebuilding through film. A balance between public-facing and private initiatives must be achieved as a considerable part of society in both Armenia and Azerbaijan is not willing to participate in collaborative initiatives. And so, finding participants willing to join private initiatives is of utmost importance, as well as providing them with a shelter against public criticisms that may end up derailing their endeavours. Public-facing initiatives, naturally, entail a greater risk due to the unpredictability of reactions from the wider society. Such initiatives would be more conducive in reaching their aim if implemented in ‘small doses’ (e.g. public screenings of films that show characters from the “other side” in an ambiguous light rather than in a totally positive way).

The issue of financing and external support is a sensitive one that requires a careful approach. Allegations of working in the interests of foreign actors are rife in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and so initiatives that are openly supported or funded by external actors are often viewed with suspicion. There are, however, limited possibilities for local support or funding, and so foreign-provided assistance, whether desired or not, is often the only available option. This puts local filmmakers in a predicament.

Below we present three recommendations to address these issues.

Private film screenings

Following our interviews with members of the Armenian and Azerbaijani film industries, we realised that they have not seen each other’s films, including even those that touch on Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Raising awareness among film critics and filmmakers of each other’s films will contribute to a greater understanding of each other’s perspectives and increase the possibility of producing films, perhaps even co-productions, in the future. Private film

screenings can take place in a third-party country in person so that the follow-up discussions would also enable an effective exchange of ideas.

Diversified funding of co-productions

Most films produced in Armenia and Azerbaijan are supported by governmental ministries or local organisations with particular views on what national cinema should or should not be. Although the contours of national cinema in both countries are not monolithic, there are still limitations to the work of filmmakers, especially to those of them who wish to touch on highly politicised Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, and generally for shedding light on a possibility for a cooperative filmmaking. This makes finding alternative ways to finance and support joint film production a highly important matter. Secure and sustainable funding without ideological preconditions would enable the freedom of producers to take films outside of the contours of national cinema. Bringing together Armenian and Azerbaijani filmmakers to discuss joint projects will see fruitful results if they receive funding and support from third parties (e.g. international donors or international film corporations) who have no vested interest in one side of the conflict and allow for full freedom to explore themes conducive to peace and mutual understanding.

Consideration of political developments through film

It is noteworthy that generally filmmakers in both countries are closely tied to the state as they are to a large extent dependent on it financially and subject to its laws. Those involved in the film industry of both countries need to reflect on political developments inside the state. Therefore, it is important to promote viable mutual understanding in crucial political periods (for instance, when peace negotiations are taking place). The state interests unavoidably affect the work of filmmakers and so keeping a close eye on those interests is of paramount importance. The film industry itself cannot bring about peace between states, but its role as a facilitator in the so-called process of “preparing populations for peace” can be significant, especially when its products are politically informed and released in a timely way to support the peace process.

Conclusion

National cinema in Armenia and Azerbaijan has utilised the medium of film to mould narratives that aim to represent each state's respective view of the mutual conflict. Nevertheless, we have found that there are also films that disrupt those one-sided narratives and lead audiences to question the antagonistic views held against the other side. The fact that such films are produced and showcased, albeit to a rather limited degree, demonstrates that there is a possibility of exploring and widening the cracks of what is ostensibly a monolithic national cinema.

Our conversations with individuals working within the respective film industries somehow reflect the overall picture of a monolithic national cinema framework that nevertheless contains penetrable gaps that can be explored to disrupt dominant and, oftentimes, state-driven nationalistic narratives. In any case, a methodical strategy is required to take advantage of those gaps, considering the continuation of tense inter-state relations, state control of cultural products, and suspicion or outright opposition on the part of society vis-à-vis collaborative initiatives with the other side. We believe that our recommendations point to a path toward potential collaborative efforts between Armenian and Azerbaijani filmmakers in the future.

The list of interviewees

Sona Karapoghosyan, Project Manager at the Golden Apricot Festival.

Nana Shahnazarian, Independent researcher on late Soviet media.

Gary Gananian, Filmmaker.

Yaver Rzayev, Scriptwriter and Director.

Fehruz Shamiyev, Filmmaker and Producer.

Bibliography

Agos. 2020. "Ermeni Soykırımı hakkında film çeken Sabir Rizayev'in hikayesi." [The story of Sabir Rizayev, who made a movie about the Armenian Genocide] September 19, 2020. Accessed May 14, 2021.

<https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/24555/ermeni-soykirimi-hakkinda-film-ceken-sabir-rizayev-in-hikayesi>

Aleksanyan, Narek. 2013. “«Ընդհատված մանկություն». Ֆիլմ աղբբեջանցի կնոջ և հայ աղջնակի մասին.” [“Interrupted Childhood”. A Film About an Azerbaijani Woman and an Armenian Girl] Accessed July 28, 2020. <https://hetq.am/hy/article/27323>

Armenpress. 2012. “Գոռ Վարդանյանի «Ճակատագիր» Ֆիլմը հայրենասիրություն է քարոզում.” [Gor Vardanyan “Destiny” film propagates patriotism] Accessed July 16, 2020. <https://armenpress.am/arm/news/684164/gor-varpanyani-tchakatagir-filmy-hayrenasirutyun-e-qarozum.html>

Choi, JongBong. 2011. “National Cinema: An Anachronistic Delirium?” *Journal Of Korean Studies* 16, no.2: 173-191.

Christie, Ian. 2013. “Where Is National Cinema Today (And Do We Still Need It)?” *Film History* 25, no. 1-2: 19-30.

Cabbarlı, Cəfər. 1996. *Ədirnə Fəthi (pyeslər,şerlər,hekayələr,məqalələr,məktublar)*. [Conquest of Edirne (plays, poems, stories, articles, letters)] Edited by A. Rüstəmov. Elm Nəşriyyatı.

Danielyan, S. 2012. “Կինոնեոթյունը Էդգար Բաղդասարյան. «Փողը հիմնականում աննաշակների ձեռքում է.»” [Film Director Edgar Baghdasaryan. Money is mostly in the hands of the Tasteless] Accessed November 27, 2020. <https://www.aravot.am/2012/08/25/304700/>

Epress. 2014. “В Армении жили азербайджанцы. Об основателе армянского киноведения и не только.” [Azerbaijanis lived in Armenia. About the founder of Armenian films studies and not only.] *Epress.am*. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://epress.am/ru/2014/10/15/v-armenii-zhili-azerbajdzhantsy-ob-osnov.html>

Galstyan, Hrant. 2019. “The National Cinema Center of Armenia Falls Victim to Government Privatization Schemes and Property Developers.” March 3, 2019. Accessed May 29, 2020. <https://hetq.am/en/article/101405>.

- Galstyan, Siranush, Maria Mirzoyan. 2016. "A Brief History of Armenian Cinema In Facts And Figures." *Kinokultura*. Accessed February 17, 2020. https://www.kinokultura.com/specials/17/brief_history.shtml.
- Gevorgyan, L. 2021. "Խորեն Լևոնյան. «Ինքներս մեզանից չափսի օտարանանք»." [Khoren Levonyan. "We should not get alienated from ourselves"] *Mediamax*. Accessed July 18, 2020. <https://mediamax.am/am/news/interviews/45639/>
- Harutyunyan, Susanna 2016. "Golden Apricot: A New-Born Symbol of Armenia." *Kinokultura*. https://www.kinokultura.com/specials/17/harutyunyan_apricot.shtml.
- Higson, Andrew. 1989. "The Concept of National Cinema." *Screen* 30, no. 4: 36-47.
- Hjort, Mette., and Scott. MacKenzie. 2000. *Cinema and Nation*. London-New York: Routledge.
- Kazımdađ, Aydın. 2016. *Kino vđ Zaman (1923-2016)*. [*Cinema and Time (1923-2006) Şərq-Qərb Publishing*]. Şərq-Qərb.
- Kouymjian, Dickran. 1984. "Filmmaking in The Armenian Diaspora of America." Accessed June 5, 2020. https://www.academia.edu/36143680/Filmmaking_in_the_Armenian_Diaspora_of_America
- Lenin, Vladimir I. 1934. *Collected Works, Vol. 42*. New York: International Publishers.
- Margaryan, N. 2016. "Մկրտչյանները գերազանցեցին իրենք իրենց. «Կյանք ու կռիվ»՝ ֆիլմ ընկերության, սիրո և պատերազմի մասին." [Mkrtychans exceeded themselves] Accessed December 7, 2020. <https://www.aysor.am/am/news/2016/09/20/«Կյանք-և-կռիվ»-ֆիլմ/1139905>
- Meytarjyan, L. 2020. "«Կյանք ու կռիվ» ֆիլմի պրեմիերան՝ հետաքրքիր դրվագներով եւ հայտնի հյուրերով." [The Premier of "Life and Fight" with interesting moments and famous guests] Accessed June 12, 2020. <https://bravo.am/news/«Կյանք-ու-կռիվ»-ֆիլմի-պրեմիերան-հետաքրքիր-դրվագներով-եւ-հայտնի-հյուրերով>

- Paytyan, Naira. 2016. "National Cinema Centre of Armenia: Yesterday And Now." https://www.kinokultura.com/specials/17/paytyan_ncca.shtml.
- Rafayelyan, Karine. 2018. "«Մենք չենք կարող մեր երկիրը վերցնել-գնալ Բելգիա և համոզել, որ մի քիչ էլ նրանք գան-սալրեն այստեղ.»» ["We can't take our country and go to Belgium, and convince them to come and live here instead of us"] <http://www.irates.am/hy%C3%A2%E2%82%AC%C3%A2%E2%82%AC/1541110296> Accessed March 11, 2020.
- Sadıxov, Nazim. 1970. *Azərbaycan Bədii Kinosu: 1920-1935ci illər*. Elm Nəşriyyatı. [*Azerbaijani Feature Film: 1920-1935. Elm Publishing.*]
- Smith, Michael G. 1997. "Cinema for the "Soviet East": National Fact and Revolutionary Fiction in Early Azerbaijani Film." *Slavic Review* 56, no. 4: 645-678.
- Vitali, Valentina, and Paul Willemsen. 2006. *Theorising National Cinema*. London: BFI.
- Williams, Alan, ed. 2002. *Film and Nationalism*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Yerkir Media. 2017. "Տեղի ունեցավ «Կյանք ու կռիվ 2. 25 տարի անց» ֆիլմի պրեմիերան." [The Premier of "Life and fight 2. 25 Years Later" was held] Accessed October 22, 2020. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170130221313/http://yerkirmedia.am/culture/kyanq-u-kriv-2-premiera/>
- 1in.am. 2013. "«Ճակատագիր». Արցախյան պատերազմի մասին առաջին գեղարվեստական ֆիլմը. ["Destiny" The first feature film about Artsakh War]" Accessed November 11, 2020. <https://www.1in.am/67154.html>

Authors

Flora Ghazaryan is a PhD Candidate in the History Department at CEU, and a Gerda Henkel Fellowship Recipient.

Gulkhanim Mammadova is a researcher with a focus on peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and gender issues at a Baku-based think tank, Topchubashov Center. She is actively engaged in various peacebuilding initiatives and dialogue programs in the region. She holds a BA in Political Sciences from the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and an MA in Peace and Conflict Studies from the Social Sciences University of Ankara in 2021.

Heydar Isayev is a journalist and researcher. He holds a MA in Multimedia Journalism from the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs in Tbilisi and a BA in Public Affairs from ADA University in Baku. He's now working with Eurasianet.org. He has collaborated with RFE/RL Azerbaijani service, Meydan TV, Transitions Online, IWPR, and Caucasus Edition: Journal of Conflict Transformation.

Lala Darchinova holds an LL.M. in Comparative Constitutional Law from Central European University. Her research interests include feminist, decolonial and critical theory; and re-thinking of politics and law applying methodologies offered by these worldviews. She has been involved in peacebuilding and conflict analysis for the past five years. She is currently affiliated with the Feminist Peace Collective and Imagine Dialogue and Conflict Transformation Center. Previously, she worked as a policy specialist at the United Nations Office in Azerbaijan.

Leon Aslanov is a researcher who works on political and social issues in the South Caucasus, Middle East and the UK. He is a co-founder of Caucasus Talks, Programmes Manager at the UK-based research centre Integrity UK and is affiliated with the Programme of Armenian Studies.

Marina Danoyan is a peacebuilding practitioner from Armenia. For more than 10 years, Marina has been working in Finnish peacebuilding NGOs, namely CMI-Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, a Finnish NGO

that works to prevent and resolve violent conflicts, as well as the Peace and Reconciliation Department at FELM (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission). Marina is currently engaged in CMI's Women in Peacemaking (WiP) programme as a Project Manager. Marina holds MA degrees in "European and Global Politics" from the Tampere University, and "International Trade with Eastern European Countries" from the University Paris 12 Val de Marne, as well as from Yerevan State Linguistic University after V. Briussov. Marina has also been the Vice-Chair and Board Member of the Finland-Armenia Association since 2016.

Sofya Manukyan is a researcher at Human Rights Research Center NGO in Armenia. Her specialization is in the field of human rights impacted by the private sector. She is particularly interested in how private interests impact the environment and socio-economics. She holds a degree in Human Rights from the University of Essex. In Armenia, she is mostly engaged with promoting environmental protection and labor rights.

T.I. holds a BA in International Relations and a MA in Peace Research. He has participated in a number of inter-community dialogues which aimed to build peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The author prefers to publish under a pseudonym.

Togrul Abbasov is a PhD candidate at Charles University. His research focus is on Soviet modernity, national identities, national cinemas and visual sociology. Currently his research topic is "National Imaginaries and Modernity in Soviet Caucasus Cinema(s): Soviet Films of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in comparison" He holds an MSc in Sociology from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University.

Editors

Philip Gamaghelyan is an Assistant Professor at the Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego. He is also the co-founder and Director of Programs at the Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation and Managing Editors at the Journal of Conflict Transformation – Caucasus Edition.

Sevil Huseynova holds a degree in Law from the Baku State University. She is a PhD Student at the Institute for European Ethnology, Humboldt University, Berlin. Her main research interests include urban anthropology; ethnicity; and diasporic, transnational, and trans-local communities. She co-authored the book “Beyond the Karabakh Conflict: The Story of Village Exchange” and has authored many articles. She is a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Conflict Transformation – Caucasus Edition and has previously worked as the Azerbaijan Country Director of the Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation.

Vadim Romashov is a doctoral researcher in Peace and Conflict Studies at Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI), Tampere University. He received his M.Soc.Sci degree in International Relations from University of Tampere, and diplomas of a specialist in Regional Studies and an economist in World Economy from St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University. He is currently involved in the projects “Neighborhood Yurt-Naapurijurttä” (funded by the Kone Foundation) and “Cross-Regional Corridors of Dialogue: Developing a Complementing Track for Transforming Long-standing Conflicts” (funded by the OSCE-Network).

