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**KARABAGH CONFLICT:
TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER**

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The book is published with the support of Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Four authors - two political scientists and two journalists (two Azerbaijanis and two Armenians) - tried to look at the Karabagh conflict and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations from different perspectives and to find common ground, on which mutual understanding and the problem settlement might be built. The authors hope that the opinions and proposals, expressed in the book, will allow opening new opportunities for the constructive dialogue of the parties.



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In February 2006, Ilham Aliev and Robert Kocharian had several meetings to discuss the conflict over Mountainous Karabagh, yet the two sides failed to reach tangible results and permanently end the hostilities.

However, whatever the two presidents might have agreed upon, the agreement would have to be presented to and accepted by their respective public in both countries. Within each of the two societies the issue is highly emotionalized, and this has to be taken into account if any potential compromise is to be reached and this hurdle is to be overcome.

It is all the more important for the civil societies representatives from Armenia and Azerbaijan to get together, to engage in dialogue and try to lay a basis for a mutual understanding of the issues at stake.

In this sense, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung would like to congratulate the Yerevan and Baku Press Clubs on having jointly published this book “The Karabagh Conflict: To Understand Each Other”. It will undoubtedly contribute to a more informed civil society - both in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Hopefully, in the long run, this will also contribute to solution of the conflict - or rather their acceptance - and thus to future peace and stability in the region.

Günther Fichtner
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Head of Co-ordination Office for the South Caucasus

FOREWORD

As the tradition goes, the hopes of Armenian, Azerbaijani and international public for Karabagh conflict resolution are pinned on the period of calm in domestic policy. People believe - quite justly - that in the course of election campaign, the tough political fight, when the elites of the two countries as well as in the unrecognized Mountainous Karabagh Republic put the main emphasis on populist slogans, seek to show their citizens how firm they are in protecting national interests, one cannot expect the parties to be compromising.

However, it happened so that all the years after the ceasefire was signed in May 1994 were full of political collisions: elections and national referenda, resignation or a disease of presidents, imaginary or real attempts at coup d'etat, a terrorist attack on the parliament... Our leaders and the international intermediaries have never been able to enjoy a break that would allow them to truly concentrate (certainly, having a wish to do so) on the main obstacle for the development of the two countries and the region in general.

Year 2006 seemed to be such a time-out to many. However ambiguous the election campaigns and the Referendum on the RA Constitution that took place in 2005 are, it can be stated that the situation in Baku, Yerevan and Stepanakert did more or less settle down and, as many statements noted, a "window of opportunity" opened to work over the resolution of Karabagh crisis. Particularly, since during the past fifteen years the parties had enough time to grasp the stances, the limits of compromise of each other and the mediators have gained such a good insight into the conflict and its different aspects, the numerous interests linked to it, the arguments of Azerbaijanis and Armenians, they would hardly propose resolution models that would have been clearly and initially unacceptable.

The Minsk Group co-chairmen - primarily, the Americans Steven Mann and Matthew Bryza who came to replace him in mid-2006 - in most of their speeches sounded extremely optimistic. Before the meetings of the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents in Rambouille, afterwards - in Bucharest, the words of the mediators implied that the framework agreement is about to be signed. This, however, did not happen. The co-chairmen made a rather tough announcement that they see no point in further “shuttle” diplomacy, but a few days later they expressed their readiness to go on with the effort. The participants of the negotiations process displayed some vague expectations before the Great Eight meeting in Saint-Petersburg. These expectations turned out to be futile, too.

The observers, most of whom did not believe the agreement was possible, were confused in conjectures as to what grounds the co-chairmen had for optimism. Is it possible that they should know something no one else knows about? Experts of International Crisis Group in August-September repeatedly voiced their fear of a new war. But despite this and autumn announcements from Baku and Yerevan, signifying that the parties are just as far from compromise as they had been before the new framework plan appeared, Matthew Bryza again referred to the possibilities of it being signed in late 2006 - early 2007. A new version was launched: the elections were alleged not to be an obstacle for an agreement, it being possible to reach in 2007, too. Yet, this was rejected by the RA President, who hinted that the negotiations process during parliamentary, and most probably, presidential elections would hardly result in an agreement. In other words, the “window” the mediators had been talking about at length slammed shut.

To resolve the confused situation it is sometimes useful to cast a glance backwards, to its beginning, when the “window” was just opening. This book attempts to compare what the ideas and

notions were that people, professionally dealing with the problem, opinion-leaders in their respective countries, came into 2006 with. All sections of the book were written in 2005. They probably would have been repeatedly reconsidered during the subsequent months. Yet their value is in this very being free from the petty fuss of 2006. Are the approaches of Stepan Grigorian and Rasim Musabekov comparable, do they have common edges? The comparison of the two stances can be a certain indicator of how realistic the hopes and opportunities related to Karabagh conflict resolution are.

Journalists Arif Aliev and Boris Navasardian prepared 10 questions for experts and further comment on the answers received both from the standpoint of how close their approaches are and through the lens of their own understanding of the problem, the feelings of Armenian and Azerbaijani publics, outside views on the problem. Thus, the book is made of two interviews and two comments.

The followings questions were addressed to Grigorian and Musabekov:

1. Who needed the Karabagh conflict, who has cashed in on it? Was there an alternative to its escalation? What was it at various stages? To what extent do inner political factors influence the regulation process?

2. What are the specific differences of the sides? Are history and culture dividing or uniting factors for the Armenian and Azerbaijani people? Why would Azerbaijan not accede to the independence of MK, and the Armenians in Karabagh and Armenia would not think of its existence in Azerbaijan plausible?

3. What resources are there for peaceful regulation? What stands in the way of utilizing those resources and what guaran-

tees are needed for the sides to make the first steps towards reconciliation? Are there any discrepancies between the perceptions of the “enlightened” and those of the common people on the possibilities of a resolution at the current stage? Are there chances for “public diplomacy” to contribute to the peace in the region?

4. Where do the reservations and phobia for each other stem from and what is the source of nurturing the image of an enemy? What is the role of media in the conflict? Is it possible to reach a decrease in hostility through public opinion to the point that an agreement is reached between the countries?

5. What should the logic of regulation proceed from: security to cooperation or cooperation to security? What would the parties gain from reviving the transportation and economic cooperation, and what are the losses from the lack of such cooperation and the blockade?

6. Who will rip the benefits in case the conflict is not resolved in predictable future? What would the consequences be, if full-fledged military actions resume?

7. What could make a solution possible: intensive bilateral talks, mediating efforts of the international community, the pressure on the part of the leading countries? How would the outcome be affected if Mountainous Karabagh representatives were also included in the negotiation process?

8. To what extent could the Karabagh regulation be integrated into the context of introducing a new system of regional security in South Caucasus? What is the perspective role of NATO, as well as the Russian and Turkish factors in that regard?

9. In what way could European integration potential affect Armenian and Azerbaijani relations?

10. Which form of resolution offered during the last 15 years would you consider to be more realistic? Could you define your own model currently acceptable for the sides, or at least the principles on which the regulation should be based?

The answers of Azerbaijani and Armenian experts showed similarities in their views on a whole number of issues. They both place the responsibility for transformation of the Karabagh problem into an armed clash on the central authorities of the USSR and the principle of “divide and rule” that was being implemented. And the conflict per se was in many ways conditioned by the USSR national policy. The corrupt administration of the two Soviet republics, in the opinion of Grigorian and Musabekov, share the guilt for what had happened. It is these two factors and not the history or the culture of the two nations that account for the roots of the conflict. Both experts believe that after the conflict moved to an armed phase and afterwards, after the ceasefire was signed, the parties came close to peace several times. Their opinions somewhat differ as to in which specific situations the conflict resolution or avoiding further escalation were possible. But they are unanimous in their assessment of events in 1997-1998, seeing the resignation of the RA First President Levon Ter-Petrosian as a missed opportunity of reaching an agreement. The stage-by-stage plan drawn at that time or its renewed version to this day are viewed by Grigorian and Musabekov to be the most promising resolution model. Both stress the inevitability of bilateral compromise, and some mutual concessions are proposed that are refused by the official parties of the negotiations.

The experts see no alternative to the peaceful resolution, thinking that war is perilous for the region. They do not doubt that the unresolved conflict damages both Armenia and Azerbaijan and disagree with the opinion that the time factor favors one or the other side. Both Stepan Grigorian and Rasim Musabekov recog-

nize the great dependence of the negotiations on the mediating effort and the external factors, even though they differ in their definitions of international policy vectors. They both value the potential role of the European Union and NATO, listing examples of these structures contributing to overcoming crises or containing them within civilized processes. Having analyzed the behavior of the leadership of the RA and AR on Karabagh issue, the experts conclude that the lack of democracy in both countries impedes the resolution process, and “the exploitation of the tension” by politicians remains one of the main recipes for gaining and keeping power. The popular diplomacy as well as expert communities of Armenia and Azerbaijan is viewed by respondents to be an important internal resolution resource.

As it can be seen, the attitudes of Rasim Musabekov and Stepan Grigorian have a lot in common on the key issues. At the same time the comments of Arif Aliev and Boris Navasardian show both divergences of opinion with experts and with each other and new elements of consensus. In particular, in the opinion of journalists, the conflict could have had no resolution in the context of the international realities that accompanied the post-Soviet development of Armenia, Azerbaijan and South Caucasus region in general. In their opinion, to overcome the destructive inertia both sides need new political resources and approaches. Moreover, the journalists were more skeptical than experts regarding the role of popular diplomacy.

It is important to note that the book co-authors have been involved in many initiatives of Baku and Yerevan Press Clubs and their partners. When making a certain point, they proceed from the discussions and studies, held within these initiatives.

The joint projects of two Press Clubs were actually the first precedents of direct (with no international “mediation”) interac-

tion of journalistic associations of Armenia and Azerbaijan. At the initial stage the partners tried to avoid points of tension and, with the participation of Georgian colleagues, discussed professional issues in journalism, freedom of expression and access to information, media legislation, etc. common for all. After some time the climate of trust and tolerance that had set in allowed to raise more sensitive issues, too - the role of media in conflicts, coverage of Karabagh issue in the press of the two countries. The regional initiatives of YPC and BPC started to involve not only journalists but also representatives of non-governmental organizations, expert community, politicians. This enabled to widen the scope of subjects discussed, to consider the whole complex of problems, related to the conflict resolution and regional integration.

At a certain stage the direct participants of joint projects started to include the journalists, representatives of the civil society of Mountainous Karabagh. Stepanakert Press Club acted as the partner of BPC and YPC. Actually, to a certain extent the whole process of cooperation between Armenian and Azerbaijani partners was a continuous invention of new forms and overcoming of taboos – the inner and outer vetoes, impeding the deepening of the dialogue and the problem resolution. The innovative format Azerbaijan-Armenia-Turkey, initiated by Yerevan and Baku Press Clubs, turned out to be quite productive. It allowed the journalists of the three countries to look at the problems of the region and the relations within the triangle in a broader geopolitical context. To this effect trips were organized with subsequent publications, TV films on interethnic conflicts in other regions. Joint Armenia-Azerbaijani journalistic “troops” were deployed under the projects of two press clubs in Northern Ireland, the Cyprus, Israel and Macedonia.

From discussions and study tours the partners proceeded to studies and joint information products. Monitoring and content analysis of the media of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Turkey,

surveys with standard sampling, in-depth expert interviews, focus groups, Delphi method. The press and public opinion in Mountainous Karabagh were studied separately. A certain chronicle of the media of South Caucasus was presented in the book, produced by media experts of International Association of Journalists “South Caucasus”, founded, among others, by Yerevan and Baku Press Clubs. The book features the history, the legislation, the market of media in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia as well as in the unrecognized republics of the region – Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Mountainous Karabagh. The simultaneous accession of Armenia and Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe (Georgia became a member of this structure a bit earlier) prompted the partners to make a comparative analysis of the freedom of expression and information situation, the media legislation in three countries as well as to develop recommendations to synchronize reforms in this sphere.

Under YPC and BPC projects other books and brochures were published, web-sites were launched; joint periodical and electronic newsletters on regional issues were disseminated. Documentaries were produced showing various aspects of the relations between the countries and nations of South Caucasus, TV talk shows were shot with the participation of politicians, experts and representatives of NGOs of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

When the direct contacts, mutual visits of journalists and civil society activists of Azerbaijan and Armenia became complicated in 2000-2001, the partners had to look for new effective forms of communication. The problem was solved through satellite TV bridges that enabled holding conferences, debates with participants meeting their colleagues without leaving their cities. To help journalists receive first-hand information about the neighbor country, BPC and YPC initiated “virtual” press-conferences - Armenian journalists in Yerevan studio were asking questions to Azerbaijani

politicians in Baku studio and the other way round. Media representatives had a chance to have an hour of questions to MPs Vazgen Manukian, Asim Mollazadeh and Shavarsh Kocharian, state and public figures Novruz Mamedov, Ruben Shugarian, Eldar Namazov, other influential personalities of Armenia and Azerbaijan, who appeared on the other end of the TV bridge.

This book, “Karabagh Conflict: to Understand Each Other”, of which we owe the appearance to German Friedrich Ebert Foundation, in many ways is based on the knowledge and experience accumulated during the implementation of projects above. And while it is presented to public, Baku and Yerevan Press Clubs realize and plan new initiatives. We do hope that each of them contributes to puzzling out the confused tangle of problems in our region.



Stepan GRIGORIAN

Stepan Grigorian was born in September 24, 1953. He graduated with honors from the Physics Department of Tbilisi State University. In 1975-1983, Mr. Grigorian completed his post-graduate studies at Yerevan Physics Institute and received his PhD in Physics and Mathematics in 1983. He has published more than 30 scientific articles in physics of high energy and elementary particles. In 1990-1995, he served as a member of the Supreme Soviet (parliament) of the Republic of Armenia, joining the standing parliamentary committee on human rights. In 1995-1998 Mr. Grigorian is the Extraordinary Envoy and Plenipotentiary Minister of the Republic of Armenia in Russian Federation, and in 1996-1999 – the Authorized Representative of the Republic of Armenia in the CIS Collective Security Agreement. In 1998-2000 Mr. Grigorian was a Counselor of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

Stepan Grigorian has been a board member of the “Armat” Center for Democracy and Civil Society Development since 1999, and chairman of the board of the Analytical Center on Globalization and Regional Cooperation since 2002. He has authored about 120 publications on conflict resolution, regional security, cooperation in the South Caucasus, globalization processes, civil society development and human rights, and Armenia’s relations with NATO, EU, OSCE, CE and other organizations

“THE RESUMPTION OF MILITARY ACTIONS IS A DISASTER FOR BOTH ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN”

1. Who needed the Karabagh conflict, who has cashed in on it? Was there an alternative to its escalation? What was it at various stages? To what extent do inner political factors influence the regulation process?

To answer these questions one needs to understand the correlation between the “objective” and “subjective” reasons of why the conflict broke out. The Karabagh problem did not come out of nowhere. Historical factors have played their role here. However different the interpretation of events and realities is, the historians of both Armenia and Azerbaijan do not deny that Karabagh problem existed already in early 20th century. The national policy of the USSR exacerbated the ethnic relations on many edges of this empire. In practice this was a policy of disguising the problems and solving them by force, a policy of concealing the true situation of national minorities from the citizens of the country. Entire nations were deported from their historic areas; demographic situation of the country was artificially changed. It suffices to remember the resettlement of Crimean Tatars from the Crimea and Meskhetei Turks from Georgia; inhabitation of Baltic republics with the representatives of other regions of USSR, etc.

In Mountainous Karabagh Autonomous Region (MKAR) the share of the Armenian population decreased from 94.7% in 1921 up to 75.9% in 1979. This was perceived by the local Armenians as a consistent policy of Baku to “azerbaijanize” the autonomous region. The concern was justified by the example of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic in Azerbaijan, where the



Armenian majority of early 20th century practically “disappeared” by 1988. Social and economic hardships faced by the MK population were noted, too. For this reason the renewal of the problem by the end of 20th century had quite serious grounds and objective reasons.

Since its beginning in 1988 the Karabagh movement in MK and Armenia had a powerful democratic charge, which could contribute to the prevention of conflict escalation. Yet this is where “subjective” reasons came into the picture. Among other things it is the inclination of the USSR authorities to retain conflict situations in the peripheral regions of the country. The end of 1980s was marked by a systemic political and economic crisis of the communist empire. As the well-established Soviet tradition prompted, the Kremlin decided to restrain the situation through inciting a clash of various ethnic, religious and social groups. The simple reluctance of Armenians and Azerbaijanis not to fight each other was insufficient, as there was a party, interested to have a confrontation in the South Caucasus (SC), and this factor played a serious role in the transformation of a Karabagh conflict into the most entangled bloodshedding conflict in former USSR.

Then the Kremlin had a complete control over media and used this institute to sparkle hatred among the people of South Caucasus countries (or the Transcaucasia, as it was called at the time). We all remember the reports on Karabagh conflict aired by “Vremya” newscast and the articles from “Pravda” newspaper that conveyed no other information but the fact that in the clashes “people of various nationalities were killed”. And this was reported on the days when the Freedom Square of Yerevan was the rally site for hundreds of thousands of people, raising not only the Karabagh problem, but also the issues of democratization in Armenian society, freedom of expression, human rights, free and fair elections.

Naturally, the power structures of USSR and republics of Transcaucasia were fully controlled by Communist authorities, too, and the democratic movements in Armenia and Azerbaijan (Armenian National Movement and People’s Front of Azerbaijan) had no levers of pressure on them and media to try and prevent the conflict escalation.

There was also another “subjective” factor, contributing to the conflict intensification: our people were a part of the totalitarian system denying the existence of problems in the country, intolerant to alternative views on political, economic, social and other processes. In other words, our people did not have a tradition of problem-solving by dialogue, mutual respect and open discussion of the controversies – and this could have reduced the probability of conflict growing into a military confrontation.

The “perestroyka”, declared by Mikhail Gorbachev, did not change the essence of the Communist regime, either. The political resolution of the extraordinary session of MKAR Regional Council of People’s Deputies on February 20, 1988, soliciting the cessation of the region from Azerbaijani SSR and unification with Armenian SSR, was followed by a painful response not only of Azerbaijan, but also of the “Center”. The painful response was later accompanied by force. It suffices to remember the “Ring” operation, implemented in May 1991 by the special troops of the USSR Interior Ministry, using armored vehicles in the Armenian villages in the north of MK, as well as in Shahumian district and Getashen subdistrict of Azerbaijan. The operation ended by ousting of the villagers from their houses. This makes it clear that the transformation of Karabagh problem into a serious international conflict was actually inevitable – with all the negative consequences it had for all its parties, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Mountainous Karabagh.

The inner political factors in Armenia and Azerbaijan undoubtedly have a serious impact on the stances and actions of the official Yerevan and Baku in Karabagh issue. The elites of the two countries exercise significant pressure on the leadership in terms of the conflict resolution. Any decisions or discussions on Karabagh issue made in international organizations give rise to heated debate within the countries. However, the role of responsible administration consists in promoting tolerance in the society, preparing it for compromise. The leaders should not be guided by radical political sentiment.

2. What are the specific differences of the sides? Are history and culture dividing or uniting factors for the Armenian and Azerbaijani people? Why would Azerbaijan not accede to the independence of MK, and the Armenians in Karabagh and Armenia would not think of its existence in Azerbaijan plausible?

In the present day interpretation of Karabagh problem the main controversy is that each of the parties believe MK to be its historical land, quoting numerous historical arguments to support their point. The problem of MK remains in the sphere of a territorial and historic dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan. (In my answer to Question 7 I dwell on the reasons for such a serious deformation of the essence of the conflict). Under the circumstances it is quite hard to speak about possible compromise and agreements: because if this land is “mine”, why should I compromise on it?

Sometimes the history (or, rather, this or that interpretation of the past) and the culture become factors impeding the solution of some controversies, and therefore – separating nations. An illustrative example of that are the activities of the Armenian delegation in PACE immediately after Armenia and Azerbaijan joined the CE in 2001. Its members attempted to introduce to the Assembly’s

consideration the issue of the recognition of Armenian genocide in Ottoman Empire despite the fact that the CE is not inclined towards historical problems – they are actually out of the organization’s mandate. On their behalf, the Azerbaijani and Turkish delegation raised the issue of the killings of civilian Azerbaijanis in 1992 in Khojalu (a village in the vicinity of Stepanakert). These two issues are certainly incomparable for the global community neither in terms of their scale nor the political significance. However, the unduly and improperly raised problems have further complicated the relations between our countries.

In the absence of traditions of peaceful coexistence and compromise, political and religious tolerance, in the absence of free media channeling alternative viewpoints on each other, it would be naive to hope for a speedy and mutually acceptable solution of the Karabagh problem. The experience of conflict resolution in the world shows this is a slow and difficult problem. However specific each interethnic confrontation is, similar challenges are faced by intermediaries in Abkhaz, Kosovo and other conflicts.

The grounds due to which Karabagh Armenians think it impossible for them to live within Azerbaijan are numerous. I will consider the two reasons voiced most often. The first refers to the negative historical experience of the life of Armenians under the administrative rule of Azerbaijan, the second is that the modern world is very dynamic, its rules change as the time may demand it and in the nearest future a thorough review of fundamental international norms and principles is possible. A reference is made to Kosovo and Montenegro, where the international community recently has been shifting towards the positive solution in the issue of Kosovar Albanians or Montenegrins’ independence.

Of the arguments, known to me as quoted by Azerbaijan against the recognition of MK independence, the principle of ter-

ritorial integrity of states is most common, as a fundamental norm of international law.

The parties remain committed to these mutually exclusive positions, although many years have gone by since the conflict broke out. Meanwhile, there are examples when the readiness of one of the parties to compromise gave it certain advantages in the eyes of the international community. After the accession of Cyprus Republic to the European Union was decided, the sentiment of Cyprus Turks underwent a serious change, and on the referendum of April 24, 2004 they voted for the unification of the island by the plan of the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (“two countries in one country” formula). The referendum results are primarily explained by the EU attractiveness, in which the Cyprus Turks saw the guarantees for their security and economic development. And although the plan was not supported by the Greek Cypriots, this dynamic change in the stance of the “northerners” gives a chance for the conflict resolution, and, most importantly, sets possibilities of Northern Cyprus overcoming international isolation.

3. What resources are there for peaceful regulation? What stands in the way of utilizing those resources and what guarantees are needed for the sides to make the first steps towards reconciliation? Are there any discrepancies between the perceptions of the “enlightened” and those of the common people on the possibilities of a resolution at the current stage? Are there chances for “public diplomacy” to contribute to the peace in the region?

I would subdivide resources for peaceful resolution on “external” and “internal”. The “external” resources are shaped by the countries and international organizations that are directly interested in the stability in the South Caucasus region. Here I would empha-

size the role of the USA, which, being a major global power, has its interests in every region of some significance. The interests in South Caucasus are constituted by the involvement of the region countries in the antiterrorist campaign, their geographic proximity to the Middle East region of particular importance to the US. SC is the most convenient link between Europe and Central Asia, in the region major energy projects are implemented, ensuring alternative routes for supplying oil and gas from the Caspian to the West. Another significant factor is the vicinity of the countries, called by the USA the “axis of evil” (Iran, Syria).

All this preconditions the growing interest of Washington in the stability of the region. After the countries of SC gained independence, the USA has provided to them substantial economic, humanitarian, scientific and other assistance. The role of this power is also essential in the development of democratic institutes in out countries. And since 2002 the USA started to provide assistance in military and technical spheres to the countries of South Caucasus. Americans engage in serious efforts to improved Armenian-Turkish relations, and, through co-chairmanship in the OSCE Minsk Group, actively seek ways for peaceful resolution of the Karabagh conflict, realizing that it is otherwise hard to expect stability and development of the whole region.

Speaking of international organizations, the vast potential of EU and NATO should be noted, As a result of their last expansion, the South Caucasus countries became the neighbors of these organizations. In compliance with their activity principles, these organizations seek to cooperate with their neighbors, advocate the democracy development and the formation of stable political systems. Besides, the EU and NATO are interested in the cooperation of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, since it is only through close interaction of the countries of the region that the peaceful conflict resolution and full-scale integration of SC in European and inter-

national structures is possible. Immediately after its expansion, in June 2004 European Union made a resolution of cooperation with the countries of the region under the European Neighborhood Policy.

At the NATO Istanbul summit, held in June 2004, a decision was made that the regions of South Caucasus and Central Asia (CA) are of strategic importance for the organization. Readiness was stated to pass from cooperation under Partnership for Peace to close interaction on individual programs, as well as on the creation of the institute of Special Representatives in CA and SC. In 2000-2004 NATO held military exercise “Cooperative Best Effort” in every country of the region. NATO is of obvious interest for the South Caucasus not only as the most powerful defense and security system, but also as an organization of which Turkey is a member. NATO can be the “bridge”, which will further ensure also the bilateral cooperation of Armenia and Turkey in security – the sphere where the enemy image stereotypes are most persistent.

The “internal” factors, capable of contributing to the speedy and peaceful resolution of the conflict, include both power structures and the civil societies of our countries. Certainly, the decisive role in the conflict resolution belongs to the authorities of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the elected representatives of MK. After the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2003 in Armenia the legitimacy of the administration turned out to be so low that one can hardly expect them to make any serious steps towards the conflict resolution. The joint mission of CE and OSCE, observing the elections, recorded a great number of violations and described the elections in its final report as non-democratic and incompliant with international standards. This assessment of elections conducted was joined by the EU and the US Department of State. Only the observers of the Commonwealth of Independent States considered that the violations in place did not affect the election results, even

more deteriorating the impression from Armenian elections, as the partiality of the CIS missions is widely known.

The authorities that do not enjoy the confidence of their citizens are unable to make serious steps, particularly such steps that involve mutual concessions to Azerbaijan. And everyone realizes that any compromise is associated with mutual losses, a surrender of something, and is thus quite unpopular in the society. Besides, the present leadership of Armenia, who came to power in 1998 through the slogans of the need to recognize the independence of Mountainous Karabagh and the unacceptability of concessions to Azerbaijan, is today limited in their maneuvering possibilities. The same is true for other political forces of Armenia, advocating the “unbending” negotiations policy. Thus, in April 2001 all political parties, having faction or deputy groups at the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia (RA NA), made a joint statement which says in particular: “Azerbaijan will get an adequate response, bearing all responsibility for the consequences of new military actions”, and further: “(...) For us in the issue of Artsakh problem resolution the following principles are acceptable – the unification of Karabagh and Armenia or the international recognition of the independent status of Karabagh”.

And since a similar, rigid position is taken by the authorities of Azerbaijan, for whom the only acceptable option is the autonomy of MK in Azerbaijan and its vertical subordination, it is clear that there is very little hope for the use of the power resource for the peaceful and the mutually acceptable conflict resolution. Milli Meclis of Azerbaijan on the results of parliamentary hearing on the Karabagh issue, held on May 6-7, 2005 adopted a Declaration, saying: “(...) As a result of aggressive policy, conducted by Armenia versus Azerbaijan, about 20% of the Azerbaijani territory was occupied, Armenians do not conform with the UN resolutions (...), official Yerevan also conducts a policy of resettlement

in the occupied Azerbaijani territories (...)”, and further, “(...) We demand the global community not to close its eyes at these facts and make efforts to solve the Karabagh conflict basing on the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan”.

Yet, recently in the stance of Armenian authorities on Karabagh issue there have been unexpected “swerves”. Thus, on April 11, 2005, during the meeting of President Robert Kocharian with the students of Economy Department of Yerevan State University the following was stated: “(...) We have never denied that the reconciliation calls for mutual concessions - there is no other way to solve conflicts. Their resolution is either a surrender of one of the parties or compromise. There was a war, this war was stopped in May 1994 and to this day we have a ceasefire. But in reality, this is not a surrender already (...)”; “(...) If there is a continuing conflict, its solution is in mutual concessions (...)”; “(...) Today we must accept that as a result of conflict resolution mutual concessions are inevitable (...)” Earlier, on March 30 at the parliamentary hearing on Karabagh issue the RA Defense Ministry Serzh Sargsian said: “The Armenian party is ready to discuss the security belt issue. If we are given greater security guarantees than the ones ensured by the belt, it will no longer be necessary”.

It is hard to say whether this means that Armenian authorities make a drastic change of their stance on the Mountainous Karabagh and how consistent they will be. However, it is important to note here that what has been said is close to the position of the first Armenian president Levon Ter-Petrosian. To illustrate the point I will quote Ter-Petrosian’s article “War or Peace? Time to Stop and Think”, published in the Russian “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” on November 1, 1997: “(...) The war must be excluded, therefore, the Karabagh issue must be resolved solely by peaceful talks”, “(...) The only solution to the Karabagh issue is the compromise which does not mean a victory of one of the parties and defeat of

the other, but a possibility to arrive at a consensus under the conditions of conflict satiation”; “(...) The compromise should not be considered solely as something imposed; on the contrary the conflicting parties must apply huge effort for its soonest attainment, since the alternative, as mentioned above is the war and further suffering of people”; “(...) Compromise is not a choice between good and bad, but between the bad and the worse, i.e., compromise is only a way to avoid what is worse, to which the conflicting parties have to resort, when the realization of the possible ‘worse’ comes and when there is a capacity for political will and courage”; “(...)The second error is the unjustified statement that since Karabagh won the war there is no need for compromise. Unfortunately, Karabagh won not the war, but the battle. The war is won only when the adversary surrenders”.

But on a larger scale, however milder the official rhetoric becomes, the power resource will work for the conflict resolution in full only when the administration of the two countries has a high degree of legitimacy, and the tone in the political life of Armenia and Azerbaijan is set by liberal forces.

“Internal” factor, as noted above, is constituted by the civil society. During the years of independence its institutes have significantly developed. This is true for political parties, public organizations, and media. Although they are still going through the hard way of development, overcoming serious problems and obstacles, the experience of Georgia showed their growing role in the life of the state. During the “rose revolution” in Georgia the role of NGO sector and independent media was very important. Certainly, in the resolution of Karabagh problem the role of civil society institutes of Armenia and Azerbaijan may grow. This can be assisted also by the increase of the regional projects, involving public and political figures and organizations, media representatives, youth associations, experts, intellectuals.

Unfortunately, neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan is an “exemplary” democratic state, which, certainly, narrows the opportunities of “popular diplomacy”. Recently in Armenia we see a serious retreat from democratic values and freedoms: there are no independent TV channels; for three years in a row in 2002-2004 the reputable international Freedom House organization rates Armenian media as “not free”; violence against journalists is a common phenomenon; activities of political parties are restricted; human rights violations have become common (it suffices to remember the dispersal of the opposition rally of many thousand people in April 2004). The fulfillment of the commitments to the Council of Europe is not adequate either.

It is also concerning that the authorities of Armenia and governmental political forces try to monopolize the MK problem and instill it in the minds of their citizens that only they are capable to solve it in the interests of Armenian nation and that any other point of view, different from that of the leadership, means “defeatism”. An opinion is promoted that if there are alternative concepts to the Karabagh problem resolution, it will result in weakened position of Armenia in the negotiations process. It is not accidental that in recent 3-4 years on Armenian TV air it is practically impossible to voice a stance on Karabagh resolution that would contradict the one, commonly accepted as official. Following the Azerbaijani press, one can see the situation is similar there. A false understanding of patriotism is being promoted in our societies. And it is very important that those political and public forces in our countries that are ready for compromise and understand the perils of the maximalist approaches become more active in their efforts.

Anyhow, the certain step back from blunt denial of political opponents’ stance, present in Armenia today and more active in the last months of the OSCE Minsk Group effort on conflict resolution

models and the rather calm discussion of these models in the press and the public of both countries allow hoping that the peaceful resolution resources have not been exhausted and can be used in the coming future.

4. Where do the reservations and phobia for each other stem from and what is the source of nurturing the image of an enemy? What is the role of media in the conflict? Is it possible to reach a decrease in hostility through public opinion to the point that an agreement is reached between the countries?

The studies of Armenian and Azerbaijani press, administered recently, show that in our societies the distrust towards each other prevails and the mutual fears are strong. The stereotyped enemy images of Armenians in Azerbaijan and of Azerbaijanis in Armenia get increasingly strong in our countries. Thus, Yerevan Press Club and its partners in January-September, 2005, held cross studies of the press of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (Armenian press was analyzed by Azerbaijani and Georgian experts, the Azerbaijani press – by an Armenian and Georgian experts, and, accordingly, the Georgian press – by an Armenian and Azerbaijani expert), aiming to determine how adequate, valid, impartial the coverage of events in other countries was. The findings of the study are quite characteristic: in both Armenian and Azerbaijani press the share of pieces on each other with negative connotation is big. The difference is only in that in quantitative proportion, the negative pieces on Armenians in Azerbaijani press are several times more numerous than those in Armenian press on Azerbaijanis. The Armenian and Azerbaijani press monitoring, held in 2004 by “Region” research center, showed that Azerbaijanis link the enemy image with Armenians even when telling about issues unrelated to Karabagh conflict, and in Armenian press the enemy image is presented through the nega-

tive image of either a Turk or an Azerbaijani. And this research, too, records a quantitative excess of mentions of the enemy Armenian in Azerbaijani press as compared to the mentions of enemy Azerbaijani in Armenian press.

The frequent reference to the past (also in the context of MK problem), the arbitrary interpretation of historical facts, references to only negative examples of the interaction of two people are among the reasons for intensified confrontation in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. Besides, the strong dependence of media of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the authorities results in a situation when the controversy is significantly conditioned by the stances of the leadership of our countries. Certainly media cannot eliminate the reasons for the conflict, yet it is in their power to set up a more favorable climate for a dialogue between the countries and weakening of the mutual distrust and aversion.

To put the media to work in order to de-radicalize the public opinion of Armenia, a democratization of the whole society and establishment of political freedoms are necessary. It is extremely important to voice an alternative view on all issues, including MK, that differs from the official standpoint. Then the media will be more active in providing a tribune to public and political figures, inclined to engage in a constructive dialogue with Azerbaijanis. The public must be involved in a discussion on mutual interests of two countries and nations, on the possibilities of cooperation in various spheres.

5. What should the logic of regulation proceed from: security to cooperation or cooperation to security? What would the parties gain from reviving the transportation and economic cooperation, and what are the losses from the lack of such cooperation and the blockade?

The security in general and regional security in particular is quite a complicated phenomenon and is not confined solely to the military. It includes three dimensions: military-political, economic and human (the latter incorporates the civil society institutes, media, and the humanitarian sphere). The peculiarity of the modern world is that in the setup of security systems a noticeable role is now played by economic and human dimensions. It is time the SC countries understood what ideal they should aspire for to unite the region.

The general rationale of the resolution should contain actions in two directions: ***first*** – this is the regional cooperation, necessary to develop simultaneously in political, economic, environmental and humanitarian spheres (to advance by parallel routes and step by step). It is understandable that the regional cooperation should create conditions for starting interaction in security. The consistent political and humanitarian cooperation will ensure the human dimension of security, and economic and environmental cooperation will contribute to its economic dimension in the region. Presently it is difficult to imagine cooperation in the military sphere on a regional level, for this reason the ***second*** direction of actions is the integration of the countries of the region in European (CE and EU) and Euro-Atlantic (OSCE and NATO) structures – it is expected that the South Caucasus security must be formed as their part and be up to their standards). The authority and the resources of NATO will ensure the participation of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the military cooperation under this organization. Thus, the second way will ensure the transition from security to the trilateral military cooperation of the countries of the region.

The international community represented by CE, EU and USA recently has been trying to contribute to the strengthening of confidence between the people of the region and to include the eco-

conomic dimension of security. Armenia supports this approach, however, Azerbaijan agrees to economic cooperation only after the Karabagh conflict is resolved. A number of major oil, gas, energy and transportation programs are being implemented in the region, leaving Armenia out. Apparently, Azerbaijan believes that the trio of Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan is a self-sufficient system and can successfully cooperate. But I believe that the rationale of regional actions must be built on a different principle: the maximal involvement of all countries of the region into major regional projects. This will ensure a high level of trust between the parties with the subsequent mutually acceptable solution of Karabagh conflict. The launch of regional economic cooperation will result in a common regional market in South Caucasus, and the opening of communications will enable the free transition of commodities, services and capital that will inevitably weaken the role and significance of orders between the states of the region. Under these new conditions the search for the compromise solution to MK will become easier, too.

Besides, the international community, realizing the importance of human dimension of security, will try to form a broader context of regulation of relations among the SC countries. The method of establishing interactions between various social and professional groups of our countries is actively pursued. It remains only to hope that contacts, opinion exchange will help to change the general climate in the relations between the nations of the region, to find common ground for further regional cooperation.

6. Who will rip the benefits in case the conflict is not resolved in predictable future? What would the consequences be, if full-fledged military actions resume?

After the ceasefire in May 1994 all three parties to the conflict, Armenia, Azerbaijan and MK, managed to retain the truce.

Moreover, it is to their merit that the truce lasts with no introduction of international peacekeeping forces. However, if for a long time the parties are unable to find a comprehensive conflict resolution option, are unable to sign a peace treaty, this can result in regular tensions on both diplomatic and political levels (during the recent months more statements were voiced of politicians, primarily of Azerbaijan, on the possible solution of the problem in military way), and along the contact line in the conflict zone. According to some sources, in 11 years of the armistice the number of casualties from the three sides because of sniper bullets and sporadic shootings, is comparable to the casualties during the military phase of conflict in 1991-1994.

International community, concerned with the lack of resolution to the conflict and persisting tensions in the conflict zone, gives a regular response to them. And PACE resolution 1416, adopted on January 2005 session, says: “The Assembly recalls that both Armenia and Azerbaijan committed themselves upon their accession to the Council of Europe in January 2001 to use only peaceful means for settling the conflict, by refraining from any threat of using force against their neighbors. The Assembly urges both Governments to comply with these commitments and refrain from using armed forces against each other as well as from propagating military action (...)”

It is hard to say who will win if the conflict is “frozen”, yet it is quite easy to guess who will lose. Should the resolution process procrastinate, Armenia and Azerbaijan will be the first to suffer. And the problem here is not only that in case of a long-term “conflict freezing”, absence of progress, the probability of military actions renewal increases, but also that our countries become less interesting for the international community, are viewed to be “risk zones” for foreign investors from abroad and businessmen. The parties to the conflict also lose because the absence of progress in

the conflict resolution can push the global community to other methods of conflict settlement, such as “inducing to peace”, tested on the Balkans. And in this case, as the international experience shows, the parties to the conflict are actually distanced from “scenario writing” of situation development and are passive observers of the way their fates are governed.

In Armenia, we often hear from our authorities that the lack of resolution does not impede the development of Armenian economy. Official data on economic growth are quoted, on the successful adaptation of the Armenian economy to the conditions of economic blockade. Such phenomena are possible, but they must not be taken as solutions of the main tasks and problems.

The resumption of military actions is a disaster for both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Everyone knows how big the emigration from South Caucasus is, the hard the social condition in our countries is also common knowledge. For this reason the resumption of military actions will mean a humanitarian and demographic disaster for two countries, and maybe – for the whole region. I am convinced that the international community will adequately respond to such a development: Armenia and Azerbaijan will probably be expelled from CE; international sanction system will be applied against both countries. For this reason I do hope that our authorities will have sufficient common sense not to renew military actions.

7. What could make a solution possible: intensive bilateral talks, mediating efforts of the international community, the pressure on the part of the leading countries? How would the outcome be affected if Mountainous Karabagh representatives were also included in the negotiation process?

In order to answer this question I will try to present my understanding of the Karabagh problem development. This conflict went through many stages, starting from a political and military confrontation, the subsequent ceasefire, and implementation of active mediating mission by international organizations and ending with the fragile peace, “frozen” condition of today.

One of the most important developments throughout the Karabagh conflict in Armenia was the change of resolution concept. This occurred after the change of power in 1998 and made a serious impact on the whole processes, as well as distorted the essence of the conflict itself.

Since 1988 when the Karabagh movement in MK and Armenia started and till 1998 the problem was considered in the context of internationally recognized norm “the right of nation to self-determination”. This prompted all the steps of Armenian politics and diplomacy, namely: the support of the right to MK elected authorizes to participate in the negotiations process and determine its fate. In the resolution of the Supreme Council of Armenia on July 8, 1992 it was recorded in particular: “(...) Basing on the fundamental principle of international law, the right of nations to self-determination, as well as on results of the referendum on the independence of Mountainous Karabagh Republic (MKR), held on December 10, 1991, confirming its commitment to the political resolution of MKR problem (...), Armenia will be protecting the solution of Artsakh issue that will be accepted by MKR (...)”

The Armenian authorities of the period thought it necessary that elected MK representatives be present in the meetings and negotiations with the Azerbaijani leadership. And so it was, say, on September 25, 1993, when the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Levon Ter-Petrosian and Heydar Aliyev, as well as the Chairman of the State Defense Committee of MK Robert

Kocharian met in Moscow. Practically all the documents of the time, along with the signatures of the official representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan and resolution mediators, bear the signatures of competent MK representatives. Thus, the well-known Bishkek protocol, opening the way to truce and signed on May 1994, next to the mediators' signatures, has the signatures of the heads of parliaments – Babken Ararktsian of Armenia, Rasul Guliev of Azerbaijan and Karen Baburian of Mountainous Karabagh. The same can be seen also in the document on ceasefire, signed by the Defense Ministers of Armenia, Azerbaijan and MK on May 11, 1994.

This attitude of Armenian authorities was understood by international community, for this reason in 1994, at OSCE summit in Budapest MK was officially recognized to be a party to the conflict. This was confirmed in Prague, on March 31, 1995, at OSCE Senior Council session, where The Chairman in Office summed up, saying “(...) Chairman-in-Office confirms previous OSCE decisions on the status of the parties, i.e. the participation of the two State parties to the conflict and of the other conflicting party (Nagorno-Karabakh) in the whole negotiation process, including in the Minsk Conference. (...)” This was a very important decision not only for MK, but also for Armenia and Azerbaijan, as it enabled the three parties to the conflict as well as the international community to gain a full and many-faceted idea of the conflict, to understand its essence and to a certain extent, to see the differences in the attitudes of the Armenian parties, Armenia and MK. The participation of MK as a full-fledged political party (and not solely a participant of the military part of the conflict) in the conflict resolution process became the most important factor allowing to successfully advance the process till 1998 and development of serious conflict resolution options under OSCE Minsk Group.

The Azerbaijani party treated the idea of Karabagh involvement as an independent unit in the negotiations process with less

“enthusiasm” and insisted on the equipotent participation of MK Azerbaijani community in the talks (as a result, the MK Azerbaijani community took part in the talks through representation in Azerbaijani delegation).

The argumentation of the Karabagh party on the right to participate in the negotiations process was quite a weighty one, because even before the conflict started the MKAR Armenians made 76% of the total population of the region. For this reason any elections, held in MK, whether this was an election of local self-government heads, deputies of various levels or referenda, had quite a representative nature and did not contradict the international rules of the game, by which any nation has a right to form its own power bodies (that is, the realization of the right to self-government). Thus, the elected MK authorities could have the competence of representing the whole of Mountainous Karabagh. Karabagh Azerbaijanis did not formally express their stance during the declaration of Mountainous Karabagh Republic (MKR) on September 2, 1991 and the conductance of MK referendum on independence in December 1991; however, even their participation could not change the results of the voting.

After the change of power in Armenia in 1998, when the country was headed by Robert Kocharian and the political forces that support him, primarily “Dashnaksutiun” party, the attitude of Armenia on Karabagh issue underwent a qualitative change. The new authorities of the country started to view the conflict from positions, close to “HayDat” ideology, the thesis of MK being historic Armenian land and its unification to Armenia being a matter of restoring historical justice. The consequence of this policy was that with the silent agreement of Armenia MK dropped out of the negotiations process and the attitude of the official Yerevan grew more rigid. Indeed, if the MK issue is the problem of “historical Armenian land”, what is the involvement of MK elected authori-

ties necessary for? It is quite enough for Armenian delegation only to present the stance of Armenians. Thus, starting from 1998 the new format of negotiations started to work, where only Robert Kocharian and Heydar Aliyev met, and after his decease – Kocharian and Ilham Aliyev. During the past 7 years there have been over 25 meetings, in none of which elected MK representatives took part. Thus, it is not surprising that the international community today states their complete futility and lack of progress. No documents have been signed and no options of conflict resolution have been developed to be presented in writing for public discussions in our countries.

The attitude to the conflict of the leaders of global powers, co-chairing OSCE MG, changed too. Thus, the joint statement of Presidents of Russia Boris Yeltsin, of USA William Clinton and of France Jacques Chirac, adopted on Mountainous Karabagh on June 23, 1997, says: “(...) To contribute to the efforts of peaceful conflict resolution by negotiations, the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Conference from Russia, USA and France have presented a new proposal for a comprehensive settlement, taking into consideration the legitimate interest and concerns of all parties. It represents an appropriate basis for achieving a mutual agreement. The primary responsibility, however, rests with the parties and their leaders”. This referred to the “package” and “stage-by-stage” options, where, as it is known, the interests of all three parties to the conflict are reflected. This statement is to be compared to the joint declaration of Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President George Bush, adopted on the Russian-US summit of May 24-26, 2002 in Moscow, saying in particular: “(...) In Central Asia and the South Caucasus, we recognize our common interest in promoting the stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all the nations of this region (...)”, and further: “(...) The United States and Russia will cooperate to resolve regional conflicts, including those in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and the

Transnistrian issue in Moldova. We strongly encourage the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia to exhibit flexibility and a constructive approach to resolving the conflict concerning Nagorno-Karabakh. As two of the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE’s Minsk Group, the United States and Russia stand ready to assist in these efforts (...)” As we can see, there is not a word on the essence of conflict here, and it is presented as a dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

This new perception of the conflict is also proved by PACE Resolution 1416, adopted on January 25, 2005, on Karabagh issue. Notably, the Council of Europe since the accession of Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2002 started to actively attend to certain issues related to Karabagh conflict, as upon their accession our countries assumed the obligation to continue the efforts on conflict resolution by peaceful means only.

The increasing influence of CE in our region has resulted in a situation when on almost all sessions of PACE and CE Ministers Committee (the supreme executive body of the organization) certain issues related to the conflict were discussed or resolutions were made on them. resolution 1416 actually records the results of the CE four-year work and the designated co-rapporteurs on Karabagh conflict (the first co-rapporteur on MK was the present CE Secretary General Terry Davis, and the report on January session of PACE was presented by another British MP, David Atkinson. On the basis of his report Resolution 1416 was adopted) I will quote only some of the Resolution provisions: “(...) Considerable parts of the territory of Azerbaijan are still occupied by Armenian forces and separatist forces are still in control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region (...)”; “(...) The Assembly expresses its concern that the military action, and the widespread ethnic hostilities which preceded it, led to large-scale ethnic expulsion and the creation of mono-ethnic areas which resemble the terrible concept of ethnic cleansing. The Assembly reaffirms that independence and secession of a

regional territory from a state may only be achieved through a lawful and peaceful process based on democratic support by the inhabitants of such territory and not in the wake of an armed conflict leading to ethnic expulsion and the de facto annexation of such territory to another state. The Assembly reiterates that the occupation of foreign territory by a member state constitutes a grave violation of that state's obligations as a member of the Council of Europe and reaffirms the right of displaced persons from the area of conflict to return to their homes safely and with dignity (...); "(...) The Assembly calls on the Government of Azerbaijan to establish contacts without preconditions with the political representatives of both communities from the Nagorno-Karabakh region regarding the future status of the region. It is prepared to provide facilities for such contacts in Strasbourg, recalling that it did so in the form of a hearing on previous occasions with Armenian participation. (...)" As we can see, there is not a word said on the essence of the conflict, on the rights of MK residents to live safely on their land, on their right to self-determination, on the fact that the political demands of the MK population majority was responded by force, that an attempt was made to oust MK Armenians from their homeland. To counterbalance the political component of the conflict an accent is made on its ethnic element, It is considered as a territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as a result of which one party occupied the territory of the other.

Why did the international community represented by the main mediators introduce modifications in their approaches to the resolution? I think the reason is simple, it took the way that seemed the "simplest": the fewer conflict parties, the easier it will be to arrive at an agreement. The present-day development when the negotiations under OSCE MG Group have been stuck in a dead-end shows how wrong it was to exclude the MK from the negotiations processes. And the last report by Goran Lenmarker and the discussion at July 2005 session of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly show

that many people involved in mediating activities start to understand this, too.

In the Armenian society there is an understanding that taking into account the MK opinion will bring the conflict solution closer. according to the survey administered by the Armenian Center of Strategic and National Studies, the question of: "Which of the conflict parties do you think must be involved in the negotiations on Karabagh conflict resolution?", 75% experts and 72.4% of public answered that in the negotiations process Armenia, MK and Azerbaijan should take part, 20% of experts and 14.8% "regular citizens" think that these should be MK and Azerbaijan.

In order to find a commonly acceptable solution, the following must be accomplished simultaneously: trilateral negotiations with the involvement of Mountainous Karabagh elected representatives should evolve (giving up the practice of bilateral Armenia-Azerbaijan format that has proved to be ineffective), improvement of OSCE MG format as well as the activation of mediating efforts of the international community.

Only by taking into account the opinions and interest of all conflict parties can steady peace and prosperity of our countries be achieved. Any solutions, imposed on the parties to the conflict and adopted through deporting the conflict essence and deforming the main format, can produce only temporary results instead of a stable resolution. Taking into account the opinions of all conflict parties along with the establishment of truly democratic systems in our countries, readiness for mutual compromise and dialogue with the opponent – this is what will yield the result we want.

8. To what extent could the Karabagh regulation be integrated into the context of introducing a new system of regional security in South Caucasus? What

is the perspective role of NATO, as well as the Russian and Turkish factors in that regard?

The answer to these questions is to be sought in the overall context of European (CE, EU) and Euro-Atlantic (OSCE, NATO) integration, since ultimately, both these processes are based on a common value system, and their separation is hardly reasonable. These structures themselves are guided by the principles of interaction, mutual complementation, transparency and low hierarchy.

The world has undergone serious changes after 9/11. 9/11 was the detonator of new geopolitical trends. The USA started to act under the concept of preventive attacks on terrorist bases, preventing the threats to its borders, weakening and neutralization of totalitarian regimes serving as a ground for extremists, as well as the assistance to the democratic development in the problem region of the world. The USA was able to stand up for these ideas on the July 2004 summit of the Great Eight, where it was decided to develop the concept of “Bigger Middle East”, including the Arab countries as well as Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. At the NATO summit in Istanbul in June 2004, building up on the American position, a resolution was made on the need to protect the safety of NATO countries where such threats arise and to prevent such threats in the proximity of Alliance borders.

By creating antiterrorist coalitions (anti-Taliban, anti-Iraq, etc.) the European countries and the USA try to fight against the international terrorism together, including the force actions. Against the background of antiterrorist campaign and due to it, the world witnesses changes that will inevitably result in the transformation of the role of South Caucasus for the global community. Considering a number of factors, including the geographic one, the role of South Caucasus countries today certainly increases. The most important ones are presented below.

Firstly, in SC region during the past years major international economic projects are being implemented, such as the construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, launched in the first half of 2005, Erzerum-Tbilisi-Baku gas pipeline, a number of new highways and railways routes; major energy programs are associated with the region. Once these are completed, one will be able to state the change in the economic structure of South Caucasus. Since the majority of these programs is being implemented by biggest international organizations and corporations, the interest of European countries and the USA towards the region is becoming more and more obvious. This interest is largely due to the Caspian, rich in oil and gas, and uniting to such important regions as SC and CA. Thus, the willingness of the USA to help Azerbaijan in protecting its rights in the issue of the status of the Caspian sea is not accidental – and this help may go all the way to provision of military assistance and location of military bases on the territory of Azerbaijan.

Secondly, the attitudes of the USA and EU on a number of essential questions related to the SC. This is primarily an issue of normalizing the relations between Armenia and Turkey. The USA has raised the issue of opening the Armenian-Turkish border for a long time already, while EU is more and more addressing the issue of the recognition of the Armenian genocide of 1915 by Turkey. There is a trend of approximation of the EU and US stances over Iran. Thus, the experts of MAGATE, in which the role and influence of France traditionally prevail, expressed their agreement with the US stance and demanded Iran to have greater transparency in the implementation of nuclear programs.

Thirdly, Azerbaijan and Georgia take a quite active part in antiterrorist campaign (provision of air space and military bases to the members of anti-Iraq coalition, the support of initiatives aimed against international terrorism in international organizations. They

take part in the peace operations in Kosovo, in anti-Taliban and anti-Iraq coalitions and have their military contingents there. In September 2004 Armenia also stated its readiness to send peacekeepers to Iraq, and in January 2005 46 people (mine engineers, doctors and drivers) left for Iraq. Armenia became the 28th member of anti-Iraq coalition, taking part in the military action to stabilize the situation in Iraq. This, naturally, caused the positive response of the USA that since 2002 started to assist the countries of the region in the development of national armies and the preparation of counter-terrorism professionals. Thus, in Georgia antiterrorist center has been established with the assistance of USA. Other examples of this line are the more frequent visits of high-ranked officials of European countries and the USA to the region. The fact that the US Defense Minister has visited Azerbaijan for three times during the past two years is speaking for itself. Finally, for the first time after the collapse of the USSR the US President, on May 10, 2005, visited one of the CIS countries, Georgia (of course, excluding Russia).

Fourthly, it was noted above that after the recent expansion of the European Union and NATO the countries of the South Caucasus region became the neighbors of these organizations and the latter ones display their interest in the development of cooperation of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia under the programs implemented in the region. The consistency in their action was noticeable in September 2004, when the NATO leadership canceled its military exercise in Azerbaijan simply because Baku refused to allow the entry of Armenian officers to the country. Somewhat later, the Chairman of European Commission Romano Prodi announced in Yerevan that EU is ready to provide serious assistance to the countries of the region, but only with one condition: they must cooperate among themselves.

Fifthly, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are members of OSCE and CE and assumed serious commitments in this regard: to

hold democratic, free, transparent elections, to solve regional conflicts by peaceful means, respect human rights. Taking into account the fact that the Baltic and Eastern European countries have successfully gone through the transformation from totalitarian and democratic society, OSCE and CE started to work even more actively with the countries of SC, giving them more attention, time and resources. This was noted in particular in the Edinburgh declaration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (2004), where the need for moving OSCE institutes to South Caucasus and Central Asia, the increase in funding for these regions, the number of conferences and other events to be held here is stressed. The Council of Europe has a very active presence in the region, too. This is primarily the control over the implementation of commitments assumed by the three countries upon their accession to CE. At almost every PACE session reports on these processes are heard.

Sixthly, the importance of Georgian factor has increased, in which the West sees a consistent ally after Mikhail Sahakashvili and his political team came to power. The stance of the Georgian President that his country belongs with the European family, and its security is to be ensured through integration with NATO makes Tbilisi a reliable partner of European countries and the USA. Extraordinary parliamentary and presidential elections of Georgia in 2003-2004 showed that a legitimate change of power in the region countries is possible, and this makes South Caucasus all the more attractive.

Due to the increased role of South Caucasus and the activation of the new actors we are becoming witnesses of forming a new security system for the countries of the region. And how ready is Armenia for such a development? What must its main foreign policy benchmarks be, enabling cooperation in SC and creating common security system?

I think Armenia must announce the start of integration to European Union and NATO as its strategic target, giving up its focus on the ineffective security system of the Organization of Collective Security Agreement, setting demarcation lines in the region. Out of the three SC countries Armenia is the only CSA member. Interestingly enough, Russia itself acknowledges the lack of vitality of CIS institutes. Thus, during the working visit of the Russian President Vladimir Putin to Yerevan on March 24-25, 2005 he made the following statement: “If anyone expected CIS to have particular gains in economic, policies and military cooperation, this, certainly did not happen, because this could not happen”.

Armenia must also refrain from hosting bilateral military exercise on this territory. It must participate only in multilateral military exercise and operation, in particular, those held by NATO. If all three SC countries strive to become members of North Atlantic security system, this will be the guarantee of non-resumption of military actions in the region.

After the ousting of Russian troops from Georgia and should Armenian-Turkish relations normalize, the military structure of South Caucasus will hang and the question of common security system in South Caucasus will become more urgent. For this reason Armenia must demonstrate a real aspiration to establish neighborly relations with all neighbors in the region, including Turkey and Azerbaijan.

The increased role of SC in the world affairs, the augmenting number of countries and international organizations, intensifying its impact on the processes in the region, cannot fail to tell on regional conflict resolution. If till 2001 the problem of Mountainous Karabagh was being treated in the frames of OSCE MG (or, to be more exact, with a decisive involvement of three co-chairmen of OSCE MG – USA, France and Russia), the develop-

ments in the world call for introducing new formats. The CE, whose positions in the region grow stronger, proposes to introduce a new component in the negotiations process: trilateral negotiations under Armenia-Azerbaijan-Turkey format. The Council of Europe, represented by its Secretary General Terry Davis proposes to head the OSCE Minsk Group by the representatives of these countries in the CE, thus uniting the efforts of the two structures in the conflict resolution. To implement Resolution 1416, PACE, on a spring session of 2005 makes a ruling of establishing a Temporary Committee, bringing together representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Sweden and Turkey.

Throughout the 17 years of Karabagh conflict Russia has played quite an active role under both OSCE MG and individual initiatives. However, at different stages the specific position of Russia was displayed, in particular, its objective lack of interest in the speedy resolution of Karabagh problem. As it is known, the USSR gained nothing because of the conflict being unresolved, and, I believe, Russia gains nothing, either. The expectations related to the Moscow support, that the parties to the conflict held were excessive and could not come true. This was one of the reasons for weakened role and influence of Russia in the region. The idea of conflict “freezing” by keeping Armenia and Azerbaijan in the area of its influence is still alive in that country to this day, although 14 years after the collapse of the USSR Moscow could have revised it.

The weakening of Russia’s positions in the world in general and SC region in particular results in the increased role of stronger and more active players on the global arena. The latter ones, on their behalf, see the Turkey gaining important role in this process.

9. In what way could European integration potential affect Armenian and Azerbaijani relations?

As it is common knowledge, Armenia and Azerbaijan are members of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) since 1992 and the Council of Europe (CE) since 2001 and are actually in the process of European integration. Under OSCE framework the OSCE Minsk Group was created, dealing with the MK problem peaceful resolution. The OSCE role is significant also in the issues of controlling the adherence to Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, where flank restrictions are imposed on SC. The positive role of the Treaty is already in the fact that it excludes the uncontrolled militarization of the region.

Today the agenda includes the rapprochement of SC countries with European Union by the realization of European Neighborhood Policy. This process demands free market relations in economy and trade, inevitably weakening the role of borders between the states, creates a need for forming a legislative framework up to European standards and contributes to the establishment of a common economic space, free competition in the markets, and so on. In this context the European integration today is the only way to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, solution of conflicts and controversies.

10. Which form of resolution offered during the last 15 years would you consider to be more realistic? Could you define your own model currently acceptable for the sides, or at least the principles on which the regulation should be based?

Throughout the existence of Karabagh conflict there were many discussions and disputes around the possible options of conflict resolution. The most serious are the “package” (July 1997) and “stage-by-stage” (December, 1997) options, as they were presented in writing to the public of Armenia and Azerbaijan (today the authorities confine them to verbal communications only), and,

most importantly, contained an attempt to reflect the interests of all three parties to the conflict - Azerbaijan, Armenia and Mountainous Karabagh. In terms of being realistic I would like to single out the “stage-by-stage” option, for the reason of its greatest probability of being implemented. In the search for a model of Karabagh conflict resolution, one must consider the new realities that came up in the world in South Caucasus region. During the time that elapsed since 1997-1998 when the parties were offered the “package” and the “stage-by-stage” solutions, the role of the main actors, interested in our region, changed significantly. The influence of CE, OSCE, EU and NATO in regional politics has greatly increased, and the dominance of the USA in SC region is already obvious for everyone, while Russia, as noted above, loses its positions here.

To demonstrate how the changing international context can influence the attitude to certain conflict resolution models, let us take our tour to the other side of Europe. The survey, administered in 2005 among the Welsh, showed that they feel safe and calm because the United Kingdom is an EU country and they, “bypassing” London, can contact other nations and countries. Thus, the principles of freedom, democracy, tolerance and consensus are the only ones, capable of overcoming the controversies, accumulated in our region. And the change of factors, influencing the Karabagh conflict resolution, gives us a chance. The possible resolution of Karabagh conflict is in the following formula: the reason for the lack of resolution to the conflict is in undemocratic governance of Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as in the deformed format and distorted essence of the conflict. For this reason the problem solution requires a general favorable background to overcome the conflict (this is a necessary but an insufficient condition of the peaceful conflict resolution) and simultaneously, the parties must agree on specific Karabagh resolution issues (sufficient condition for conflict resolution).

Necessary condition of the peaceful conflict resolution. The concept of “general favorable background in conflict resolution” includes: a) simultaneous democratization of Armenian and Azerbaijani societies; b) full implementation of commitments to the Council of Europe by both Armenia and Azerbaijan; c) consistent assessment of elections in Armenia and Azerbaijan by the international community. Refusal of the representatives of international organizations and leaderships of democratic countries to have contacts with officials involved in the fraud, should there be any; d) official announcement by Armenia and Azerbaijan of their commitment to European (CE and EU) and Euro-Atlantic (OSCE and NATO) integration and active participation of the two countries in the processes; e) intensive military and technical cooperation of Armenia and Azerbaijan with USA and NATO; f) regional economic cooperation, evolving along with the conflict resolution, through the inclusion of Armenia in international and regional gas, energy and communication projects; g) multilateral cooperation of Armenia and Azerbaijan with EU under European Neighborhood Policy; h) activation of the role of civil society of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the conflict resolution. Cooperating with the countries of SC, the leading world powers and international organizations must make an emphasis on the contacts with those political and public forces of the countries of the region that are advocating peaceful conflict resolution, compromise, mutual concessions, democratic transformations, fight against corruption, etc.; i) application by international community of more effective mechanisms of impacting the conflict parties, to ensure their greater readiness for compromise. Here some “inducing to peace” can be applied, however, this shall not be the main resolution mechanism; j) launch of various forums of SC country representatives, in particular, expert forums, where mutually acceptable resolution models will be further developed, opportunities of mutually beneficial cooperation will be studied.

Sufficient condition of peaceful resolution of Karabagh conflict. This means that the parties to the conflict must simultaneously agree on specific issues of Karabagh resolution. These are: a) conflict resolution by solely peaceful methods, resulting from negotiations, however hard and lengthy; b) refusal of the Armenian parties (Mountainous Karabagh and Armenia) from defining the status of MK on the very first stage of negotiations. The conflict resolution should proceed by the principle of “territories in exchange for MK security” and not “territories in exchange for MK independence”; c) withdrawal of MK self-defense forces from the part of taken Azerbaijani territories; d) provision of a guarantee of land communication of MK and Armenia; e) refusal from the ineffective format of bilateral Armenian-Azerbaijani talks and transition to the formats of Azerbaijan-MK-Armenia and Azerbaijan-MK; f) development of a mechanism for taking into account the opinion of Azerbaijani minority of MK; g) creation of security zone along the MK territory border (former MKAR borders) and placement there of NATO peacekeeping forces, having a UN SC mandate; h) deblocking of highways, railways and other communications; i) entitling MK to having its own self-defense forces and local police; j) entitling MK to a Constitution of its own and a right to form its legislative, executive and judiciary power structures; k) encouragement of MK Armenians by EU and CE (e.g., by direct cooperation of EU with MK) in return for their withdrawal of the demand to define the independence of MK at the very first stage of conflict resolution.

Here only the main components and conflict resolution principles are described. In my opinion, they will make it possible to restore the negotiations process and to attain a speedy resolution.



Rasim MUSABEKOV

Rasim Musabekov was born on January 1, 1951. He graduated from the Automation Department of the Oil and Chemistry Institute of Azerbaijan (now Azerbaijan Oil Academy) in 1973. In 1972-1982, he worked in various Komsomol bodies in Azerbaijan and in Moscow. In 1985, Mr. Musabekov completed his post-graduate studies in Moscow and received his PhD degree in social sciences. He was engaged in teaching and research work in 1985-1989. Mr. Musabekov was head of the research laboratory on interethnic relations in the Youth Institute in Moscow (now Social/Humanities Academy), after which he headed the sociology laboratory in the Higher Party School in Baku. In 1990-1991, Rasim Musabekov was in charge of the ideology department of the Baku Communist Party Committee. In 1991-1992, he served as an advisor on inter-ethnic relations to the President of Azerbaijani Republic. He was an advisor in the apparatus of the Milli Meclis (parliament) of Azerbaijani Republic in 1992-1993. In 1994-1999, he was an assistant professor in Baku Institute of Political Science.

Since 2000 Mr. Musabekov has been engaged in independent analysis. He has authored more than 100 books, brochures and scientific articles published in the USA, Great Britain, Sweden, Russia, Turkey, China, Georgia and other countries.

“YOU WILL NOT BE BETTER OFF IF YOUR NEIGHBOR IS IN TROUBLE

1. Who needed the Karabagh conflict, who has cashed in on it? Was there an alternative to its escalation? What was it at various stages? To what extent do inner political factors influence the regulation process?

An objective analysis of the soviet statistical data shows that the Mountainous Karabagh Autonomous Region was not at all underdeveloped economically, but in some aspects it was even ahead of many regions and towns not only in Azerbaijan but also in Armenia. Naturally, there were many problems of social, economic, cultural and educational nature, but those were not extraordinary problems and were not beyond difficulties that all the former USSR nations had to face. The frustration of the region's populace was caused by the ineffective and brutal administrative command system, which in their minds was embodied in Baku, and not in the main hideous communist rule of Moscow. The actual reasons and the driving force behind the Mountainous Karabagh conflict undoubtedly were national sentiments.

Aspirations of the Armenian majority in MKAR, which perpetually raised the issue of uniting with Armenia, are understandable. In the former USSR where the rulers deported whole nations, redrew borders of the republics with an easy hand, created and liquidated them (the Karelian-Finnish SSR, and the Moldavian SSR), passed regions from one subject to another and then took them back (the Crimea, torn apart from the Russian Federation and attached to Ukraine, Karachevo-Cherkessia cut from the RSFSR—to Georgia), this seemed quite possible, especially on the high surf of expectations triggered by Mikhail Gorbachev's proclaimed new course on “reconstruction” and “openness”.

Karabagh movement inevitably caused tensions – both on ethnic (between Armenians and Azerbaijanis) and on political grounds (between Yerevan and Stepanakert on the one hand, and Baku, on the other hand). However, this was not necessarily supposed to grow into an inevitable armed confrontation. The absolute majority of common people were not at all interested in such an outcome, first of all the 200,000 Azerbaijanis living on the territory of Armenia, and 300,000 Armenians living on the territory of Azerbaijan, outside of Mountainous Karabagh. It was they who first experienced the dire consequences of the escalating conflict. Though the emotional outburst engulfed practically the whole population of Armenia and Azerbaijan, reflected in the millions of people rallying in Baku and Yerevan, common people were hardly interested in further aggravation of the conflict. Subsequent disruption of cooperative contacts between the republics intensified the social and economic situation and diverged people's attention from the solution of their vital problems.

A logical problem arises. If the core population of Armenia and Azerbaijan were not interested in escalating the conflict, at least bringing it up to the military level, then who and what was behind the blockades, deportations, cruelty, destruction, murders and finally to war? The provocative and destructive role of special circles in Moscow was stated so many times. Arkadiy Volskiy, heading the special administrative committee in MKAR for a year, openly acknowledged that fact in April of 2005, during an *ORT* show devoted to the 20th anniversary of “perestroika.” Serge Sarkisian, the present Defense Minister, and Secretary of National Security Council of Armenia also pointed that out during his speech at the session of the Armenian Parliament, dedicated to the problem of Karabagh conflict resolution. Both did not mention any specific names, but understandably meant the ideologists and executors of the colonial politics “divide to rule” – a saying as old

as the word itself. Their intentions were simple: to arouse a conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, bring it up to direct confrontation and make those people hostages in the hands of colonial predispositions of the Center. Moscow would lend a helping hand now to the one, then to the other side, passing its arsenal to both, establishing contacts with the extremists from both leagues, meanwhile doing everything to prolong the quagmire.

Nevertheless, there were also those both in Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as in MKAR who adhered to the credo “the worse - the better.” Ultra-nationalists on both sides refused to consider any options of reconciliation, which could have resulted in expanding MKAR autonomy, ensuring its real autonomy, and guaranteeing its complete security within the territory of Azerbaijan. They counted on the escalation of mutual hatred, which has blocked and at times even excluded the possibility of a reasonable compromise. The same groups designed and promoted ideas of ethnic cleansing, and often participated in their execution. If the intellectuals standing at the roots of the Karabagh movement were triggered by idealistic motivations, then various sub-leadership groups (outsiders of the second rank and retired or ousted leaders of the first rank and their supporters) strived to use the opportunity either to get or return to power. Besides, the atmosphere of brutality and social instability was very favorable for the mafia and criminal groups, for it allowed them to bury the evidence of their past, present and future crimes and evade punishment.

To say who has gained and who has lost from escalating the Karabagh conflict into a direct-armed confrontation between Azerbaijanis and Armenians is hard, for in the long run everyone has lost. Aside from direct losses – in terms of tens of thousands of people killed and maimed, many hundred thousand refugees and displaced people, destroyed towns and villages, our countries appeared thrown backwards for decades in their social and eco-

conomic development. Democratic and market transformations have slowed down and have been distorted. Millions of our countrymen have left their homelands in search of a better living. If the Baltic republics have become full members of NATO and the European Union, Azerbaijan and Armenia are having a difficult time in deciding their geo-political orientation and continue to stick to such ineffective post-soviet structures, headed by Moscow, as the CIS and the Collective Security Agreement.

At the same time some groups in both countries have reaped quite palpable political and economic dividends from the Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontation. For instance, the notorious communist leader, former member of omnipotent Politburo Heydar Aliyev was able to revive politically and together with his ousted supporters regained power. Second-rank communist functionaries from provincial MKAR - Robert Kocharian, Serge Sarkisian and their supporters have risen to unimaginable for them heights: they are heading the power in Armenia. At the time when our countries and people were in mayhem of destruction and poverty, those brought to power on the surge of the Karabagh movement grew richer, getting their hands on the former state property and the profitable industries. Criminal groups counting on trading weapons, prisoners and dead bodies, were not left out either. Marauders raided thousands of houses throwing Armenians and Azerbaijanis out of their homes, stripped off thousands of schools and hospitals, cultural institutions, plants and organizations of seven regions temporarily occupied by Armenian forces. Corrupt officials appropriated hundreds of millions of cash in dollars and roubles that was consequently being sent to Karabagh first through the Union Government, and then by the powers in Baku and Yerevan.

A retrospective view on the development of these events allows stating, that to stop the wheel of continuously escalating Azeri-

Armenian confrontation and prevent it from growing into a full-scale war, acquiring more and more destructive nature, seemed to be quite difficult. The fact that the communist leaders were unable to deal with this problem at the starting phase was quite predictable. They were devoid of the political insight to value the merits and the political will to realize late Academician Andrey Sakharov's plan, who proposed to make a territorial exchange between Azerbaijan and Armenia, discharge tensions and concentrate on issues of democratic reform. In conditions of still existing USSR such a territorial re-trimming did not amount to changing outer state borders and therefore, was quite plausible.

Later there appeared some peacemaking potential in the joint initiative of President Yeltsin and Nazarbayev, ratified in the Zhelesnovodsk Communiqué. I had the opportunity to be personally present at the negotiations as an advisor of Azerbaijan's President of the time. I can assure that despite tension during the Armenian-Azerbaijani dialogue proceedings, it seemed that coming to decisions, which could at least curb expansion of the conflict seemed to be quite possible at the time. However, the disintegration processes in the USSR in concomitance with the formation of uncontrolled "defense groups" and the self-rule of "field commanders," along with the provocative actions at the sites of Soviet army bases, disrupted the chances to realize the stipulations of the Zhelesnovodsk Communiqué. In the air over Mountainous Karabagh a helicopter was shot down with a group of high ranking Azerbaijani officials, as well as Russian and Kazakh observers on board. Azerbaijanis were completely forced out of the residential areas of Karabagh; ethnic cleansing was concluded with the mass extermination of the town of Khojali by 336th regiment of the Soviet Army and the local Armenian forces. As a result, the negotiations between the conflicting parties were in essence disrupted.

Another serious attempt to localize the Karabagh conflict was made in April of 1992, when President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosian and the acting President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Yagoub Mamedov signed a declaration through the initiative and mediation of then Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani. It projected immediate measures (in a course of a week) to start ceasefire under the Iranian and the OSCE representatives, and simultaneously to open all communication lines for economic links. The value of such an approach was that a practical goal was set as a cornerstone – to prevent the conflict from growing into a full-scale war. However, the weakness of the central government both in Yerevan and Baku failed the attempt. The ink on the endorsements of the two leaders had not managed to dry, when the Armenian forces through the support of the Russian military took the last Azerbaijani city of Mountainous Karabagh – Shusha, following that – the Lachin region which divided MKAR from Armenia.

As someone directly involved in the preparation of the Teheran talks and personally being acquainted with President Levon Ter-Petrosian, I doubt that he could display such an outstanding treachery by misleading the Azerbaijani side through the attained and immediately breached agreement. I suppose he simply had not much power over his military and even less on the field officers in Mountainous Karabagh. In fact, further developments in Azerbaijan proved that his colleagues in Baku – Ayaz Moutalibov and Yagoub Mamedov – were incapable of not only to establish an actual ceasefire and unblock communication lines, but also were unable to keep their own power. Moscow kept an envious and disapproving eye on the Iranian initiative and the Russian representatives refused to participate in Teheran talks. Getting an unofficial green light from the military and the regiments of the South Caucasian military region, it urged and helped the Armenian forces to occupy Shusha and Lachin, leaving the world to face the facts. With this, the faith for a peaceful regulation of the conflict

was put to sleep for a long time. The ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijanis in Mountainous Karabagh, like it had previously been done in Armenia, was over, the sporadic military actions became a full-scale war between Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

I would like to underscore one thing: the argument that the advancement of the Armenian troops was a forced action and was conducted with the purpose of ensuring the security and lives of Karabagh Armenians is not sincere and is intended for people uninformed about the reasons and the developments of the conflict. Both the Zheleznovodsk and Teheran agreements assumed a possibility of reaching that without a full-scale war with Azerbaijan, without condemning hundreds of thousands of people to suffering and privation.

A new opportunity to find ways to the peaceful regulation of the Karabagh conflict emerged after the Bishkek Agreement on ceasefire and resumption of the mediating mission of the OSCE Minsk Group.

The parties were close to strike an accord several times and even declared their readiness to start discussing a gradual plan prepared by the Minsk Group. However, the weakness of the highest powers, as well as the wish of the radical circles to cash on military actions and gain unacceptable concessions from Azerbaijan regarding the status of Mountainous Karabagh once again obstructed the talks from getting to the phase of real regulation. President Levon Ter-Petrosian was forced to resign. The new leadership of Armenia engaged in the ongoing negotiations for almost seven years now, both in the Minsk Group format and on the basis of bilateral talks, has not succeeded in its promise to attain peace on its own terms.

In the course of the conflict several Presidents have changed in Azerbaijan, none of them has ventured to accede to the loss of sovereignty over Mountainous Karabagh, even in exchange of return-

ing the seven occupied regions outside Karabagh without bloodshed. Several times (before the 1999 Istanbul summit of the OSCE, then in Paris with the participation of President Jacques Chirac, in Key West with the participation of US State Secretary Collin Powell) the parties came quite close to a compromise. However, force majeure events at the last moment (the assassinations in the Armenian Parliament, the notorious resignations in Azerbaijan, etc.) and the growing resistance among the Presidents' own administration forced them to make a step back.

There were quite a few reasons for this - of geo-political, internal, psychological and other nature. I already spoke about Moscow's objectives in using the existing conflicts to strap the post-soviet states in a tighter bond, and to erect hurdles for the expansion of Western influence in South Caucasus. This is why on the one hand Kremlin politicians would come up as mediators, and would work for a long-term "freezing" of the conflict, on the other.

At present those who are at the head of the states both in Armenia and Azerbaijan are people who have come to power on the Karabagh surge, and are more stringent critics of their predecessors, who were more inclined to compromise or less able to establish rigid control. The present leaderships, however, is incapable to counter their predecessors with any convincing positive results of their tenure. Privation, unemployment, corruption, lawlessness and arrogance of the office holders, pilfering state property and income – these are the realities in our countries. In these conditions it is difficult to unite people through democratic methods around a reliable and acceptable for the majority of people philosophy of national security and development. Therefore, to unite their people the elites adhere to other methods as needed, coming up with outer ethnic threats, creating and exploiting the "image of an enemy."

A number of public opinion polls indicate that the vast majority of people in these countries are against resumption of war. However, having been brainwashed for so many years, people consider this conflict in the light of a "victory" or a "defeat." They do not make rational calculation of the benefits from a quickly attained peace and re-establishment of cooperation. They do not consider the losses they have suffered as a result of the quagmire in a state of "neither peace, nor war," further strained with the overwhelming military expenses, or consider it a hurdle in the way of social, economic and democratic development.

The reason for the procrastination of a peaceful regulation also lies in the deficient evaluation of the time factor by the sides. In Yerevan they assume that as time passes Azerbaijanis will acknowledge the loss of Mountainous Karabagh and would agree to register it legally. The world, in turn, would recognize it as a new entity, which does not change or violate existing international laws. In Baku there is the feeling that the oil reserves have already attracted powerful energy corporations and raised the interest of the leading countries in Azerbaijan, and that the growing revenues from this industry would allow reinforcement and refurbishment of the army. According to expectations of Azerbaijani leadership, revenues both from oil export and international support would grow during the upcoming 5-10 years. Consequently, it would be possible to reach more favorable conditions for the regulation of the Karabagh conflict. In a word, a diplomatic and promotional struggle is on the way; both sides are displaying readiness for concessions for the outer world, and inflexibility for inner circulation. But the time goes by and with each year the futility of such narrow and simplistic approach becomes obvious. Nothing other than local tactical dividends could be attained through this. Thus, time and resources needed for the strategic goal of integration into the European political and economic sphere are being wasted. Unfortunately, the intellectuals

and political forces capable to present the situation convincingly to the community in this light are barred from having access to political and informational levers to do that.

2. What are the specific differences of the sides? Are history and culture dividing or uniting factors for the Armenian and Azerbaijani people? Why would Azerbaijan not accede to the independence of MK, and the Armenians in Karabagh and Armenia would not think of its existence in Azerbaijan plausible?

Controversies between Armenians and Azerbaijanis undoubtedly bear political character. In legal terms, the Karabagh conflict could be defined as cessation, in political terms - as irredentism. In their modern histories many nations and states of Europe have had to face and resolve problems analogous to Karabagh. Not all of them have reached the stage of armed confrontation, as in the post-soviet territories and former Yugoslavia. However, terrorist acts are being committed even in the most advanced countries, in UK, France and Spain, for example.

To speak about economic controversies between Armenia and Azerbaijan is absurd, for those countries do not compete; on the contrary, they lose as a result of severed traditional cooperation and transportation links. In terms of controversies on individual level, those are the consequences and not the reasons for the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in relation with Mountainous Karabagh. Perceptions about ethnic, more rarely genetic or religious incongruity of our nations, with which some politicians come up unfortunately, even from high international tribunals, bear more of a promotional character and serve as justification of the impossibility to keep Mountainous Karabagh under Azerbaijan, and the executed ethnic cleansings. It is impossible to gain mod-

ern international community's predisposition through those declarations. The ideas about incongruity are not only directly contradictory to modern human values, to which all pledge faithfully, but also condemn our nations to eternal if not war, then hostility towards each other.

The mentality, history and culture of both Armenians and Azerbaijanis are unique, original. However, during many centuries of cooperation they have strongly intertwined and have mutually enriched each other. In behavioral patterns of Armenians and Azerbaijanis, if not presented in a caricatured way, a lot of similarities could be observed. In music, painting, there are so many common intonations, melodies, rhythms and images, that they trigger arguments about their origin. The same is true about the culinary, lifestyle and many traditions. In relation with the history, despite the erroneous perceptions, the long contacts of both nations is mostly characterized by peaceful co-existence, and not rivalry and hostility. I do not want to idealize our common history; along with the bright side it does contain some dark pages, as well. A negative lopsided interpretation of history for the ephemeral promotional purposes is not only wrong in the scientific sense, but also harmful, for it hampers the inevitable reconciliation of our nations in the foreseeable future and would further disrupt revival of mutual trust, good neighborhood and cooperation.

The confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan in relation with Mountainous Karabagh bears the form of the two conflicting basic principles of modern international law. Azerbaijan is making its stakes on the principle of "territorial sovereignty, and unacceptability of forceful changes of state borders," and does not agree either to grant independence or hand it over to Armenia. It seems if agreed, Baku would once and for all get rid of the permanent headache of the Karabagh Armenians' separatist claims, would return the rest of the occupied Azerbaijani territories, would

cut the military expenses, and would be hailed by the international community for its peaceful concession.

However, Azerbaijan has never had, does not have and in the predictable future would hardly ever have a government ready and capable of legally ratifying abdication of its sovereignty rights on Mountainous Karabagh. And it has many reasons. First of all, it would mean to acknowledge the weakness of the state and incapability of performing its utmost duty – to defend its territorial integrity and security of its citizens. Abdication of its lawful rights might encourage Armenia (there are some groups for which territorial claims are not restricted exclusively to Mountainous Karabagh) and other neighbors to make other territorial claims. Capitulation against the separatism of Karabagh Armenians might trigger other ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan to analogous actions, especially with the help of foreign stimulation and support. Second, Mountainous Karabagh, and especially Shusha, represents the cradle of Azerbaijani culture. Over 45,000 Azerbaijanis used to live here along with Armenians (a quarter of the whole population of MKAR). Recognition of Mountainous Karabagh or its concession to Armenia rips them of a chance to ever return to their homeland. Third, though public opinion is against the resumption the war, it would never, under any circumstances accede to peace at the cost of violating the county's territorial integrity.

Armenian's objective to cede Mountainous Karabagh under the disguise of "self-determination of nations," does not need additional explanation. After all, the Karabagh movement was designed for that same purpose. As an Azerbaijani it is difficult for me to speak about the reasons why the Armenian side considers it unacceptable to have Mountainous Karabagh as part of Azerbaijan with extended autonomy power, even under the guarantees of the international community. But if you try to look at it through the

prism of the other side, (in a simplified way, of course) it looks as follows.

First, the military victories of 1992-1995 have inspired Armenians with the hope or the illusion that it is possible to plan and attain their goals full scale, i.e., the internationally legalized ratification of secession of Mountainous Karabagh. Second, the Armenian side is convinced that maximum autonomy and security guarantees are already in its pocket, irrespective of any developments. If such is the case, why should they not be more unyielding and not try to get more? The resolution of the UN Security Council requiring the Armenian troops to withdraw from the occupied territories did not state any timeframes or threat of sanctions. The flow of foreign aid to Armenia has not decreased and has the highest per capita rates in the CIS countries. No great dividends from restoring cooperation with Azerbaijan are immediately anticipated in Yerevan. Third, in Yerevan and in Stepanakert (Khankendi) the power is primarily in the hands of the former field commanders who had immediately organized armed insurgency against Baku and implemented mass ethnic cleansings on the occupied territories. It is clear that the mere idea of Mountainous Karabagh's subordination to Baku makes them uneasy. Under their command during the years of the conflict a new generation has emerged which has grown up in conditions of factual integration with Armenia, and does not imagine passing under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan, even in the most mildly federative form.

3. What resources are there for peaceful regulation? What stands in the way of utilizing those resources and what guarantees are needed for the sides to make the first steps towards reconciliation? Are there any discrepancies between the perceptions of the "enlightened" and those of the common people on the possibilities of a resolution at the current

stage? Are there chances for “public diplomacy” to contribute to the peace in the region?

At first glance it seems that everything that could have been used for the progress of a peaceful resolution has already been launched. The most recognized international organizations, like the UN, the OSCE, Council of Europe, CIS have been involved in the process. Such powerful European and Euro-Atlantic forces as the EU and NATO have also declared their readiness to provide economic, political and moral support for the peacemaking efforts. The Minsk Group Co-Chairs represent the mightiest countries of the world – the US, France and Russia. But all of this has been insufficient so far to get the negotiations out of the quagmire. I do not think that changing the format of negotiations or escalating tension along the cease-fire line is capable of changing the situation for the better. On the contrary, it might hurt it. To stimulate the conflicting sides for peace the size of the dividends to be gained for concessions, as well as the price to be paid for unreasonable intransigence should probably be raised.

The conflicting parties are divided by mutual distrust. That is why they insist on to their initially proclaimed and mutually unacceptable negotiation platforms. No one wants to make the first step to a concession, cautious of a perfidy on the other side. It seems that planning a specific “rout-map” by the mediators, including a “ladder of steps” with timeframes could be a way out, guaranteed by the leading mediator-countries.

Judging by opinion polls and media monitoring, the vectors of the vast majority of the population and experts in relation with the Karabagh conflict in each of the countries are identical. But there are differences in the approach of the resolution and the role of internal and external forces in the process. Thus, compared with common people the experts in Azerbaijan are rather skeptical in

relation with possible progress in the near future. They tend to reduce the role of Russia and overrate the growing interests of influential oil corporations, Western countries and the potential of the European integration in the resolution of the Karabagh conflict.

In relation with public diplomacy, it has played a considerable role in opening a dialogue between our nations during the first years after the ceasefire. Here the activities of the human rights organizations, trying to locate and return prisoners and the remains of the deceased, as well as follow up with the fate of people missing in action, could be mentioned. Reciprocal visits of journalists also turned out to be fruitful; the journalists’ unions have established systems to exchange information, TV and radio bridges, created joint Internet sites, and conducted various forums on the global network. However, the bogged down negotiation process, lack of real progress in the regulation process makes public diplomacy efforts less effective and limited. The obvious criticism of the radical, as well as the pro-government groups in Azerbaijan has disrupted its progress. Recognizing the benefits of “public diplomacy” tools, it should be understood that they cannot replace the state mechanisms carrying direct responsibility, and having the necessary resources and power to resolve the conflict.

In the context of “public diplomacy” the role of Diaspora should be specifically underscored. Organizations established by the Diaspora have great potential. For there are hundreds of thousands of Armenians and Azerbaijanis living outside of our countries – in Russia, Georgia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, as well as in the US, Germany and in other countries. In fact, in those counties they live immediately next to each other, support and cooperate in business, are colleagues at work, etc. Unfortunately, the influential Diaspora organizations are more focused on proving their righteousness, attaining support of public opinion and of

the governments in countries they live in. They try to denigrate the conflicting party, rather than search for ways of peace and understanding. Moreover, the majority of activists and members of those organizations do not experience all the privations of the long-lasting Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict first hand and they come up with radical ideas, displaying uncompromising maximalism. Having in mind that there are no barriers for inter-ethnic dialogue in countries where the majority of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Diaspora are concentrated, as well as their declared support to the peaceful resolution of the Karabagh conflict, it is important to reorient these organizations towards achievement of their proclaimed goals.

Contacts in the lines of interconfessional dialogue, as well contacts between veterans', women's ecological organizations, seem to carry considerable leverage in promoting public diplomacy. Together with the human rights and media organizations, traditionally active in that direction, they also could become lobbyists of peace.

4. Where do the reservations and phobia for each other stem from and what is the source of nurturing the image of an enemy? What is the role of media in the conflict? Is it possible to reach a decrease in hostility through public opinion to the point that an agreement is reached between the countries?

The source of those phobias is the lopsided interpretation of the events at the beginning of the last century, when the Russian imperial administration utilizing the age-old policy of "divide to rule" drew Armenians and Azerbaijanis into bloody confrontations. The territorial debates of 1918-1929, resulting in armed confrontations during the formation of the Armenian Republic and the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, also left a stigma on people's

perception for each other. Tragic apparitions of the Armenian-Turkish past have further marred the already complicated Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. All this in totality has immediately transformed the Mountainous Karabagh conflict into an unyielding confrontation with acts of brutality and mass ethnic cleansing. The lopsided perceptions about themselves and of the opposing side played a role.

I suppose, Armenians cannot get rid of the feeling of being sieged in a castle, and many Azerbaijanis see them as the conductors of Russian imperial interests (not without some benefit for themselves). Hence, the divergent approach, when everything is drawn in contrasting colors: ours is good – theirs is bad. Inflexibility contains perceptions of rigidity and victimization, i.e. qualities for the mass outpour of which the other party should be presented as bad as possible - cunning and inhuman.

The media have considerable input in triggering xenophobia, which has at times grown into mass psychosis. To blame them is unreasonable for they have been responding to the social demand, both in the phase of intensifying the conflict and during its rapid escalation and transformation into a full-fledged war. And as the French say, "a la guerre comme a la guerre". But even after 11 years of ceasefire the situation has not changed a lot. The media monitoring conducted by the Yerevan and Baku Press Clubs indicates that during the last years the rate at which the press, radio and television have been addressing the Karabagh conflict has reduced a little, but all the same, speaking of the conflicting party the media primarily refers to the negative events, definitions and characterizations.

I suppose that without real progress in the peaceful regulation of the conflict it is impossible to expect any changes in the tone of our media, especially the Azerbaijani media (the losing side in the

war usually compensates it with a rancorous rhetoric). Nevertheless, at least on the level of the leading newspapers, TV and radio stations they could reach coordinated efforts in order to prevent the criticism of the other side from becoming promotion of “zoological” hatred, not to spark mass hysteria and psychosis.

5. What should the logic of regulation proceed from: security to cooperation or cooperation to security? What would the parties gain from reviving the transportation and economic cooperation, and what are the losses from the lack of such cooperation and the blockade?

Those are interrelated and complementary parts of a whole. Without security guarantees there could not be cooperation and, in turn, cooperation brings forth trust and heightened interaction, consequently – more security. Nevertheless, I suppose any type of extended cooperation without preliminary minimal guarantees of security, is inconceivable, therefore, these issues are of primary importance at the moment.

Cooperation - if that does not imply primitive trade at the wholesale market in the Georgian village of Sadakhlo- is possible only through a definite level of inter-state relations, ratified through corresponding legal acts. How can we speak about any cooperation between Azerbaijan and Armenia, if the sides have not yet recognized each other, do not have diplomatic relations and neither the citizens nor their properties on hostile territories are protected by the law, and the businessmen and the entrepreneurs cannot strike any deals, which would be recognized by the executive structures and courts to be based on “good will”.

Let us hypothetically assume that the communication lines are open and there are no barriers against business deals between the parties on conflicting sides. Would there be any cooperation?

Hardly. No one would venture to insure cargos sent or received by the parties. Consequently, those shipments could be lost, loitered on the way, etc. The situation can be changed only through a compromising formula for the regulation of the conflict. The most important elements of such a regulation have to be stable security guarantees both in Azerbaijan and Armenia, and in Mountainous Karabagh. Naturally, we are not talking about empty declarations but about an agreement (with the participation of guarantor governments) reinforced through technical and military (restriction of arms on the contact zone, deployment of dividing forces or international observers), political (establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, establishment of official representations, ratification of a preliminary inter-state agreement) and information and promotional measures (putting an end to demonizing the opposing side and calling for war and forceful actions).

Naturally all sides suffer from the severed transportation, economic, scientific, technical and humanitarian contacts. The annual losses from the disrupted transit trade through the railway route from Turkey and Iran, towards Russia and North Europe amount to tens and possibly hundreds of millions of dollars. However, if for Azerbaijan those losses are partially compensated by the growing shipments of cargo through automobile routes, then the losses for Armenia are much more sizeable. In fact without opening the railway communication lines through Azerbaijan, rehabilitation of the main industries in Armenia is almost impossible.

President Levon Ter-Petrosian’s forced resignation and abdication from the declared agreement on the suggested measured plan of the Minsk Group resulted in the stagnation of negotiations for many years. As a result the primary oil pipeline Baku-Ceyhan, and the gas pipeline Baku –Erzurum that were being designed at the time did not pass through the shortest Armenian route, but through Georgia. If for Azerbaijan this means a little increase in transporta-

tion costs to carry energy resources to the western markets, then Yerevan was deprived from millions of dollars of transit income and the possibility to obtain the necessary oil and gas on privileged terms for the country.

In the conditions of continuing uncertainty in the timetable of reaching progress in the regulation process, Iran and Turkey have started to look for alternative routs bypassing Armenia, railway routs through Georgia (Kars-Akhalkalaki) and Azerbaijan (Resht-Astara-Baku) to Russia and Northern Europe. Accomplishment of these projects will leave Armenia in a regional land-lock. For after the construction and rehabilitation of the mentioned segments the investors would strive to justify their investments through maximally utilizing the new lines and would hardly consider investing in the reconstruction and refurbishment of the old half-disintegrated railroads of Armenia.

The disrupted cooperation links have had an adverse effect on energy, technical, chemical, food and textile industries of our countries. It is difficult to estimate what might be the benefits of restoring those relations. For the equipment of the closed down industries or those, having drastically reduced production is hopelessly outdated or loitered, the skilled staff has scattered away and most importantly, and many of the traditional markets have been lost. But unequivocally there still might be some revenues.

As a result of the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories around Karabagh by Armenian forces (5 regions in full and two partially) hundred thousand hectares of fruitful land have been out of exploitation, mines are at a standstill, industrial plants and social infrastructure has been destroyed, tremendous damage has been done to the ecology. The significant assistance (media give this figure as one billion Euros), allocated by the EU and the US for the rehabilitation of the territories damaged from military

action have not been appropriated because there is no palpable progress in peaceful negotiations.

6. Who will rip the benefits in case the conflict is not resolved in predictable future? What would the consequences be, if full-fledged military actions resume?

You will not be better off if your neighbor, with whom you are in dire confrontation, is in trouble. Therefore, if the stalemate is not overcome during the negotiations, all the parties of the conflict – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Mountainous Karabagh - will suffer. Financial resources will be directed towards arms race and the democratic development will slow down. Those who would provide old and cheap ammunitions and weaponry will be the only winners. Georgia, suffering itself from unsettled regional conflicts, in the given circumstances and thanks to the accomplished democratic breakthrough would strengthen its role as the regional political leader. At the same time, mediators will cash in due to the ongoing disruption of Armenia's economic ties with Turkey and Azerbaijan. The stalemate between Armenia and Azerbaijan would allow Russia and partially – Iran to further play on the existing controversies, hamper the region's incorporation into the western system of security and economic development.

Resumption of full-fledged military actions would bear catastrophic consequences. For the new war in contrast with the 1992-1994 campaigns, led mainly by irregular detachments and volunteers, would now turn into a battle of armies having 70-80 thousand troops, many hundreds of armed ammunitions, artillery units, aviation, etc. It would be very hard to contain this confrontation solely within the Karabagh front, consequently, chances of indirect and possibly direct involvement of Russia and Turkey become plausible (in case the military actions have catastrophic consequences either for Armenia or Azerbaijan).

The fledgling economic rehabilitation discerned in both countries would be undermined; investors would start to take their funds out of the region, in any case would be cautious to make any new investments. The costly oil pipeline intended to carry the Caspian energy resources to the world markets, would be threatened. And all this in addition to human and material losses, which would be inevitable as a result of military actions of such a scale.

There is little possibility that an assault operation would be significantly successful, bearing in mind the maintained military parity between the countries the complex terrain, and the fortified borders. Consequently, after the predictable interference of the international community in the face of the UN Security Council, OSCE, Council of Europe, the parties would have to stop the war, and resume peace talks. However, the sprouts of trust and understanding between the parties which had emerged during 11 years of the ongoing ceasefire, would be lost and it would be necessary to restore them, overcoming hostilities triggered by the new losses.

Another negative consequence of the possible war would be the rapid growth of emigration. Several million people have already left the region for the previous years. Most of them were educated, highly skilled people. Previously it was primarily the Russian speaking population, which emigrated to Russia, the Ukraine and other countries of the CIS. Now we might be losing many specialists and primarily English-speaking young people.

7. What could make a solution possible: intensive bilateral talks, mediating efforts of the international community, the pressure on the part of the leading countries? How would the outcome be affected if Mountainous Karabagh representatives were also included in the negotiation process?

I presume the necessary effect could be attained if all of the above-mentioned factors are put to action. And only when bilateral talks are conducted not with the purpose of making the required impression on the domestic audience, but with an earnest desire to gain real results through mutual concessions. When the mediators would become committed and loyal to their principles, coming forth not from the interests of the countries they represent, but in the interest of fastest achievement of stable peace and security based on universal norms of international law. In relation with the leading powers, it is important to withdraw from double standards and clearly render their positions to the parties. Stimuli and guarantees provided by the international community and the leading powers in securing the safety and uninhibited development of Mountainous Karabagh, Azerbaijan and Armenia in general should be defined clearly and made publicly available.

Mountainous Karabagh has never stayed apart from the negotiation process. The leadership of Karabagh Armenians has always had a chance to get acquainted with the propositions worked out by the Minsk Group, their suggestions were also taken into consideration, the co-chairs have often visited Mountainous Karabagh and met with the local authorities. Baku has not refrained from negotiating with the leaders of Karabagh Armenians, but would agree to that only on condition that the well-known resolutions of the UN Security Council (## 822, 853, 874, 884) were observed, requiring immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of the Armenian forces from the occupied territories out of the borders of the former MKAR. The ceasefire has been attained and is standing for over 11 years, but the rest of the UN SC resolutions are being unjustifiably procrastinated.

Azerbaijanis blame Armenians for this and think they want to benefit from their military victories and force Baku to agree to their requirements in relation with Mountainous Karabagh status. Occupation of Azerbaijani territories has been realized by the

armed forced of Armenia and this is not being too diligently concealed today. In terms of negotiations with Mountainous Karabagh in current conditions, Baku thinks it unacceptable for two reasons. First, this would release Armenia from the responsibility for having occupied the territories of another state. Second, the unyielding demands of recognizing Karabagh's independence make discussing its status irrelevant. Thus, Karabagh's immediate participation in the talks at the moment would create useless obstacles. It might be in the interest of those who would not mind to prolong the time in hope that Azerbaijanis would get used to the idea of their loss, and the world would finally recognize it as an accomplished fact of reality.

However, the above said does not exclude utilizing a separate Baku- Stepanakert (Khankendi) format of negotiations, possibly, with the incorporation of the Azerbaijani community of MK in the talks. Declarations of Azerbaijani officials and politicians that MK representatives cannot be recognized as partners in negotiations excludes the possibility of a dialogue with them. Such declarations are counter-productive and do not reflect the need to reach a historic reconciliation between our people.

8. To what extent could the Karabagh regulation be integrated into the context of introducing a new system of regional security in South Caucasus? What is the perspective role of NATO, as well as the Russian and Turkish factors in that regard?

Regulation of the Karabagh conflict is further complicated by the fact that up until now South Caucasus has not conclusively agreed on a common format of local security system. Presently there are two alternatives. The CSA – a security system under the auspices of Russia, which was the Armenian orientation so far, and the NATO – to which Georgia has openly declared its alliance, and

Azerbaijan has done so with some caution. Concepts of making South Caucasus a neutral zone (like in case of the Balkans) through a special stability and security pact between Russia, Turkey, Iran, as well as the USA and the EU did not factually materialize.

The course of events in the last decade has shown that the security system oriented to Moscow is ineffective and undoubtedly lacks a lot in comparison with NATO. Extension of the North-Atlantic Alliance, accession of Bulgaria and Romania, as well as inclusion of the Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) in the block, despite Russian resistance, have made joining NATO topical for South Caucasus states, as well. Opinion polls in terms of long-term security among the population and experts indicate that Georgians are directly oriented towards NATO. These tendencies are not as clearly marked in Azerbaijan, but are also in favor of NATO. In Armenia, however, in terms of security the population is unequivocally oriented towards Russia, though many experts acknowledge the prospects of a NATO coalition.

The Turkish factor is also differently perceived in the capitals of South Caucasian countries. Baku perceives Ankara not only as an influential member of NATO, but also as a partner and a friendly country. For Georgia – Turkey is a friendly regional state and a valuable partner in modernizing their armed forces. In Armenia Turkey is seen through the tragic prism of history, Ankara is considered as an obstructing force against final independence of Mountainous Karabagh from Azerbaijan. In relation with Russia, the situation is quite the opposite. For Armenia this is a strategic partner and a traditional protector. Azerbaijan treats Russia with obvious caution, but prefers to be on good terms with it. And Georgia directly points at it as the instigator of separatism and blames it for the ongoing conflict on its northern territories.

Simultaneous and coordinated stance with regard to NATO integration would have tremendous significance for the security of Armenia and Azerbaijan, especially in the Karabagh regulation context. Such a choice implies taking specific steps, which would include a significant reduction of armed forces in the region, and their modifications in line with NATO standards. Then the Russian troops should be withdrawn from the South Caucasus in a synchronized mode, their military bases should be closed, and the semi-legal and conspired spying network (the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Security Service, etc.) should be neutralized. The negative role they play in triggering conflicts in the region is undeniable.

A full integration of our countries in NATO is impossible without the regulation of the Karabagh conflict. Consequently, this goal is a factor stimulating a peaceful resolution of the problem. Naturally NATO is not a panacea for the resolution of all disputes and controversies of member countries. Suffice it to remember such conflicting member-countries in NATO as Turkey and Greece, Spain and Great Britain, Romania and Hungary. However, these countries within the block manage to keep conflicts within political frames, and prevent military confrontation.

9. In what way could European integration potential affect Armenian and Azerbaijani relations?

Even the first steps towards European integration have had a positive effect on the relations of Armenia and Azerbaijan. They have forced our countries to act only within the legal frames and find civilized methods in the regulation of the Karabagh conflict. Suffice it to remember that the Minsk Group carrying out the mediating mission in the regulation of the conflict has been established by and acts under OSCE auspices. It was the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - an influential political

organization in Europe - that initiated the discussions of Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and the process of regulating the Karabagh problem. Thus, even if European integration does not result in speedy resolution of the existing conflicts in the region, it certainly curbs them, marks the frames of their regulation, and stimulates its positive dynamics.

Such positive impulse between the conflicting sides might trigger our countries to develop our relations and strengthen cooperation with the European Union in the frames of the EU-proclaimed "European Neighborhood Policy". The European model implies dissolving the problems of nationalism and ethnic separatism within the process of integration of all of the European nations. Though the Basque, Scotch and Corsican nationalism and separatism are still discernible, it should be acknowledged that within the frames of a united Europe they do not get out of hand. The positive effect of South Caucasus integration into the EU could be considered in that sense as well.

Politicians and officials representing the conflicting parties realize that reaching a mutually acceptable compromise would be much easier if Armenia and Azerbaijan were given a green light to join the EU. Indeed, in the process of integration and ideally inclusion into the family of United Europe with its common customs, economic, currency, legal zone, and common citizenship, many aspects of the Armenian Azerbaijani conflict seeming hard to resolve would lose their significance and actuality.

10. Which form of resolution offered during the last 15 years would you consider to be more realistic? Could you define your own model currently acceptable for the sides, or at least the principles on which the regulation should be based?

Any version of resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in relation with Mountainous Karabagh could be attained only through political will and restored trust between the parties, as well as through adequate support and guarantees of the international community. Unfortunately, we do not have adequate amount of what was mentioned above, yet. That is why 11 years of the ongoing negotiation process is in stagnation, and it has not been possible to bring it up to the level of specific decisions and actions.

The most radical version, eliminating the object of argument would be territorial exchange. It could save the parties from difficult and lengthy debates about a mutually acceptable status of Mountainous Karabagh. For even if an agreement is reached on this issue, it would be followed by endless reciprocal claims in relation with the interpretation of the stipulations or paragraphs, loyalty to the agreed upon actions by the parties. In case of territorial exchange there is no need for peacekeeping forces and international observers will not be needed either. However, this version appeared to be impossible first of all for the fact that even the USA and Turkish support would not alter the categorically negative position taken by Russia and Iran against that version. Robert Kocharian and Heydar Aliev, during the 1999 OSCE Summit in Turkey had agreed to a territorial exchange, but they were forced to withdraw after the assassination in the Armenian Parliament and the scandalous resignations in Azerbaijan.

The “package deal” would also have been acceptable. But the requirement of the Armenian side to acknowledge the independence of Karabagh (arguments about horizontal ties cannot conceal it) makes it unacceptable for Azerbaijan. Baku does not have and in the foreseeable future would hardly ever have a political leader ready to sign such an agreement. The referendum, required by the Azerbaijani constitution in relation with the status of Mountainous Karabagh, is practically impossible to carry out in any legitimate

form. Thus, the “package deal” has no chances. To agree on a broad autonomy for Karabagh, even guaranteed by the international community (all this was included in the first plan of the Minsk Group, rejected by Yerevan) Armenians would not concede at the present level of trust between the conflicting parties. To present independence to Mountainous Karabagh or relinquish the territory to Armenia (which was suggested by the third plan of the Minsk Group rejected by Baku, and discussed in Paris and Key West) Azerbaijanis cannot and would not. In this situation, if we take into consideration international practices, it is the “staged or gradual” deal of regulation that would allow passing from futile arguments to specific actions and step-by-step to proceed towards peace and cooperation.

Robert Kocharian’s administration, in contrast with his predecessors, as well as the official administration and many politicians of Azerbaijan, are skeptical regarding the latter version. Understanding the logic of the incumbent Armenian President is not difficult. Assuming that they are worried about leaving the issue of Mountainous Karabagh status open in Yerevan, since they are concerned that in conditions of peace and security they will not be able to gain more from Azerbaijan than today, when they have such a card in their hands as the occupied territories. In conditions of peace Azerbaijan’s privileged position in energy and transportation links could upset the power balance in favor of Baku, which in exchange of economic cooperation could demand political concessions from Armenia. In line with such logic it is more reasonable to try and rip more from Baku now in terms of maximum or closest to independence fixed status for Mountainous Karabagh, relating the issue with the return of the occupied territories out of MKAR. The Armenian side is reluctantly ready to discuss only this type of a “staged deal” which would temporarily leave some of the occupied territories (the Armenian press notes Kelbajar and Lachin) in their hands as a guarantee and a lever of pressure on

Baku in the future political trade-off. Naturally Baku cannot sign an agreement, which in violation of the UN SC resolution would legalize Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani lands.

Is there a way out of the negotiation quagmire? As someone long distanced from the negotiation process and having no access to confidential information I could only relate some of my considerations and note directions in which there is a chance to touch common grounds. Undoubtedly the more realistic version for the regulation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is still the “stage-by-stage deal.” Naturally, it has to undergo specific modifications to incorporate some of the basic considerations of the parties. Thus, in line with the return of all the territories outside MKAR, in exchange for security guarantees and abstinence from resumption of military actions, as well as de-blocking transportation links, a “temporary status” for Mountainous Karabagh could also be defined. This would somehow legalize the current administration of Mountainous Karabagh and allow them to get into direct negotiations with Baku regarding NKR final status, return of displaced people, reconstruction of communication links, cooperation, etc.

The positive side of a “temporary status” is that having been ratified by the sides in an agreement, it will not require confirmation through a referendum. Though temporary, such a status would allow keeping up existing relations between Mountainous Karabagh and Yerevan (until a mutually acceptable final decision is reached). The main thing is to disperse the current situation of mutual hostility between Armenia and Azerbaijan and gear it towards a positive level and give them some dynamic impetus. Subordinate relations between Mountainous Karabagh and Baku are unacceptable for Armenians at this stage. However, in an atmosphere when security threats are eliminated, contacts and cooperation would be reestablished, elements of trust would be planted and the current rigid position might acquire compromising

forms. In the context of generally hailed European integration in the South Caucasus, such a perspective is quite realistic.

Regarding the return of occupied territories outside MKAR the process of abdication itself could be carried out according to a coordinated timetable. In terms of Kelbajar and Lachin it could be conditioned on an agreement for a functioning transportation route linking Mountainous Karabagh with Armenia through an open corridor.



Arif ALIYEV

Arif Aliyev was born on August 31, 1960. He graduated from Journalism Department of Moscow State University in 1983. He worked as a correspondent for State Information Agency of Azerbaijan in 1983-1986. In 1986-1988, Mr. Aliyev was an editor in a department of “Molodyozh Azerbaijana” newspaper. In 1988-1990, he was the editor-in-chief of “Khazar” magazine and deputy editor-in-chief of “Azadlig” newspaper. In 1990-1992, Arif Aliyev worked as the director of “Turan” information and publishing enterprise and editor-in-chief of “Svoboda” newspaper. Mr. Aliyev headed the press-service of the President of Azerbaijan in 1992-1993. In 1993-1995 he was the chief advisor of “Azadlig” newspaper and taught at the Journalism Department of Khazar University.

Mr. Aliyev has been the chairman of the “Yeni Nesil” Journalists Union of Azerbaijan since 1995 and president of Baku Press Club since 1998. Since 2005 he has been the editor-in-chief of “Gyun-sahar” newspaper. Arif Aliyev is a member of the Press Council of Azerbaijan. He has authored 9 books on journalism and has led over 20 media projects, implemented in Azerbaijan.

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THE OLD SONG ABOUT THE IMPORTANT THINGS

The “live” contacts between the journalists of Azerbaijan and Armenia started to grow active in 1996. These contacts did occur before, too: the media representatives from time to time faced each other at conferences, seminars, exchanged short insulting retorts, after which every one came home with an aftertaste of “small but important victory” and told the public about the way he, in front of representatives of 12 (24, 36 and so on) countries showed the cheeky enemy his true place, proving the world how righteous and fair the claims of Armenians or Azerbaijanis were.

Since the moment the regular direct communication was established, this aggressiveness, the blunt reluctance or incapacity to at least listen to the arguments of the counterpart have been reducing. Yet, however paradoxical it may seem, along with this the enthusiasm melts - the enthusiasm sparked by the hope for the solution of Karabagh problem within reasonable timeframes and that the meetings of informal entities, including journalists, their discussions, joint events, initiatives, efforts can influence the situation for the better. Here one remembers the illusions that nurture these two societies, separated by mine fields and risking lagging even more behind the processes underway in the global world.

History is A Bad Witness and Even A Worse Judge

Let the first illusion be considered first. It can also be called a historic chimera. The appeals to restore justice, grounded on such notions as “these lands have historically been owned by Azerbaijanis, and the Russian Empire settled Armenians here to oust them from the Caucasus” or “Armenians have traditionally

been a majority here but the cunning communists gave the territory to Azerbaijani rule to oust Armenians from the land” do not hold water even from the viewpoint of purely historical approach to the problem. All these arguments have a grain of truth; this grain may be even bigger than one would want – considering the prospects of regional relations. Yet which date should one take as a starting point? Armenians base their initially chosen point on some facts as most beneficial, while Azerbaijanis take others. The neighbors – Iranians and Russians – have their own hoard of necessary maps and evidence dated by just as ancient periods of history.

Having read through the historical overview prepared by the experts and their analysis of this aspect of the problem, I was once more convinced: history is no good as witness for such situations of conflict and dispute. It is even worse in the role of a judge. Each party to the conflict has at least 20 sources to prove its point, sometimes even dated by the same time period. And how can one rely on historical evidence, when even the contemporary analysts of the reasons for the Karabagh conflict speak one thing during direct contacts, but end up writing something different? Actually, as years go by, these writings can also become historical documents.

The Tree Growing Downwards Or Where Are The Roots of the Conflict?

Hence, the principle of “dead soul” counting – where, when and how many people lived, who was moved or deported where and in what quantity – is badly suited for understanding the reasons of the Karabagh conflict and the search for its resolution. Because this conflict can least of all be identified as a territorial one: this is a conflict of ideology, geopolitics, or even, if you like it – of mentality. It resembles a tree growing the wrong way, downwards: its roots are in us, in the realities of today, and it is the branches that go into the past, the history.

The roots are political interests, struggle for power, severe conflict of the old mentality and new approaches to state and legal systems.

Was there an alternative to the conflict escalation at various stages? Of course there was. And even those options that our experts propose could quite as well be the semi-solutions. But only semi-solutions. For the agreements reached (1990, 1992, 1993) were broken not because of the endless treachery of Armenians (or of Azerbaijanis, depending on who quotes which specific case as an example), but because this was demanded by the yet incomplete rationale of the conflict: struggle for power and for retaining influence in the region. The methods and devices used in the struggle, on the one hand, call for a mandatory existence of such a conflict as a favorable background. On the other – they are simply unfit to solve problems like that of Karabagh.

To confirm this idea of mine, which is actually not a very original one, I will quote the text of the Azerbaijani expert: “Second-rank communist functionaries from provincial MKAR (...) and their supporters have risen to unimaginable for them heights: they are heading the power in Armenia”. And I will add: it is not accidental that in Azerbaijan, when speaking about the main stages of Karabagh war – the Khojali tragedy, the surrender of Shusha and the loss of Kelbajar – they speak of treason. Each one of these events was followed by a change of power. This continued until its true owner came back.

In other words, there was an alternative to the escalation of the conflict. But despite all effort it proved to be unrealizable. Because the Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontation was not the main, but rather a side factor in the conflict. Its nucleus was and still is the struggle for power in the two countries, the aspiration of the major global countries to retain or to establish their influence in the

region. This struggle is not as yet over. And the fight for influences still continues, too. See how the Armenian expert sums up his analysis: “(...) The reason that the conflict is unresolved is in the lack of democratic rule in Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as in (...) distorted essence of the conflict.” And the Azerbaijani expert, listing all the conditions necessary to resolve the conflict notes: “(...) results can only be gained (...) when the mediators would become committed and loyal to their principles, coming forth not from the interests of the countries they represent (...)”

It means today it is too early to speak of a victory of any of the conflicting parties. One can only count the tokens won or lost: Azerbaijan lost nearly a fifth (or a sixth, depending on who counts) of its land – today it is controlled by Armenian forces. Armenia lost nearly the half of its population (or a third, again, depending on who counts) – people have left the country unable to cope on with the hardships. So there is a comparison to be made of what is more important: land or people? One can add here the huge economic losses, major military expenses, the constant fear for life, hundreds of thousands of people living in the borderline (rather, the frontline) areas, the lack of serious democratic reforms – and the answer is clear.

What (Who) Separates Us And Can Armenians And Azerbaijanis Live Together?

I do not quite agree with the Armenian expert writing that history and culture are factors dividing Azerbaijani and Armenian people. Neither can I agree with the idea that one of the most frequently voiced justifications that “makes it impossible for Karabagh Armenians to live in Azerbaijan” is “the negative historical experience of Armenians living under the administrative rule of Azerbaijan”. On the one hand, why and how come the “historical

experience” of Armenians in Baku or Gyanja is so drastically different from the “historical experience” of Karabaghi Armenian who actually had a greater degree of protection: they had certain autonomy and many representatives in that very administration? Yet the protest wave was raised not by Armenians living in Baku and Gyanja, although it was they, who suffered most in the conflict, but the Armenians of Karabagh. On the other hand, every historical experience has both a negative and positive component. It all depends on which one of them is “revitalized” through specific and targeted efforts and is petrified in a stereotype.

I am not debating the point here, but I am trying to analyze, proceeding from the results of the three-year work: why is it Armenians in Karabagh do not want to live within Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan does not agree to give them independence?

The author of these lines has repeatedly visited both Yerevan and Karabagh – after the ceasefire. And it was at the time when this very “historical memory” was still alive enough to throb in veins. Almost never did I encounter open hostility (with the exception of several officials); instead I saw a wish for contacts, to establish relations. I easily held press-conferences in packed conference rooms and said just what I always say in Baku. In the same way Armenian journalists were received in Azerbaijan. TV crews from Mountainous Karabagh were strolling along the city boulevard, asking people, interviewing them. No one attacked or insulted them. Representatives of Armenian media took part in the celebration of National Journalism Day in Baku.

What did it all end with? During the visit of an Armenian human rights activist to Baku he was attacked at the airport by a reckless young man. The TV cameras happened to be in the right place at this right moment. The rest was just a matter of skill: the shots went over the TV channels, the public was indignant, this

caused a responding reaction and... “the negative historical memory” revived very soon.

Of course, this is not that simple. There are complicated mechanisms, serious services, big interests behind it all. Yet, simplifying the situation, I want to stress one more: the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is least of all a historical and territorial conflict, and is most of all a political conflict, the fire of which was blown and sustained by certain methods and with certain political aims.

Thus, the thesis on the impossibility of cohabitation of Armenians and Azerbaijanis within one state formation does not stand criticism. Directly or indirectly this is confirmed also by the responses of thousands of people that we contacted during our surveys, focus group researches, at conferences, seminars, debates, etc.

The Potential of “Popular Diplomacy” is Close to Exhaustion. Everything Depends on the Leadership

The sad example described above brings us to another very serious subject, analyzed by the experts: the existing resources for the peaceful resolution, in particular, the role of “popular diplomacy” and media in the conflict settlement.

Our experts are certainly right when they note the huge importance of each of these factors for confidence building between the parties. There is only one “but” here: the effectiveness of this resource use depends on whether the authorities would want to use them, whether the results of the activities of “popular diplomats”

and journalists have any impact on the official course of the negotiations process. Unfortunately, this “but” ultimately outweighs all the achievements of non-governmental structures.

People who at first followed the Baku-Yerevan TV bridges, the mutual visits of NGO people, journalists, human rights activists with hope, recently feel irritated at reading reports on new joint projects. They can see that none of these contacts, projects and proposals can mollify the austere faces of the officials, engaged in negotiations and accusing each of other of the same sins for over ten years already: lack of constructive attitude, uneasiness for compromise, inability to make a realistic assessment of the situation. An opinion is formed that “popular diplomacy” serves not to rapprochement, but to surrender. There is an image of “inner enemy” being created, actively used in the political struggle. (That famous phrasing – “pouring water on the enemy’s mill”!) The extremely politicized press - even that part of it that is involved in joint regional projects - being completely dependent on their patrons, is destined to follow their will. It is particularly dangerous for the opposition to have initiatives on the resolution of Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict: it runs the risk of being accused of populism at best and of treason at worst. This is also noted by our experts who write that “the authorities (...) try to monopolize the MK problem and instill it in the minds of citizens that only they are able to solve it (...) in the interests of people”.

Of what has been said one can conclude: the “civil potential” in the issue has its limit, and this limit is nearly reached. The potential can increase only as the influence of the non-governmental sector and media on the leadership grows and not as a consequence of intensification of informal contacts between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Until there is a real progress in the negotiations process, the role of “popular diplomacy” and civil institutes in the resolution of Karabagh problem will remain quite restricted.

However the smallest advancement of this kind can cause an outburst of the activity of NGOs and social groups that can play even a greater role in confidence building between the parties than the government itself.

Thus, the attempts of our experts to find explanations as to why there have been no results in the resolution of Karabagh problem and the whole complex of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations are interlinked: firstly, there is no due interest on behalf of the domestic leaders, many of them can even lose serious levers of governing the inner situation and even power; secondly, the detainment of the conflict is beneficial to the major geopolitical forces, who have specific interests in the region. The resolution of the Karabagh entanglement can make a serious push to the democratic and economic development of the whole South Caucasus. And our greater neighbors, unfortunately, do not want to have such a “democratic thorn” in their sides or their bellies. At the moments when the West seemed to push the parties towards some resolution option and we found ourselves faced by important events, both Azerbaijan and Armenia were shaken by huge cataclysms. In 1993, when the parties discussed already the details of deploying peacekeeping forces headed by a Finnish general in the conflict zone, in Gyanja a rebellion started that changed the course of events drastically. The expected breakthrough in the negotiations in 1999 was for a long time halted by the attack at Armenian parliament leaving state officials dead.

If The Leadership Suddenly Wanted...

Let us suppose that the authorities of both countries do sincerely want to untie the Karabagh knot. What is the possible framework for conflict resolution?

There are two radical options for solving the problem: it is either Azerbaijan gives a complete independence to Mountainous

Karabagh and the region goes on with its life the way it wants and can, or else the Mountainous Karabagh remains in Azerbaijan, gains a number of security and free development guarantees and we go on improving our life together. The intermediary opinion, quoted by our experts in this book, including the territorial exchange, are taken off the agenda.

Why does Azerbaijan not want to give independence to Mountainous Karabagh? I think, the Azerbaijani expert gives a very correct answer to this question. Let all patriotic, psychological motives and rhetoric of “what did we lose the lives of our sons for” type be put aside. The consent to the independence of Mountainous Karabagh is equivalent to a suicide for the Azerbaijani statehood. It means that in the nearest future the country may get just as serious problems in the south, north, south-west of its territory.

Now on to the second reason. To understand its essence, let us supplement the question of “why can Azerbaijan not grant independence to Mountainous Karabagh?” by a number of other questions. Why did Lithuania not agree to give independence to the Poles? Great Britain – to Northern Irish? Iran – to Southern Azerbaijanis? Georgia – to Abkhazians? Spain - to Basks? Russia – to Chechens? Because the territorial integrity is one of the essential components of the statehood, one of the fundamental international principles of peaceful coexistence. One can of course question the adequacy of such a comparison, state that one cannot draw parallels between these countries and cases. But this will not be true. Because the nature of the phenomenon we are dealing with is the same everywhere. The difference is only in the reasons for its appearance, in the forms of attaining the goal, the culture and mentality of the parties to the conflict. In all cases there is not only a division of lands, but dismembering of a living, multifunctional, very sensitive organism, called a state. I realize why the Soviet

army at the very initial stage of Karabagh conflict within several days took out of Armenia 200 thousand Azerbaijanis, inhabiting the north-east and the east of the country. This figure is being challenged in Armenia. Let it be 150, 120 thousand. In any case, in quantitative terms, they were much more numerous than the Armenians living in Mountainous Karabagh. And their problems were not any fewer. But should those people then remain at their houses, the development of the conflict would gain quite a different turn. It does not take much fantasy to imagine the answer of Armenia to the question: “Why can it not grant independence to Azerbaijanis, inhabiting quite a big territory of the country and unwilling to be direct subject to Yerevan administration?”

History does not like subjunctives. Yet such a question can help one to understand the stance of the Azerbaijani party.

There is also another position. The Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh do not want to live within Azerbaijan, thinking it impossible. Why? The Azerbaijani expert presents his understanding of these reasons: there is the winner syndrome – we have won the war, why shouldn't the world acknowledge the reality; the rigid policy of the leaders – the political rule is held by people, who were brought to power by this very war and struggle for independence; the psychological barrier – a generation has grown up that has not seen and cannot imagine living side by side with Azerbaijanis. The Armenian expert notes different factors: negative historical experience and the hope that the fundamental international norms will be reconsidered, that the principle of territorial integrity will some day lose its significance of today.

We have already spoken about the negative historical experience. To be able to look into the essence of the question, we decided not to consider patriotic, psychological motives influencing the search for the conflict resolution. They sometimes hide the true

reasons for the conflict so deep that it becomes extremely hard to get to the truth. As to the stance of the authorities, we have decided to assume that the authorities truly want to untie the Karabagh knot. And the hope for the review of fundamental international norms is actually more of a sign of aspiring to attain a political goal, rather than a wish to remove the main reason for the conflict.

Yet there is another very serious factor, repeatedly noted by our experts: the security issue. The Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh do not believe in the possibility of creating a reliable guarantee system for them along with any form of subordination to Baku. And here not the historic, but the “live” memory speaks: the night bomb attacks, the cannon fire from Shusha, the life in shelters, the threats of Azerbaijani senior officers to oust all Armenians from Karabagh. Mountainous Karabagh and Yerevan do not trust Azerbaijan, believing that its every proposal, including the broadest autonomy possible is nothing more than a promotional claim.

Optimistic Tragedy

The most valuable part of experts' judgments is their answer to the last question: “Could you define your own model, currently acceptable for the sides, or at least the principles on which the regulation should be based?”

Both Rasim Musabekov and Stepan Grigorian build up their proposals proceeding from the “stage-by-stage plan” of conflict resolution. It seems today to be the only realistic option since none of the parties has a political will or tools or confidence in each other or even a possibility to find a simultaneous answer to all the questions accumulated in fifteen years of war and severe confrontation.

The principle by both and most distinctly defined by the Armenian expert allows not to contrast but to link together two main problems: the territory (which is truly important for Azerbaijan) and security (which is truly important for Mountainous Karabagh). The experts realize that their proposals cannot be called a model, but should a number of lacking components be added here, by making the main issues as specific as possible, agreeing on differences one can build up the overall structure of such a model. This makes one think that maybe a joint Armenian-Azerbaijani expert team with the assistance of the same French, Russian and American professionals could have been more productive in the development of Karabagh resolution model, than the whole Minsk Group with its endless visits, new proposals and everlasting optimism. No year has passed without the Minsk Group Co-chairmen to announce the coming one to be decisive!

But can this model work?

I will conclude with a quotation from the Azerbaijani expert that brings us back to realities of today: “Any version of resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in relation with Mountainous Karabagh could be attained only through political will and restored trust between the parties, as well as through adequate support and guarantees of the international community. Unfortunately, we do not have adequate amount of what was mentioned above, yet”

And so far the high-ranked diplomats, whose negotiations are still quite secret for us, appearing in front of journalists go on singing the old songs about the important things.

The 13th meeting of the Council of OSCE Foreign Ministers was held quite recently, in December 2005. The Minister of

Foreign Affairs of Armenia Vardan Oskanian at this meeting made an unambiguous statement: “Karabagh became independent in compliance and in accordance with laws”. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Elmar Mamedyarov noted with alarm: “The existing situation leads us nowhere, and the patience is coming to its end”. Stephen Mann, the US representative in OSCE Minsk Group, concluded with optimism: “Next year we can expect great progress in Karabagh conflict resolution”.



Boris NAVASARDIAN

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A BATTLEFIELD OF CONFRONTATION OR A COMMON PROBLEM?

Speaking about the Karabagh problem there is always the risk of being dragged into a long and dreary debate on who is right and who is wrong, who started first, whose historic arguments hold more ground, etc, etc... These could be quite reasonable, however we did not want to make this book a supplement of what has been already told. Firstly, the co-authors could hardly have come up with new pro-Armenian or pro-Azerbaijani arguments, and it was not our goal to reiterate the old ones. Secondly, the past years have proven that one party’s arguments were hardly ever convincing for the other. As a result, compilation of those arguments does not make up a compromise more plausible; on the contrary, it strengthens the opponents’ resolve to insist on their righteousness.

All the following considerations stem from an effort to refrain from taking sides and to consider the issue as a common problem for both the Armenians and Azerbaijanis, analyze the basis of the problem, its current status and perspectives, for a resolution based on peoples’ interests irrespective of their nationality. Stepan Grigorian and Rasim Musabekov – both political analysts – have made an invaluable contribution with their comments in putting together these considerations.

A “Delayed” Conflict

Both experts are practically unanimous in their answers to the question of “*Who needed the Karabagh conflict, who has cashed in on it?*” Grigorian posits that “*Since its beginning in 1988 the Karabagh movement in MK and Armenia had a powerful democratic charge, which could contribute to the prevention of conflict escalation*”. “*The inclination of the USSR authorities to retain conflict situations in the peripheral regions of the country. The end of*

1980s was marked by a systemic political and economic crisis of the communist empire. As the well-established Soviet tradition prompted, the Kremlin decided to restrain the situation through inciting a clash of various ethnic, religious and social groups". Musabekov also points out how "destructive and provocative methods" of the Moscow leadership - age-old politics of "divide and rule" were put to work, with the simple intent of "intensifying the conflict to the point of open confrontation to hold the two nations hostage of the central power's disposition".

Holding Moscow responsible is common for the politicians and analysts of Armenian and Azerbaijani liberal democratic parties alike. It holds a definite constructive charge, for it helps to bring them together on a common ground, and diverts the image of an enemy. This could become a base for a dialogue. People are more inclined to talk, when the interlocutors are not associated with the destructions, incinerations and pillage of the villages, and the months' long bombardment. The participants of the dialogue are the victims of a certain clandestine plot who are striving to find ways and get out of the crisis situation.

In fact, such kind of a peculiar mutual rehabilitation is typical not only to the political representatives, but also the wide range of people. One would recall the words of a common Azerbaijani during Genrikh Borovik's 1988 notorious show called "Viewpoint" and dedicated to the Karabagh conflict. The monologue of the Azerbaijani sounded approximately as follows. "We Armenians and Azerbaijanis used to get along so well. This conflict was instigated by a third party. And I do not know who the third party is."

This "third party" depending on the political predilections and tastes, could be found in different parts of the world. In other circles one could hear an equally logical version that at the end of the 80's trying to weaken the Soviets, the West (which of course did

not expect such a rapid demise at the time but did not mind much either, when it indeed happened) would support any movements of alternative anti-communist character, and first of all national movements as the most effective in disrupting the Soviet system.

Most probably, both the Kremlin and the Western versions have their legitimacy. Moreover, they do not exclude one another. Within the context of the Karabagh conflict many factors having contributed to its emergence and escalation could be listed.

Along with the positive side of the above mentioned efforts to find culprits beyond the conflict itself, it could also become a handicap in finding solutions. First of all, external powers would always try to utilize emerging conflicts in their interest and their efforts should be taken as something inevitable in the process of overcoming difficulties. Second, accentuating the external factors and lamenting for the fact that we do not live in Oceania or on Mars, we start to rely on external factors for our relief, as well. And although the first stage of initiating a dialogue between Armenians and Azerbaijanis becomes possible when blaming a third party, it is never followed by a joint effort to get out of the maze together.

The whole sluggish process of regulation indicates the inefficiency of the existing approaches, when the blame for the conflict and the lack of positive efforts in its regulation are put on the world powers, the UN, the OSCE, anyone, except us. Meanwhile, without the involvement of our communities, government structures and the elite, the conflict wouldn't have emerged at all. And it is through their active participation and genuine efforts again, that a resolution can ever become possible. We must reject expectations of a miracle solution from outside. For if even the whole world would put aside all the other concerns and made a decision for the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis, it does not mean that their

decision would reflect the interest of all or even one of the parties involved.

Getting back to such convenient references as “Moscow’s handwriting” in the matter, it must be stated that having appeared face to face with the threat of USSR’s disintegration the Centre was ready to exacerbate the situation not only in the Caucasus, but also in the Baltics, Ukraine and other regions. In some places they succeeded to some extent, in other places they did not. At some sites the conflicts are still there but the resolution is clear and it is only a matter of time, at some other places, God forbid, the main problems are still to be unraveled. In relation with Karabagh everything has taken such a tragic turn because this conflict is endowed with its own internal specifics, and not because of a special ominous role of the external powers. Even if the conversation is geared towards the geopolitical factors, the global socio-economic, historical and cultural processes nourishing the conflict, we must remember that we have to consider their reflection through the prism of the specific conditions and interrelations in our region.

According to experts some of the specific conditions peculiar to the Karabagh conflict are considered to be “the negative historical experience of the Armenian people under Azerbaijani administration (Stepan Grigorian); “The extreme nationalists counted on the escalation of mutual hatred, various near-government groups tried to use the situation to make a breakthrough or regain their positions, the atmosphere of suppression and social instability played into the hands of the Mafiosi criminal groups, for it allowed to burry the ends of their past, present and future crimes” (Rasim Musabekov). Both agree on the fact that the conflict stemmed from the national policy in the former Soviet Union. Musabekov notes that mass deportations and other disorders encouraged people to suppose that a chunk of a republic’s land could be cut off and granted to another, Grigorian refers to the artificial changes

made in the demographic composition of Karabagh and the concerns of Karabagh Armenians to face the same fate as Nakhichevani Armenians.

The Soviet national policy, without a doubt, was hugely culpable for the Karabagh conflict and many others on the territory of the former USSR. But to understand the nature of Armenian-Azerbaijani hostilities one should look deeper at the beginning of the XX century. Almost in every country where the assets had been divided between representatives of various communities, confrontation emerges between nationalistically disposed elite groups. Striving to maximally clear the grounds for their own activities and force representatives of other nationalities and beliefs out of the market the economic subjects would actively use xenophobia in their competition.

In this respect Armenian-Azerbaijani relations were being shaped in the context of the exacerbating Armenian-Turkish relations at the twilight of the Ottoman Empire. As Rasim Musabekov puts it – one of the reasons for Armenians hostility towards Azerbaijanis is identification of the latter with the Turks and transmission of all related negative emotions on them. Acknowledging the truth of the argument, allow me to observe that Azerbaijanis too often identify themselves with Turks, at least their own interests are identified with those of the Turkish interests. The main reasons of hostilities were related to the spread of “national government” ideology in the region during the second half of the XIX century, more specifically - the radical version of this ideology. For the dominating national-religious community it signified assimilation of the minorities or complete inhibition of their interests. For minorities this meant shifting the correlation of powers in their favor or gaining independence, formation of their own market protected from foreigners and other attributes of a national state. This was how many bloody confrontations and warfare began.

The interlocution of Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Azerbaijani controversies charged the Karabagh conflict with additional explosive components. Moreover, if we compare the current coverage of the 1915 Genocide in the Azerbaijani and the Turkish media, it becomes obvious that Azerbaijanis tend to be more categorical in their outright rejection of the genocide and of the Armenian position. And the reason is not only the level of pluralism and professionalism of the press but also public sentiments in general. The Turkish community today is more disenfranchised, open and inclined to look for common grounds with Armenians than the Azerbaijanis, who are seemingly not immediately related to the issue of Genocide.

Among the basis of the Karabagh conflict a number of irrational moments could also be added to the relations of Armenians and Azerbaijanis; a peculiar feeling of national pride and dignity. This is a trend often encountered among neighbors devoid of sovereignty, living in close associations, but concentrated solely on their own identity. Being deprived of conditions for self-realization in state building, full participation and self-perception in world processes, they spend all their energy competing with each other, which at times is rendered into the most unexpected and even brutal forms.

During the Soviet period bourgeois nationalism was suppressed, but not eradicated. Rather, it was conserved. Having no possibility of developing naturally to extinction under the influence of the new historic realities, nationalism became more intransigent, and gained distorted forms. At times local (not the common Soviet) patriotism would be cruelly persecuted; at other times it was consciously reanimated to achieve the goals of the Soviet empire. Thus, during the Second World War recollections of national heroes and historic facts were being actively exploited, and so were feelings and instincts that would raise the patriotic

spirits of the Russians, Georgians, Kazakhs, etc. Symbols of encouragement used to boost various nations' morale against the common enemy at times could be at odds with each other. In this case images of a Russian conqueror usurping new lands and the heroes leading national-independence movements against him resolved a common ideological problem.

Nationalism was quite rigorously reflected in the behavior of the communist leadership. Outwardly posing to be internationalists, leaders of individual republics would often and quite resolutely implement their narrow nationalist programs, and lead an off-stage struggle against each other. Competition and rivalry were not led openly but through the highest arbitration of Moscow on which of the republics would provide a better record about the implementation of five-year planning and would take over the Passing Banner of the "Winner in Socialist Competition" together with other goods, various privileges and investments. This tendency to disregard each other in resolving important issues greatly hampered a dialogue between the communist leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan when the conflict erupted. They could hardly be blamed of indifference for the future of the region, or the sufferings and despondency of their compatriots. But their inability to resolve any of the problems circumventing Moscow, and the system itself which implied resolution of any problems only through an appeal to the Kremlin, had rendered them absolutely powerless.

One of the peculiarities of individual republics during the Soviet era was the tendency to discern trends of nationalism in their neighbors but never at home among themselves. In Azerbaijan it was a common phenomenon to call the Armenian communist elite "Dashnaks". And in Armenia the label of "Musavatists" was used as easily on some of the most influential representatives of Soviet Azerbaijan. This indicated that the Soviet elite had in fact, become heir to their national agenda from

the pre-Soviet era. Often quite rightfully suspicious of each other's intentions to gain at the expense of their neighbor both the Armenians and Azerbaijanis would explain their ethnocentrism as a forced counter reaction. A recurrence of this approach is apparent with Azerbaijanis even now, when they claim that Karabagh Armenians used to live even better than the rest of the population in Azerbaijani regions, and the reasons for their revolt were not related to discrimination. Rasim Musabekov, along with the imperial policies of Moscow, points out to the endeavors of the nationalist Armenian elite for expansion as the core of the conflict. It seems to me that our colleague is overlooking the unequivocal fact that when social and economic grievances are multiplied with national controversies and intimidation, perceptions become particularly sensitive. Besides, scrupulous attention of the trends in the country of their residence (in this case a republic) by a minority cannot be disregarded. And the Armenians in Azerbaijan had more than enough reasons to be alarmed.

The raise of national self-consciousness in Armenia after the Khrushchev meltdown in the middle of the sixties was accompanied with aggression against Azerbaijanis living in the republic. A few years later nationalistic trends gained momentum in Azerbaijan once again. The new leader of the republic – Heidar Aliev, conducted a policy of Azerbaijanization of all spheres, starting from the rearrangement of the administrative staff ending with the composition of the soccer teams. Comparing the Bronze-winner “Neftyanik” of 1966 with the “Neftchi” (note the changed name) in say 1972 - the contrast would be obvious.

Waves of anti-Armenian and anti-Azerbaijani campaigns had occurred respectively in Soviet Armenia and Soviet Azerbaijan in the past as well. But the tendencies reflected in the above mentioned examples most directly led to the events of 1988. For the nationally sensitive part of Armenians living in Baku, Kirovabad

(Gyanja) and other predominantly Azerbaijani cities, these tendencies signaled a silent and peaceful withdrawal, but in the Mountainous Karabagh Autonomous Region and other regions with prevailingly Armenian administrative and social structures tendencies for resistance started to gain momentum.

All those events unraveled on the background of socialist system's global failure, expansion of rights granted by Gorbachev's “perestroika” without being buttressed by consistent reforms to allow consolidation of the country on the base of the newly proclaimed democratic principles. Naturally the interests of the corrupt criminal circles, extremists and provocateurs of all types also played a role, as noted by Musabekov. However, the roots of the tragic confrontation between Armenians and Azerbaijanis at the fringes of the XX-XXI centuries are primarily hidden in hundred-year-old events, which nurtured radical nationalism, the echoes of which are reaching out to this day.

I would be misunderstood if the above said is perceived as an unequivocal condemnation of nationalism. In specific historic and political circumstances it was a natural phenomenon and in the best cases carried considerable democratic potential and in the worst of cases was something inevitable. However, in the context of the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations nationalism had fed on so many subjective and objective factors (many of which have been analyzed in this book by my colleagues), that it resulted in a delayed wide-scale military confrontation almost a century later. And preventing development of these events unfortunately turned out to be impossible. Armenians and Azerbaijanis needed extremely seasoned and mature national institutes to be able to prevent mass violence and curb the tragic development of the events. But how could they have created such institutes without the least experience in modern statehood, having absorbed instead all the intolerance of the Soviet totalitarianism?

In the absence of a preventive therapy the carbuncle ripened, burst open and now the scars need to be treated. In this sense Stepan Grigorian's and Rasim Musabekov's analogous positions are noteworthy. Both have discerned the disused chances to prevent or stop the military confrontation at various stages of the conflict. The natural development of the events according to the tragic scenario does not insure its fatalism, which is peculiar to some of the announcements made in Baku, Stepanakert and Yerevan.

Missed Chances?

Answering the question on chances to avoid escalation at various stages of the conflict the experts are inclined to think that in fact there had been alternatives to the factual development of events. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the negotiations have or could have resulted successfully when they were contained around interim issues – say the ceasefire. Whenever a plan for the comprehensive resolution appeared on the table, the parties found themselves unprepared to cut the Gordian knot.

It is difficult to blame exclusively the leaders of the two countries for the lack of the necessary will power. The models in circulation seemed to be objectively unrealistic. If anything, the parties could only have demonstrated constructive approaches in actively promoting their own initiatives in consideration of opponent's positions, supplementing and making international mediators' suggestions more realistic, and refraining from using the image of an enemy internally. However, such a stance of the leaders would have been almost heroic if not self-sacrificial, for, according to common opinion, the elite which refrain from nationalist stereotypes would be unable to hold power in the Caucasus.

Whatever the case, the situations, in which, according to Musabekov and Grigorian, progress could have been attained in

the regulation of the Karabagh conflict, are worth to be discussed as historic precedent, which might be useful in the light of new initiatives.

More often politicians and observers are referring to the gradual plan suggested by the mediators in 1997, its approval by Azerbaijan, the reaction in Armenia and the well-known article by President Levon Ter-Petrosian, "War or Peace? Time to Stop and Think" quoted in this book by Stepan Grigorian in a quite detailed manner. Many still consider that a solid opportunity for the regulation was missed at the time. However, no one can persuasively answer the question raised by the opponents of the plan: what would have happened if during the first stage Armenians left the controlled territories outside of MK and under any "convincing" pretext (at the time considering the actual state of affairs it would not have been difficult to concoct one) Azerbaijan resumed the communication blockade, etc. Armenians would have lost the "buffer zone" and a secure border line of defense, and the level of safety for the unrecognized republic of Mountainous Karabagh would fall catastrophically, the post-war rehabilitation would have been brought to a halt, and mass exodus of the aboriginal population would have begun. The Azerbaijanis would have only gained from such a disruption, for no one would have blamed them for going back on their promises. Since there was a "convincing" pretext. And then, what if they did? Baku would have simply returned control over territories that the international community unequivocally considered being theirs. Moreover, the leadership of Azerbaijan would have all the grounds to take a rigid position in future negotiations allowing no compromise.

The possibility of such an outcome was obvious for all, for the first President of Armenia, too. Therefore, I would dare to suggest that his concession was explained first of all with an effort to alleviate international pressures after the problematic Presidential

elections and at a higher level, to increase his role in the internal political life. The decisive role of the power structures in maintaining his presidency in September of 1996 resulted in considerable rearrangement of powers, and the President had lost more of his political clout. Inclined towards authoritarianism, convinced in his own charisma and spoiled with the adoration of his intimate circles, the President could not accept that he had been deprived of power levers. He had nothing to lose and made a total stake in relation with the key issue for the people, which traditionally had been the exclusive prerogative of the state leader. The implementation of the “stage-by-stage” plan, as already mentioned, was hardly plausible; however, its discussion and analysis of the technical details, probably its modifications could have lasted for years. The country would have stepped into a process where the President would have become the indispensable figure. He would have guaranteed international support and removed the question on who is the boss at home.

I do not question Ter-Petrosian’s sincere conviction in the need to get rid of the Karabagh cul-de-sac as soon as possible. I do not even exclude that development of events according to his plan could have made the negotiation process more significant for a while. But that was that. In spite of the common interpretation of Ter-Petrosian’s strategy and its consequences, (the “party of war” in Armenia gained a victory over the “party of peace”) the Karabagh problem was simply a battlefield and the true trophy was power. Part of the higher leadership had already made up its mind to change the leader and simply cashed in on Ter-Petrosian’s unpopular scheme to topple him.

Stepan Grigorian considers that, after Ter-Petrosian left, the conceptual approach of the Armenian authorities towards Karabagh regulations changed and that the current leadership does not enjoy enough legitimacy to adopt ground-breaking decisions.

True, after 1998 Ter-Petrosian’s plan was not formally continued (for there was the need to give some explanation to the coup d’état). Besides, the name of the new President symbolized responsibility for the fate of Karabagh Armenians, and gaining power with his team he was supposed to demonstrate a stronger position in the negotiations than his predecessor. However, the right for self-determination of Karabagh Armenians and their decisive voice in accepting or rejecting a given version of regulation just as before, continues to be taken as granted. And in this aspect too the connection between the past and present Armenian approaches has not been disrupted. Naturally all kinds of ideas circulated in the society. At times, new and unexpected accents would appear in the announcements of the current leadership as well (such as the existence of a legal pack, which legitimized Armenian territorial claims). However, those announcements had a temporary character, and did not signify conceptual changes. In relation with legitimacy issues, RA authorities chronically suffered from the trend since 1995 falsification of Parliamentary elections.

Robert Kocharian’s critics would often argue that at the time having rejected Ter-Petrosian’s initiative, he has deprived himself of maneuvering leeways at the negotiation process, and furthermore, can never return to the stage-by-stage plan. It is hard to agree with such categorical considerations. First of all, the narrow range of maneuvering is predetermined by the lack of legitimacy mentioned above and the forced selection of geopolitical priorities dictated by the same factor. Secondly, any new plan would be significantly different from what was suggested in 1997. Thirdly, even if a politician under some circumstances has made a decision, which needs to be rectified, remedying it is not only his right but also his obligation. And finally, very often politicians who had been historically known for their rigid protection of national interests, in time would often turn out to be the most stringent supporters and implementers of conciliatory decisions. At least because it

is hard to blame them in defeatism. Let us remember de Gaul and Sharon (true, they did not face the ominous issue of legitimacy which constantly emerges in our regional context.)

In this relation I would have marked the eve of the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul as one of the most promising moments in the recent history of Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontation. And not because a proposition was put forth which could have satisfied the parties, but because of the leadership which had emerged to the top both in Yerevan and Baku. Azerbaijan was governed by Heidar Aliiev. At the time (1997-1999) he was at the zenith of his authority there. On the one hand, he had succeeded reinstating himself as a national leader; on the other hand, the phantom of passing his power was not yet hovering above him, which would make him more cautious and reluctant to take steep turns. In Armenia a consensus between the three key figures of political establishment became possible: President Kocharian, the carrier of the cause and the primary figure in the negotiations; Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian, who had concentrated most of the factual influence on the situation within the country and the administrative resource; Parliamentary Speaker Karen Demirchian, a leader enjoying public affection. Practically, in both countries a replacement for the legitimacy had emerged, which could have allowed to make decisions regarding the people's future in Mountainous Karabagh and closely related geopolitical priorities. But the terrorist attack on the Armenian Parliament in October of 1999 and the need to urgently raise a heir to Aliiev due to his illness drastically changed the atmosphere in both countries and determined the fiasco at the Key West talks.

Another interesting consideration by Rasim Musabekov is worth to be discussed here. Characterizing the behavior of the leaders at the end of the 80's he notes: "They were devoid of the political insight to value the merits and the political will to realize

late Academician Andrey Sakharov's plan, who proposed to make a territorial exchange between Azerbaijan and Armenia, discharge tensions and concentrate on issues of democratic reform". One could only hail my colleague's courage in crushing the wide spread stereotype in Azerbaijan about the great scientist and humanist being a biased pro-Armenian figure. Sakharov's model addressed interests of social progress, protection of human rights and alleviation of the misery. And it is specifically for that very reason that it could not have been adequately perceived and implemented in that period. Just as all the other ideas of Sakharov, which were ahead of his time and which proved their legitimacy as time passed. Being declared to be romantic they were in fact much more realistic than military repressions by the help of the Soviet army or preaching about the "indestructible friendship of Soviet nations."

Sakharov's approaches for inter-national conflicts on the territory of the USSR changed along with their development and it seems he never came to an ultimate conclusion in this regard. Naturally his method did not suppose a mechanical exchange of, say, Meghri with Mountainous Karabagh. He would have hardly supported the Gobble Plan, had he been alive in the mid 90's. I would dare to suppose that the sagacious common Armenians and Azerbaijanis who realized peaceful exchange of villages and even left their cattle to balance the deal were closer to his heart. Simplifying the essence of Sakharov's model it could be described as the optimal distribution and utilization of the vital space in the interest of people.

The idea of exchange is still crucial, for at his point it would be better to resettle the people and find a mode which would allow to draw the new borders than to force people live together again according to the old formula.

When Similarities are Divisive

According to the dominating political rhetoric, traditional arguments of the parties, their appeals to the external arbiters and content of most media publications – the conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis bears historic and ethnical and even cultural, social character.

Both sides have accumulated a huge amount of “historical evidence” to prove that they are entitled to the region as its “indigenous” people. And the “migrant” contesters have no rights whatsoever over the land. Both describe themselves as philanthropic and generous, and portray each other as religiously and ethnically intolerant people, striving to oust, destroy or assimilate any foreign elements. Both Armenian and Azerbaijani societies have a destructive attitude towards the culture and national traditions of the neighbor, and rejection of its cultural heritage. Both sides accuse each other of stealing their neighbor’s spiritual values. All this brings to the uncompromising conclusion that coexistence is either impossible at all (correspondingly the one who is incongruent should leave, disappear, be evaporated) or it is possible only if the “imperfect” nation is completely subdued by the “distinguished.”

On the territories inhabited today by Azerbaijanis and Armenians the same types of processes as anywhere in the world were unraveling: emergence and fall of great empires and small countries. Conquests and losses, subjugation of nations and national independence movements, and mass migration, natural in those conditions. None of the events preceding the controversies between the Armenian and Turkic nations on the turn of the past two centuries and their echoing continuation of the Karabagh conflict in 1988 can be considered so unique, as to explain the hostility by pure historic factors.

The events which had happened a hundred years ago could be considered a fatal flow of circumstances. Turks and Armenians both grew to the idea of national states at the one and the same time. Both nations lived on a territory which each of them perceived as the only place where those ideas could be realized. And at the same time rivalry between the leading countries to utilize any confrontation in the region in their favor was exacerbated. Those controversies gained extremely severe forms between Armenians and Turks. Turkish radicalism was intensified by the militant nature of the Ottoman Empire, which throughout its history was conscious of the hostile attitude of neighboring countries and the whole Christian Europe. That of Armenians was fueled by the anticipation of Russian support, considering its orientation towards the southern seas.

Meanwhile international interest for the Caspian oil was getting stronger, in terms of Turkey it was reflected also through the export of pan-Turkic ideologies and anti-Armenian sentiments among the Caucasian “baby siblings”. Ownership of a considerable part of oil reserves by industrialists of Armenian descent, who were financing (and could it have been otherwise?) nationalistic political movements, even further intensified intolerance towards Armenians by the local Turkic nationalities. Religious differences, while not being the source of Armenian-Turkic hostility, were, however, adding heat to it.

The Russian imperial policies would gain from inter-ethnic clashes in the first place. The First World War and the Russian Revolution with its cruelty and total disregard for human life left no other versions of resolving national problems than brutal force. And at the peak of clarifying their relationships the process was suspended by the formation of “International USSR.” Some would call it liberation from an even worse disaster. Possibly it was. Even if Armenian and Turkish relations were somehow regulated at that

point, no one knows how they would have turned out during the Second World War, if it was not for the USSR which had incorporated both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

It is difficult to say if any political analysts would ever define clearly the nature of the Karabagh conflict as political, historic, ethnic or economic, basing on the chain of events and developments. For now no one has succeeded in doing that.

As Stepan Grigorian puts it, “Sometimes the history (or, rather, this or that interpretation of the past) and the culture become factors impeding the solution of some controversies, and therefore – separating nations”. The same idea could be interpreted as follows: voluntary interpretation of the history and culture is often misused (sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally) for political gains through instigation of ethnic hostilities. But the scientific history just as the culture cannot be held responsible for their manipulation. The history does not allow inferring that just because of their nomadic past Turkic nationalities do not have the right for statehood - an attitude quite common in Armenia. At the same time some of the Azerbaijani ideologists of history are trying to prove that Armenians had appeared in the region only in the XIII century and in Karabagh only in the XIX century. And that all the material evidence had been marked and inscribed on ancient monuments later for usurping them...

Despite the obvious absurdity of these statements it is very hard to save people from their toxic effects. Do we know many historians in both counties endowed by the professional knowledge and the courage to reject usual patterns? Therefore, it seems better to give up the utopist projects about a common historic concept for the Southern Caucasus; and categorically exclude history as a key factor in determining ways of regulation. This will help to come to terms with each other and liberate history of being written to order

and used for ideological extremism. I am all for endorsing Rasim Musabekov’s statement “A negative lopsided interpretation of history for the ephemeral promotional purposes is not only wrong in the scientific sense, but also harmful, for it hampers the inevitable reconciliation of our nations in the foreseeable future and would further disrupt revival of mutual trust, good neighborhood and cooperation”.

According to my Azerbaijani colleague, “The mentality, history and culture of both Armenians and Azerbaijanis are unique, original. However, during many centuries of cooperation they have strongly intertwined and have mutually enriched each other. In behavioral patterns of Armenians and Azerbaijanis, if not presented in a caricatured way, a lot of similarities could be observed...” It is hard not to agree with this. Sometimes it is even easier to speak about synthetic Baku, Yerevan, Shushi, Tbilisi cultural traditions, than separately of Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani traditions... A paradoxical phenomenon - if Armenians and Azerbaijanis are vigorously fighting on where a song originated from, who has invented khash or dolma, who adopted this or that ornament from whom, it means that the same things are dear to both. Why, then, instead of coming closer, people grow more and more apart? Maybe it is the things we do not want to see in ourselves that we dislike in our neighbours, and vice versa? Reading the “works” of some of the modern Azerbaijani ideologists one inadvertently starts thinking that our neighbors, perceiving Armenian national arrogance with irritation or skepticism seem to be picking it up. And today not that they are left behind, they have even surpassed the “original”. It looks like this trend has started to subside with Armenians, whereas with Azerbaijanis starting from the end of the 80’s it has been steadily growing.

Does this mean that culture and history are divisive factors, as Stepan Grigorian has put it? It seems, for a while they will continue to be so. It remains to state once again that the process of finding ways for regulation should be maximally abstracted from those notions. At the same time the idea of two nations' correlation should not be overlooked. Otherwise the new generation not encumbered with historic and cultural ties, would feel less bonded to each other, and would continue to evolve the "notion of an enemy" in the minds of Azerbaijanis and the notion of "incongruity" with Armenians.

To some point the unhealthy attitude for each other could be explained by the insulted national dignity and the syndrome of a conditionally defeated party. Starting from the beginning of the XX century this was perceived by the Armenians, today - by Azerbaijanis. Hence, we could deduct that an equally acceptable or an equally unacceptable (which is more realistic) model of regulation should be devised to recuperate from the disease. And also a sense of humor for their own weaknesses typical and somewhat forgotten during the last few years both by the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis.

In Search of a Compromise

Some insist that discussions for possible ways of regulation are simply intellectual exercises which have nothing to do with the reality and therefore, they are useless. A decision is made possible as a result of creating a balance in the factors, and becomes impossible in their absence. On the other hand, if one just catches the moment, when the established correlations would allow resolving the problem, without prognostication and modeling, the chances for a resolution provided by the time might be missed over and over again. For the balance established at a given moment cannot last forever.

According to another concept, similar to Karabagh conflicts which have deep roots and develop spirally with starts and stops along the way, cannot be regulated according to models. It is simply necessary to discontinue at some point and make peace with the established reality at one of the rings of the spiral, whether resulting from military actions, diplomatic efforts or backstage intrigues. One such "sojourn" for MK happened in the 1920s, when it was declared part of Azerbaijan by the Bolsheviks. Armenians repeatedly challenged this decision, also on the level of top officials, calling for joining the region to Soveit Armenia. The other one occurred after the ceasefire of 1994. This one is naturally unacceptable for Azerbaijanis.

Therefore, the status-quo established for a relatively extended segment of time cannot be seen as the solution of the problem. In relation with the Karabagh conflict it would be hard to return to any of its former phases and agree upon accepting it as fixed, including the status and territory. This would be problematic both in terms of practical realization and perceptions of fairness by the parties and their understanding of the responsibility for instigating hostilities. In Baku the sparks having started the fire could be considered the threats, which had forced mass exodus of Azerbaijanis from the Kapan region, the MKAR resolution of cessation from AzSSR, or the death of two Agdam residents, heading, in a crowd, for Stepanakert to teach Armenians a lesson. In Yerevan and Stepanakert those would be the escalation of pressure on Armenians living in Azerbaijan by the end of the 80's, massacres of Armenians in Sumgait, Baku, and Kirovabad, or the use of weapons of mass destruction against Stepanakert residents since 1991.

I will underline that all the above mentioned events were happening in a country called USSR. At the time when Armenia and Azerbaijan gained their independence and along with it the

responsibility for their actions, their citizens and territories, they were already involved in a full fledged war in which uncontrolled resources were incorporated; the Soviet troops, Chechen guerillas, Afghan mojaheddins, and volunteers from the Armenian Diaspora among them - i.e. our countries stepped into their independence in a situation of an unraveling confrontation, where causing maximum damage to the enemy and securing their countries at any cost were natural laws of the game. And this could not have been stopped just through UN resolutions; the parties themselves had to mature for reliable mutual guaranties to discontinue military actions.

Underestimation of these specific circumstances results in not very objective conclusions, which I think are reflected also in Rasim Musabekov's answers: "... the argument that the advancement of the Armenian troops was a forced action and was conducted with the purpose of ensuring the security and lives of Karabagh Armenians is not sincere and is intended for people uninformed about the reasons and the developments of the conflict". Solely Armenians are being blamed here for the war proceeding the way it did. Would the Azerbaijani troops have stopped at some point if the military success was on their side and the enemy did not even consider the option of a ceasefire?

A long-term regulation, aimed at sustainable peace and the general development in the region, cannot be based exclusively on the fact of who has won a victory over the other or what the correlation of forces is. Perception of Karabagh and Armenian sides about the success of military campaigns of 1992-1994 and those of the Azerbaijanis about oil and growing investments in the army as the main arguments in the process of regulation would not help to establish a stable accord. If it was that simple, the history of the post-war Western Europe would have gone in a completely different direction. And new countries would hardly have joined or

strived to join the region. The principles that have made it a zone of peace and stability should be adopted by the parties of the Karabagh conflict too, if they do not want to appear on the back seats of civilization.

Both Stepan Grigorian and Rasim Musabekov agree on the "stage-by-stage" resolution of the conflict, though the concepts of "stage-by-stage" or "package" in relation with the models of regulation are quite relative. Both characterize the methods rather than the specific plans. Between variations of the "stage-by-stage" model there might be more differences than between some of them and the "package" solution. Returning to the idea widely propagated a few years ago seems to be worthwhile: that each phase should be a complete package in itself, i.e. a complex of parallel actions implemented by the sides. And the situation emerging as a result of each stage should be a step forth for all parties, even if the next stage fails. At the same time the plan should contain realistic incentives to continue the process.

It is extremely vital that the model reflects the key issue about the status of MK, considering concerns of the parties. Armenians would not be satisfied to know that the status would be determined during the last stage. They would like to know HOW it will happen. Azerbaijanis would not agree if their government and Azerbaijani community of Karabagh are not involved in the decision making.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) which had prepared a report on MK and recommendations for the regulation had come very close to a model, which would include the main factors and sensitive issues. It is not by chance that the key elements of their recommendations coincided (or presented the basis?) with the principles of an agreement suggested by the co-chairs of the Minsk group. The ICG documents are noteworthy by the fact that they

refrain from exploiting such conflict resolution rhetoric as concepts of “fairness” and “in correspondence with the international law.” A cynical politician has once said: “Show me international police and I will rely on international laws.” The parties to the conflict have broken and continue breaking the basic norms of international co-existence so often that it seems useless to force them to make certain steps only because they correspond to the accepted international norms.

It is even more difficult in terms of “fairness”. What is fair for some is a monstrous unfairness for the others, since the Armenians and Azerbaijanis see and interpret history and even the events of the last one and a half decades from diametrically contrary positions. Any arbiter who would venture to acknowledge the fairness of one of the parties would be accused of bias. Therefore, the solution of the conflict could be based not on judgments of who’s right and who’s wrong, but an attitude towards it as a Common Problem, which Armenians, Azerbaijanis and the mediators have to resolve jointly.

The ICG follows common sense and the principle of maximum gains (or minimal losses) for the parties, staying in the sphere of international law at that. Relying on their materials it is quite plausible to come up with a working model of the Armenian-Azerbaijani compromise. However, this seems to be the mission of a separate scrupulous work. And here referring also to the ideas set forth by Stepan Grigorian and Rasim Musabekov, I would like to dwell on some of the basic elements of the regulation.

First of all this is a **peace agreement** which excludes use of force and defines serious international sanctions for its violation. The fact, that one of the parties upholds the right to resume war if it is not satisfied with the outcome of negotiations, moreover, openly demonstrates its militaristic attitude both inside and outside

the country, makes it incapable of a compromise. Why should they concede anything if there is a chance to get the maximum? The other side observing these stances is also reluctant to give up any territories, which in case of war would play a decisive strategic role.

Of course there is also the reverse logic. If non-resumption is guaranteed, then the side who gains from the status-quo would not be interested to consider ways for a compromise. Therefore, to retain the stimuli balance it has to give up something significant for the peace accord - in this case with part of the controlled buffer zone. **Leaving Azerbaijani territories** outside the region of MK with the return of their former residents is the second compulsory element of the regulation. Stepan Grigorian formulates it as “territories in exchange of security.”

At the same time requirements for simultaneous and unconditional liberation of all the seven regions prove, that the authors either do not realize the seriousness and complexity of the regulation, or are simply insincere in claiming commitment to compromise. Those territories are grouped according to geographical, strategic, and other characteristics into several categories and require a differentiated approach.

There is the territory on which the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh has been proclaimed. And there is part of the former Mountainous Karabagh Autonomous Region controlled by Azerbaijan. There are territories used as a corridor between Armenia and MK and there are Azerbaijani territories controlled but never utilized by Armenians. There are the Shushi (a) and Shahumian (rural) region; there is the hypothetical Meghri corridor between the mainland of Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan; and there is the subdistrict of Getashen which was populated by Armenians before the conflict. There are other regions of former

compact Armenian settlements in Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis in Armenia. And this is far from being a comprehensive list of territories which would sooner or later be discussed during negotiations. Once again, it proves the impossibility of simplified approaches. Even the Kelbajar region taken separately cannot be perceived as something holistic in the strategic sense of the word.

Concession of part of the Armenian controlled territories does not at all imply disregard for the others. The mediators suggest various formulae: 5+1+1, 5+2. Theoretically any of those formulae could work, and everything will depend on the packaging of the details in each phase of the regulation. One of the elements of the process (but not a key principle) could be **exchange of territories** according to Sakharov, or assumed to be Sakharov's interpretation. I.e., if the separation of the two nations, including territorial separation cannot be avoided, it should be performed on the principle of distribution of vital spaces, proportional to the way it was prior to the conflict. An example of such separation was almost simultaneous occupation at the very early stages of the conflict (and without any significant claims on both sides) of the two enclave villages – the Azerbaijani Kyarki and Armenian Artsvashen. Naturally the exchange will take place through official negotiations now, and not through tacit concessions of the parties to avoid violence.

Having in mind that the most sensitive issue of the conflict - the status of Mountainous Karabagh – cannot be defined in the first phase of regulation (this being the main reason for the “stage-by-stage” model) **the temporary status of internationally recognized MK** with a strictly defined timeframe becomes an indispensable element. This idea is particularly suggested by Rasim Musabekov. The current “unrecognized” status of Karabagh is when their natural rights to move, watch television, perform banking operations and play football are perceived by Azerbaijan as

violations of international law, are absurd, though from a purely formal approach it would be hard to argue with Baku in relation with this. Without overcoming this state of affairs it is futile to hope for a normal flow of the regulation process. Especially when international experience proves that marginalizing an unrecognized territory striving for secession only exacerbates the situation.

The temporary status apparently has to be something similar to the current state of affairs in Mountainous Karabagh, only without the isolation (including from Azerbaijan), with control over the armed forces and compliance with international norms and agreements by the administration of MK. Besides when the temporary status of Karabagh is put to action MK leaders have to provide conditions for the return of Azerbaijani refugees to the places of their former residence.

Deployment and composition of the peacekeepers on the line of separation is another question which could disrupt the progress of negotiations. The problem of their neutrality is not resolved by mechanically excluding the countries neighboring with Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as those chairing in the Minsk group. It could have been mitigated if the parties displayed readiness to maintain the security in the region without deployment of large peacekeeping forces. The function of **international peacekeeping forces** could have been limited to monitoring and operation of check points. This would have relieved from the astronomical expenses foreseen for the personnel, as well as the threat of facing irreconcilable differences concerning its constitution.

ICG suggests resolving the future of MK through a **referendum** (I will add, held by the end of the temporary status). At the current stage of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations, an alternative to that might be endless and futile negotiations, freezing the conflict for an indefinite period of time with indefinite outcomes, or war.

Considering the perspectives of a referendum the sides should agree to a number of stringent principles. First of all the status of MK should be defined only after steps for reinforcing trust and security guarantees have succeeded during the phases preceding the referendum.

Azerbaijan has to realize that waging a full-fledged war against part of its population, using weapons of mass destruction and bombarding from the air, declaring MK representatives terrorists and criminals of war, it has left no doubt that other than repression nothing could be expected from the Baku administration for Armenians. Therefore it cannot unilaterally decide the fate of Mountainous Karabagh. Refuting the idea of referendum or interpreting it in the way it pleases (that all the populace of Azerbaijan should participate, or that the selection of MK status should be discussed only in the frames of territorial integrity) Azerbaijan seems to indicate that it is unable to offer an acceptable future for the people whom it claims to be its citizens. Meanwhile, we remember the times when the term “Center” for Mountainous Karabagh Armenians, the prospects of economic ties, cultural development, educational and career opportunities were associated with Baku. It is important that Baku should start considering a phrase now and then being dropped by the progressive representatives of Georgian elite: “We have to offer Abkhazs (and Ossetians) a country they want to be a part of.”

In turn, Armenia has to understand that between practical start of the regulation and the referendum enough time should pass for Azerbaijan to try to become attractive for Armenians of MK. Meanwhile Baku should have direct contacts with the residents of MK. Yerevan has no grounds to insist on an early (say, within the upcoming five years) referendum, i.e. the operation of the temporary status and preparation for a referendum might last another 12-15 years.

Finally, Mountainous Karabagh should acknowledge that 1991 Referendum of Independence could not be a substitute for the new one, realized within the frames of the regulation project. During the temporary status the unrecognized republic should create conditions for the return of Azerbaijani refugees, and the will of Azerbaijanis formerly living in MKAR should be considered when deciding the status. It is not excluded that even if conditions are provided part of the refugees won't return. In that case the ballots of non-participating Azerbaijanis could be counted as cast for MK within the borders of Azerbaijan, as it is already applied in international practices.

The justified consternations of the parties should also be taken into account. The artificial distortion of the demographic situation compared to the 1988 (something feared by Armenians) or the political diktat over the will of Stepanakert by Yerevan (that Azerbaijanis are worried about). Corresponding precautions, such as control of migration and guarantees for the autonomous functioning of all the democratic institutions in MK should be secured by the international mediators in cooperation with the parties to the conflict. Complicated? Of course it is. But who would expect an easy life in this process.

I can foresee quite a few questions. What if the Azerbaijani leadership despite all its efforts would be unable to convince its society that changes should be made in the Constitution to allow a referendum of independence in one of its regions? What will be the status of the returning Azerbaijani refugees (their passport and citizenship)? If different from that of MK Armenians, how their participation in the referendum would be technically organized? If Karabagh Azerbaijanis are under the jurisdiction of independent MK would they pose the question of self-governance? It will not be easy to formulate the questions that would be included in the referendum, as well. All these issues are often presented as too

complicated in advance. If there is sincere desire, solutions would be ultimately found. I think, foreign and local experts are quite capable of suggesting specific solutions on most of the said issues. But all that would make sense only when a constructive negotiation process is launched on the base of framed agreements.

In the context of the Referendum in MK, the question about self-determination of other regions with compact settlements of Azerbaijanis and Armenians in Armenia and Azerbaijan, respectively, before 1988 could also be incorporated, but that would mean to cut the model of regulation of its pragmatic grounds, absolutely necessary at the given moment. At the same time, there is no need to categorically restrict national right to self-determination. In an atmosphere of positive processes, realization of Azerbaijan's and Armenia's ambitions for European integration, formation of a drastically different political and socio-economic climate in the region, this question could be resolved in the frames of free migration, local governance, rehabilitation of private property rights, and in extreme cases – through new referenda. But this can be attained only through dismantling the Karabagh knot today.

Reconciliation Resources

What are the resources that the sides have attained or retained during the last one-and-a-half decade to resolve or at least contain the conflict? In their answers Rasim Musabekov and Stepan Grigorian have extensively referred to the following factors as resources for reconciliation; the ceasefire regime, involvement of the international community and the process of negotiations as such, the political will of the leaders and national elite; economic and other cooperation, media and civil society.

Undoubtedly, the most important achievement is the self-regulated line of contact. Despite losses of the military on both sides

after the established ceasefire regime, the situation here could still be considered under control. At other conflict zones, even those where the level of hostilities cannot be compared with Karabagh, no such resource has been established. In South Ossetia guarantors of non-resumption of military actions are the joint peacekeepers consisting of Russian, Georgian and Ossetian detachments. In Abkhazia and Transdnistria the peacekeepers are formally deployed under the CIS, but factually it is a Russian military presence. Whereas, in MK OSCE is conducting only monitoring. Having in mind the incidents at areas of active military presence of peacekeepers, the Karabagh model could be marked as one of the most effective ones.

Another positive factor in the context of the Karabagh conflict is considered to be its internationalization and to some extent involvement of many influential organizations. This allows keeping the destructive energy of the conflict under control which is atypical of, say, the Arab-Israeli confrontation. Despite recesses and ineffective phases of negotiations, the input of international organizations in maintaining relative stability in Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict remains to be significant.

It is commonly thought that in terms of controlling conflicts negotiations are useful per se, irrespective of how successful they are. A dialogue is being established on different levels, the image of an enemy is broken. What we see in the atmosphere of Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict proves to the contrary. As the mediators' work on the next round of suggestions draws to its conclusion, anti-Armenian and anti-Azerbaijani sentiments start growing correspondingly in Azerbaijan and Armenia, protests against a compromise increase, and it leaves the impression that with each round of negotiations the parties become further distanced from each other than before. It was specifically after the Key West that the declaration of the Armenian parliamentary par-

ties and the so-called “Charter of the Four” (signed by well-known representatives of Azerbaijani society) appeared, significantly restricting the range of negotiations. A similar situation emerged by the end of 2005 when the mediators prepared a revised concept for the regulation.

Both Rasim Musabekov and Stepan Grigorian place great significance on the legitimacy of the state. Fair elections, genuine support of the society could have boosted the political clout of the leaders, would have allowed them to venture a mutual compromise. Reserves of legitimacy entrusted with the leaders are after all to be used at critical moments when history challenges the nations. Unfortunately, it is specifically these resources that the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan are not endowed with. They remain hostages of complex interwoven geopolitical interests created in the South Caucasus, and the unreadiness of the national elites, which either do not want, or are unable to make radical changes, or try to maximally gain from the existing state of affairs. Instead of taking responsible steps at the moment the leaders stick to the opportune status quo, which has unfortunately no perspectives, and justify their inflexibility by the fact that the suggested compromises are unacceptable for the society, whose marginal positions are often shaped by themselves.

The possibility of developing economic relations in conditions of the unresolved conflict became the vogue by the end of the 90’s, when huge energy and transportations projects started to shape up and be realized in the Southern Caucasus. Azerbaijan was categorically against Armenia’s involvement in those projects, and despite specific pressures from abroad, it was able to carry on his line. Though Armenia’s exclusion had forced extra expenses and higher prices, the majority of the concepts were put to life. If in transnational projects Baku’s strategic plan intends to weaken Yerevan economically as much as possible, then its rejection of

bilateral or tri-lateral (with Georgia) economic cooperation has objective reasons. How could economic or trade interactions occur between two countries which have no official relations, or bilateral legal-normative basis?

At the same time in its effort for total isolation of Armenia internationally, Baku has gone beyond the line. Refusing to cooperate in environmental protection, natural or man-made disasters, and in a number of other spheres, Azerbaijan has inflicted as much harm on itself, as on Armenia. Moreover, presenting Georgia with ultimatums because it trades with Armenia in goods produced in or transited via Azerbaijan has brought the situation to absurdity. Whatever the case, the resources of regional cooperation for curbing the negative consequences of the conflict are not being utilized.

The potential of the civil society has also been utilized at its minimum. Stepan Grigorian has noted that the authorities of Armenia and pro-governmental political forces try to monopolize the MK problem and instill it in the minds of their citizens that only they are capable to solve it. In these circumstances the input of NGOs and the expert community in the regulation is significantly reduced.

It must be stated that both the previous and the current Armenian leaders continue to proudly state year after year that only several individuals are competent in the whole complexity of the Karabagh problem in the country (the first president of the country, for example announced those to be 6). Meanwhile various aspects of the conflict are being discussed at forums and meetings of various levels called to contribute its resolution. Hundreds if not thousands of official and unofficial people participate in those discussions. It turns out that those initiatives as such, as well as participation in them are useless? Won’t the few competent individu-

als share the depth of their knowledge with us – their compatriots, also striving to get out of this cul-de-sac? No, the *au fait* want to keep their caste immaculate and intact. But how do they expect to reach an agreement, if the society is uninformed and unprepared (whereas, public support is noted by everyone as an indispensable element)? Maybe they think that the knowledgeable few on both sides would strike an accord and then condescend to thrill their people by their decision? But where are the guarantees that the accord born after years of efforts would be delightfully accepted by the same people? The process threatens to become permanent; the sagacious “gurus” would come up with more and more suggestions and each time the public would be unprepared.

No one calls to breach the confidentiality of negotiations. We are speaking about continuous and profound interpretation of the objective aspects, position of the parties, various modes of overcoming controversies to the people; about the support or at least a minimal interest for the non-governmental sector’s efforts on this issue, attempts to utilize the accumulated potential of trust in the matter. Complete disregard, if not rejection of the authorities for bilateral or multilateral (regional) civil initiatives has resulted in a period of depression, following a short progress, in the sphere.

Starting by the end of the 2000 mainly on Azerbaijan’s initiative possibility of contacts on a non-government level has been drastically reduced. First, a campaign of discrediting individuals and organizations participating in a dialogue with Armenians was launched. Then Armenian journalists and NGOs were banned to visit Azerbaijan. And in the last two to three years visiting Armenia or MK by Azerbaijani colleagues has become quite episodic or selective. The circle of Azerbaijanis who are allowed to visit the neighboring country without seriously harming their reputation has narrowed down to a minimum, with “eligibility criteria” being not quite clear.

On the level of aggressive mass consciousness in Azerbaijan (with its banner-holders from the same “civil society”) capable of throwing stones or eggs on anyone, who dares to get into contact with the “enemy” it has been gradually ingrained in the minds of Azerbaijanis that contacts with Armenians are unacceptable, for they might create an illusion that they have forgiven Armenians, and it would weaken the militant spirit of the nation. For official Azerbaijan it seems, obstruction of the total blockade in the sphere of NGO contacts with Armenia is also out of tune with Azerbaijani strategies.

Ultimately, though in different forms both in Baku and in Yerevan, the leadership has indicated that it has no need for civil diplomacy. Therefore, it is useless to speak about its effects, for it can play a role only if the sides have demonstrated mutual desire for an agreement, and public dialogue is called to reinforce government actions. The civil society in Azerbaijan and Armenia has not been called to such mission. In the best of cases we could speak about human or professional contacts, without daring to misuse such terms as “diplomacy”. In fact, having in mind the overall atmosphere of mistrust, those contacts should be carried out maximally in the open to prevent accusations of a “clandestine accord between marginals” standing out against public opinion. Unfortunately, the temptation of looking better-informed and having more clout than common citizens in relation with Karabagh issues is a trend characteristic of some NGOs and expert groups as well. These pretensions of being the selected few, evoke nothing but new waves of aggression against themselves.

The position of civil dialogue supporters is undermined also because of the negative or skeptical attitude of most of the Azerbaijani and Armenian media. Media criticism of NGOs on some issues is understandable. At some point there were too many initiatives, where the participants would gather only to feign how

“Armenians and Azerbaijanis can peacefully sit around a table next to each other and not stick a fork into each others’ eyes”, as one of the Azerbaijani human rights activist has picturesquely put it. And the real palpable efforts of others - those who tried to rescue war prisoners and hostages, contributed to the exchange of information, etc., - were obscured in the torrent of formalistic “peace initiatives.” Overall, according to Musabekov, “The media have considerable input in triggering xenophobia, which has at times grown into mass psychosis”.

Media performance, its role in aggravating tensions between the two countries is analyzed in detail in a joint publication of the Yerevan Press Club and “*Yeni Nesil*” Journalists Union of Azerbaijan, called “What Can a Word Do?” One of the reasons for nationalistically stereotyped approach of the leading media is their dependence on specific political circles and their leaders and adoption of their anti-Armenian and anti-Azerbaijani rhetoric respectively, competing to show off with their overtly enthusiastic “patriotism.”

Television plays an especially important role in shaping the atmosphere around the Karabagh conflict. But it is specifically this conduit of mass communication that is almost completely controlled by the authorities in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and there is no use in speaking of genuine pluralism on the TV in both countries. According to Stepan Grigorian “... in the recent 3-4 years on Armenian TV air it is practically impossible to voice a stance on Karabagh resolution that would contradict the one, commonly accepted as official”. It must be noted that this refers not only to the issue of Karabagh, but also any other problem, within the focus of attention or interest of the administration. The discussion of the Constitutional amendments on Armenian TV and the coverage of the referendum could serve as an example. The YPC monitoring of the media demonstrated how biased media were in covering the campaign.

I would like to share with one of my subjective observations here. It seems that the interpretation and coverage of all issues related to Armenia and Armenians in the Azerbaijani media is dictated and controlled from one and the same office. And it is not by chance that the periods of “information war” and “respite” happen concurrently throughout all the leading media outlets, irrespective of their political orientation, and as a rule dictated by the “general line of policy” taken by specific state institutions or triggered by external political factors. In particular, there is no doubt that the concentrated attack on participants of civil dialogue during the second half of 2001 (after the Key West) by the TV and print media, was encouraged from the top followed by an unofficial ban on Armenians visiting Baku.

Analysis of the reconciliation resources suggested in this chapter shows that the real contribution in the regulation and control of the conflict can be attributed to the ceasefire regime and the activities of the international mediators. All the other resources could be effectively put to action only after practical agreements are reached on an official level, or at least if there is obvious desire on behalf of leadership of both parties to utilize the peacekeeping potential.

On the Format and Mediators

As Stepan Grigorian has noted selection of the mediators and the format of negotiations has been a significant factor on all levels of resolution. He even comes up with the conclusion that the present stagnation in negotiations might be the result of removing Karabagh from negotiations as a third party. Meanwhile, the international community had chosen this approach thinking that: “**the fewer conflict parties**, the easier it will be to **arrive** at an agreement”. But the “simplest” route turned out to be ineffective, and “many people involved in mediating activities start to understand this, too”.

It seems that suggesting or rejecting this or that format the parties remain bound by symbols, or tactical games. Whereas, each of the possible formats could become effective for the solution of specific range of issues, and rejecting any of those formats is injudicious. For example discussion of returning several regions and corresponding security guaranties is reasonable when all three parties are participating. Obstructing operation of specific structures' in MK (communications, the banking system; presence of international organizations and implementation of humanitarian projects there) could be resolved in a direct dialogue between Baku and Stepanakert. Confrontation of Armenia and Azerbaijan on all international forums harmful for the images of both the countries and the region as a whole, is destructive for the development of these countries, and this is a theme for discussion between Baku and Yerevan.

Positions of the parties for the mediators are also far from being constructive. The experience of our countries has proven that international structures are inclined to support but not to resolve our issues for us. We continue to place great hopes with them, but have they done a good job, say, in democratizing our countries? Can we claim with assurance today that as a result of extensive international programmes implemented in Armenia and Azerbaijan these countries have become more democratic than they were during the first year after gaining independence? There is, of course, progress on the institutional level, but in terms of "a functioning democracy" our countries do not look any better than 15 years ago. It seems that all depends on where the seeds have fallen, both in terms of advocates of reform and mediators of conflicts. And are we ready to make use of the "know-how" provided by them?

Throughout the Minsk process Baku, Yerevan and Stepanakert looked like exacting examiners, listening to the co-chairs conde-

scendingly, as if saying "let's see how you prepared this time?" And even before negotiations started, engaged in criticizing the weak points of the next suggestion.

Meanwhile, however close the mediators get to the optimal conflict resolution model, it is absolutely natural that with no constructive involvement of Armenia and Azerbaijan a whole range of bigger and smaller details cannot be worked out. During all the recent years both the international expert community and the co-chairs of the Minsk Group have been trying to bring together the Armenian and Azerbaijani approaches as close as possible. In the beginning it looked like trying to join two pieces of paper with ragged edges. Gradually the profiles of the edges were becoming more suitable to be matched. Their junction is hampered, one might say, by the uneven edges, which could be smoothed out only by the conflicting parties, if they step into the mediators' efforts. However, their behavior, based on traditional unwavering stances, discredits each resolution plan.

Both Stepan Grigorian and Rasim Musabekov have high regard in European integration and regional structures. OSCE and Council of Europe curb proliferation of the conflict, put specific responsibilities on the sides and look for (each within its own frames of mission) perspectives of regulation. Though some controversies in relation with who would do what evolved in 2005, particularly regarding discussion of specific aspects of the issue at the UN and preparation of a report by David Atkinson followed by the PACE resolution. However international organizations have an extensive experience in coordinating their positions and sharing responsibilities. Despite all the discontent with the inefficiency of MG activities, there is no other competent institution capable of seeking resolution models and designing its technical details for now. Being in the know of the problem, the profound and diverse menu of mechanisms regarding most of the aspects of regulation

is such a huge asset that sooner or later it would yield results in reaching an agreement between the parties.

Speaking about the international and regional factors Rasim Musabekov prefers the European model as more promising. “The European model implies dissolving the problems of nationalism and ethnic separatism within the process of integration of all of the European nations”. “Though the Basque, Scottish and Corsican nationalism and separatism are still discernible, it should be acknowledged that within the frames of a united Europe they do not get out of hand”.

Stepan Grigorian refers to the problem of Cyprus where the process of European integration slowly but gradually allows to overcome the negative effects of the conflict even when it has not been regulated, yet. Correspondingly, in the South Caucasus problems caused by aggression and hostility could be substantially reduced when European and regional integration mechanisms are put to work. “In the process of integration and ideally inclusion into the family of united Europe with its common customs, economic, currency, legal zone, and common citizenship, many aspects of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict seeming hard to resolve would lose their significance and actuality”, says my Azerbaijani colleague. And the perspectives of a “Europe of regions” instead of a “Europe of national states” in relation with the Southern Caucasus, would practically remove all the issues for which we have not been able to find solutions for the time being.

On the other hand, Europe itself is facing some difficulties which make some of our compatriots sneer with “jovial skepticism” that “it’s all bad with them too.” However, this is an extremely inappropriate consolation: should we not first attain the level of tolerance existing in the EU and methods of resolving crisis before we start to address the new challenges together with the other members of the European family?

Both Musabekov and Grigorian agree that getting closer to NATO is an important factor for the resolution to overcome our reservations and move our disagreements onto civilized grounds. At the same time Musabekov warns that “naturally NATO is not a panacea for the resolution of all disputes and controversies of member countries. Suffice it to remember such conflicting member-countries in NATO as Turkey and Greece, Spain and Great Britain, Romania and Hungary”. However here, as in the case of the EU, controversies are contained in the political range, and direct military conflicts are not allowed. Besides, NATO’s presence reduces the effects of other destructive external factors to a minimum.

In contrast with many other countries participating in the regulation of the Karabagh conflict through the international structures mentioned above, Armenia’s immediate neighbors – Russia, Turkey, Georgia and Iran – all certainly have their own channels of influence over the situation.

In fact, Russia is mentioned more frequently than the others. Azerbaijani politicians would even refrain that Moscow holds the keys to the regulation. Armenia is traditionally prescribed a pro-Russian orientation, and based on this Azerbaijanis conclude that if only Moscow exerted pressure on Yerevan, the latter will succumb. And the lack of progress is explained by the fact that Russia is not interested in the resolution of conflicts on post-Soviet territories, for that allows keeping its influence over the former peripheries.

However, I think the reality is much more complicated than the traditionally voiced formula. First of all, it is the lack of extreme outbursts of anti-Russian sentiments in Armenia (a common trend in many of the post-Soviet countries) is portrayed as a pro-Russian orientation, despite the fact that Moscow does its best to raise such

sentiment in Armenia as well. Secondly, this “orientation” is understood as Russia’s possession of powerful economic and political levers in Armenia, which does not necessarily mean that it is perceived with enthusiasm in Armenia. Thirdly, Armenia’s tendencies to come closer to the NATO and the EU are being underestimated. If formerly those tendencies were being coordinated with Russia, today they are more independent.

Interestingly, Azerbaijan holds grudges for Armenian-Russian close relations on the one hand, on the other hand, makes everything possible to reinforce those relations, maximally obstructing Armenia’s participation in international cooperation projects and thus, leaving it no other alternative. Possessing a wide-range of possibilities for maneuvering, Baku uses them to attain the same goal that it proclaims to be against its interests.

And finally, it is important to bear in mind that Moscow does not have a clear view of the type of resolution it wants to benefit from, which would make it worth to take the responsibility.

The next two neighbors, Iran and Georgia, which could have influenced the situation due to their historical and cultural proximity to the area, have serious problems of their own. Georgia has its own inter-ethnic problems, which exclude objective mediation, and Iran has geopolitical controversies with most of the other players involved in the regulation of Karabagh. At the same time in a whole range of particularities both these countries could be extremely helpful. First of all, Georgia continues to act as the connecting chain in unofficial contacts between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In contrast with all the other neighbors Turkey has a real potential for immediate and effective changes in the current no-way-out situation. Moreover, to some extent it is a party to the conflict, exerting quite rigid sanctions against Armenia. And no matter

what they say about the complexity of Armenian-Turkish relations, the underlying motive for the sanctions is Turkey’s direct support of Azerbaijan in the Karabagh confrontation. Consequently, any plans of regulation should incorporate specific requirements from Ankara in this or that form.

Naturally, no one would expect Turkey to stop sympathizing with Azerbaijan. We would not also argue against the dubious principle of “one nation - two states” declared both in Ankara and Baku. But when the process of regulation is launched, we would rightfully expect that our western neighbor stops being a simply biased observer, and takes specific steps parallel to those made by Armenia and Azerbaijan. On the first phase this could be unblocking the border with Armenia and initiation of negotiations to establish diplomatic relations.

With a deeper understanding of international relations and more experience in diplomatic compromise, Turkey could successfully influence Baku, and become an example for Yerevan on how to undo the toughest knots. Unfortunately, this does not happen for now. Ankara, just as its Azerbaijani brethren, considers that there is no need to think about concessions, when Armenia can be cornered and drawn to its knees through sanctions, blockade, lobbying of its interest in the international circles, through oil and other strategic resources. But it seems that developments of the last few years have clearly demonstrated that only part of the issues could be attained through those methods, particularly; Armenians would appear in a **worse** situation. But neither Ankara nor Baku would be able to make things as **bad** for Armenians as to concede to their conditions. Besides, Yerevan also has its own formulae to cause headaches for its highbrowed neighbors and actively uses them. As a result, the issues do not move from the dead point, no one actually makes any gains from this and, ultimately, things get **worse** for everyone.

The absence of progress on the Turkish front is all the more disappointing, because the country as a whole is undergoing change. No matter how painful and contradictory, the process of Europeanization of Turkey proceeds much faster than in Armenia or Azerbaijan. Armenians are apt to brand Turkish reforms as false and hypocritical, feigned to be entrusted by the West. It is common saying among us that “unless their nature changes, no facelift would help.” Even if we take up the more progressive and open-minded positions for the Armenian and Kurdish issues in Turkish press, literature, education and research as an institutional phenomenon, it is undeniable that it obtains more and more systemic character. And any ongoing habit sooner or later becomes part of human nature. It is seldom for a child to clean his/her teeth without being reminded, and often (in the situation of Robinson) even the grown ups would give up the procedure, if there is no one to reprimand them.

Many of the trends for which Europe is today so attractive have become habitual through persistent enforcement. And the fact that in today’s Turkey Atom Egoyan’s “Ararat” is shown, and “Ambassador Morgenthau’s History” is published is very significant in many aspects. It is impossible to circumvent the Genocide when considering this country’s role in relation with Armenia. Unfortunately, a composed, unemotional attitude for their own history is not an accomplished fact in Turkey but a weak tendency. To this day consciousness of the most of the Turkish political elite is shaped by one of the Young Turks’ leaders - Talaat-Pasha: “The hatred between the Turks and Armenians is now so intense that we have got to finish them. If we don’t they will plan their revenge”. In the XXI century it does not refer to the physical extermination of each other, but the cruel dilemma “either we, or they” has retained its vitality in a new interpretation reflected against the situation with the Karabagh conflict. For fairness sake it should be noted that in Armenia, too, some are under the same dilemma...

History should not pose as the executioner of the Present. New relations should be based on the current interests and needs. Once this truth is understood it would be much easier to deal with the history as well. The possibility of Turkey acknowledging the Genocide would become real only when Turks stop perceiving it as a defeat or a punishment, and Armenians would stop to see that as a victory or retaliation.

The closer we get to such an understanding of the state of affairs, the better chances we would have for the key players in the region and the international efforts to contribute to the Karabagh conflict resolution. Meanwhile, as stated several times before, any mediators and formats are capable of securing an ongoing peace and prosperity only with the good will of the conflicting sides themselves.