

A photograph of soldiers in camouflage gear running across a dry, hilly landscape. The soldiers are in the foreground, moving from left to right. The background features rolling hills and a large, prominent mountain peak under a clear sky. The terrain is arid with sparse, dry vegetation.

Chained to the Caucasus: Peacemaking in Karabakh, 1987-2012

Philip Remler

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Cover Photo: Armenian and Karabakh armed forces hold joint military exercises at a training ground near the town of Tigranakert in Karabakh, November 14, 2014. Getty Images/Karen Minasyan.

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CONTENTS

Foreword	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Acronyms	viii
Introduction.	1
1. The Social and Political Origins of the Karabakh Conflict.	6
2. The Outbreak of the Conflict in Context (1987-1988).	19
3. Peacemaking at the End of the Soviet Era (1988-1991)	31
4. The Beginnings of International Peacemaking (1991-1994)	37
5. The Minsk Group as Mediator (1994-1998)	61
6. Aliyev and Kocharyan (1998-2001)	76
7. Treading Water (2001-2005)	86
8. The Madrid Principles (2005-2008).	91
9. The Medvedev Initiative (2008-2012).	99
Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Recommendations	112
Selected Bibliography and Additional Resources	124
Endnotes.	127

Foreword

The simmering conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the mountainous region of Karabakh that has dragged on for more than twenty years has been referred to as a “frozen conflict.” But there is shooting across the line of contact, and every year people on both sides—including civilians—are killed. Therefore, it is more accurate to say that the settlement process, rather than the conflict, is frozen.

Two decades since efforts to find a settlement began in what is known as the Minsk Process, peace remains elusive. Even the personal involvement of presidents of three of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—namely France, the United States, and the Russian Federation, the three co-chair countries of the Minsk Process—has had little impact.

The settlement process has been rather opaque, either because the negotiators have advocated quiet diplomacy, or because the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan have hammered out deals behind closed doors that their constituents may not be ready to accept. Indeed, as Philip Remler points out in *Chained to the Caucasus*, peace can only be made when the people are ready to accept it. Since Nagorno-Karabakh is so closely associated with the history and identity of both parties, anyone who negotiates peace may be seen as betraying the nation. To break these chains, negotiators and their backers in the international community need to create both incentives and public policy that can make a peace agreement palatable rather than a risk to leaders’ political futures, or lives.

The International Peace Institute (IPI) commissioned this study as part of its efforts to promote new approaches to the protracted conflicts in Europe. With years of experience working in the South Caucasus and with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Philip Remler combines the knowledge of an insider with the critical eye of an outsider to make a cogent assessment of why it has been so hard to resolve the Karabakh conflict. While his conclusions are sobering, they can hopefully help all parties to better

understand the motivations and limitations of the actors, and stimulate new approaches to resolving this long-running conflict.

Walter Kemp
Vice President, IPI

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Acronyms

ASALA	Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia
ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
EU	European Union
G8	Group of Eight
JCAG	Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKAO	Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast'
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
UN	United Nations
US	United States

Introduction¹

Why has peacemaking in the Karabakh conflict failed?² To answer that question, we will need to examine aspects of the roots of the conflict, the context in which it arose, and the factors—the politics, countries, societies, and ideologies—that have kept it going for over a generation.³ This study offers some frank evaluations of the efforts made over many years to resolve the conflict, some of which have not been discussed publicly except as narratives of one side or the other.

The Karabakh conflict is not unique. Though it has a number of distinct aspects, it fits well within the continuum of ethnic or quasi-ethnic conflicts that broke out in Europe and Eurasia toward the end of the last century, and the lessons of the efforts to achieve peace in the Karabakh conflict are of value to peace and mediation efforts elsewhere. Karabakh is usually lumped together with the other so-called “frozen conflicts” that emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union: Transdnistria in Moldova, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. But parallels also exist with other conflicts such as Cyprus and Northern Ireland, and we see echoes of the same issues in Ukraine today.

Karabakh was the earliest eruption of armed nationalism in the unraveling of the Soviet Union. It predated by a year the national movements in the Baltic republics and Ukraine. The descent into nationalist armed hostilities was perhaps predictable. Azerbaijanis and Armenians had fought a bloody war after they declared independence from the collapsing Russian Empire in 1918, and the nationalism of the Armenian Diaspora, a potent and heady ideology, later filled the vacuum left by popular rejection of hollowed-out late-Soviet Leninist cant. Although there may be little mystery why nationalist animosities turned violent, it remains a puzzle why that happened as early as it did in Karabakh.

Once started, the conflict resisted all efforts to find a political solution, and the reasons for the failure to find a resolution are the

focus of this report. From the beginning, many and varied mediators have tried to reach a settlement. Senior statesmen from major powers, and international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations Security Council tried to mediate and encouraged the parties to reach a settlement. All these efforts failed. In some cases, the would-be mediator was feckless. In others, promising initiatives were nipped in the bud by sudden military offensives. These include the Iranian mediation of 1992, which was aborted by the Armenian seizure of the town of Shusha in May of that year. Similarly, the serious initiative of Mario Sica (who as representative of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the predecessor to the OSCE, coordinated the efforts of Russian, Turkish, and American mediators) was undone by the Kelbajar offensive of March 1993. No one was more persistent in mediation efforts than Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev, who labored intensively for more than three years, abandoning long-held Russian goals and ulterior motives for the sake of achieving peace. He tried in vain to persuade both sides to accept a set of principles. When that proved impossible, he tried to get them to agree to just a few of the principles. He gave up only after it became obvious that the leaders were negotiating just to humor him and had no intention of agreeing to anything.

In twenty years of negotiations, the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia have honored only one durable cease-fire—the 1994 Bishkek Protocol that is still in effect—and accepted two peace plans, both of which ultimately failed. The first was the 1997 OSCE Minsk Group proposal, a step-by-step plan accepted by Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev. That plan failed when Ter-Petrosyan was overthrown by a coup (though officially he “resigned”) carried out by opponents of compromise. The second plan to be accepted was the land swap that Aliyev agreed to in 1999 in secret direct negotiations with Armenian President (and former leader of Karabakh) Robert Kocharyan. That plan was scuttled by a deadly act of terrorism.

In fact, that violence is a theme of this study. No matter how brave politicians may be in risking political suicide, they can rarely be induced to take actions that they judge will lead to their physical

deaths. If a peace agreement is ever signed to resolve the Karabakh conflict, it will be by leaders who believe that the opposition to an agreement can be managed—that the agreement is *survivable*. In peacemaking for Karabakh, mediators have consistently been unable to convince leaders that the proposals they make are, indeed, survivable. What is or is not survivable in practice ultimately depends on what the peoples involved in the conflict can be persuaded to accept. One tragic irony of the Karabakh conflict is that, with few exceptions, leaders have *not* tried to prepare their peoples to accept compromise. They have consistently told their peoples that total victory is achievable. As long as leaders continue to do so, they will live in fear that any solution other than total victory will lead to a popular backlash that may kill them; and so the vicious cycle perpetuates itself.

The instinct for self-preservation is part of a larger factor that keeps protracted conflicts such as Karabakh (and all those mentioned previously) going on long beyond their military phase: as years go by without resolution, those involved in protracted conflicts—the belligerents, their external patrons, and even the negotiators—develop the expectation that the conflict will not be resolved in the foreseeable future, *and they adapt to that expectation*. Powerful political and economic interests develop, capitalizing on the distortions inherent in the status quo. Unless that status quo becomes extremely painful, or unless leaders can override those powerful interests, the status quo benefits from strong inertia that defeats peacemaking efforts.

To be sure, failure is relative, and though international mediation has failed to foster a political solution in the Karabakh conflict, a strong argument can be made that, in the absence of a peacekeeping force, the involvement of the international community through mediation efforts has helped to keep widespread military hostilities from reigniting. Negotiations have given the sides a space to vent their frustrations without resorting to war, and internationally sponsored talks are a constant reminder to the parties in conflict that the eyes of the world are on them. But the international community aims higher; it seeks a sustainable peace.

This study is arranged chronologically, beginning at the outbreak of the crisis in late 1987 and ending with the failure of Russian President Medvedev's initiative in 2012, twenty years after the interna-

tional community's first attempts to mediate. The beginning chapters set the stage, analyzing the way in which the Soviet Union's structure led to ethnic conflict and the development of ethnic nationalism out of ethnic rivalry. Each chapter thereafter describes successive efforts to end the conflict and the factors that militated for the failure of those efforts. The report concludes by offering lessons learned and recommendations for moving forward.



Chris Robinson, with the kind permission of Thomas de Waal

A Note on Terminology and Orthography

Even the naming of this conflict is contentious. The term Armenians use for the region is *Artsakh*. The term Azerbaijanis use is *Dağlıq Qarabağ*, or Mountainous Karabakh. The term most frequently applied by outsiders from the beginning of the conflict was from Russian, *Nagorno-Karabakh*. But as Thomas de Waal has pointed out in his book *Black Garden*, “Nagorno-Karabakh” is not a region but the transliteration of part of a Russian adjective describing something related to that region, derived from the Soviet-era official term, *Nagorno-karabakhskaya avtonomnaya oblast’* (NKAO), or the Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabakh.⁴ Following de Waal’s lead, the author here uses the Russian nominative form, “Nagornyy Karabakh,” to refer to the Soviet- and post-Soviet-era entity and its authorities. The conflict, however, is wider than the Soviet-era boundaries of Nagornyy Karabakh. This report refers to it as the Karabakh conflict, which ensures that lowland Karabakh is covered as well (including the provinces currently occupied by Armenian forces). For convenience, Stepanakert (not Khankendi) is used for the capital, but Shusha (not Shushi) is used for its historical center. And while Stepan Shahumyan gave his name to the Soviet-era appellation of a district near Nagornyy Karabakh, it was universally referred to in Soviet times as the “Shaumyan District” (Шаумяновский район), based (like Nagornyy Karabakh) on the Russian version of the name. As with “Nagornyy Karabakh,” we retain the Soviet-era terminology.

Transliterating Russian and Armenian words and names from their original alphabets is fairly straightforward, and standard transliteration for both is used throughout. Not so for modern Azerbaijani, written in Latin script but containing several letters not found in English (such as *ə* for the *æ* sound derived from Persian, which is variously rendered as the letter *a* or *e*; or *ç* for English *ch*) and some that have entirely different qualities (such as *c* for the English letter *j*, or *x* for English *kh*). In these cases, ease of recognition has been chosen over authenticity. Therefore, “Nakhchivan” rather than “Naxçivan,” “Rovshan Javadov” rather than “Rövşən Cavadov,” “Aliyev” rather than “Əliyev,” and indeed Karabakh rather than “Qarabağ” and Azerbaijan rather than “Azərbaycan.” (References to Republican or Ottoman Turkish are left in Republican Turkish orthography.)

Chapter One

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORIGINS OF THE KARABAKH CONFLICT

To discuss the nature of peace initiatives in the Karabakh conflict and why people made, accepted, or rejected proposals, we need first to understand the origins of the conflict and the psychological effects of those origins on the participants. This chapter discusses structural factors that led to the conflict, and the thinking of the participants, in ways that may be both contrary to the assumptions the participants have made about themselves and their opponents and alien to outsiders accustomed to Western conceptions of the state.

NATIONALISM AND THE ETHNIC POLICIES OF THE SOVIET UNION

In late Soviet times, the retreat of central Soviet power—the result of economic incompetence, growing corruption, and adventurism in foreign policy—allowed the re-emergence of ethnic tensions that had been kept simmering by the nationality policies of the Soviet Union. Ethnic tensions are sometimes portrayed as a prime cause of the Soviet collapse.¹ In the present author's view, however, the myriad “national liberation fronts” and “popular fronts” that appeared at the end of the 1980s were far more a *product* of Soviet weakness than they were a contributor to it, though to be sure, they did add to the problems of the center. Ethnic tensions had existed for centuries among the peoples of what became the Soviet Union, and the strength of the Soviet center kept many of those tensions submerged. At the same time, however, the structure and ideology of the Soviet Union created competition for resources that exacerbated ethnic tensions and contributed to the rapid growth of ethnic conflict once the center lost its hold.

How did this happen? After all, Lenin spoke of the tsarist Russian Empire as the “prison-house of nations” and vowed to change the tsarist policy of forced Russification. And though Stalin later switched to a Russian-first nationalities policy, Soviet ideology continued to promote pride in ethnic self-identification, resulting, for example, in tremendous subsidies for the publication of books in non-Russian languages, far more than would be viable in a free market. At the same time, however, Soviet ideology promoted a homogenized *Homo sovieticus*; the flags of the Soviet Union Republics, for example, were almost identical, with minor variations in the placement or color of stripes, and “national dance troupes” performed almost identical shows with minor variations in dance steps and costumes to distinguish one ethnic group from another. Despite the official promotion of non-Russian languages such as on street signs, non-Russian speakers trying to use their own languages in their own republics sometimes heard the phrase “Говорите по-человечески” (“Speak in a human language,” i.e., Russian). The contradictions in Soviet ideology were never resolved and helped create the bitter feelings associated with the complex of nationalism, resource competition, and dependence on Moscow as arbiter.

That complex was echoed and reinforced by the Soviet Union’s unique federal structure. At the highest level below the central authorities were the Union Republics—the fifteen republics represented by their titular languages on the seal of the Soviet Union.² Those republics were recognized as independent states by the international community after the Soviet Union’s collapse. On a level beneath these were numerous Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSR), which were considered by Soviet law to have a degree of autonomy from their parent republic and a form of sovereignty. Abkhazia was an example of an ASSR within the Union Republic of Georgia. Nagorny Karabakh was an example of a lower-order autonomy, the “Autonomous Oblast” (область = region), which possessed some autonomy but not sovereignty. Lower still was the “Autonomous Rayon” (district), which had little, if any, real autonomy.

Common to all levels was the concept of the titular ethnic group—in Soviet parlance, the “root nationality” (коренная национальность or, in an earlier rubric, коренное население, or “root

population”).³ Virtually all forms of autonomy, both from the center and from the lower federal levels, were based on ethnicity. Union Republics had a single “root nationality” (henceforth, “titular nationality”): for example, Latvians in Latvia and Uzbeks in Uzbekistan. Typically, lower-level autonomies within a Union Republic had a different titular nationality: for example, Abkhaz in the Abkhazian ASSR (in the Georgian SSR) and Karakalpaks in the Karakalpak Autonomous Oblast’ (in the Uzbek SSR).⁴ The nationality policy followed by the Soviet Union, a policy of favoring and subsidizing a titular nationality within that ethnic group’s Union Republic, ASSR, or autonomous region, was called *korenizatsiya* (коренизация; a literal translation would be “rootification”).

In most cases, a single ethnic group formed the titular nationality of autonomies at a level beneath the Union Republics. In certain cases inside Russia (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic), nationalities were considered too small to have their own autonomies and two or more were merged into one ASSR: for example, the Chechens with the Ingush, the Kabardians with the Balkars, and the Cherkess with the Karachay. In the case of Dagestan, an autonomy was created from societies that were so ethnically fragmented that there was no titular nationality; instead, the 450 or so *jamaats* of the region, which had been divided by Russian ethnographers into thirty-nine ethnic groups, were further consolidated into thirteen “nationalities” (plus one for Russian immigrants), each with its own set of districts, sharing titular rule of the Dagestan ASSR.⁵ The long-term effect of *korenizatsiya* was that, as David Laitin and Ronald Grigor Suny point out, “Ethnicity was matched to territory, generally imperfectly, but nevertheless a strong sense developed that each nationality ought to have its own territory, even its own polity.”⁶

The stratification of ethnically based polities created competition for resources and jobs. The resultant inter-ethnic tension made federal units and their smaller component parts more dependent on the center in Moscow as arbiter. The *korenizatsiya* policy, whatever its original ideological impulse, resulted in inter-ethnic rivalry for Moscow’s favor and competition for resources doled out by Moscow—a mechanism of divide and rule that succeeded in pushing ethnic aspirations below the surface (but that preserved or increased

animosities) for most of Soviet history. Those animosities have played a huge role in post-Soviet politics, though often disguised in other-than-ethnic terms. For example, in Kabardino-Balkaria, which is dominated by Kabardians, Islamist extremists are reportedly overwhelmingly Balkar. Many of the perpetrators of the 2004 act of terrorism at a school in Beslan, North Ossetia, also ostensibly Islamist, were Ingush supported by their Chechen ethnic kin, harking back to the Prigorodnyy conflict between the Ingush and North Ossetia, and before that to two centuries of Ossetia's role as Moscow's chief ally in subduing the North Caucasus. Many of the victims of the supposedly "Islamist" terrorist attack in Beslan were in fact (Ossetian) Muslims.

Korenizatsiya created feelings of both entitlement and frustration: entitlement because titular nationalities (at whatever level) felt free to lord their favored status over minorities, and frustration because all entitlement depended on Moscow, which could always favor the rival titular nationality in the next republic or the next layer up or down. In this way, the Soviet system channeled and manipulated pre-existing ethnic rivalries, and the competition for resources fostered by the Soviet system preserved and amplified those ethnic rivalries enough to ensure that they boiled over when Soviet power retreated. For this reason, separatist polities in the former Soviet Union are often continuations (sometimes after a hiatus) of ethnic regional autonomies that existed under the Soviet Union. The conflicts are more accurately described as secessionist rather than separatist. Unlike the initial process of the breakup of Yugoslavia, the conflicts that broke out in the former Soviet Union were mostly not among the largest federal structures (the Union Republics). Instead, smaller entities rebelled to secede from former Union Republics. Karabakh is something of a hybrid. While Karabakh itself was an ethnic regional autonomy, it created and played upon tensions between two Union Republics, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

ETHNIC FILTRATION

One by-product of *korenizatsiya* that played an important role in the Karabakh conflict was the process of migration that gradually concentrated Soviet-era ethnic groups into compact territories, mostly (but not always) where they formed the titular nationality; one might term this process "migratory filtration." The gradual migration—and

resultant separation—of Armenians and Azerbaijanis has a complex history, but understanding it is vital for analysis of the Karabakh conflict.

Tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis long predated the Bolshevik takeover. The region was disputed between Ottoman Turkey and its contemporaries in Iran (whose rulers during most of the last millennium were Turkic and spoke the language that coalesced into Azeri). Russia began its conquest of the region in the eighteenth century. Tsarist policy favored the Christian Armenians over the Muslim Azerbaijanis. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) was interpreted to give Russia a status as protecting power over Eastern Christians living in Ottoman lands, and a general Russian policy of clearing Muslims from the regions bordering the Ottoman Empire and replacing them with Christians brought in Armenian immigrants, including Armenians encouraged to emigrate from the Ottoman lands and Iran.

Although it is common on both sides of the Karabakh dispute to say that Stalin created the problem by drawing the borders where he did, the truth (unpleasant to both sides) is that before World War I, Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the territory of present-day Armenia and Azerbaijan were two ethnic groups inhabiting one expanse of land. Majorities varied from district to district, but there was never one border that could put Azerbaijanis on one side and Armenians on the other without leaving significant minorities in both countries. Azerbaijanis comprised less than 50 percent of Baku's population until the 1970s, and the oil boom in late tsarist times had attracted large groups of Russians and Armenians, among others. Meanwhile, the tsarist census put the "Tatar" (i.e., Azerbaijani) population of the *uyezd* (district) of Yerevan, now Armenia's capital, at 56 percent. In Karabakh, Azerbaijanis generally built their permanent homes in the lowland winter pastures, moving in summer to higher pasturage next to the upland Armenian villages. For centuries, the plateau fortress town of Shusha remained an Azerbaijani outpost in the heart of Karabakh, securing the Azerbaijani villagers' mountain pasturage.

Small pockets of ethnic homogeneity were dotted throughout, creating competition and resentment wherever borders were drawn. For example, the Sweden-based website *mountainous-karabakh.org*, in

a chronology of events, laments that on July 7, 1923, “Stalin draws the boundaries of Nagorno-Karabakh in such a way that a narrow strip of land separates the area physically from Armenia.”⁷ The chronology neglects to mention that the strip of land in question (the districts of Lachin and Kelbajar) was “Red Kurdistan,” whose inhabitants (according to the single tsarist census) were overwhelmingly ethnically Kurdish speakers of Azerbaijani, with rights to ethnicity-based boundaries that were supposed to be equal to, and as important as, those of the Karabakh Armenians; in accordance with Soviet ideology, those rights would have been violated by incorporation into either Karabakh or Armenia. The same logic that created an autonomy in Karabakh also left Lachin and Kelbajar outside it. Looking at the broader picture, both titular nationalities inside present-day Armenia and Azerbaijan were small parts of much larger national populations outside that territory: Armenians in the Ottoman and Iranian lands and in other parts of the Russian Caucasus, especially Georgia; Azerbaijanis in Iranian Azerbaijan and Georgia.

World War I, especially its aftermath, exacerbated tensions to the point of bloody conflict. The Ottoman massacres of Armenians did not reach the Caucasus, but the plight of Armenians further west inflamed eastern Armenian sentiments, and at the end of the war and immediately after, independent Armenian forces under the Dashnaktsutyun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation, usually called “Dashnaks”) fought bloody battles with Ottoman and Azerbaijani armies in Karabakh and elsewhere in Azerbaijan. An Ottoman army briefly occupied Baku in 1918. Making peace in the Caucasus was as complicated as making war, as regimes came and went.⁸ Finally, the Treaty of Kars (1921)—in reality between Ankara and Moscow, though signed by the Soviet regimes of the Transcaucasus—ended the fighting.

The Bolsheviks stepped into this cauldron with a clear bias toward the Armenians. Armenians were more likely than Azerbaijanis to become Bolsheviks (Azerbaijanis were always underrepresented in the Azerbaijan Communist Party).⁹ The Armenian nationalist Dashnaks and the Bolsheviks had fought the Ottomans and Azerbaijanis together in 1918, and an Armenian, Stepan Shahumyan, was the leader of the Baku Commune and one of the “26 Baku Commissars”

celebrated as martyrs in Soviet hagiography. At first the Soviets fused Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan into one Union Republic—the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. In 1936 the republic was disarticulated into the three Union Republics that lasted for the rest of Soviet history and gained independence when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) collapsed.

Against this historical background, the three Transcaucasian republics of the USSR demonstrate how titular ethnic groups gradually separated following the drawing of borders. Georgia possessed significant Armenian populations (Tbilisi was then the cultural capital of the eastern Armenian world) and an equally large Azerbaijani population in the southeast, in a region traditionally known as Borchaly. In Azerbaijan, significant populations of Armenians lived in Nakhchivan, Karabakh (and neighboring regions), and the industrial Baku-Sumgait region. In Armenia, large Azerbaijani populations lived both in the Yerevan region and in the south, neighboring the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan, which was created by the Treaties of Moscow and Kars to give Turkey a direct border with Azerbaijan.

The original framers of this partition thought the ethnic mix would pose no problem. As Robert Kocharyan—who served as leader of both Nagornyy Karabakh and Armenia—said in a 1996 conversation, “There were two reasons why Armenians in Karabakh were willing to become part of Azerbaijan. First, in those days everyone thought there would be a new *Homo sovieticus*, and ethnic differences would no longer matter. More importantly, it was not a choice between Armenia and Azerbaijan; it was a choice between Baku and Yerevan. Baku was a big, rich city with a large Armenian population, and Yerevan was a village. People in Karabakh had relatives in Baku, not Yerevan.”¹⁰

But educational and employment opportunities often favored the titular nationality. A gradual “migratory filtration” occurred over the years, as families seeking opportunity moved to places where their ethnic group formed the titular nationality, either in a Union Republic or an autonomous subdivision. Armenians (except those from the Baku and Karabakh regions) tended to immigrate to Armenia. For the Azerbaijanis, a magnet developed in the Nakhchivan ASSR, an exclave

of the Azerbaijan SSR, where Azerbaijanis were the titular nationality, though Armenians had originally formed a majority. Today's Azerbaijani political elite is composed predominantly of people whose ancestors emigrated from Armenia, mostly to Nakhchivan. Heydar Aliyev, the most important president of Azerbaijan to date and father of the current president, was born in Armenia; his parents subsequently left for Nakhchivan.¹¹ Aliyev's predecessor as president, Abulfaz Elchibey, was born in Nakhchivan of parents who had emigrated from Armenia. As a result, virtually all Azerbaijanis gradually disappeared from southern Armenia (Armenia is now the least ethnically diverse of all former Soviet republics), and all Armenians disappeared from Nakhchivan, where they had once formed the majority. The forcible expulsions of populations when the Karabakh conflict broke out at the end of the Soviet era were in effect continuations by other means of the ethnic filtration that had been occurring for decades as a result of Soviet nationality policy.

These processes took place at varying speeds and with local variations, and there were anomalies. Baku was the most salient anomaly, partly owing to the fact that Azerbaijanis were a minority both in the city and in its ruling Communist Party. As Azerbaijanis moved into Baku from the hinterlands, finally becoming a majority in the 1970s, they took on the cosmopolitanism of a city that had grown rapidly in the late nineteenth century owing to diverse Russophone migration attracted by the oil industry. Many of the new Azerbaijani Bakintsy adopted the Russian language to blend in with the large populations of Russians, Armenians, and others they found there. Although someone like Heydar Aliyev, born in an earlier generation and a provincial to boot, could speak fluent Azerbaijani, by the early 1990s many in the Bakintsy elite spoke only "kitchen" Azerbaijani and looked down on those for whom it was the first language and for whom Russian was only a second language. Mixed marriage was frequent, with Russian as the marital tongue regardless of ethnicity; the children of these marriages typically spoke Russian as their first language. Unlike most of the rest of Azerbaijan, professional opportunities in Baku favored those who spoke Russian, not Azerbaijani. As a result Baku became a magnet for Armenians, among others, until the recrudescence of ethnic tensions in the late 1980s that accompanied the Karabakh independence/unification movement.

Other anomalies in the Caucasus were Javakheti, a predominantly Armenian-inhabited region of Georgia, home to a large Soviet (later Russian) military base; and Tbilisi, the old cultural capital of Armenians in the Russian Empire, where the neighborhood of Avlabari became a center of Armenian life—though many Armenians still emigrated from these anomalous places to Armenia.¹² On the whole, all three republics became more homogeneous (with respect to the other titular nationalities) over the course of Soviet rule.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONALISM IN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN

The conflict is often portrayed as a struggle between national self-determination and territorial integrity, two “universal” concepts enshrined in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. That is ahistorical. The Karabakh war began as, and to a large extent remains, a struggle between two opposing nationalisms that were unleashed, influenced, and in some respects shaped by the decline and collapse of the Soviet Union. Only later did these nationalisms seek ideological underpinnings for their aspirations in the Helsinki Final Act and interpret it to suit their purposes.

Stalin had a clear and decisive way of dealing with nationality problems during his rule, and if the famous quotation about “no man—no problem” is apocryphal, it is nonetheless in close accord with his system of autocratic governance. Later generations of Soviet leaders relied less on the harshest of repressive measures. They suppressed primarily those who could not be reconciled to the system, such as the relatively small group of dissidents and ethnic groups such as Jews seeking to emigrate. The case of the Soviet Jewish emigration in the 1970s and 1980s was highly instructive to other ethnic groups, since the Soviet Jewish movement enlisted Jews in other countries, especially the United States, to push their own governments to bring pressure to bear on the Soviet Union. The success of that campaign was not lost on the rest of Soviet society: a diaspora can be a great asset.

The growth of nationalism among the Armenians of the Soviet Union, including Karabakh, clearly predated its Azerbaijani counterpart. It is no exaggeration to say that modern Azerbaijani nationalism

was born as a reaction to Armenian nationalism. The historical differences between the two nationalities easily explain why. Armenians have been linguistically and ethnically distinct from their neighbors at least since the Iron Age. Armenia has ancient kingdoms to look back to, and the national perception of persecution and genocide, handed down from generation to generation, has provided a fresh impetus for national solidarity.¹³ In addition, after the extinction of the First Armenian Republic, groups such as the Dashnaks maintained a strong and continuous presence in exile throughout the twentieth century.

In contrast, Azerbaijan was always part (albeit sometimes a very central part) of larger empires, and since the thirteenth century the Azerbaijani language has been just one of the closely related forms of the Oghuz branch of Turkic spoken in Anatolia, Iraq, Iran, and parts of Central Asia.¹⁴ A graphic illustration of the ambiguities surrounding Azerbaijani national identity (though written by an outsider) appears in the novel *Ali and Nino*, by the pseudonymous Kurban Said, set during and after World War I. The novel's Azerbaijani hero, Ali, is consciously torn as to which of his identities defines him: Is he an ethnic Turk looking west toward the Ottoman Empire, which from 1908 under the Young Turks was rediscovering its Turkish roots? Is he a Shia Muslim looking south toward Iran, whose rulers were, like him, Azeri-speaking Shia? Or is he a grandee of the Russian Empire looking north to St. Petersburg, as opposed to both Turkey and Iran?

Armenian nationalism suffered few such ambiguities. Armenian national identity is inextricably bound up with the perception that Armenians were victims of genocide, which infuses Armenians worldwide and provides a clear organizing principle for national feeling and aspirations. At the same time, this principle has added nuance to relations among the various Armenian communities, as it left the western Armenians who originated in the Anatolian heartland—the victims of the massacres—with political priorities that differed somewhat from those of eastern Armenians. Western Armenia, by convention, refers to Armenians living in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire, who looked to Istanbul as their cultural and religious center. They were culturally and linguistically distinct from the eastern Armenians of the Russian Empire, who looked to Tbilisi as their cultural capital and to Echmiadzin, near Yerevan, as their

religious center.

Today's Armenian Diaspora is largely descended from western Armenian refugees who settled in Lebanon and Syria and eventually in France and the United States. Permeated by fresh memories of the *Medz Yeghern*, or "Great Catastrophe,"¹⁵ the western Diaspora gave birth to anti-Turkish societies, including among the Dashnaksutyun, who sought revenge by assassinating exiled Young Turk leaders in the 1920s. That spirit was recalled in the 1970s by terrorist groups such as the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG). The priorities of the Dashnaks and other Diaspora organizations lay in the western Armenian homelands.

The Soviet Union tried hard to ensure that the western Diaspora Armenians did not influence the eastern Soviet Armenians (just as they tried to keep Turks, even exiled Communists such as Nâzım Hikmet, away from Azerbaijan), but inevitably there was contact; for example, the father of Levon Ter-Petrosyan, a (western Armenian) Syrian Communist, immigrated to Soviet Armenia, and he was one of many. The Dashnaksutyun was founded in the Russian Empire and ruled Armenia during its brief period of independence after the collapse of the Russian Empire, cooperating with the Bolsheviks against the Ottomans and Azerbaijanis. The Dashnaksutyun was wiped out by the Soviets along with the independent First Republic of Armenia, however, and survived only in the western Armenian Diaspora. When Soviet power weakened, Diaspora Dashnaks were able to establish considerable influence among Soviet Armenians, especially in Nagornyy Karabakh.

The Dashnaks were, until very late, ambiguous about independence for the Soviet Republic of Armenia, fearing it would close off possibilities to achieve their primary aim, the creation of an Armenian state that would include their homelands in eastern Anatolia. The Dashnak slogan "Territorial unity first, independence later" ran contrary to the philosophy of Levon Ter-Petrosyan and the Karabakh Committee, which led a drive for the immediate independence of the Armenian SSR and took power as Armenia was achieving it.¹⁶ The Dashnaks did not do well in Armenian elections, and Ter-Petrosyan banned them in 1994. But all Armenian parties could agree on the

importance of Karabakh, and the Dashnaks flourished there.

Armenian nationalism is too complex a subject to analyze deeply here. Indeed, it has been the subject of many books.¹⁷ But several characteristics of Armenian nationalism are worth noting, as they will inform the later development of the Karabakh conflict:

- The deeply felt sense of both the unity and isolation of the Armenian people, based on a language spoken only by the ethnos and a church that is not in communion with any other;
- The enduring perception of persecution, dispossession, and genocide, fueling irredentism along with a perpetual sense of vulnerability to strong and hostile foreign neighbors;
- The long-term resort to terrorism and assassination, including of Armenians deemed to be traitors to the ethnos;
- The perception that Azerbaijanis are Turks and therefore bear responsibility for the actions of the Ottomans in 1915; and
- The interplay between the history and aspirations of Armenians in Armenia and those of the larger and richer Diaspora outside, which wields great influence with the states it inhabits.

None of these is unique to Armenians. The Middle East and Caucasus are full of compact linguistic groups unrelated to others nearby and of religions and sects not in communion with any other. (Only the Israelis would appear to share both the linguistic and religious singularities with the Armenians, though the Nestorian Assyrians come close.) A number of peoples in Europe and the Middle East have diasporas with populations greater than those in their ancestral homeland. The history of those regions is rife with irredentism, terrorism, and assassination fueled by past dispossession and mass murder. And as the Balkan Wars demonstrate, more than one people holds its immediate neighbors responsible for decisions taken in Istanbul in centuries past. But the Armenian mix of all of these is potent and explains why Armenian nationalism re-emerged so early in the process of the disintegration of the USSR, and why it fueled many of the events thereafter.

From the first moves in the Karabakh conflict, the cause of detaching Karabakh from Azerbaijan became the rallying point of

Armenian nationalism worldwide. The slogan heard was “Miatsum,” or unification (with Armenia). For the western Armenian Diaspora, Karabakh meant a way of continuing the struggle against the Turks and turning it into an armed struggle; it signified that after centuries, even millennia, of being victims, Armenians were fighting back against their persecutors. For the eastern Armenians, the Karabakh conflict meant a way of breaking out of the “Indian reservation,” as one participant in the struggle put it, in which Stalin had imprisoned them. It also meant a way of galvanizing financial and political support from the rich Diaspora and, by extension, the West.

Chapter Two

THE OUTBREAK OF THE CONFLICT IN CONTEXT (1987–1988)

The aspect of the Karabakh conflict that is hardest to understand is how suddenly and massively the early protagonists broke with Soviet practice and mentality. True, there had been disturbances on nationalist grounds before—when, for example, Mikhail Gorbachev tried to replace the ethnic Kazakh first secretary of the Kazakhstan Communist Party with an ethnic Russian—but they were one-off and not part of a sustained national movement or nationalist tensions. In contrast, the tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Karabakh erupted into mass violence despite seventy years of the Soviet Union’s repressive methods of keeping order and led quickly to the development of strong nationalist organizations. The aspects discussed below are part of the basic historical context.

THE RAPIDITY OF DISORDER

As Thomas de Waal points out in *Black Garden*, the movement to reassign Nagornyy Karabakh to Armenia sprang up on the heels of Gorbachev’s October 21, 1987, purge of Heydar Aliyev, the Azerbaijani KGB chief and Communist Party first secretary who rose to become a member of the Politburo and deputy prime minister of the Soviet Union. Aliyev, probably the most talented—and feared—politician from the Caucasus since Stalin, had been a symbol of Azerbaijan’s mastery of the Soviet patronage system. His ouster carried a silent message throughout the Caucasus. Still, the suddenness with which events unfolded in late 1987 and early 1988 raises questions that neither historians nor the antagonists’ chronologies answer satisfactorily. Historians in general look back through the lens of 1989, a pivotal year in world history; motivations that appeared commonplace after



Levon Ter-Petrosyan, president of Armenia, 1991–1998 (UN Photo/Evan Schneider).

1989 were in fact rare before then. Using as one's starting point the traditional pre-1989 Soviet practices of control and repression, the events following the ouster of Heydar Aliyev, outlined here by a pro-Karabakh website, would appear to make no sense whatsoever:¹

1987

October: Armenians in the Armenian-dominated village Chardakli in northwestern Azerbaijan refuse to accept the appointment of an Azeri as director of the village. This led to the local Communist Party crackdown on villagers, which, to the Armenians, meant...the goal to drive them out of the village.

1988

January: After the events in Chardakli, the Azerbaijani population of Armenia begins noticing harassment and many are forced to leave the country. The first refugee wave reaches Baku and settles in the industrial city of Sumgait. Two new refugee groups arrive before the end of February.

January: Tens of thousands of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh sign a petition sent to Moscow, which calls for a referendum in the region to determine Karabakh's future.

January 25: Following the escalation of tensions between Armenians and

Azerbaijanis, reports arrive about the Azerbaijanis' escape from the Armenian town of Kapan adjacent to the border with Azerbaijan.

February 13: The first demonstrations held in Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast' (NKAO), calling for the reunification of NKAO to Armenia.

February 19: The first demonstrations of the Karabakh conflict take place in Baku.

February 20: During an extraordinary session of NKAO's Soviet of People's Representatives, with the votes 110 against 17, a resolution is passed on "Application to the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan SSR and Armenian SSR for NKAO's transfer from Azerbaijani SSR to Armenian SSR."

February: The Karabakh Committee is created, whose main goal is the reunification of Karabakh with Armenia.

February 22: Azeri militia from Ağdam attack the village of Askeran in Karabakh, but face harsh resistance from the residents.

February 26: Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrate in the Armenian capital, Yerevan, to show their support for NKAO's return to the Armenian SSR.

February 27 to 29: Mass pogroms and killing of Armenians takes place in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait. Armenians begin to leave their houses and property and flee the country.

March 17: Nagorno-Karabakh Communist Party's District Committee approves the resolution from NKAO's Soviet about the transfer to the Armenian SSR.

March 23: USSR Supreme Soviet in Moscow rejects Karabakh's demand for reunification with Armenia without possibility of appeal.

Thus within just three months of Aliyev's sacking, Karabakh Armenians, fearing a reassertion of Azerbaijani control, begin to harass Azerbaijanis and force them to flee for their lives, despite seventy years of experience with Soviet methods of dealing with such disturbances.² Demonstrations begin in February in Stepanakert, Yerevan, and Baku despite seventy years of Soviet repression of unsanctioned demonstrations. Just two days after the Karabakh vote to join Armenia, an "Azerbaijani militia," already formed in Ağdam, attacks Askeran, again despite the experience of seventy years of Soviet

suppression of civil unrest. And in three days at the end of February, Azerbaijani mobs have gained enough outrage and hatred to forget about the seventy years of Soviet methods of addressing crimes against civil order, and massacre Armenians in Sumgait. In other words, the events require a sudden and huge change in the mentality of the peoples of the region. We need to look at the context that produced this change to explain both the change and why it took place in the Caucasus before anywhere else in the USSR.

The Soviet Union was, to be sure, changing fast in these years—but the policy of *glasnost* was only proclaimed after the Chernobyl nuclear accident in April 1986, and most of the nationalist movements that sprang up at the end of the Soviet era, such as those in the Baltics and Ukraine, did not get going until well into 1988 or even 1989.³ It is hard to believe that mentalities in the Caucasus would change so much more rapidly than those in other parts of the Soviet Union, absent a shock. It is indeed possible that Aliyev's ouster represented that shock. Aliyev exercised power not only in Azerbaijan but also through his KGB connections in Armenia: Ashot Manucharyan, a founder of the Karabakh Committee and later the national security adviser to Levon Ter-Petrosyan, remained a close friend until forced to leave Yerevan in 1993. With Aliyev suddenly gone, the command structure of the state security apparatus in the Caucasus may have become rudderless, and fears, a sense of insecurity, and conspiracy theories may have spread unchecked.

The suddenness with which the issue spiraled out of control took the Kremlin by surprise. The Politburo met on the issue on February 21, 1988, but that did not prevent the Sumgait massacre from starting six days later. After the February 27–29 Sumgait massacres, Armenians rapidly began to flee Azerbaijan, mostly to Armenia or Russia. In response, Armenia expelled its Azerbaijani and Muslim Kurdish population, allowing only the Yazidis to remain.⁴ By 1992, approximately 350,000 Armenians had left Azerbaijan and 160,000 Azerbaijanis had left Armenia, based on population figures.⁵

The Azerbaijani side, as mentioned previously, was late in developing its own nationalism and did so as a violent backlash against perceived Armenian ethnic violence against Azerbaijanis. The Baku Azerbaijani elites felt they had more in common with their

fellow Armenian, Russian, and other *Bakintsy*; they thought of Baku as an island of cosmopolitan culture that had, as they saw it, risen out of an Oriental morass. After the Sumgait massacre, however, events moved quickly. The Azerbaijan Popular Front was founded on July 16, 1988. The Popular Front was a hodge-podge of anti-Soviet nationalists and anti-Armenian ethnocentrics, an ambiguity that has plagued Azerbaijan's nationalist movement ever since. The Popular Front's leader, Abulfaz Elchibey, was firmly in the former camp. His model was Atatürk, who had harnessed Turkish nationalism, which had barely existed before the end of the nineteenth century, to create a modern Turkish nation inside the new Turkish Republic. Elchibey reasoned that nationalism could be similarly harnessed to create a modern Azerbaijani people and a new Azerbaijan.⁶ But most of the Popular Front's rank-and-file members were not so philosophical in outlook; to them, nationalism meant avenging Armenian insults through violence.

The Communist Party leadership in Azerbaijan was unable to deal with either the Armenian nationalism or the growing Azerbaijani response. Azerbaijan is a society of regional clans, and after Gorbachev purged Heydar Aliyev (of the Nakhchivan clan), the next two leaders, Kamran Baghirov and Abdurrahman Vazirov, were drawn from the Nakhchivanis' traditional rivals, the Azerbaijani Karabakh clan. Coming from the affected region, they were apparently ambivalent and certainly ineffective in calming emotions on both sides. Another massacre of Armenians took place in Baku in 1990 and was suppressed by a major operation of the Soviet army, creating a cadre of martyrs to the nationalist cause.

TWO UMBILICAL CORDS FOR KARABAKH

Two distinct umbilical cords provided support for Karabakh. One was the Armenian Diaspora, especially in the West, which was given access to Karabakh by the weakening and collapse of the Soviet Union. The other was the Republic of Armenia, in both the political and military aspects of the conflict. These two external ties interacted. Karabakh, as an icon for Armenian people worldwide, could shape the way in which the Diaspora used its great influence on the Republic of Armenia.

The movement of Karabakh Armenians for secession from

Azerbaijan would have been problematic without a strong base of support in Armenia, which after independence possessed international recognition and state infrastructure. The decision by Armenian leaders to pursue Karabakh secession—especially in the wake of Armenian independence, when Levon Ter-Petrosyan came to power on the strength of the Karabakh issue—gave the Karabakh Armenians a base for military supply and an intercessor with the Soviet state (and additional help with the Soviet Army in the region), and later with the Russian state and the military that remained in the region. Karabakh was not the only place Armenians could have begun armed conflict: the Armenians of Javakheti, in Georgia, were gearing up for armed struggle at the same time. Yerevan dissuaded them.⁷ Since Georgia was Armenia's one land route to Russia and Europe, supporting separatism in Georgia would not only have threatened to engage Yerevan in a multi-front war that it did not have the resources to handle but would also have threatened the economic viability of the Armenian Republic.

With Armenia concentrating on assisting Karabakh, it became a rite of passage for young Armenians to go to Karabakh to take part in the struggle. Eventually, military campaigns against Azerbaijan, notably the conquest of Kelbajar in April 1993, were launched from Armenian territory. Finally, Armenia spoke for Karabakh in all international fora. This was prompted by Azerbaijan's assertion that the war was one of foreign aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan, rather than an internal conflict between separatists and the Azerbaijani government. On this basis, once the conflict took on major proportions and international efforts began on a settlement, the Azerbaijanis refused to deal with the Karabakh Armenians in peace talks. They dealt state-to-state with Armenia and have stuck fast to that policy ever since.

It should also be noted that there were direct clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Kazakh-Ijevan region of northwest Azerbaijan/northeast Armenia. Soviet borders had left a number of tiny exclaves, each just a village with surrounding fields, belonging to either country surrounded by the territory of the other. By mid-1992 all these exclaves had been forcibly cleared out and the populations expelled. Cross-border incidents, mostly shelling, were common. The

local chiefs of security in Kazakh (Azerbaijan) and Ijevan (Armenia) used their own initiative and agreed on a hotline with a single telephone wire running between the two towns and a regime of joint military patrols.⁸ This kept things quiet until Baku and Yerevan found out about the local cooperation in 1993 and put an end to it.

The Armenian Diaspora engaged on Karabakh in the following ways:

- Armenian Diaspora fighters, some with connections to terrorist organizations such as ASALA and the Dashnak-linked JCAG, showed up in Karabakh to fight against the Azerbaijanis.
- The conflict and the threat to Armenians galvanized the Diaspora into political action in favor of Karabakh secession. The political divisions between the Dashnaks and Levon Ter-Petrosyan's Armenian National Movement were especially evident in the United States. Two main Armenian organizations grew up there: the Armenian National Committee, which was close to the Dashnaks; and the more moderate Armenian Assembly, which supported Ter-Petrosyan while he was in office. Diaspora fundraising focused more on Karabakh than on Armenia proper (causing some resentment in Armenia).
- Diaspora politicians settled in Armenia, some of them achieving high office in areas where they could influence or make Armenian policy on Karabakh. Raffi Hovannisian, an American, was independent Armenia's first foreign minister from 1991 to 1992, though his tenure was short owing to differences with Ter-Petrosyan. Vartan Oskanyan, a Syrian-born, American-educated US citizen, became deputy foreign minister in 1994 and foreign minister in 1998, holding that office for ten years (he dropped his US citizenship to take the post). Gerard Libaridian, another American, served as Ter-Petrosyan's foreign policy adviser from 1991 to 1998. Naturally, the Armenian Diaspora is not monolithic, and Libaridian especially was the pragmatic architect of many of Ter-Petrosyan's moves toward peace. But by and large, the Armenian Diaspora, at least in the United States, was *plus royaliste que le roi*; after Ter-Petrosyan accepted an international peace plan in 1997, his allies in the Diaspora

deserted him, and his overthrow in early 1998 was widely applauded by Armenians abroad.

The unique umbilical dynamic allowed Nagornyy Karabakh both to approach Armenia directly and to affect Armenian policy by using the weight and influence of the Diaspora on Yerevan. The power of this ability was realized early by the Karabakhis. In February 1993 a visiting US diplomat asked the Karabakh representative in Yerevan whether the Karabakhis were satisfied with the level of support they received from the government of Armenia. "Yes," replied the representative, "And if we are ever less than satisfied, we can change the government of Armenia." Not an idle boast, as Ter-Petrosyan found out to his regret in the winter of 1997–1998. By the end of 1993 the strategic decision making of the Republic of Armenia and that of the Armenians of Nagornyy Karabakh were already closely merged; by February 1998 any distinction between the two had entirely disappeared.

ASSASSINATION

Assassination has played a prominent role in the politics of the Armenian Diaspora. The original targets were exiled former Ottoman officials accused of genocide, such as Talat Paşa and Cemal Paşa, two of the Young Turk triumvirate. They were assassinated by Dashnaks as part of "Operation Nemesis" from 1920 to 1922. Nemesis also targeted officials of the short-lived Azerbaijan Democratic Republic after World War I.¹⁰ This is significant in view of later popular attitudes among Armenians that revenge against the Turks and the struggle for Nagornyy Karabakh's independence were both part of the same war.¹¹ In the 1970s, as terrorist groups proliferated in the Middle East, home to many Diaspora Armenians, the aims of Nemesis were taken up by Armenian terrorist groups such as ASALA and JCAG, which followed the patterns and methods of other Middle East–based terrorist organizations.¹² Both were founded in 1975 and carried out targeted assassinations of Turkish diplomats, as well as mass terrorist actions such as the Orly Airport massacre in Paris in 1983. The involvement of ASALA alumni in the Karabakh conflict has been well documented.

It is significant for the course of the peace process that assassination and the threat of assassination were also used to eliminate

internal enemies and intimidate those viewed as potential traitors. In 1986, for example, ASALA boasted in its newsletter that it had carried out lethal “people’s justice” against a “traitor.”¹³ Nagornyy Karabakh leader Artur Mkrtchyan was assassinated in April 1992, and his interim successor, Karen Baburyan, was reportedly tied to a tree by Dashnaks who threatened to torture and murder him and his wife if he agreed to peace talks with Azerbaijan. Armenian President Ter-Petrosyan accepted a peace plan whose details became public in August 1997; by February 1998 his strongman supporter Vazgen Sargsyan had deserted him over that issue, and Ter-Petrosyan received an ultimatum either to resign or be deposed by force. He resigned. In October 1999, just after Armenian President Kocharyan and Azerbaijani President Aliyev agreed on their own peace plan, assassins murdered Sargsyan (then the Armenian prime minister), the speaker of the National Assembly, and others in Parliament, derailing the settlement. While both Azerbaijani and Armenian officials need to worry about their political future if they sign a peace deal, Armenian leaders also face concrete precedents that force them to worry about their physical survival.

Assassination has not been a major factor in Azerbaijani political culture. In the coups and revolutions of the early 1990s, most of those who lost their lives were innocent bystanders; the participants themselves usually emerged without a scratch. An exception was the March 13, 1995, coup attempt against Heydar Aliyev by the brothers Mahir and Rovshan Javadov, who began by assassinating Deputy Parliament Speaker Afiyaddin Jalilov, widely reputed to be Aliyev’s illegitimate son. The Javadovs did not survive the coup.

KARABAKH ON THE SPECTRUM OF “FROZEN” CONFLICTS

The protracted separatist conflicts dating from the collapse of the Soviet Union are often called the “frozen conflicts.”¹⁴ They form a spectrum in their varying levels of interaction between the central or metropolitan state and the separatist polity. Where they fall on the spectrum reflects the attitude of the central state, both in day-to-day interaction and in negotiating strategy. At one end of the spectrum is Transdniestria, where Moldovan citizens, including those who consider themselves citizens of Transdniestria and not of Moldova,

travel freely between the territories controlled by the central and separatist authorities—hundreds, perhaps thousands, every day. There is extensive trade between the two; separatist Transdniestria's most lucrative trade is with the European Union (EU), thanks to Moldova's willingness to register Transdniestrian companies for EU customs processing. Moldova's approach, based in part on the religious and ethnic similarities between the two sides of the River Dniester, is that everyone whom Moldova considers to be a Moldovan citizen should be embraced by Moldova. Pragmatism prevails; for example, not only have some members of Transdniestria's de facto government had Moldovan passports (though they are fighting to be rid of Moldova), but some have also held Romanian passports to facilitate their travel to the EU (though they proclaim that Romanian nationalism is their main enemy).

The frozen South Ossetia conflict, prior to the Russian-Georgian War of 2008, showed somewhat less contact among the populaces, but after armed hostilities ceased in 1992, robust economic ties developed between the sides, especially in terms of contraband. The relationship reached its high point under Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze, whose nephew Nugzar controlled the trade in surplus grain alcohol imported from the EU. Much of it wound up in Russian vodka thanks to what might be termed a joint venture featuring the participation of Georgians, the South Ossetian authorities, North Ossetians, and the vodka factories that line the road between the North Ossetian capital, Vladikavkaz, and its airport in Beslan. At one point North Ossetia reportedly accounted for 35 percent of the vodka produced in Russia. In 2001 the Georgian minister of internal affairs could boast of his excellent relations with the South Ossetian authorities.¹⁵ Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution and changes in the economics of the Russian vodka industry ended this trade, but a partial replacement was found: Russia banned the import of Georgian fruits and vegetables, giving South Ossetian truck drivers the opportunity to enter Georgia (which was still open to them), buy Georgian produce, and truck it through South Ossetia past "Russian" (in fact, North Ossetian) customs into the Russian market. The populations had less contact than in the case of Transdniestria, but there was still some porosity.

The Abkhazia conflict saw much less exchange, even before the Russian-Georgian war in 2008. There was some contact involving the western Georgian Mingrelian population, which was split between the Abkhaz-controlled Gali region and the Georgian-controlled eastern side of the Inguri River. Relatives could come and go, but with great difficulty, and there was little contact between the Abkhaz themselves and the Georgians outside of Gali.¹⁶ However, Abkhaz and Georgian criminal organizations operated simultaneously in Gali to strip the farmers of profits from the mandarin and hazelnut crops.¹⁷

The Karabakh conflict is the most extreme of the four in its isolation of the two sides. Azerbaijanis and Armenians, including Karabakhis, may know and befriend one another if they live elsewhere, but Azerbaijanis and Karabakhis living at home see one another only through the sniper scopes of tactical rifles. The front lines are mined and impassable. Even in the absence of general hostilities, dozens are killed along the line of contact every year, many of them by snipers. The sides reject efforts to make the line of contact safer, fearing that would show “weakness” in the face of “enemy aggression”; it also reminds the populaces of each side that the “enemy” is still out there killing them and that the current leaders are defending them and exacting revenge.

There is no trade or visiting between Karabakh and Azerbaijan proper. Azerbaijan routinely rejects proposals for programs of cooperation. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has refused to negotiate with Nagornyy Karabakh authorities or to recognize any Karabakhis as interlocutors for negotiation except as members of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia. Azerbaijani officialdom, pointing to the early Armenian slogan “Miatsum” (unification), proffers the narrative that this is not a civil war of secession but an attempted annexation by Armenia with the cooperation of parts of the ethnic-Armenian population of the Karabakh region.¹⁸ This approach by Azerbaijan has been consistent through both the Popular Front government of 1992–1993 and the administrations of Heydar and Ilham Aliyev that succeeded it. The Karabakh authorities, too, have fostered the isolation of the two sides by driving out the entire Azerbaijani population from a wide buffer zone around Karabakh and refusing to allow any passage between Karabakhi- and Azerbaijani-

controlled territory.

Given that the more inclusive approaches of Moldova with Transdniestria and of Georgia with South Ossetia have produced no better path to political resolution, international negotiators have not tried to persuade the sides to change their approach. But the radical isolation of the two communities in the Karabakh conflict has had a significant effect: more than in the other conflicts, the antagonists have dehumanized one another. After ten years of unresolved conflict, they knew little of one another; now they know even less. Where once they knew each other's customs and thought processes, now they see only aliens; where once they shared a history, now they share nothing. This total estrangement removes incentives for a resolution of the conflict that would allow the resumption of neighborly relations.

Chapter Three

PEACEMAKING AT THE END OF THE SOVIET ERA (1988–1991)

The earliest attempts at peacemaking came from within the Soviet Union. It was soon clear, however, that the rapidly declining USSR had too many other problems, and Karabakh was left to local authorities, whose accommodations with nationalists on both sides exacerbated the conflict.

THE LAST SOVIET ATTEMPT: VOL'SKIY AND POLYANICHKO

On July 24, 1988, with the Karabakh violence spinning out of control, Communist Party of the Soviet Union General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev named Arkadiy Vol'skiy, a top Kremlin troubleshooter, to the newly created post of “Representative of the Politburo” to Karabakh, a euphemism for Kremlin imposition of direct rule. The appointment showed how seriously Gorbachev took the issue, but it can also be read as revealing how far Moscow was from having a real policy toward the conflict. Policymakers sometimes appoint a person to solve a problem for which they have no policy; the person then becomes the policy. Vol'skiy appears to have been given this task. Externally personable, affable, and charming, he was superbly suited to difficult negotiations. He had the ability to get along with anyone, even those strongly opposed to his own views. Occasionally, however, his core of steel showed through.¹

In the same year, however, Viktor Polyanichko was appointed second secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. The second secretary of a Union Republic was traditionally a Russian who represented the Kremlin and who often wielded more power than the typical first secretary. Heydar Aliyev had not been typical, and his

legacy was difficult to erase. He had packed the Azerbaijani bureaucracy with his supporters. Polyanichko, tasked with purging them, was tough and uncompromising. He had earned a fearsome reputation in Afghanistan, where he was reportedly responsible for the deportation of several villages. It is not clear when Polyanichko first started his involvement in the Karabakh dispute, but it is clear that his priorities and methods were not the same as Vol'skiy's.

Neither one, however, was able to stem the rising tide of inter-communal violence and the effects of the blockade that Azerbaijanis began to impose on Karabakh.² Vol'skiy's groups took two tacks. First, they tried to separate the sides to eliminate occasions for conflict. Second, they tried what might be termed an "orientalist" approach, complete with plans for ceremonies of reconciliation involving ritualized moves by elders. Both paths could succeed only if cooler heads prevailed on both sides, and that clearly did not happen. The violence ratcheted up after an incident on September 18, 1988, in which Azerbaijanis attacked a Soviet Army and Armenian convoy supplying Stepanakert via Karabakh's main road to the outside world through the Azerbaijani town of Ağdam. In revenge, Armenians attacked Azerbaijani villages.³ The Kremlin's responses were traditional: on December 11 the members of Armenia's Karabakh Committee were arrested and sent to prison in Moscow, on grounds that they had allegedly interfered with assistance shipments from Azerbaijan to the victims of the Spitak earthquake on December 7. Subsequently (and this was equally traditional), on January 12, 1989, Gorbachev changed Vol'skiy's bureaucratic title to "Head of the Special Administrative Committee for Nagornyy Karabakh."

It is unclear whether this change in title had any concrete meaning on the ground, but in 1989 the Kremlin was dealing with the collapse of its international position, including the beginning of the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, and with Gorbachev's attempt to salvage the USSR through a political reform agenda, including the formation of a new legislative body, a Congress of People's Deputies to be chosen in competitive multiparty elections. Little attention could be spared for the still-worsening crisis in Karabakh. On May 2 Hungary dismantled the fence on its border with Austria, opening the floodgates that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall six months later. On May 25 the Congress of

People's Deputies convened to choose a new Supreme Soviet. On May 31 the Karabakh Committee was released from prison without having gone to trial. Sources are silent on why they were released. Given the way things worked in the late Soviet period, this probably meant that, with high-level attention diverted to foreign problems, someone sympathetic was able to arrange their release by exerting influence behind the scenes.

As Gerard Libaridian makes clear, the Karabakh Committee, having renamed itself the Armenian National Movement, made the independence of the Armenian Republic its first priority, reasoning that independence would also further its goals for Karabakh.⁴ This was controversial in Armenian Diaspora politics, but when the movement's leader, Ter-Petrosyan, became head of Armenia's Supreme Soviet in August 1989, the Armenian struggles for national independence and Karabakh accelerated in tandem.

The Kremlin's response, once again, was to rearrange the deck chairs. On November 28 Vol'skiy's Special Administrative Committee was abolished and eventually replaced by an Organizational Committee for Nagornyy Karabakh headed by Viktor Polyanichko, whose brief appears to have been to suppress Armenian independence by using the Azerbaijanis, especially the Popular Front, against the Armenians of Azerbaijan. Just three days after Vol'skiy's committee was ordered dissolved, the Armenian Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution to unite Nagornyy Karabakh with Armenia. The Azerbaijani reaction spiraled out of the control of both Polyanichko and the Popular Front leadership. January 13, 1990, saw the beginning of a week of murderous violence against Armenians in Baku. A state of emergency declared on January 15 had no effect. Finally, on January 20 the Soviet Army invaded the city by *coup de main*, firing indiscriminately to intimidate the demonstrators and rioters and ultimately killing 130 Azerbaijanis.⁵

Abdurrahman Vazirov was fired as Azerbaijani Communist Party first secretary (and Polyanichko's nominal superior). Vazirov, like his predecessor Baghirov, had been born in Karabakh. They were appointed because, in the clan politics of Azerbaijan, the Karabakhis were enemies of Heydar Aliyev and his Nakhchivani clan. Faced with a more pressing problem of control, the Kremlin tried something

different, appointing Ayaz Mutalibov as first secretary. Mutalibov was from an entirely different clan, the Tat/Talysh. The Tats and Talysh are Persian speakers.⁶ The Tats inhabit the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains through to the Absheron Peninsula (where Baku is located), and the Talysh are from the Lenkaran region on the Iranian border in the south of Azerbaijan. As non-Turkic peoples who formed minorities in Azerbaijan, it was assumed they would be less susceptible to both Azerbaijani nationalism and its attendant independence movement.

In a strange postscript, representatives of the Azerbaijan Popular Front and the Armenian National Movement, both still in opposition in their respective republics, met in Riga, Latvia, the month after the Baku massacres. The host was the Baltic Council, which was holding a meeting of national independence movements, on the margins of which the Azerbaijanis and Armenians met to discuss Karabakh. This meeting can be considered the beginning of outside mediation efforts to resolve the conflict. The published statement of a participant, Hambartsum Galstyan, shows that the participants of the two sides developed a remarkable rapport with one another.⁷ During the meetings, however, word came from Yerevan that members of the Popular Front were forcing Armenian villagers out of their homes in the Getashen region (north of the NKAO), and it became politically impossible for the Armenian side to carry on with the talks. In the event, elections later that year brought the Armenian National Movement to majority representation in the Armenian Parliament, with Ter-Petrosyan as Parliament's chair, while Mutalibov successfully shut out the Popular Front in Azerbaijan. Continuation of the talks on the basis of equals in opposition became impossible.

Throughout 1990, as the violence in Karabakh worsened, the power of Moscow to intervene declined as the Soviet Union entered its death throes. National independence movements sprang up in many Union Republics and in smaller autonomies, leading Gorbachev to try to save the USSR through a New Union Treaty. Boris Yeltsin gained increasing stature as an alternative to the Soviet leadership. The Eastern and Central European democratic revolutions of 1989 completed their rejection of the Soviet-dominated past, leaving the USSR standing alone. Moscow had little attention to spare for distant

provinces, and both the North and South Caucasus were left to their own devices. The USSR made no further efforts at mediation.

With the collapse of discipline in the Soviet Army, weapons disappeared from its stores in the region and wound up in the hands of fighters.⁸ Later, Soviet troops began to be used as mercenaries. By 1992 and possibly before, Soviet (by then Russian) troops still stationed in Shusha would fire artillery rounds on Stepanakert, and those stationed in Stepanakert would fire on Shusha.⁹ And by June–July 1992 uniformed Russian officers populated the field headquarters of the Azerbaijani commander in an offensive on the Karabakh town of Mardakert.¹⁰ That Russian-led offensive was reportedly halted by another Russian armed force fighting on the Armenian side.¹¹

With Moscow out of the game, authority devolved to local actors. Polyanichko and Mutalibov attempted, unsuccessfully, to use force to resolve the issue, culminating in “Operation Ring” of May 1991. Both the Armenian and Azerbaijani fighters had become better organized, and in Operation Ring the Azerbaijani OMON (Ministry of Internal Affairs special forces) attempted to “drain the pond” in which the Armenian *fedayin* swam by deporting Armenian villagers from the Shaumyan region north of Karabakh.¹² Shaumyan remained in Azerbaijani hands from that time forward, but few *fedayin* were detained. Scott Horton, an American lawyer, visited Baku and Karabakh during Operation Ring as part of a delegation from the Sakharov International Congress and spent time with Polyanichko, who talked of the similar operations he had overseen in Afghanistan with the specific aim of “sowing discord among the enemy.”¹³ Horton got the strong impression that Polyanichko’s aim was to keep the tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis so high, and the two republics so dependent on Moscow to control those tensions, that they would shelve any drive toward independence. Clearly, however, such an aim would conflict with attempts at reconciliation between the two nationalities over Karabakh.

To review attempts to resolve the conflict during the Soviet era, we can say the following: though the Soviet Union was still strong when the crisis first erupted, Moscow did not recognize that the Armenians and soon the Azerbaijanis no longer feared the Soviet state and that they were willing to undertake acts such as riots and demonstrations

that until then Soviets had not dared. Soviet attempts to contain the crisis swung wildly between the repressive and the conciliatory until Moscow itself was too weak—and too diverted by other crises—to make further significant efforts. Left to their own devices, the provincial governments tried to preserve themselves by making accommodations with their nationalists, worsening the conflict.

Those tendencies increased sharply after the Moscow “Putsch” coup attempt of August 19–21, 1991. Just two weeks after the Putsch began, on September 2, the Karabakh Armenians unilaterally established a “Republic of Nagornyy Karabakh.”

Chapter Four

THE BEGINNINGS OF INTERNATIONAL PEACEMAKING (1991-1994)

When the Soviet Union left the stage, other actors appeared: first Soviet successor states such as Russia and Kazakhstan; then regional actors such as Iran and Turkey; and finally the OSCE as the principal international mediator, whose presence did not, however, prevent others, especially Russia, from trying to go it alone. The division of Soviet military assets among the successor republics led to a sharp rise in the intensity of the conflict and its effects on the civilian population.

ZHELEZNOVODSK: TRANSITIONAL MEDIATION

Just three weeks after the Putsch came an attempt at resolving the conflict that marks the real transition from Soviet to international mediation. The Zheleznovodsk agreement, as it became known, was in one sense a continuation of Soviet attempts at peacemaking in that it involved the leaders of the emerging Soviet successor states and made use of existing Soviet resources, including the projected use of Soviet military resources to keep the peace. In another sense, though, it resembled later international attempts at mediation in that the leaders who signed Zheleznovodsk approached one another as equal heads of sovereign states between whom one might mediate, but not dictate.

From September 20 to 23, 1991, the Russian and Kazakh leaders Boris Yeltsin and Nursultan Nazarbayev traveled to Armenia and Azerbaijan, including Nagornyy Karabakh. On September 23 Yeltsin and Nazarbayev convened the local leaders—including not only Ter-Petrosyan and Mutalibov but also Karabakh leaders such as Robert

Kocharyan—in Zheleznovodsk, in the nearby Russian North Caucasus. With assurances by Ter-Petrosyan that Armenia had no claims on Azerbaijani territory, the four leaders of Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan signed a declaration mandating that:

- By January 1, 1992, all Armenian and Azerbaijani “unconstitutional enactments” would be repealed and the authority of all “legitimate bodies of power” would be recognized;¹
- Also by January 1, all armed forces aside from Soviet units must be withdrawn from the “conflict zone” (not further defined);
- A joint Russian-Kazakh “provisional working group” would “take measures to normalize the situation”;²
- Hostages would be released and internally displaced persons would return home in safety, and transport and communications links would be restored; and
- Armenian and Azerbaijani delegations would conduct bilateral negotiations with one another. As a prerequisite, Armenia and Azerbaijan would each sign bilateral treaties with Russia and Kazakhstan, thereby recognizing one another as sovereign states—and effectively ignoring the existence of the Soviet Union.

It is clear that both Russia and Kazakhstan viewed the mediation effort as part of the process of asserting the supremacy of the individual republics over the Soviet Union, which still officially existed, though by then none doubted that its days were numbered. An accomplishment in international mediation would have been a tremendous coup for the prestige of both Russia and Kazakhstan. But the effort was also premature in that neither yet had the resources for serious follow-up, though Kazakh representatives remained in the region until well into 1992. Especially damaging was the fact that neither Yeltsin nor Nazarbayev had any real control of the Soviet military units left in the region who, left to their own devices (including financially), increasingly used their capabilities to generate income as mercenaries, arms dealers, contraband middlemen, and providers of logistics.³

Events on the ground doomed the initiative. On November 20,

1991, before the military withdrawal and disbandment clauses were to take effect, an Azerbaijani helicopter crashed over Martuni district in Karabakh, killing the Russian, Kazakh, and Azerbaijani officials on board. Azerbaijan immediately resumed military operations.

As they made this attempt at a settlement, the four Union Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Kazakhstan were acting equally as independent nations, though formally they were in different stages of the process of independence. Armenia had declared its independence on August 23, 1990, and elected Ter-Petrosyan (speaker of the Supreme Soviet) president on October 16, 1991. Azerbaijan's leader, Communist Party First Secretary Mutalibov, had issued a statement in support of the August 1991 Putsch, but in its wake he was elected president on September 8, and Azerbaijan's National Assembly adopted a declaration of independence on October 18. Russia never issued a declaration of independence, but on June 12, 1990, it adopted a declaration of state sovereignty and the supremacy of its laws over Soviet legislation. One year later Yeltsin was elected president in a popular vote. However, Russia did not formally withdraw from the Soviet Union until December 12, 1991. Nor did Kazakhstan try to withdraw from the USSR. Kazakh Communist Party First Secretary Nazarbayev changed his title to president on April 24, 1990, by vote of the Supreme Soviet, and was the sole candidate for the post in a popular vote on December 1, 1991.

The question of independence for all the Union Republics was settled by the dissolution of the Soviet Union with the Belavezha Accords of December 8, 1991, signed by the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus; and the subsequent Alma-Ata Declaration of December 21. Alma-Ata was signed by eleven former Union Republics (minus the Baltics, whose independence had achieved international recognition earlier, and Georgia, which was in the midst of a revolution). It is of prime relevance to the Karabakh conflict that the Alma-Ata Declaration, which founded the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), recognized the Union Republics as independent sovereign states within their 1991 borders, and the signatories committed to respect each other's territorial integrity and the inviolability of those borders. The new republics did *not* recognize as independent states any of the subdivisions of the Union Republics—

ASSRs, Autonomous Oblasts (including Nagornyy Karabakh), or other units—that had declared independence or otherwise claimed independent sovereignty and statehood. By signing the Alma-Ata Declaration, Armenia, despite the earlier decision of its Supreme Soviet, recognized the Republic of Azerbaijan and its Soviet-era borders and did not recognize Nagornyy Karabakh, nor has it done so to the present day.⁴

Of equal importance to the Karabakh conflict, the international community followed this precedent. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the same new countries that had signed Alma-Ata (plus Georgia) received the formal recognition of the international community, with establishment of diplomatic relations and accession to international organizations. Thus the international community, far from imposing an arbitrary delineation of statehood on the elements of the former USSR or willfully denying legitimate claims to independence put forward by various national minorities, was following the precedent established by the newly independent republics of the CIS themselves. On this basis, most of the newly independent states joined the Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe (CSCE) on January 30, 1992, and the United Nations on March 2.⁵

Though Azerbaijan and Armenia were recognized internationally as independent and treated as fully formed states, it is important to bear in mind that in reality they were not yet real states—none of the countries of the former Soviet Union were, perhaps not even Russia. These were polities in the process of becoming states, and which type of state they would become was not yet set or predictable. For both Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Karabakh conflict played a major role in transforming each country into a state and in determining what kind of state that would be.

THE KHOJALY MASSACRE AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

Less than a month after Armenia and Azerbaijan joined the CSCE, and before they had even joined the UN, an event occurred that focused the international community on the need for international efforts to resolve the Karabakh conflict. As part of a campaign to clear

Azerbaijanis from villages near Stepanakert and gain unimpeded access to the outside, on February 25 and 26, 1992, Karabakh Armenian forces attacked the village of Khojaly, site of the airport servicing Stepanakert. The civilian population, accompanied by a few Azerbaijani police, attempted to flee but was massacred by Armenian fighters. The Azerbaijani official death count of civilian villagers was 485.⁶ In addition, an unknown number of Khojaly villagers were taken prisoner, some held hostage for months for use in projected prisoner exchanges.⁷ The disaster had immediate political repercussions for Azerbaijan. President Mutalibov initially tried to deflect blame for the massacre but was forced to resign on March 6. An interim replacement was named: Yaqub Mammadov, rector of the state university medical school, widely known as “Dollar Yaqub” because of his reputation for graft.⁸

Mammadov had no control over the Azerbaijani militias, which were either independent or nominally loyal to the Popular Front. These immediately stepped up attacks against Armenian villages, and Armenians reciprocated. Artillery bombardments were common. Azerbaijani-controlled Shusha overlooked Karabakh Armenian-controlled Stepanakert and thereby provided a tactical advantage in the artillery exchanges. Further east, Azerbaijani-controlled Ağdam lay in the plains, overlooked by Armenian-controlled Askeran and Nakhchivannik; the advantage here lay with Armenian gunners.

Azerbaijani militias held Armenians living in Azerbaijan as prisoners to exchange for hostages taken by the Armenians at Khojaly. Some of these were previously captured militants; many were convicts who had been serving time in prison in Azerbaijan (some for many years and for a wide variety of crimes) and were for that reason unable to leave during the de facto population exchanges. One prisoner had in essence been bought by the militias from a prison in Russia. The militias kidnapped some private citizens, at least one of them culturally prominent and well known to the Baku intelligentsia.⁹

Amid such toxic deterioration, little could be done in the way of mediation. However, the international community nonetheless began its involvement. From March 16 to 21 a UN high-level delegation visited Armenia and Azerbaijan to evaluate possible UN involvement in mediating the conflict, but the UN diplomats appear to have

recommended against it. Another delegation visited in May, by which time others had already claimed precedence: on March 24 the First Additional Meeting of the CSCE Council, pushed, *inter alia*, by activist US Representative John Maresca, decided to convene a peace conference at Minsk, marking the beginning of the Minsk Process. But before the CSCE could get started, an unexpected player made an entrance: Iran.

Iran had tremendous interests in both Azerbaijan and Armenia, and equally large assets to bring to bear in aid of a mediation effort. Iran is home to large populations of ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis, and it has considerable trade and historical links with both countries.¹⁰ Starting in 1514, the border between the Ottoman Turkish lands and the Iranian dynasties (Safavid through Qajar) seesawed back and forth through present-day Armenia and Azerbaijan before Russia lopped off both during its expansion into the Caucasus at the expense of both Turkey and Iran.

Iran and Armenia were drawn together in 1992 both by trade (Armenia's border with Iran is possibly its least problematic) and by a shared interest in countering what both saw as "Pan-Turanism," which played a large role in Armenian threat perceptions.¹¹ As the Soviet Union was collapsing, Turkish ultranationalists and pan-Turkists poured into the Caucasus and Central Asia, convinced that the ex-Soviet Turkic peoples were longing to look up to Republican Turks as long-lost big brothers, and that with minimal investment Turks would gain both economic and political predominance throughout the region. Reality ultimately proved these hopes delusional, but in 1991–1993 Armenians and Iranians could be forgiven for thinking that such triumphalist Turks were a threat.

In Azerbaijan, Turkey's influence was a reality, but where Azerbaijanis saw ethnic kin who could link them to the outside world, Iranians saw a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a US proxy, meddling in a region on Iran's borders. Iran approached Azerbaijan as the prize in a competition with Turkey and, aside from ethnic and linguistic kinship, Iran played on the shared Shia branch of Islam. Iran supported mosques, clerics, and religious bookshops in Azerbaijan, where during the Soviet era religion had mostly either been subverted for state purposes or simply forgotten.¹²

Iran saw its potential mediation in the conflict as a way of cementing friendships and other ties, reducing Western influence, and enhancing its own stature abroad, all helping it to break out of international isolation. In early May 1992 Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani invited the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Yaqub Mammadov, to Tehran for negotiations. On May 7 the three leaders met and agreed on a "Joint Statement of the Heads of State in Tehran," usually known as the Tehran Communiqué. The communiqué was long on preambular sentiments and short on operative clauses. It mandated a cease-fire and reopening of communications and transportation links within a week of the arrival in the region of Mahmud Vaezi, Rafsanjani's special representative. Once these steps were effected, observers from the Islamic Republic, the CSCE, and others were to be deployed.¹³

But the next day, May 8, 1992, Armenian forces launched an attack on the Azerbaijani stronghold of Shusha and captured it. Nine days later, Armenian forces captured Lachin, opening the road between Nagorny Karabakh and Armenia. The proposed Iranian cease-fire never went into effect, and Iran has been absent from subsequent mediation, which coalesced into a process centered on the CSCE (later the OSCE), of which Iran is not a member.

THE POPULAR FRONT TAKES POWER IN BAKU

The fall of Shusha produced an earthquake in Azerbaijani society. Former president Mutalibov, who had resigned in disgrace after the Khojaly massacre and had fled to Russia, suddenly reappeared in Baku with some henchmen on May 14 and announced in Parliament that he was taking charge. "If the times demand a dictator," he declared, "I will be that dictator."¹⁴ The next day, the Azerbaijan Popular Front launched a counter-coup that drove Mutalibov back to Russia with some demonstrative fire from militias commanded by the Popular Front's strongman (later Minister of Internal Affairs) Iskandar Hamidov. With the Popular Front in control, Isa Gambar, one of its leaders in Parliament, was named interim president, and new presidential elections were scheduled for June 7. Popular Front leader Abulfaz Elchibey was reluctant to run, warning publicly that "if you hold elections now, the leader you choose will last for no more than a year" (he was exactly right). But Elchibey's supporters persuaded him



Abulfaz Elchibey, president of Azerbaijan, 1992–1993 (photo by author).

to run anyway, and he was duly elected and inaugurated into the middle of a war that he did not want.

On May 15, the same day that the Popular Front was taking power in Baku, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev met in Tashkent with representatives of the former Soviet republics to divide Soviet Army assets. The massive amounts of Soviet heavy weaponry (including armor) that both sides received soon led to a quantum jump in the intensity of the fighting, with disastrous results for the civilian populations. Azerbaijan received a large part of the heavy weaponry of the Soviet Fourth Army based in Ganje, or rather of that part of it which had not already been sold on the black market. The key interface between the ex-Soviet, now Russian, military and the new Azerbaijani leadership was a black marketeer named Surat Huseynov who had helped bankroll the Popular Front and had raised his own militia in Ganje, armed thanks to his close relations with the Russians.

The new Azerbaijani commander in the region, Najmaddin Sadiqov, an ethnic Azerbaijani, was also from Russia. And during Operation Goranboy, an assault against the Mardakert region in the northern part of Nagorny Karabakh launched on June 12, his field

headquarters was populated by Russian officers in Russian Federation uniforms.¹⁵ The offensive went on to capture Mardakert on July 4 and much of northern Nagornyy Karabakh before being stopped by Armenian forces, which were reportedly reinforced by other Russian military units.¹⁶ Armenian forces eventually reconquered much of what the Azerbaijanis had won.

Given the large Russian role on both sides and the stature in the Caucasus of Russian Defense Minister Grachev, who had friends throughout the militaries of the region, it was no surprise that he should emerge as the next would-be mediator. In September 1992, Grachev summoned Azerbaijani Defense Minister Rahim Gaziyeu and his Armenian counterpart, Vazgen Sargsyan, to Sochi, Russia, and on September 19 got them to agree to a two-month cease-fire.

We do not know much about the specifics of the cease-fire, which was in essence a deal among the three defense ministers, all of them crafty, secretive strongmen. On May 5 the Russian president had created the "Mediation Mission of Russia for Nagornyy Karabakh."¹⁷ The head of the mission was Ambassador Vladimir Kazimirov, who had served much of his career in Africa.¹⁸ Kazimirov reportedly tried to attend the Sochi meeting but was shooed away by Grachev and the Russian military. Kazimirov learned his lesson and from then on stayed closer to the Russian military than to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The cease-fire seems to have lasted longer than previous attempts, but it was unconnected to any effort to find a political solution and ultimately failed when Grachev's attention was diverted elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the CSCE attempts to mediate were going nowhere. The Czechoslovak chairman-in-office of the CSCE had named Italian Senator Mario Raffaelli to chair the future Minsk Conference. Raffaelli had been the Italian government's chief negotiator in the 1992 talks that led to the Rome Accords to resolve the civil war in Mozambique. Raffaelli tried to get the sides to talk in Rome to set up the Minsk Conference but in four rounds made no headway. Raffaelli seems to have thought that information never leaked between the sides, because he explained to diplomats in Baku, on a visit in late 1992, that he "emphasized territorial integrity to the authorities in Baku and national self-determination to the Armenian authorities."¹⁹ Such an

approach had little chance of increasing confidence between the sides, especially in competition with Grachev's mediation. One side or the other always found a reason not to meet in Minsk and set withdrawals by the other side as a precondition for holding further meetings.

THE LEGACY OF 1992

The year 1992 ended with both Russian and international mediation in tatters, though the war was in a deceptive winter lull, with the Armenians using the cease-fire to organize their military, while the Azerbaijani military remained a collection of militias. But we should not pass on from 1992 without discussing the increasing engagement of Armenia and Azerbaijan, now formally independent, with the wider world. Over the course of 1992, embassies opened in both Yerevan and Baku. Oil executives and technicians, who had been dipping their toes into the Caspian, now descended on Baku en masse. Technical assistance to both countries began under the American FREEDOM Support Act, which was originally designed to avert hunger and disease in case the Soviet economy collapsed completely during the winter of 1991–1992. While the presence of such programs and the hordes of Western consultants, many of dubious qualification other than their willingness to go, were just a drop in the bucket for the culture and direction of a big country like Russia, they quickly became an overwhelming presence in Armenia. Their effects on Azerbaijan were reduced after October 24, 1992, when the US Congress, lobbied heavily by Armenian-Americans, adopted Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, which forbade most assistance to Azerbaijan. The American and EU presence, plus the rapid influx of Western cinema, opened up Armenia and Azerbaijan to a wide range of cultural and economic influences that had been missing for the better part of two centuries.

The winter of 1992–1993 was difficult for both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Western press tended to focus on stories about Armenia, such as lurid tales of starving feral dogs attacking humans in Yerevan, but in fact rural Azerbaijan suffered as well; for example, forests in both Armenia and Azerbaijan were decimated by illicit logging to keep families from freezing. The hardship affected the two countries differently. There was a certain solidarity in Armenia, a feeling that afflictions often beset the Armenian nation, and through

unity they are overcome. In Azerbaijan, however, the people turned away from the government. The Popular Front had come in promising democracy, but the people saw only hardship, and the popular perception of democratic government suffered accordingly.

The most immediate effects in Azerbaijan were on the conduct of the war. In February 1993 Surat Huseynov, who had bankrolled much of the war and the Popular Front, pulled his units out of the Mardakert region of Karabakh, which they had conquered with Russian support the previous summer. Huseynov and his people retreated to Ganja and mutinied; that is, they refused to accept orders from Baku, though Baku was not in a position to do anything about it. Armenian forces took advantage of the standoff to retake Mardakert.

CSCE AGAINST THE TIDE OF WAR

In the latter part of March 1993 CSCE negotiations finally started. Having failed to move the parties in his Rome talks, Raffaelli designated the Italian permanent representative to the CSCE, the accomplished professional diplomat Mario Sica, to convene "5+1" talks with the participation of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey, and the United States (the "5") under the aegis of the CSCE (the "1"). The talks took place in Geneva. Gerard Libaridian represented Armenia. Azerbaijan sent its foreign minister, Tofiq Qasimov, along with his two young assistants: Tofiq Zulfuqarov, who had worked on the Vol'skiy committee (and would later serve a term as foreign minister); and Araz Azimov, who had joined the ministry as a translator just a year or so earlier. Azimov mastered the security portfolio he was given so well that he remains deputy foreign minister to this day.

Sica took the group through a document providing for a cease-fire and negotiations on a final status for Nagornyy Karabakh. In several days of talks the group went through the entire document, and though much text remained bracketed, there actually appeared to be the kernel of a real settlement. The negotiators decided on a recess to let the Armenians and Azerbaijanis consult back in their capitals on bracketed text and to reconvene a week later.

On March 27, however, while the talks were in recess, Armenian



Vladimir Kazimirov (center), head of Mediation Mission of the Russian Federation for Nagorny Karabakh, 1992–1996; Tofiq Qasimov (left), foreign minister of Azerbaijan, 1992–1993; Candan Azer (right), Turkish foreign ministry director general for the Caucasus (photo by author).

forces invaded and captured the Azerbaijani province of Kelbajar, located between Karabakh and Armenia north of Lachin. The invasion came from the Republic of Armenia, not only from Karabakh (it is unclear whether any Republic of Armenia forces participated in the invasion, or whether all the forces invading from Armenia were Karabakhis who had staged from there). The inhabitants of Kelbajar, mostly Azerbaijani-speaking Kurds, fled or were expelled. The talks reconvened in Geneva in early April but immediately broke down.

The invasion and occupation of Kelbajar led the United Nations Security Council to adopt Resolution 822 on April 30.²⁰ While reaffirming support for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, the inviolability of international borders, and the inadmissibility of the use of force for territorial acquisition (i.e., the principles that support the Azerbaijani side of the case), the resolution nowhere supports the principle of the self-determination of peoples, on which Armenia regularly insists. That is, the invasion was considered so blatant that the UN Security Council, including two of the three

powers that tried to mediate in March, felt it was no longer possible to give the Armenian side a counterweight. The operative paragraphs of the resolution demanded a cease-fire and withdrawal of occupying forces from Kelbajar and “other recently occupied areas of Azerbaijan” and the reopening of all communications and transportation links.

The United States, Russia, and Turkey made an effort to revive the negotiations despite the new facts on the ground. In late April they met in Moscow and drew up an interim peace plan that they presented to the parties on May 3.²¹ The plan called for the following:

- Complete withdrawal of the forces occupying Kelbajar;
- A two-month cease-fire and cessation of military activities (a “standstill” to prevent Azerbaijan from redeploying its forces to Kelbajar); and
- Preliminary negotiations in the “five” format (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey, United States) leading to resumption of the interrupted CSCE-led negotiations to prepare for a comprehensive peace settlement.

The CSCE was prepared to send 600 monitors to ensure that Kelbajar remained clear of military forces during the subsequent negotiations, even procuring yellow berets for the monitors to wear. However, the next set of negotiations never took place. Though the Popular Front government of Azerbaijan, desperate to stop the Armenian advance, initially accepted the trilateral proposal (while Armenia demanded more guarantees, stalling while the international mood was against it), the occupation of Kelbajar had already dealt a fatal blow to the Popular Front and to Azerbaijan’s fragile political stability. Negotiations were lost to Azerbaijan’s internal conflicts.

Surat Huseynov, who by then was supplementing his Russian support with a lucrative trade in smuggling narcotics of Afghan origin through Azerbaijan to the West, began expanding the territory he controlled. The demoralized Azerbaijani forces were unable to stop him. Throughout May he advanced eastward from his base in Ganje and on June 4 defeated an Azerbaijani army force that tried to halt his advance. Soon after, his forces surrounded Baku. On June 15 Elchibey and the Popular Front were forced to elect Heydar Aliyev chair of

Parliament in an effort to stave off the coup. Aliyev hijacked Huseynov's coup, using it to force Elchibey to flee, seize power as acting president on June 24, jail the remaining Popular Front officials, and officially assume the presidency himself on October 3. Aliyev made Huseynov prime minister on June 30 but purged him in October of the following year, forcing Huseynov to flee to Moscow.

THE MANY FACES OF HEYDAR ALIYEV

The political development of Azerbaijan is, for the most part, beyond the parameters of this paper. However, from this point forward the peace process took on the shape Heydar Aliyev gave it. Aliyev's overriding fixation was the use and preservation of his personal power. As such, his primary concern regarding Karabakh was to end the war before it destroyed him as it had destroyed the four preceding Azerbaijani leaders. His only criterion for its resolution was that a settlement must not endanger his grip on power. Because of this utilitarian and pragmatic view, Aliyev was able to make agreements with the Armenian side that no Azerbaijani before or since has been in a position to contemplate.

While nationalism came late to the Azerbaijanis, the legacy of Heydar Aliyev came early and remains to this day. Azerbaijanis feared Aliyev, but they also respected him for the rank he achieved and the clout he possessed in the Soviet system. As one put it, "The Russians stole everything from us. But at least he got some of it back."²² Highlighting some parts of Aliyev's biography is vital to understanding his motivations and methods.

Aliyev was born in Armenia and, rising through the ranks of the KGB, found it important to remain on good terms with Armenians. If Aliyev had ethnic prejudices, he never showed them. He remained close, for example, to his protégé Ashot Manucharyan, who became Ter-Petrosyan's state security chief. He had clan prejudices, however, including an animus against the rival Karabakh Azerbaijani clan.

Aliyev was a master of cadre policy, stuffing the ranks of all institutions with his supporters. One successor, ordered to purge Aliyev's loyalists, complained that after removing a layer of Aliyev supporters and replacing them with their enemies, he found that these, too, were secret Aliyev supporters—"And he has seven layers of



Heydar Aliyev, president of Azerbaijan, 1993–2003 (photo by author).

supporters.”²³

Aliyev grew up in the KGB, and its culture of elaborate tactical operations infused his methods, as did its innate suspicion of the other pillars of the Soviet state: the Communist Party, the military, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In true KGB fashion, Aliyev was able to hide his fingerprints by shuffling off the visible responsibility on his subordinates. During peace negotiations a sharp insider was asked why Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Hasan Hasanov was so obstructive. He replied that Hasanov knew well that if there were ever a deal, Aliyev would never sign it himself, but would order Hasanov to sign it—and Hasanov was trying to put off “that black day” as long as possible.²⁴ Aliyev likewise off-loaded responsibility onto international mediators, berating Minsk Group negotiators for “their” failure to resolve the conflict, as if Aliyev himself were a mere bystander on issues of war and peace in Azerbaijan.

Aliyev derived his power from his ability to evoke both fear and awe in those he ruled. When he reappeared in Parliament in Baku on June 15, 1993, he told Azerbaijan’s elite that he knew most of the faces in the hall. “Some of you have been good to me,” he said, and for that he was grateful. “Some of you have not been so good to me,” he

continued, “but don’t worry. I am not a vengeful man.” The entire room let out a low moan, as if punched in the solar plexus. Clearly, Aliyev was the most vengeful man they knew.²⁵ This personal fearsomeness allowed him to deal with Russia in a way that was unique among his counterparts elsewhere in the post-Soviet states, most of whom were either cowed by Russia, determined viscerally to reject it, or confined to the path of ingratiation and manipulation of the center that they had pursued as provincials in Soviet times. Having shared in running the Soviet empire, he neither feared Moscow nor held its post-Soviet rulers in awe.

Ultimately, Aliyev was to reach agreement on two peace plans, more than any other leader. Why was he able to do this? The first reason was pragmatism. Aliyev had no particular sentiment for Karabakh. As he said to the US ambassador in February 1993, “Even when we had Karabakh, it was never ours.”²⁶ For Aliyev, the criterion for whether an action was good or bad was not ideology; rather, it was whether it would add to his power or detract from it. Second, he had the power and authority to make the Azerbaijanis accept his decisions. He also had luck, because the Azerbaijani populace was politically accepting of his leadership, the more so after the failure of the Popular Front’s version of democracy. And unlike the Armenians, he did not have to worry about a politically charged diaspora. Furthermore, oil and gas wealth could cushion a blow to national pride.

THE ROLE OF TURKEY

Aside from bringing Aliyev to power, the most significant effect of the Kelbajar invasion was to alienate Turkey from the peace process. Prior to April 1993 Turkey had indeed favored Azerbaijan as a Turkic state that appeared to be open to Turkish influence and business. At the same time, however, Turkey was moving to create peace on its eastern border through quiet overtures to Armenia, necessarily low-key when dealing with a country whose territorial claims extended to putting Turkish territory, in the form of Mount Ararat, on its national seal. But Turkey was gradually opening up to Armenians: by January 1993 the weekly Kars-Gyumri (formerly Leninakan) train, which had been in operation since 1951, was used every week by hundreds of Armenian traders, who received Turkish visas at the border and entered Turkey to exchange Soviet-era goods such as blankets for the consumer items

that were in such desperately short supply in Armenia. The road border remained closed, but Turkey had allocated money in its 1993 budget to build infrastructure and open it completely.²⁷

After the Kelbajar offensive, however, Turkey halted the train run and shelved all plans to open the road border, as improving relations with Armenia became politically untenable.²⁸ On April 17 Turkey's President Turgut Özal died shortly after visiting Azerbaijan. He was succeeded on May 16 by Süleyman Demirel, who soon developed a close relationship with Aliyev. For the rest of Demirel's tenure as president, until 2000, he in essence gave Aliyev a veto over Turkish rapprochement with Armenia.

The Turkey factor was also significant to the military balance of power in the Caucasus. By 1993 it was becoming clear—and with the beginning of Russia's Chechen War in December 1994 it became painfully obvious—that Russia no longer possessed the strongest military in the Caucasus region; Turkey did. Turkey had always stationed large numbers of troops in eastern Anatolia; this was not only to counter a potential Soviet invasion but also to fight Kurdish separatists. The size of the Turkish deployment did not decrease when the Soviet threat faded, and the well-trained and well-equipped Turkish army outclassed any other body of troops in the region at the time. The Kelbajar campaign, the resultant Azerbaijani political turmoil, and the subsequent Armenian military gains raised the specter of Turkish intervention for both Yerevan and Moscow. (It is worth adding that Turkish President Demirel rebuffed all suggestions that Turkey intervene, believing it might take a day to get in but twenty years to get out.)²⁹

Partly to keep Turkey out, and partly because of the political turmoil in Azerbaijan, Russia accelerated its competing unilateral channel of mediation between the two sides. Vladimir Kazimirov recounts in his memoirs the establishment of a fax link to facilitate rapid communication between the sides through his office.³⁰ Kazimirov takes credit for cessation of artillery bombardments between Stepanakert and Ağdam in June. On July 2, 1993, Kazimirov proposed widening the artillery cease-fire, but two days later Armenian forces launched an attack against Ağdam. From this time onward Kazimirov played a dual role: as Russia's representative to the

Minsk Group and as the negotiator for Russia's independent mediation efforts. At times these two roles had clearly conflicting interests. Two conflicting channels of mediation were soon in full evidence, a condition that made the conflict an arena for geopolitical rivalry and encouraged forum-shopping by the parties.

THE ROAD TO BISHKEK

The new rulers of Azerbaijan were faced with a deteriorating military situation. Huseynov's rebellion had left the army leaderless and demoralized. Armenian forces quickly took advantage of the situation. Having attacked Ağdam, just east of Nagornyy Karabakh, on July 4, they captured the city by the end of the month. Ağdam, in lowland Karabakh, had been the major entrepôt and communications hub for the Karabakh region.³¹

The UN Security Council responded on July 29 by adopting Resolution 853, following a report two days earlier by the chair of the CSCE Minsk Group.³² Resolution 853 condemned the seizure of Ağdam and the attendant civilian suffering, and it called for cooperation in humanitarian relief. It demanded yet again a cessation of hostilities and the complete withdrawal of "occupying forces" from Ağdam and "all other recently occupied areas of the Azerbaijani Republic" and the reopening of communications and transportation links. It endorsed CSCE negotiations and plans for a CSCE cease-fire monitoring mission. It welcomed the acceptance by the parties of the "Timetable of Urgent Steps" developed by the Minsk Group for the implementation of Resolution 822. It also called on Armenia to exert its influence on the Karabakh authorities to abide by Resolution 822 and accept the CSCE peace plans. It called on all states to refrain from supplying munitions and weapons that might exacerbate the conflict.

Resolution 853 had no perceptible effect. The Armenians continued to press their military advantage and by the end of August occupied the Füzuli, Jebrayil, and Qubadli districts, which lie south and east of Karabakh, between the NKAO and the Iranian border. The population fled to refugee camps, worsening the crisis. By the time Heydar Aliyev was formally elected president of Azerbaijan on October 3, nothing was left of western and southwestern Azerbaijan (not including the Nakhchivan exclave³³) except the poor and

mountainous district of Zangelan.

In response, the Minsk Group, still headed by Mario Raffaelli, on September 28 adopted an “Adjusted Timetable of Urgent Steps to Implement Security Council Resolutions 822 (1993) and 853 (1993).” The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 874 on October 14, welcoming this timetable and the CSCE efforts.³⁴ The council reiterated the demands made in the previous two resolutions (for a cease-fire, withdrawal, etc.); called on all states not to interfere in a way that might widen the conflict (i.e., by implication, the problem was not just the supply of weapons, as addressed in Resolution 853, but also active outside support, although dropping explicit reference to weapons might be seen as accepting the inevitability of outside weapons sales); and called for sending a UN delegation to the Minsk Conference, which the council fervently hoped would be convened soon. The resolution takes note of “high-level meetings” that took place in Moscow on October 8. Curiously, such meetings are not mentioned in the memoirs of Vladimir Kazimirov, the Russian negotiator. Rather, Heydar Aliyev, still serving as acting president, met Karabakh leader Robert Kocharyan in Moscow on September 25, though with no immediate results.³⁵

Once again, the Security Council resolution had no effect. In October Armenian forces occupied Zangelan and pushed east from Füzuli to Horadiz. They now controlled a buffer zone one province deep east of Karabakh, as far as the Iranian border to the south, and west to the Armenian border. High mountains to the north protected Karabakh and the territory it occupied. All of the Azerbaijani inhabitants of the occupied regions had been expelled or had fled. By this time hundreds of thousands of displaced Azerbaijanis had taken shelter in squalid refugee camps further east in Azerbaijan. The Minsk Group duly met in Vienna from November 2 to 8 and revised yet again its “Timetable of Urgent Steps,” and the Security Council responded with yet another resolution: 884, adopted on November 12.³⁶ The resolution condemned the new occupations and reiterated the Security Council’s points in previous resolutions.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijani forces were training and reinforcing. When Surat Huseynov entered Baku in June, the first person he called on was Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Rovshan Javadov. Javadov

and his brother Mahir, Azerbaijan's deputy general prosecutor, were essentially warlords who had integrated their militias into the Popular Front military. Javadov and Huseynov now cooperated on acquiring arms and strengthening the Azerbaijani armed forces. From his narcotics trade, Huseynov had connections in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Javadov visited Afghanistan in July 1993 and reportedly met with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in his capacity as leader of Hizb-i Islami forces.³⁷ Several hundred otherwise unemployed mujahidin soon came to Azerbaijan, where they were put on the front lines in the Füzuli sector, though they were never used effectively.

On December 16 Armenian and Azerbaijani forces clashed near Beylagan, near the front line east of Füzuli, probably indicating that the Armenian forces were trying to advance eastward, deeper into Azerbaijan. Kazimirov indicates that the Azerbaijani side delayed responding to his unilateral call for a cease-fire, probably indicating that the Azerbaijani forces, perhaps reinforced by Afghan mujahidin, were successful against the Armenians.³⁸

Some weeks later, in January, an Azerbaijani campaign to recapture Kelbajar began by invading through the high mountain passes north of the province. The offensive may have taken some Armenian units by surprise by going over mountains in winter, but the campaign soon turned into a disaster. Although news was rigorously suppressed, word filtered back of officers abandoning their men to freeze to death or be captured and of bodies being held in morgues outside Baku, to be released in small lots to disguise the huge numbers of Azerbaijani casualties, widely thought to be in the range of 4,000–5,000.

By February 1994, then, the Armenians had reached the logistical limit of their expansion, and the Azerbaijanis had lost much of the army that they had newly trained and equipped. At this point, Russia offered its mediation services. The channel was kept strictly hidden from the Minsk Group, with which Kazimirov was in open competition. Kazimirov's account of the Bishkek Protocol, which initiated the cease-fire that remains in effect, is extremely disingenuous, leaving out any role played by the Russian military. He portrays the process as one initiated by the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly, which held a

meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on May 4 and 5, 1994. Kazimirov implies that parliamentary representatives of Azerbaijan and Armenia just happened to show up in Bishkek and started negotiating under the auspices of the speaker of the Kyrgyz Parliament, Medetkhan Sheremkulov.

In fact, the Bishkek Protocol originated in the Russian Defense Ministry, where on February 18, 1994, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev chaired a meeting with his Azerbaijani and Armenian counterparts.³⁹ It is clear what Grachev wanted out of the meeting: a permanent military/peacekeeping presence in Azerbaijan. At the risk of a digression, it is important here to review a similar case: the conflicts in western Georgia. In the summer of 1993, Shevardnadze's Georgia faced not only the Russian-supported Abkhaz separatist conflict but also a rebellion led by ousted former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Russia offered to broker peace, provided Georgia entered the CIS and accepted Russian peacekeeping troops for Abkhazia and western Georgia. Shevardnadze desperately appealed to the West for an alternative, but no Western state was willing to send armed peacekeepers to a UN mission. Meanwhile, with Russian military support, the Abkhaz took Sukhumi on September 27. Finally, in October Shevardnadze accepted Russia's conditions. Almost immediately, Gamsakhurdia's forces melted away (Gamsakhurdia himself was killed shortly thereafter), and the Abkhaz forces stopped their advances.⁴⁰

Azerbaijanis, in talks with Russian officials, understood that the Russian aim for Karabakh was analogous: an official CIS (i.e., Russian) peacekeeping force, preferably keeping out any Western military contingents. That aim explains why the Russian mediation effort saw itself in direct competition with the CSCE Minsk Group effort, which, if successful, would have resulted in a truly multinational peacekeeping force. Azerbaijani officials of the time showed disquiet at the Russian demands, noting that a concomitant Russian motivation was to ensure that no US or NATO troops were deployed to the former Soviet Union. The Azerbaijanis spoke often of ensuring that any peacekeeping force come with a CSCE mandate and adhere to UN rules on peacekeeping forces limiting the size of any one nation's contingent and ensuring diversity in command structures.⁴¹ Both

Russia and Armenia, on the other hand, were acutely aware of the capabilities of the nearby Turkish military forces. Both feared that too much damage to Azerbaijan might trigger Turkish intervention, and both believed that a Russian peacekeeping force might serve as a tripwire to deter such intervention.

For these reasons, on February 18 Grachev pressed for a Russian peacekeeping contingent. As Kazimirov notes, "In reality, at that moment only Russia was prepared to allocate a peacekeeping contingent and observers. Turkey's readiness to do so was categorically rejected by the Armenians."⁴² This remained unacceptable to the Azerbaijanis. Once again, the Armenian forces attempted to advance, launching attacks on April 10 eastward along a front from Terter to Ağdam.⁴³ The attacks had the added effect of ensuring there would be no developments from the April 11 meeting of the CSCE Minsk Group in Prague.

One other factor may have been pressing on the minds of both Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the spring of 1994: negotiations between Azerbaijan and Western oil companies over the development of three major oilfields in Azerbaijan's sector of the Caspian Sea had been going on since before formal independence. After some false starts, negotiations started making serious progress in the spring of 1994, promising a much richer (and therefore presumably stronger and more influential) Azerbaijan in the near future. The "contract of the century" was eventually signed on September 20, but by spring 1994 Azerbaijan was beginning to feel that time was on its side, and Armenia may also have felt that the time was right to consolidate its gains.

The stage was thus set for the May 4–5 meeting of the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly in Bishkek. As mentioned previously, Kazimirov's memoirs maintain the fiction that the Bishkek Protocol was an initiative of parliamentarians deciding to act as peacemakers, with little build-up and negotiation solely by the parliamentarians at Bishkek. In reality, however, the Azerbaijani representative was Afiyaddin Jalilov, whose position as deputy speaker of Parliament was less important than his widely known but unacknowledged status as Heydar Aliyev's illegitimate son and constant companion. It is clear that Aliyev would not have sent him without knowing exactly what

would be signed.⁴⁴ Likewise, Levon Ter-Petrosyan would not have given negotiating leeway to Babken Ararktsyan, speaker of Armenia's Parliament.

The Russians did make a final attempt to push for a Russian-controlled CIS peacekeeping force. In his description of the talks in Bishkek, Kazimirov remarks delicately that "Jalilov did not show the same understanding of the expediency of proposing that the parliamentarians of the participating states of the CIS discuss the initiative of V. F. Shumeyko [chair of the Russian Federation Council] and M. Sh. Sheremkulov to create CIS peacekeeping forces (on this issue it was perceptible that the Azerbaijani leadership had made promises to the Westerners, who were sharply opposed to the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to the zone of conflict; the forces of the CIS seemed to them just a screen for Russia)."⁴⁵

Jalilov refused to sign on May 5, the date on the draft protocol, and the Russians flew to Baku on May 7 to convince Aliyev. Aliyev finally agreed on May 8 that Jalilov should sign, with wording describing a vague intention to explore the possibility of a peacekeeping force rather than mandating the creation and deployment of a real force. Jalilov now said that, as long as they were in Baku, Quliyev, not he, should sign. But he finally signed, and the cease-fire went into effect at 00:00 hours on May 12 instead of on May 9, the date envisioned in the original draft. The protocol's operative provisions can be summarized as follows:

- Parties express the intention to end the conflict with a role for the CIS and in accordance with relevant UN and CSCE decisions;
- Parties will observe a cease-fire from the agreed time and work on "a durable, legally binding agreement mandating a mechanism to ensure the non-resumption of military and hostile activities, withdrawal of troops from occupied territories and restoration of communication, [and] return of refugees";
- Parties "agree to suggest that Parliaments of the CIS member-states discuss...creating a CIS peacemaking force"; and
- Parties agree to continue meeting as appropriate.

Nothing ever came of the “agreement to suggest discussions” on a peacekeeping force, but the cease-fire has been in effect since then, with occasional major violations but without the resumption of widespread hostilities.

Chapter Five

THE MINSK GROUP AS MEDIATOR (1994-1998)

The emergence of the Minsk Group as the premier negotiating platform, with a co-chair system to form a compact negotiating team, was a stabilizing force in the early years after the Bishkek cease-fire, when hostilities could have restarted at any time. As the Minsk Group and its co-chairmanship matured, the parties were given evidence that the international community could work together and put checks and balances on the interests of individual countries to conduct a serious negotiating effort. Belief grew that a negotiated solution could be found.

THE BIRTH OF THE MINSK GROUP

By mid-1994 the most active phase of hostilities had ended, thanks to the mediation of Russia. Specific Russian objectives, however, remained unachieved, including the deployment of a Russian-dominated peacekeeping force. Russian mediation, still at this point in the hands of Vladimir Kazimirov, therefore continued to run in one channel in competition with the CSCE mediation effort, while in another channel Russia (represented here, too, by Kazimirov) participated in the efforts of the CSCE. It should be noted that the Azerbaijanis and Armenians thought it prudent not to take sides in this competition and to accept the good offices of any country. In September 1994, for example, Ter-Petrosyan and Aliyev met for an hour and a half (including a period of intense one-on-one discussion) in the Waldorf Astoria suite of US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright.¹

In an attempt to rein in the Russians, the CSCE adopted a new

structure for its mediation efforts on December 6, 1994, at its Budapest summit.² The decision created a Minsk *Conference* (still un convened) with a dual chair, and a Minsk *Group* for the actual negotiation efforts, also with a dual chair from the same two countries. The Minsk Conference was to be made up of officials at a senior political level; the representatives to the Minsk Group were expected to be ambassadors. A mandate for the conference co-chairs was adopted on March 3, 1995.³ It was tacitly agreed that Russia would hold one of the co-chairs; in 1994 the Swedes continued their chairmanship, but in 1995 they passed it on to the Finns. The Budapest decision also created the High-Level Planning Group to plan a cease-fire monitoring operation.

The co-chairs achieved an initial diplomatic success on February 3 and 4, 1995, in securing an exchange of letters among the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Nagornyy Karabakh (which had elected Robert Kocharyan “president” on December 22, 1994), creating a mechanism for dealing with incidents threatening the cease-fire. However, it was clear that the channels were not working in perfect harmony, as the letter laying out the mechanism was signed only by Kazimirov “on behalf of the Co-Chairmen”; Kazimirov did not consider it necessary to put the name of his Swedish counterpart (Anders Bjurner) on the letter.⁴

THE CONTEXT OF 1995–1996

The Budapest Document ranged much more widely than the Karabakh conflict; it changed the *Conference* on Security and Co-Operation in Europe into the *Organization* for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, thereafter known as the OSCE and with the expanded activity and structure inherent in the name change. The OSCE was no longer just a forum for diplomats, with somewhat vaguely associated affiliates such as the field missions in various capitals of the former Soviet Union; now it was an organization with a secretariat structure that was to deploy missions as needed to resolve conflicts and promote the values of democracy and human rights in places where these had long been absent.

The OSCE was changing in response to an increasingly dangerous world. As the Soviet Union collapsed, armed conflicts broke out not

only in Karabakh but also in Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan, and in the Prigorodnyy region of North Ossetia, in Russia's North Caucasus. These were all relatively small, though some were exceptionally bloody. In 1994, however, all these conflicts were dwarfed by the rapidly escalating wars in the former Yugoslavia, culminating in July 1995 with the Srebrenica Massacre, and by the war in Chechnya, which Russia overtly launched in December 1994 (though the covert Russian operation, which by then included combat troops, advisers, and aerial bombardment, began in April).

These wars had an effect on the ways in which OSCE countries viewed the Karabakh conflict. The Russians, for example, were sympathetic to Karabakh Armenian separatist aspirations, and they had strongly supported the separatist sides in the conflicts in Georgia, including instances of direct military participation. But in the Balkan wars, the Russians resumed their traditional support for the Serbs, who fought in the name of suppressing separatism. Similarly, the Russians opposed the Chechen nationalists who were trying to secede from Russia. Russian President Yeltsin welcomed Western support, including the strong support of US President Clinton, for Russia's territorial integrity. He was therefore no longer in a position to give open support to separatism elsewhere and was willing to cooperate with the West on resolving the Karabakh conflict in a way that would preserve Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

Under the tightly knit and active Finnish co-chairmanship of 1995–1996, the Minsk Group held regular meetings, sometimes including actual negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, carefully handling Kazimirov to ensure that, to the extent possible, he was cooperating with Minsk Group efforts.⁵ There was a pause when Azerbaijan suffered a serious coup attempt by the Javadov brothers from March 13 to 17, 1995. As Turkey's "Susurluk" investigation later revealed, the coup was supported by the Turkish National Intelligence Organization and the husband of Prime Minister Tansu Çiller. After the coup failed, with the Javadovs dead, Turkey's President Demirel and Heydar Aliyev re-established their close relationship, with Aliyev exerting more influence than before on Turkish policy.

After the turmoil settled down, the Minsk Group began regular meetings, attempting each time to foster negotiations between the

Azerbaijanis and Armenians.⁶ Minsk Group meetings took place in Stockholm on April 6 and 7, 1995; in Helsinki, with negotiations between the sides from June 15 to 19, followed by a Minsk Group meeting on June 20 and 21; in Moscow on September 4, 1995, and again from June 14 to 18, 1996; and finally between October 18 and 30, 1996, in Helsinki and Moscow in the run-up to the OSCE summit in Lisbon on December 3. The meetings produced no concrete results but were rather part of the process of developing the personal relationships among the negotiators that might facilitate progress. In the negotiating style of Russian and other Soviet successor societies, trust based on rule of law (which has rarely existed) is replaced by trust based on personal respect (*уважение*).⁷

At the same time, the Minsk Group was hampered by the second, Russian channel of mediation. In February 1996 new Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov, who was highly interventionist, circulated as a non-paper a new settlement proposal.⁸ Russia's proposals in separatist conflicts affecting other former republics of the USSR (i.e., Transdnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Karabakh) were consistent: they all proposed a "common state" that essentially offered the separatists unfettered independence inside their own borders plus a veto over the direction of the metropolitan or "common" state, and also included a Russian-led peacekeeping force. Those stipulations have always been anathema to the metropolitan state, which would gain little if anything from such a settlement. In addition, Russia was always perceived, often correctly, as the main backer of the separatists. It is therefore no mystery why, absent huge levels of coercion, the metropolitan states rejected these proposals. While Armenia accepted the Russian non-paper as a basis for negotiation, both Azerbaijan and Nagornyy Karabakh rejected it.

Owing to a lack of progress through 1996 and the inability to reach consensus on an OSCE-wide text at the Lisbon summit, the OSCE chairman-in-office issued a statement from the chair (i.e., not a consensus statement of all participating States) reiterating prior positions that all participants in the Minsk Group except Armenia could accept. The Lisbon Statement followed the practice of earlier UN Security Council resolutions on the conflict in deliberately refusing to mention the principle of self-determination, like the UN

Security Council implicitly concluding that Armenia was the recalcitrant party. The Lisbon Statement reads as follows:

You all know that no progress has been achieved in the last two years to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the issue of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan. I regret that the efforts of the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Conference to reconcile the views of the parties on the principles for a settlement have been unsuccessful.

Three principles which should form part of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were recommended by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group. These principles are supported by all member States of the Minsk Group. They are:

- territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijan Republic;
- legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh defined in an agreement based on self-determination which confers on Nagorno-Karabakh the highest degree of self-rule within Azerbaijan;
- guaranteed security for Nagorno-Karabakh and its whole population, including mutual obligations to ensure compliance by all the Parties with the provisions of the settlement.

I regret that one participating State could not accept this. These principles have the support of all other participating States.⁹

The statement reflects a major event of 1995, far from the region, that continues to have a significant bearing on the course of Karabakh negotiations. In July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces massacred more than 8,000 Bosniak Muslims in Srebrenica, an atrocity that led the United States to intervene in the conflict. Until then, the United States had deferred to the EU, which viewed resolution of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia as a test of the European ability to conduct a coherent foreign and security policy. Srebrenica showed that the EU was not yet ready, and the United States—already feeling guilt over one genocide in Rwanda and determined to stop a second—deployed forces, took over diplomatic efforts, and imposed peace. As part of these changes, the Croats were given a free hand in August to destroy the Republic of Serbian Krajina. Most of the population of the

Republic of Serbian Krajina was forced to flee; Operation Storm was a humanitarian disaster. The salient point is that humanitarian concerns aside, the international community was largely indifferent; no one could protest the destruction of this self-proclaimed state since it had no international status, standing, or protections—and the same held true for Nagornyy Karabakh. The Lisbon Statement pointed future diplomatic efforts toward finding an interim status for Karabakh that would grant it security from sharing the fate of the Republic of Serbian Krajina.

Other events of 1995 also influenced later mediation efforts in Karabakh. On April 25, 1995, the OSCE Assistance Group in Chechnya arrived in Groznyy under the leadership of the Hungarian diplomat Sándor Mészáros and began to seek negotiations. After a Russian offensive in May seized the separatist strongholds of Shatoy and Vedeno, Shamil Basayev, the Chechen commander who had fought in Karabakh and Abkhazia, launched an attack inside Russia that took hostages at a hospital in the town of Budennovsk (June 14–19). As part of resolving that operation, the Russian government agreed to negotiate with the Chechen leadership, under OSCE auspices, on ending the war. After negotiations in Groznyy on a comprehensive political settlement went nowhere, the Chechen and Russian negotiators (the latter including Arkadiy Vol'skiy, who figured in early efforts to defuse the Karabakh crisis) developed a step-by-step approach, addressing cessation of hostilities and security issues first, with status issues to be negotiated in a later agreement. Ultimately, the sides reached the first agreement on July 31, 1995. Although that cease-fire soon broke down, the later Khasavyurt Accords (1996) followed a similar pattern, stipulating that any agreement on status issues must wait at least five years. The OSCE later adopted the same approach to a Karabakh settlement.

Five developments in 1996 also affected later efforts to resolve the Karabakh conflict. One was the re-election of Levon Ter-Petrosyan to the Armenian presidency on September 23, 1996, amid widespread reports of fraud. Protest demonstrations broke out. Although his force ministries managed to restore order, Ter-Petrosyan's political position was severely weakened. On March 20, 1997, Ter-Petrosyan was forced to appoint Robert Kocharyan, the leader of Nagornyy Karabakh, as his

prime minister to shore up his declining popularity. In essence, Ter-Petrosyan strengthened the party in his own government that was implacably opposed to any compromise with Azerbaijan. Kocharyan immediately began to undermine Ter-Petrosyan's stature with the Diaspora, appealing to the Dashnaks with the provocative assertion that any settlement of the Karabakh conflict must include territorial concessions from Turkey to Armenia.

The creation of the "tri-chair" system of the OSCE Minsk Group negotiations marked another significant development. In 1996 the Finns approached the US Minsk Group representation to say they would be relinquishing the co-chair of the Minsk Group and asked whether the US would be interested in taking their place. The US representative, Ambassador Joseph Presel, said no. Contributing to his decision were his strong conflicts with political appointees in the US National Security Council Staff (NSCS), which had paralyzed the US effort. Presel was overruled, however, by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, who thought the Minsk Group offered a promising forum for American-Russian cooperation. Presel was eventually sent to Uzbekistan as ambassador and replaced by Lynn Pascoe. With Talbott running the operation, the NSCS bowed out of the issue. However, by then some months had gone by, and, with the co-chair still open, the French had expressed their interest in the position. There followed an unseemly election campaign, with the US and France lobbying the Azerbaijanis, Armenians, and the Swiss chair of the OSCE.¹⁰ Finally, the Swiss named both candidates as co-chairs, and on January 14, 1997, the joint Russia-France-US leadership was formalized; it has lasted to the present day.

The co-chairs quickly marginalized the rest of the Minsk Group. On one level, they have been considered secretive and overly autonomous. At the same time, however, they form a compact and coherent group of major players, in distinct contrast to the Minsk Group as a whole, whose discussions were less than serious. In meetings of the full Minsk Group, representatives regularly monopolized the time with meaningless oratory, and the sides, when present, would play to the gallery in their interventions. Though unsuitable as a negotiating forum, the full Minsk Group has endured; its members are potential sources of peacekeeping contingents and reconstruction

funding that would be required by any political solution.

As a negotiating format, the Minsk Group co-chair system has been more effective. Thomas de Waal quotes the scathing comments of both Azerbaijani and Armenian officials on the Minsk Group, citing, for example, Armenian former President Ter-Petrosyan as telling him, “The OSCE began to take this question seriously only in 1996 [when the current tri-chair system developed]. Before that... they competed among themselves more than they thought about the Karabakh issue.”¹¹ This is true to a certain extent. It is also true that Kazimirov, who was closer to the *siloviki* of Russia’s Defense Ministry than he was to the Foreign Ministry, was the source of most of the competition. When an Azerbaijani official asked Kazimirov in 1994 whether he had met Joseph Presel, then just coming in as the new US negotiator, Kazimirov’s response managed—in just six words—to be at once threatening, aggressive, racist, and obscene.¹²

A third development of 1996 was Vladimir Kazimirov’s exit, as he took up his assignment as Russia’s ambassador to his beloved Costa Rica, where he had served early in his career. He was replaced by two diplomats: Yuriy Yukalov as co-chair of the Minsk Conference, and Valentin Lozinskiy as co-chair of the Minsk Group. They were opposites. Yukalov was a chain-smoking old-style Soviet diplomat who had spent most of his career in Africa during the Cold War, and Lozinskiy was an urbane European who had been acting ambassador at the UN during the Soviet collapse. It is unclear what they thought of one another on a personal level, but their politics and approaches seemed to differ sharply. They could, and did, look simultaneously out of the window of the office they shared in the Foreign Ministry on Smolensk Square and disagree on whether it was cloudy or sunny. Unlike Kazimirov, however, they took a collegial approach to their fellow negotiators and avoided trying to bully the parties to the conflict. They had less ego invested in the work of the past and were more willing to cooperate on accomplishing something in the present, a pattern that would continue beyond their tenure.

A fourth development in 1996 was the appointment of a new “Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference.”¹³ The position had been created on August 10, 1995, and Andrzej Kasprzyk of Poland

has held the post from July 1996 to the present day.¹⁴ At first greeted with skepticism by the national representatives in the Minsk Group, Kasprzyk and his team became the one impartial source of information actually on the ground full-time, and he became the one constant interlocutor for Karabakh officials as the national negotiators of the co-chairs served their tours and moved on. Though he has not been included as a member of the Minsk Group co-chairs, his on-the-ground experience has informed their actions and has helped to reduce tensions along the line of contact.

A fifth development was the establishment of a private bilateral channel of communication between Armenia and Azerbaijan at the level of presidential advisers: Gerard Libaridian for Armenia and Vafa Guluzade for Azerbaijan. The United States facilitated this channel by installing a secure telephone line in their offices. Libaridian was a US citizen, an academic from a Dashnak family who moved to Armenia to throw in his lot with Ter-Petrosyan and the movement for independence. This gave him priorities different from those of the Dashnaks, who viewed their remit as encompassing the entire Armenian people, of which the Republic of Armenia was in their view only one part. Libaridian left Armenia after the downfall of Ter-Petrosyan. Guluzade had come up through the Communist Party ranks, with Soviet diplomatic experience especially in Arab-Israeli issues. By this time, Guluzade had been adviser to four Azerbaijani leaders: Mutalibov, Mammadov, Elchibey, and Aliyev. The last, however, marginalized Guluzade until he resigned in 1999. The two representatives, both polished and charming, got on well and engaged in serious discussion, much of which informed the subsequent OSCE proposal.

THE MINSK GROUP “STEP-BY-STEP” PROPOSAL

The stage was set for the new co-chairs to put forward proposals. In meetings in Paris, Washington, and Moscow in the winter and spring of 1997, the co-chairs hammered out a set of two agreements, based on an American draft that incorporated many of the ideas already floating around. It included a nod to the non-paper that Russia had circulated in 1996 outside the Minsk channel. That document had met with little success either with the sides or with the other co-chairs, but it was considered necessary to include something from it as part of integrating all Russian efforts into the Minsk Group channel. The set



Vafa Guluzade, foreign policy adviser to the president of Azerbaijan, 1990–1999 (photo by author).

of agreements also incorporated two requirements that had become clear owing to events elsewhere in 1995 and 1996. The first was a step-by-step approach that would deal immediately with security issues and leave the more intractable status issues for a later (perhaps much later) date, as in Chechnya. The second requirement was an interim status for Nagornyy Karabakh, pending a final status agreement, that would make its security a matter of international concern to protect it from the fate of the Republic of Serbian Krajina.¹⁵

Owing to the way in which Armenia and Azerbaijan later published versions of this initiative, subsequent writers have tended to assert that the Minsk Group made two discrete proposals in 1997: a “comprehensive” approach in July followed by a “step-by-step” approach in September. That is false. The approach was step-by-step from the start, with the text of Agreement II, on final status, being a placeholder for negotiations that were to begin at an unspecified time, presumably after adoption of Agreement I on security. As the official talking points agreed by all the co-chairs explained,

In our view, there are two clear-cut agendas: an agenda of immediate steps to end the armed conflict, which includes troop withdrawals,

deployment of an international peacekeeping force, return of displaced persons, and establishment of security measures to protect the populations of the region. There is also an agenda to determine the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, including permanent security guarantees, that will be ratified by the Minsk Conference.... [The Co-Chairs] recognize that an agreement on status may take longer to negotiate. For that reason, we have separated the two agendas into two separate agreements, so that negotiations on each can proceed at their own pace.¹⁶

When the proposal was presented to Ter-Petrosyan and Aliyev in Yerevan and Baku in July, they both immediately understood that Agreement II would be negotiated at a later, and perhaps indefinitely postponed, date. The September draft was a second iteration of Agreement I incorporating changes requested by Ter-Petrosyan and Aliyev. Agreement II was, as expected from the beginning, too hard for the leaders to deal with, and was not included in the second iteration. The documents have been published accurately in the appendices of Ali Abasov and Haroutiun Khachatrian's work.¹⁷

The principal points of Agreement I were as follows:¹⁸

- Armed hostilities would be ended permanently and the use of force renounced. Military forces would be withdrawn: the Republic of Armenia forces to Armenia, Nagornyy Karabakh forces to the 1988 boundary of the NKAO with certain exceptions, and Azerbaijani forces to lines that would facilitate the operation of an OSCE peacekeeping force.
- A Permanent Mixed Commission (PMC) would “supervise and implement” the cease-fire with respect to Azerbaijan and Nagornyy Karabakh; this would be run jointly by Azerbaijan, Nagornyy Karabakh, and the OSCE, with the latter providing mediation and arbitration.
- The resultant demilitarized zone would be a “zone of separation,” with a buffer zone in which the OSCE would operate in cooperation with the PMC. Displaced persons would return to their homes in the zone of separation. Detained persons would be released and returned. The parties would work through the PMC to open transportation, communication, power, trade, and other links. All blockades would be lifted, with free rail

communication between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

- The Lachin corridor would be demilitarized and leased from Azerbaijan by the OSCE, which would facilitate Karabakh's exclusive use of the corridor. Displaced persons would return to Shusha and the Shaumiyan district.
- Azerbaijan and Armenia would establish diplomatic relations and create a binational commission to prevent border incidents.

Agreement II was a placeholder that provided a relatively generic status agreement. It was based on ideas that had been present for some time, including discussions in the Libaridian-Guluzade bilateral channel. In their agreed talking points on the proposal, the co-chairs noted that “the subject of the bilateral discussion was a trade-off: Armenia was to recognize Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity when a satisfactory status for Nagorno-Karabakh was elaborated.”¹⁹ The co-chairs noted that they had “taken Azerbaijan’s support of the highest degree of autonomy for Nagorno-Karabakh as a start, not an end,” but that when “OSCE countries signed the Helsinki Final Act, which enshrines self-determination as an OSCE principle,...[t]hey deliberately refused to define self-determination as independence.”²⁰

The principal points of Agreement II were the following:²¹

- All parties would recognize the territorial integrity and inviolability of borders of Azerbaijan and Armenia.
- Nagorny Karabakh would be “a statal and territorial formation, within the borders of Azerbaijan, whose self-determination shall include the rights and privileges listed below...” Its borders would be those of the former NKAO. Its constitution would incorporate a formal agreement between the Karabakh authorities and Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan would likewise amend its constitution.
- Karabakh and Nakhchivan would have free access to both Armenia and Azerbaijan; Karabakh would be a free economic zone with free circulation of currencies. Karabakh would have its own budget. It would be multiethnic, with each citizen having the right to use his or her native tongue in all official contexts.

- Nagornyy Karabakh would be governed by its constitution and laws; Azerbaijani laws would be in effect if they did not contradict that constitution and those laws. Karabakh would be represented in Azerbaijan's Parliament and presidential elections. Karabakh citizens would carry specially notated Azerbaijani passports but would not be considered foreigners in Armenia (as a footnote to the agreement notes, this was analogous to the UK Ireland Act of 1949).
- Karabakh would have its own security forces; Azerbaijan's security and police forces would have no right to enter except by permission of the Karabakh authorities.
- The UN Security Council would guarantee the agreement.

Such a status proposal is insufficiently specific to serve as an actual agreement that might last. And there was little engagement on it when the Minsk Conference and Minsk Group co-chairs (including the US deputy secretary of state and the French Foreign Ministry political director, respectively the US and French Minsk Conference co-chairs, with Yukalov as Russian co-chair, plus the other Minsk Group negotiators) traveled to Yerevan, Stepanakert, and Baku in July 1997 to present their proposals. Both Ter-Petrosyan and Aliyev preferred to concentrate on Agreement I, whose essence was to give Karabakh security and an interim status as a protectorate of Armenia in exchange for the return to Azerbaijan of occupied territories, leaving a corridor between Armenia and Nagornyy Karabakh. The interim status is never explicitly mentioned (Azerbaijan would never have agreed to it) but is the result of the sum of security mechanisms included in the agreement, especially the internationally-chaired Permanent Mixed Commission and the Azerbaijani-Armenian Binational Commission. Agreement I was a compromise giving something to each side but total victory to neither. As soon as the co-chairs finished their presentation in Yerevan, Ter-Petrosyan said he would accept it if the question of Shusha was moved from Agreement I to Agreement II, showing that he understood that the package was a step-by-step proposal and that Agreement II would come much later, if ever. Aliyev agreed to this proposal. He made clear that his primary objective was the return of occupied territories outside Karabakh, allowing half a million displaced persons to return to their homes

from the squalid camps in which they had been living.

The Karabakh authorities, predictably, refused to engage substantively on either agreement. Nonetheless, the co-chairs were optimistic. They had secured the acceptance by both Ter-Petrosyan and Aliyev of the main points of Agreement I, with agreement as well on the main changes the two leaders had requested. The co-chairs felt that it was up to Ter-Petrosyan to deliver the Karabakhis.

But he could not. As the co-chairs returned to their capitals for a redraft in accordance with the wishes of Ter-Petrosyan and Aliyev, the Karabakhis started enlisting opposition to the agreement in Armenia and in the Diaspora. Since they disliked and distrusted Ter-Petrosyan, they could not accept a peace agreement that essentially put them under his protection. The Karabakhis were aided in their efforts by the lack of any public preparation for compromise. Aliyev had enough authority and control not to fear his people's reaction, but Ter-Petrosyan had been losing authority, and his prime minister was a hard-line Karabakhi.

The dam broke when Aliyev visited the United States in July 1997, soon after the co-chairs' visit. On July 30 he gave a speech at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Buoyant with his reception in the United States and with the prospect of an end to the war, he made public the details of the Minsk Group plan. In his view, he was doing his part to prepare the Azerbaijani public (including persons displaced from Karabakh and the Armenian-occupied provinces) for compromise. He mentioned specifically that Azerbaijan would not be getting Shusha and Lachin back for the foreseeable future. But the Armenians in the audience—some, such as Armenian Ambassador Ruben Shugaryan, had come to listen, others to protest—were shocked. No one had prepared Armenians—in Armenia, Karabakh, or the Diaspora—for compromise or for anything but victory. Shugaryan and other supporters of Ter-Petrosyan emerged from the speech with grave concern, understanding what the effect might be both in Armenia and in the Diaspora.

On August 25 the Karabakh Armenians formally rejected the Minsk Group proposal. Nonetheless, the co-chairs persisted and on September 19 presented the second iteration of their proposal, based

on the requests of Aliyev and Ter-Petrosyan. It differed from Agreement I of the first proposal in the following points:

- The withdrawal of troops would be accomplished in two stages, with the lines of a preliminary stage to be determined by the High-Level Planning Group and the second stage to be more or less equivalent to the withdrawal involved in the earlier proposal (though this version left all of Lachin district in the hands of the Armenians). The buffer zone was now defined as running along the 1988 boundaries of the NKAO plus the Lachin district.
- The parties were to conduct subsequent negotiations involving all those who had fled or been expelled from Azerbaijan or Armenia since 1987.
- The binational commission of the prior proposal was in this version renamed the “Armenian-Azerbaijani Intergovernmental Commission.”
- In place of Agreement II, the September version included a paragraph committing the parties to negotiate a comprehensive settlement to resolve the status of Nagornyy Karabakh, as well as the issues of Lachin, Shusha, and Shaumyan, and to convene the Minsk Conference.

But the die was already cast in Armenia. Opposition to the agreement was vociferous both inside Armenia and in the Diaspora. On December 1 Ter-Petrosyan attempted to blunt the opposition by publishing an article in the Armenian press entitled “War and Peace: Time for Reflection.” But it was too little, too late. The Karabakh party succeeded in persuading Defense Minister Vazgen Sargsyan to defect from Ter-Petrosyan’s side. Deserted by the strongman who commanded armed support in the face of popular protests, and facing a united front of opposition from Kocharyan and other Karabakhis, Ter-Petrosyan was given an ultimatum on February 3, 1998. He resigned rather than stand on his constitutional rights and provoke an armed coup that he would undoubtedly not survive, since he no longer had armed forces to defend him. On March 3 elections were held to replace Ter-Petrosyan. Robert Kocharyan, the former leader of Karabakh, was overwhelmingly voted in as president of Armenia.

Chapter Six

ALIYEV AND KOCHARYAN (1998–2001)

Kocharyan was a strong and ruthless leader; it is no wonder that, despite political differences, he and Heydar Aliyev found a common language. In the few years permitted by Aliyev's declining health, the two drew their countries closer to peace than at any time before or since. They possessed a tremendous advantage in their capacity to utilize international mediation without being dependent on it.

THE REORGANIZATION OF ARMENIAN POLICY

Shortly after Kocharyan took over in Armenia, his government addressed a letter to the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. While reiterating Armenia's commitment to a comprehensive settlement through negotiations in the Minsk Group framework and to the existing cease-fire, Armenia blamed the current impasse on the following:

- The status of Nagorno Karabagh as party to negotiations has not been clearly defined; there has been no full-fledged negotiation conducted on its political status; furthermore, Nagorno Karabagh has not been involved in any discussions related to that key issue.
- Root causes of the conflict have not been properly addressed; there is a prevailing misperception of the capabilities of one party to influence the other; there has been no in-depth assessment of the new realities that have emerged in the aftermath of the conflict.
- The Lisbon Statement, which ran counter to Armenia's will and in disregard to the opinion of Nagorno Karabagh, undermined



Robert Kocharyan, president of Armenia, 1998–2008 (UN Photo/Susan Markisz).

Armenia's and Nagorno Karabagh's position in the negotiations, just as it affected the viability of any political mediation.

- The condition predetermining the outcome of negotiations left Nagorno Karabagh with no other choice but to reject the method of the step-by-step settlement; Armenia underwent a social and political crisis that eventually led to the resignation of the supreme executive authorities.¹

In the next section, the letter asserted that “the step-by-step process is discredited by the Lisbon Statement, and cannot serve as the basis for resolution.” Further, “Preconditions presuming territorial integrity of Azerbaijan are not acceptable.” In other words, the Lisbon Statement—though not formally adopted by the entire OSCE—“predetermined” the outcome of status talks: the international community was taking a position contrary to that of Armenia, and until that changed, accepting Agreement I of the step-by-step process would only reduce Armenia's leverage to achieve results for Nagornyy Karabakh outside the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.² Armenia was now demanding an agreement on Nagornyy Karabakh's status before any withdrawals from occupied territories. Moreover, the letter warned,

Given the strategic realities in the region...it is hard to believe that there can be any reasonable argument that would interest Nagorno Karabagh to go back under Azerbaijani jurisdiction.... Nagorno Karabagh achieved its present status and level of security in the course of military confrontation with Azerbaijan.... Hence, Nagorno Karabagh should be able to conclude the peace process with a status and security level no lower than those it had prior to entering the process.³

In other words, Azerbaijan could not hope to gain at the negotiating table what it could not gain on the battlefield. Conversely, Karabakh should be expected to gain at the negotiating table what it had been unable to win on the battlefield: international recognition of its claims to independence.

The Minsk Group co-chairs had exhausted their 1997 proposals. At this point the Russians demanded that their 1996 proposal be resurrected. The Americans and French could not refuse, since the Russians had gone along with the 1997 proposals and the Westerners wished to avoid, at all costs, a return to the rivalries of 1996 and earlier. The 1996–1997 proposals were therefore redrafted (in fact, with the exception of the “common state” language and clauses postponing decisions on issues such as Lachin and Shusha, the draft closely resembles the July 1997 Minsk Group proposals, but with Agreement II placed before Agreement I). The resultant hybrid was presented to the sides in November 1998.⁴ Like other “common state” proposals, the 1998 proposal was dead on arrival.

THE LEADERS FIND A PLAN

But both Kocharyan and Aliyev believed that there were better alternatives to the status quo. They had met once, in September 1993. They met again in Washington, DC, on April 26, 1999, on the margins of celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of NATO. Neither country had any interest in joining NATO, and the timing was also awkward: April 24 is the date Armenians observe as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. In addition, Aliyev was in poor health and was in Washington en route to heart bypass surgery in Cleveland, which took place just three days after the meeting.⁵ Nonetheless, their encounter kicked off a series of one-on-one meetings. The first two were in Geneva: one in July that was not publicized until Aliyev mentioned it

in his statement after their second meeting, and another on August 22. They met for a third time on September 10 on the margins of the Baltic–Black Sea Cooperation Summit in Yalta. Their fourth one-on-one took place on October 11 in Sadarak, on the border where Armenia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan’s exclave of Nakhchivan meet.

What is noteworthy about these negotiations is how closely they were held. Not only did Aliyev and Kocharyan keep the subject of their talks secret from the international negotiators, *but they also kept it secret from their own foreign ministers*, who continued to meet and discuss (without result) the last set of Minsk Group proposals. Kocharyan and Aliyev, in fact, hammered out a solution entirely different from previous international proposals, a bold compromise based on an extensive territorial swap: Armenia would get full sovereignty over Karabakh, including a corridor through Lachin, in return for the full transfer to Azerbaijan of Armenia’s southernmost Meghri province, which forms a corridor between the main part of Azerbaijan and the exclave of Nakhchivan.⁶

After their fourth meeting, at Sadarak, Kocharyan and Aliyev held a joint press conference at which both hinted that they were very close to a solution:

Robert Kocharian (pointing at the reporters, says to the Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev): Everybody is waiting impatiently for us to say that all the problems have been settled and so on. Our meetings are necessary. We discussed all the complex of issues. I must say that it is not easy to move forward towards the regulation of the conflict, there are many problems.... Unfortunately, I am obliged to say again that we cannot disclose the details of our talks. But I think that in the nearest future you will be able to get much more comprehensive information. [...]

Heydar Aliyev: [...] I agree fully with what the President of Armenia said. We analyzed the problem sufficiently enough. You know that the conflict has been going on for a long time.... Many international organizations—the Organization of the United Nations, Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)—have been engaged in its solution. Since 1992, the Minsk Group of OSCE is being engaged in the solution of the conflict. It is to the point to say, the co-chairs of the Minsk Group are busy with it at present.

There have been many proposals, many variants there. But the parties have not reached any agreement. To find a peaceful solution for the conflict, we weighed all the pros and cons of the issue with President Robert Kocharian. Of course, it is intricate, a lot of time has passed, and it is not easy to come to an agreement by meeting once. But I think that our last meetings, I mean the meetings of the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents, have been useful. Perhaps, when we first began our dialogue, we could not imagine that our cooperation will be so useful for the solution of the conflict.

We considered many problems. But we need time to come to some conclusion; we need time for meetings and negotiations. Of course, mutual compromises are necessary. It will be impossible to settle the conflict without a reciprocal compromise. Robert Setrakovich, I know what compromises can be done. In one word, our negotiations will continue hence. [...]

Robert Kocharian: I want to add some words. One of the presidents spoke about the compromises. I must say that we mainly discussed the degree of compromises, in other words, the rapprochement to each other in the process of negotiations. Regulation means just this. Otherwise, it may appear that President Aliyev spoke of compromises, President Kocharian did not. Therefore, I am pleased with what was said here. [...]⁷

In this remarkable news conference, the two leaders not only looked forward to an early solution; they also made a point of telling both their peoples that they had discussed compromises and that compromise was essential to the settlement of the conflict. In one of the rare times in the history of the conflict, the leaders were trying in a coordinated and simultaneous way to prepare their populations for compromise in the hope of avoiding the political disaster that had overtaken Ter-Petrosyan the previous year.

The potential geopolitical consequences of the proposed territorial swap were significant. Meghri not only lay between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan; it also formed Armenia's border with Iran, a border Armenia would have lost as a result of the swap. In addition, 2,000 Russian troops were based in Meghri, helping to police the border with Iran; under a 1992 agreement with Azerbaijan, no regular Russian military forces were to be stationed in Azerbaijan.⁸ The deserted de facto border between Nagornyy Karabakh and Iran would

likewise disappear. The swap would not only have produced a geographically contiguous Armenia-cum-Karabakh and a geographically contiguous Azerbaijan-cum-Nakhchivan; it would also have shifted the geopolitical orientation of the region from north-south to east-west.

Like many such borders, the one between Armenia and Iran was a rich mine of contraband income. To push his plan through, Kocharyan needed to compensate those who would suffer the loss of that income, illicit though it was. One of the prime beneficiaries from the border was Vazgen Sargsyan, the strongman whose defection had overthrown Ter-Petrosyan and put Kocharyan into power. In between stints as Armenia's defense minister, Sargsyan had been Ter-Petrosyan's presidential emissary for the south of Armenia—in other words, the godfather of cross-border trade and contraband. On June 11, 1999, shortly before the first of the secret one-on-one meetings, Kocharyan appointed Sargsyan as prime minister, essentially following the dictum of *The Godfather* to keep one's friends close and one's enemies closer.

In the style of Russian and post-Soviet agreements between principals, the Aliyev-Kocharyan deal on Karabakh was oral and contained a minimum of detail. And there were plenty of details to be worked out to turn the plan into a document ready to sign. For example, what would happen to Kelbajar, the Azerbaijani province north of Lachin, between Karabakh and Armenia? Kelbajar had been conquered by the Armenians in March and April 1993 and the Kurdish Azerbaijani inhabitants driven out. Bordered by high mountains on the north, Kelbajar would be inaccessible to Azerbaijan, absent Lachin, and Armenians had already begun settling there. What would become of Armenian access to Iran? What would become of the Russian bases in Meghri province, the lucrative cross-border trade, and the family visits of Iranian Armenians?

Many of these issues remained unresolved after the Sadarak meeting. Aliyev called in the US ambassador in Baku, Stanley Escudero, and revealed the deal he and Kocharyan had been developing. This was news to the United States, whose Minsk Group representatives had just met with the other co-chairs and the Norwegian chair-in-office of the OSCE on October 7 in Oslo; no

delegation revealed any knowledge of such a plan. Aliyev asked that the Americans, on behalf of the Minsk Group, turn the oral agreement into a written draft that he and Kocharyan could finalize. He asked that this be done immediately. It is unclear what either Kocharyan or Aliyev told the Russians, but it is likely that they knew something was in the works, and thanks to the Sadarak press conference, the populations of both countries were also aware of an impending deal that contained the fatal word “compromise.”

Though US Deputy Secretary of State and US Minsk Conference Co-Chair Strobe Talbott had seen the Minsk process as an opportunity to cooperate with Russia, the Americans broke with recent co-chair precedent and did not coordinate with the other Minsk Group co-chairs. Rather, acting unilaterally, they hurriedly began to put what Aliyev said onto paper. Still in the drafting process, Talbott, US Minsk Group Co-Chair Carey Cavanaugh, and several other officials flew off to Baku (October 26) and Yerevan (October 27) to try to refine the deal with Aliyev and Kocharyan. However, Talbott had to leave for Tbilisi on October 27 to deal with another crisis.⁹ Taking off from Yerevan, the Americans were confident that a resolution was finally just around the corner.

While Talbott’s plane was still in the air, sixteen days after the meeting at Sadarak, a man named Nairi Hunanyan and four companions burst into the Armenian Parliament armed with rifles, disarmed deputies (many of whom were habitually armed), and shot dead eight officials, including Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and Parliament Chair Karen Demirchyan. Hunanyan, a former Dashnak, accused the government of “sucking the blood of the people.”¹⁰ Aside from that one statement, however, his motives for carrying out the atrocity were never seriously probed. Even while the crisis was in progress, President Kocharyan’s spokesperson stated that Hunanyan’s group consisted of “individual terrorists” who were acting alone. That has remained the official line, both of the Armenian government and of the court that convicted the five and sentenced them to life imprisonment.¹¹ A veil of silence remains over the case, at least from within the Armenian establishment.

The net effect of the attack was to eliminate the political heavyweights who would have been deployed to persuade Armenian

society to accept the land swap Kocharyan had worked out with Aliyev. It has also been noted that the assassinations removed two of Kocharyan's most significant potential rivals. Whatever the motivations for the attack, or whoever may have been behind it, Kocharyan informed the Minsk Group that he could not go forward with the peace agreement. The year 1999 ended with the failure of the most promising attempt to make peace in the history of the Karabakh conflict before or since. It was promising because the leaders themselves had found with precision the area where their interests overlapped, using their own sensitive (but in this case faulty) judgment as to what was survivable.

THE PEACE PROCESS IN INTENSIVE CARE

The trauma of the attack meant that the year 2000 was also lost. An assassination attempt against Nagornyy Karabakh leader Arkadiy Ghukasyan in March 2000 did not improve prospects. The mediators, too, stood still in 2000. It was a period of political transition in Russia (President Yeltsin announced on December 31, 1999, that he was resigning in favor of the obscure Vladimir Putin) and the United States (President Clinton used what little foreign policy attention was left over from electoral politics to try, unsuccessfully, to secure an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement). In the third Minsk co-chair capital, Paris, President Jacques Chirac was hamstrung by the past two years of *cohabitation* with Lionel Jospin.

The Minsk co-chairs used 2000 to regroup and revise the 1999 land-swap deal in an attempt to find a formula that could survive in Armenia. At first their efforts concentrated on finding commitments for reconstruction financing from donor countries and international financial institutions that both sides (but mostly Armenia, since Azerbaijan had oil wealth) would receive after a deal. In the latter half of 2000, however, their calibrations tended to move toward Armenian positions and away from Azerbaijani positions.

Kocharyan and Aliyev resumed their meetings in early 2001 with two meetings in Paris hosted by French President Chirac: one on January 26 and a second on March 4 and 5, at which the two presidents reportedly discussed the need for a peace plan synthesizing elements of previous plans. In February they leaked the texts of the

1997–1998 OSCE Minsk Group proposals, perhaps as a trial balloon.¹² Significantly, they did not publish any texts related to the 1999 proposal they had worked out between themselves.

Early in 2001 the co-chairs settled on a proposal, one that continued their trend of leaning toward the Armenian side that had so violently rejected the 1999 plan. The co-chairs' new proposal retained the Armenian gains of sovereignty over Nagornyy Karabakh and Lachin from the previous land-swap plan, but it gave Azerbaijan nothing more than a non-sovereign access corridor to Nakhchivan in place of the 1999 plan's assignment of sovereignty over the entire Meghri region. When an ambassador to Baku from one of the co-chair countries was briefed on the new proposal, his jaw dropped. He predicted that Aliyev would never accept the deal, as it satisfied all of Armenia's war aims without giving Azerbaijan a fig leaf in return.¹³ But the co-chairs were adamant that the recovery of most of the occupied provinces and the return of most of the displaced persons filling camps in Azerbaijan would be sufficient to induce Aliyev, whose health was failing, to accept the proposal as part of his legacy to Azerbaijan.

After the Kocharyan-Aliyev meetings in Paris, the newly installed Bush administration in the United States decided to try its hand. Colin Powell began his tenure as US secretary of state in January 2001 with considerable international prestige. US Minsk Group Co-Chair Carey Cavanaugh convinced Powell that success was within reach if Powell harnessed his reputation and American power to host a Dayton-style negotiating summit for Kocharyan and Aliyev. Talks were set up for picturesque Key West, in Cavanaugh's native Florida, from April 3 to 7, 2001. For four days, Powell and the Minsk Group co-chairs worked to secure Aliyev's signature on the agreement. They failed. In all, Aliyev and Kocharyan had just two fifteen-minute one-on-one meetings at Key West, in contrast to the lengthy private meetings they held in 1999. The leaders flew to Washington to meet with President George W. Bush on April 9. He met them separately, indicating that they were not ready to meet him together with a solution close at hand. Both Armenian and Azerbaijani officials speaking to the press cast doubt on claims that significant progress had been made.¹⁴ Subsequent visits by the Minsk Group co-chairs to the region likewise failed to budge the

sides. The year 2001 ended without further efforts in the peace process. A meeting between Aliyev and Kocharyan scheduled for November 30 failed to take place.

Key West set a pattern that would be repeated. Mediators tried to use the prestige of senior international figures to push the sides to agreement. They failed; no amount of star power or appeal to “legacy” or “political will” could compensate for the deficiencies that one side or the other saw in the deal. Key West was also the last time a full-blown peace plan was on the table. Subsequent efforts by the mediators have been more modest: they have involved not an agreement but “framework principles” or even simply “food for thought.”

Chapter Seven

TREADING WATER (2001-2005)

From 2001 to 2005 the world was preoccupied with much more immediate crises and much hotter wars. The Minsk co-chair mediation efforts, riven by tensions among the co-chair countries over the war in Iraq, were treading water, focused on keeping the process alive.

THE EFFECTS OF 9/11

The year 2001 was pivotal in world history. On September 10 the United States, the world's most powerful country, looked out upon the world as an essentially benign place. The Cold War was over. The United States was the only pole left standing in what had been a bipolar world. Americans could be excused if, following the smug dictum of Wittgenstein, they believed that all major problems in foreign policy had been solved and only "puzzles" remained. On September 11 all that changed. The world Americans saw was now hostile, full of "unknown unknowns." Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq followed. Because of America's place in the world, they affected most countries and most foreign policy issues.

The Afghanistan and Iraq wars dominated the world's attention, leaving little room for focus on issues other than those directly affecting the "Global War on Terror." Two such issues existed in the South Caucasus. One was in Georgia's lawless Pankisi Gorge, where Chechen combatants fighting against Russia had taken refuge and set up safe havens. Russia labelled these Chechens Islamist terrorists and had been threatening to mount an operation against them inside Georgia since the beginning of the Second Chechen War in 1999. After

9/11, both to combat al-Qaida elements in Pankisi and to forestall Russian intervention, US President Bush decided to send American forces to train and equip Georgian troops to regain control of the Pankisi Gorge, announcing this to a surprised and very pleased Eduard Shevardnadze when they met at the White House on October 5, 2001.¹ The second Caucasus issue was Azerbaijan's potential role as a transit hub for US forces and logistics in the Afghanistan campaign. To secure Azerbaijan's cooperation, on October 24 the US Congress amended Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, which had banned assistance to Azerbaijan, to allow the US president to waive that ban. The waiver has been renewed every year since then. Aside from those exceptions, however, the Caucasus attracted little of the world's attention, which was now focused on the war in Afghanistan and the run-up to the war in Iraq.

The post-9/11 wars and the international climate leading to them significantly affected the Karabakh-related events of 2002–2003, as did the transition in Azerbaijan from Heydar Aliyev to his son Ilham. In general, little or nothing was done to move the peace process forward. Rather, the emphasis was on keeping it alive. This was in itself problematic owing to the serious fissures over Iraq emerging among the three Minsk Group co-chair countries.

From May 12 to 15, 2002, the co-chairs hosted the deputy foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Stirin, outside Prague, launching what came to be known as the Prague Process.² Deputy Foreign Ministers Tatoul Markarian and Araz Azimov had been appointed presidential representatives for the occasion, but the OSCE press release notes that their talks “supplement—and do not replace—the ongoing direct dialogue between the two Presidents.”³ The free-wheeling talks may be seen as an effort to preserve the negotiating process for the future rather than as a forum for actual negotiation. During the rest of 2002 and most of 2003 the process was no more than treading water as the Armenians geared up for elections, the Azerbaijanis came to terms with Heydar Aliyev's mortality, and the major powers sank into acrimony over Iraq.

On March 5, 2003, Robert Kocharyan was re-elected, freeing Armenia's hand, but on March 20 the Iraq War broke out, keeping the US, France, Russia, and anyone else from paying much attention to the

Karabakh conflict. Heydar Aliyev was hospitalized in Turkey on July 8 before moving on August 6 to his final hospitalization in Cleveland. Aliyev appointed his son Ilham as prime minister on August 4 and subsequently resigned, making Ilham the acting president. On October 15 Azerbaijan held a presidential election, and Ilham Aliyev was duly elected. Two months later, on December 11, 2003, Ilham Aliyev and Kocharyan met in Geneva. The new Azerbaijani president stated afterward that the peace process should begin again from scratch. The following day Heydar Aliyev died.

Ilham Aliyev did not possess his father's autocratic authority. Rather, he relied on a collective of Heydar Aliyev's loyalists, including a heavy presence of the Nakhchivani clan. This collective rule imposed tremendous restraints on Ilham's ability to negotiate. He was untested in negotiations, and the collective was unwilling to thrust him into talks that might prove beyond his depth—hence the desire to start from scratch. Understanding that Heydar had made compromises to come to deals with the Armenians, the collective feared that the Armenians would pocket those concessions and bargain for more. There was no question of bold compromise of the sort worked out with Kocharyan in 1999. Heydar had not had to wonder whether that compromise would seriously weaken his grasp on power. Ilham was forced to wonder whether any compromise at all would weaken his.

In 2004 the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Vartan Oskanyan and Elmar Mammadyarov, began their involvement in the Prague Process. Their first meeting took place in Prague on April 16. It was followed by a meeting of their two presidents on April 28 in Warsaw at the European Economic Summit. The two pledged support for the Prague Process. Aliyev reportedly offered a new partial deal: Azerbaijan would regain occupied territories in return for ensuring the reopening of all transit links to Armenia, including the Turkish border (Aliyev had discussed this in Ankara the previous month). Armenia, however, looked upon the closed borders as a “blockade”—an act of war. Ending the “blockade” was not (to the Armenians) a fair trade for the occupied territory that Armenia wanted to exchange instead for an acceptable status for Karabakh. Before the second meeting between Oskanyan and Mammadyarov on May 12 in Strasbourg, Oskanyan told Radio Free Europe that the proposal was

“absurd” and would not be discussed.⁴ Oskanyan and Mammadyarov did travel to Turkey together on June 28 and 29 to meet with Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, but the meetings produced no results.

On June 22, 2004, the co-chairs, clearly at the end of their tether, held a meeting with the two foreign ministers in Prague and drafted an agreement synthesizing their positions. The co-chairs presented the draft during a visit to the region the following month, without success. In their parting press conference in Yerevan they announced that they had run out of ideas and would proffer no new proposals; it was up to Armenia and Azerbaijan to present their ideas. The frustration appears to have been a consensus of the co-chairs, especially the new Russian and American co-chairs, Yuriy Merzlyakov (appointed August 2003) and Steven Mann (appointed April 2004). Perhaps to soothe the co-chairs’ frustration, Oskanyan and Mammadyarov made optimistic statements following their fourth meeting, in Prague on September 2.

However, the process again ground to a halt after Kocharyan and Aliyev met with each other one-on-one and then together with Russian President Putin on September 15 on the margins of the CIS summit in Astana, Kazakhstan. Aliyev appears again to have raised the issue of Armenian withdrawal in exchange for opening transit links. In response, Kocharyan suspended further talks indefinitely, Foreign Minister Oskanyan noting that there would be a “time out to study and reflect.” Oskanyan reinforced this via a foreign ministry statement released on October 27 declaring that all issues except the status of Nagornyy Karabakh were “tangential.”⁵

The year 2004 ended, however, with the germ of an idea that would dominate the mediation process until the end of this study’s timeframe in 2012. A number of suggestions appeared on how to square the circle between a “package solution,” which was unachievable because Azerbaijan and Armenia could never agree in the short or medium term on a status for Karabakh; and the “step-by-step solution,” to which Armenia could never agree because it would trade away Karabakhi occupation of Azerbaijani land in the short term, thereby reducing Armenian leverage on status negotiations further down the road. The basic strategy to bridge this gap was to fix in one agreement both the security and troop withdrawal aspects of a settlement and the *mechanism* for determining the final status of Nagornyy

Karabakh, while delaying the actual use of that mechanism until much later.

This stratagem appears in a “food-for-thought” non-paper that US negotiator Steven Mann circulated around this time. It also appears in a December 2004 article in *Le Figaro*, written by Spanish former Foreign Minister Ana Palacio and NATO Parliamentary Assembly President Pierre Lellouche, urging the mediators to propose a solution “that would give Armenia temporary control of Karabakh in exchange for the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azerbaijani territory, [with] the final status of Karabakh to be decided by its inhabitants in a referendum in five or 10 years’ time.”⁶ The idea was taken up later in 2005 by the International Crisis Group, whose recommendations for the peace process included the same two-phase approach.⁷

Chapter Eight

THE MADRID PRINCIPLES (2005–2008)

From 2005, diplomats in the Minsk Group, working with the leaders and foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, began hammering out a framework of the “principles” that could guide a settlement. The principles centered on the idea that security measures would be implemented first but that a mechanism incorporating an expression of popular will would be put in place at signing to determine—after an interval—the final status of Nagornyy Karabakh. The Madrid Principles, as they became known after the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting of 2007 in Madrid, remain to this day the basis of discussion in settlement talks.

TINY STEPS FOR LITTLE FEET

Oskanyan and Mammadyarov spent much of 2005 managing not to talk to one another. They met with the co-chairs in Prague on January 11, 2005. The next meeting was postponed after Oskanyan came down with pneumonia, but when it finally took place, in London on April 15, the co-chairs could only meet with the two separately. The co-chairs tried to get the two to meet with them ten days later in Frankfurt, but Oskanyan stayed away. Finally Aliyev and Kocharyan met with the Minsk co-chairs in Warsaw on May 16 and 17 on the margins of the Council of Europe summit and appear to have decided that their foreign ministers should resume meetings. The ministers subsequently met in Paris on June 17. At that meeting Mammadyarov appears once again to have raised the idea of an Armenian withdrawal from occupied territories in exchange for the reopening of transportation and communications links throughout the region.¹ The net result was that the two did not meet again until the end of the year. In the



Ilham Aliyev, president of Azerbaijan, 2003–present (UN Photo/Rick Bajornas).

absence of a negotiation process, the co-chairs conducted a fact-finding mission to the occupied territories from January 30 to February 5, 2005. They reported that, though they observed no significant Republic of Armenia involvement in settlement of the occupied areas, they did observe Karabakhi involvement in settling Lachin and an area east of Mardakert.²

At the May 16–17 Warsaw meeting, the two presidents began their first discussion of a new idea by the Minsk co-chairs for a “framework document” of principles on which to base a resolution, rather than a comprehensive peace agreement.³ It embodied the hybrid two-stage mechanism first mooted in 2004 and first flagged in public by Russian Co-Chair Yuriy Merzlyakov on April 5, 2005, shortly before the unsuccessful meeting of April 15. The idea was to get the leaderships to agree on principles that would then be fleshed out by negotiations on a full agreement, while at the same time preparing the populations for compromise.

As mentioned previously, the new configuration aimed to agree on both a troop withdrawal and a mechanism for determining status while postponing that status mechanism for many years. Armenian sources of the time reported that the peace settlement would include

a provision mandating a referendum, to be held ten to fifteen years after the agreement was signed, to determine Nagornyy Karabakh's final status. The Armenians would withdraw first from five of Azerbaijan's seven occupied provinces; they would hold on to Lachin indefinitely as a corridor, and Armenian troops would withdraw from Kelbajar as soon as a date certain was set for the referendum. The Armenians noted to the press that the Azerbaijanis were demanding that the withdrawal from Kelbajar take place at the same time as the other withdrawals.⁴ Two other sticking points emerged in later years: the first was the question of what to call the "binding expression of popular will" (i.e., vote, referendum, plebiscite, or some other term), and the second was the question of who would get to vote in it. These issues have never been resolved. Again, it is important to note that the proposal being discussed in 2005 and its many iterations since have been frameworks of "principles," officially not fully developed peace agreements. Presumably, drafting and negotiating an actual peace agreement would follow agreement on the principles. As the principles were honed over time, they grew in specificity, more nearly resembling the outlines of an agreement.

The co-chairs tried to refine their proposals in a meeting with Mammadyarov and Oskanyan on June 17, 2005, and in a visit to the region that began on July 11. Kocharyan and Aliyev discussed the amended proposals when they met on August 27 on the margins of a CIS summit in Kazan, Russia. Work was suspended during the run-up to what were expected to be contentious parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan on November 6 and in the violent aftermath. There were no further developments in 2005 until the Ljubljana OSCE ministerial meeting on December 4, at which Oskanyan and Mammadyarov discussed the proposals with the co-chairs. After a subsequent visit to the region from December 15 to 17, Russian Co-Chair Merzlyakov revealed to the press on December 21 that the co-chairs were drafting a two-page framework document of basic principles, one of which mandated the deployment of a 10,000-person-strong peacekeeping force that would exclude contingents from Russia, the United States, France, and Turkey. Commenting the following day, Mammadyarov stated that there were in all nine principles in the document.⁵

RAMBOUILLET

In this mood of cautious optimism, the foreign ministers met with the co-chairs on January 18 and 19, 2006, to discuss what Oskanyan termed “a half-page document that enumerates general principles that could then form the basis for a more detailed peace plan” in preparation for the planned meeting of Aliyev and Kocharyan in Rambouillet, France, on February 10 and 11.⁶ A telephone call between US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Ilham Aliyev and a meeting with both presidents hosted by Jacques Chirac at the Élysée Palace before they went off to Rambouillet provided enough high-level attention to lead one US official to call it “the most important meeting in at least five years regarding this conflict.”⁷

But like Key West, the meeting was a failure. Neither Rambouillet’s palatial and history-laden surroundings, nor Chirac’s showmanship, nor Rice’s earnestness could budge Kocharyan or Aliyev. The co-chairs issued a discouraged statement on March 9 after meeting on March 7 and 8 in Washington.⁸ Aliyev met George Bush in Washington on April 28 with no change in position. Tensions flared on the line of contact in the following months.⁹

Senior diplomats of the three co-chair countries—Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigoriy Karasin, US Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried, and French Ambassador Pierre Morel—made a joint trip to the region in May. This trip, plus an Oskanyan-Mammadyarov meeting with the co-chairs at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on May 19, produced an agreement that the two presidents would get together in Bucharest on the margins of a Black Sea Economic Council meeting on June 4 and 5. That meeting once again failed to budge the sides; neither did a subsequent meeting of the foreign ministers in Paris on June 13.¹⁰ The co-chairs were discouraged. One of them, in a private conversation, mused, “It appears that Kocharyan and Aliyev want to give the appearance of holding negotiations—to satisfy the expectations of the international community—without the reality of negotiations. We will soon reach a point at which the co-chairs will have to ask themselves whether they want to continue this masquerade.”¹¹

“WE HAVE REACHED THE LIMITS...”

On June 22, 2006, the co-chairs laid out their proposals in a report to the OSCE Permanent Council.¹² In it (parts of which were subsequently included in a statement for the public), they made clear that they had “proposed to Presidents Aliyev and Kocharian a set of core principles that we believe are fair, balanced, workable and could pave the way for the two sides to draft a far-reaching settlement agreement.”¹³ The principles “are based on” the following:

- Phased redeployment of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territories, with special modalities for Kelbajar and Lachin;
- Demilitarization of those territories;
- A referendum or population vote, to be held at a date and in a manner to be decided through further negotiations, to determine the final legal status of Nagornyy Karabakh;
- Deployment of an international peacekeeping force;
- Establishment of a joint commission for the implementation of the agreement;
- Provision of international assistance for demining, reconstruction, and resettlement of internally displaced persons, with interim arrangements to allow Nagornyy Karabakh to maintain direct relations with assistance providers;
- Renunciation of the threat or use of force; and
- International and bilateral security guarantees and assurances.

Curiously absent from the report, but certainly part of the “principles,” were the reopening of bilateral and regional trade and communications links (the co-chairs perhaps omitted this because inclusion would have required permission from Turkey). Also missing, as the Armenians soon pointed out, was explicit mention of an interim status for Nagornyy Karabakh (though that was encompassed by the point on security guarantees).¹⁴

In their report the co-chairs went on to say, with resignation, “As co-chairs, we have reached the limits of our creativity in the identification, formulation and finalization of these principles. We do not

believe additional alternatives advanced by the mediators through additional meetings with the sides will produce a different result.” Noting that the societies were not prepared for a compromise resolution, the co-chairs thought “the parties would be well-served at this point by allowing their publics to engage in a robust discussion of the many viewpoints on these issues.” The co-chairs concluded, gloomily, “We see no point right now in continuing the intensive shuttle diplomacy we have engaged in over the past several months. We also see no further point in initiating further presidential meetings until the sides demonstrate enough political will to overcome their remaining differences.... We will be ready to reengage if indeed the parties decide to pursue the talks with the political will that has thus far been lacking.”¹⁵

Also on June 22, as the co-chairs were beginning the break for reflection that they had signaled in their report, Matthew Bryza succeeded Steven Mann as the US co-chair. Bryza distanced himself from the gloomy tone of the co-chairs reporting that day in Vienna and thereafter remained resolutely upbeat no matter how unpromising the behavior of the sides.¹⁶ It is worth noting that although senior Russian officials detested Bryza for his enthusiastic support of Georgia’s President Mikheil Saakashvili, he and Yuriy Merzlyakov collaborated to continue and strengthen an era of good feelings in the workings of the Minsk Group co-chairs, who were finally emerging from the suspicions and antagonisms of the bruising discordance among their home countries over Iraq.

The publication of the report and a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty interview with Bryza gave rise to an exchange of accusations between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis. An Armenian Foreign Ministry statement claimed that the co-chairs left out the corridor linking Karabakh to Armenia and Karabakh’s interim status and that the two presidents had agreed on the referendum.¹⁷ In response, Azerbaijan’s Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov denied any agreement on a referendum and declared that Azerbaijan maintained its position that any referendum must be nationwide throughout Azerbaijan.¹⁸ The Karabakh authorities chimed in to reject a referendum, saying they had already held one in 1991 that had decided in favor of independence. The Karabakh authorities were also

unhappy with the language regarding the referendum since it would occur after, not before, they had released the territories they were holding hostage to an agreement.¹⁹

As a result of the airing of the principles, with the risks inherent in public reaction, the sides gave negotiations a rest for the remainder of the year. The Minsk co-chairs met inconclusively with Mammadyarov and Oskanyan in Moscow (October 6) and Paris (October 24) and visited the region from November 21 to 23.²⁰ Kocharyan and Aliyev met with the co-chairs on the margins of the CIS summit in Minsk on November 28.²¹ Although Oskanyan and Mammadyarov were scheduled to meet with the co-chairs at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels on December 4 and 5, they did not bother to meet one another.²² On December 10, Nagorny Karabakh held a referendum that adopted a new constitution reiterating the region's independence and sovereignty.

The time-out lasted through 2007. Even after the foreign ministers met in Moscow on January 23 and the co-chairs visited the region from January 24 to 26, positions remained unchanged. Ever upbeat, Bryza said in an interview on February 7 that the two sides were "close, very close" to agreement on basic principles and that a "window of opportunity" for progress would open between Armenian parliamentary elections on May 12 and presidential elections in both countries the following year.²³ However, "constructive" talks on the margins of the Black Sea Economic Conference meeting in Belgrade on April 19 were described positively by the Armenian side but deprecated by the Azerbaijanis.²⁴ Kocharyan and Aliyev held their one meeting of the year at the CIS summit in St. Petersburg on June 9, after which Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty could ask, "Nagorno-Karabakh: Standstill, Time-out, Stalemate or Deadlock?"²⁵ When the co-chairs eventually got the foreign ministers to Brussels on September 4, they were unable to get them to meet together. From October 24 to 27, the co-chairs shuttled between Baku and Yerevan in an attempt to get the presidents to meet before the OSCE Madrid Ministerial Council meeting on November 29 and 30. Not only were they unable to persuade the presidents, but they were also unable to get the foreign ministers to meet at the Madrid meeting.

Frustrated, the co-chairs engaged in a bit of public show. At the

Madrid meeting, faced with the impossibility of meeting with Mammadyarov and Oskanyan together, the co-chairs formally presented the latest form of the basic principles separately to the two foreign ministers. The proposals thereafter took the name “Madrid Principles.”²⁶ Aside from the name, however, the presentation changed nothing. An interview with one of the co-chairs indicates that the formal presentation was connected with the closing of the “window of opportunity” that Bryza had declared open earlier in the year: presidential elections were scheduled in both countries in 2008. The outcome in Azerbaijan was not in question, though the campaign led Aliyev as a candidate into intemperate and belligerent talk (a pattern he would repeat), but the Armenian constitution prevented Kocharyan from running again.²⁷ There was sure to be a change in the personnel, if not the policies, at the top in Armenia.²⁸ (Karabakh had already in July elected a new leader, who, as head of the region’s security services, did not promise any softening of positions.)

Early 2008 was lost to the Armenian elections. On February 19, Armenia elected another Karabakhi strongman, Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan, who had been defense minister from 2000 to 2007. Defeated candidate Levon Ter-Petrosyan charged that Sargsyan had stolen the election through blatant fraud, and mass protests by his supporters led to a harsh police crackdown that preoccupied Armenia for several months. Meanwhile, from March 4 to 9 serious clashes broke out along the cease-fire line, after which the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution originally drafted by Azerbaijan calling for an Armenian withdrawal (with the three co-chair countries voting against).²⁹ In addition, Sargsyan brought in a new foreign minister, Eduard Nalbandyan, Armenia’s ambassador to France, who needed time to “read in.” Only on May 6 did Nalbandyan meet Mammadyarov and the co-chairs at a Council of Europe event in Strasbourg, telling reporters afterward that the purpose of the meeting was “familiarization.”³⁰

Chapter Nine

THE MEDVEDEV INITIATIVE (2008–2012)

The longest sustained mediation effort in the history of the Karabakh peace negotiations was undertaken by Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev. It appears that his primary motivation was to place upon the world stage a significant, statesmanlike accomplishment that would move him out from under Putin's shadow and secure his acceptance as a president in his own right. Desperate for a "deliverable," Medvedev eventually offered to water down the Madrid Principles to get a paper, however anodyne, on which the sides could agree. He admitted defeat only when it became clear that the sides were humoring him and talking with no intention of reaching an agreement.

MEDVEDEV TAKES THE STAGE

On March 2, 2008, Russia elected Dmitriy Medvedev as president to succeed Vladimir Putin, who was forbidden by the constitution from seeking a third consecutive term. Though Medvedev's election victory was never in doubt, it was a time of great uncertainty in Russia. No one knew whether Medvedev would turn out to be a genuine president or just a four-year stand-in for Putin. Russian officials had been pondering their next steps: should they try to join Medvedev in the presidential apparatus in the Kremlin and Old Square or follow Putin to the prime ministry in the Russian White House? As Medvedev delivered his inaugural address on May 7, the camera cut between him and close-ups of faces in the audience. It panned in on one man—Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov—who was intently studying not Medvedev but the gilt fittings of the Kremlin hall: a reminder that some of Moscow's most intractable and destabilizing



Serzh Sargsyan, president of Armenia, 2008–present (UN Photo/Marco Castro).

problems were managed by personal ties between Putin and those who supported him.

In hindsight, we can see that Medvedev tried, and failed, to become his own man with his own presidency. He sought to accomplish this by playing the statesman on the world stage. And nowhere did he make a greater effort than in attempts to resolve the Karabakh conflict. In all, President Medvedev hosted eleven of the fifteen meetings between Ilham Aliyev and Serzh Sargsyan between June 6, 2008, and January 23, 2012.

Medvedev's involvement was qualitatively different from previous Russian mediation. Before Medvedev, Russia pressed its agenda for Karabakh, featuring military deployments and/or maintaining a sphere of influence in the South Caucasus. Medvedev, on the other hand, sought an achievement that would boost Russia's prestige and earn him credentials as a statesman. In this, he had the good will of Western leaders, who viewed him as more democratic and liberal than the *chekist* Putin. The belief that he might steer Russia toward European values, for example, motivated Angela Merkel's desire to cooperate with him in an unsuccessful attempt to resolve another "frozen conflict," Transdnistria. On Karabakh, too, the Western co-

chairs—whose countries would not deploy their presidents' time and attention so generously—put aside previous suspicions and acceded to a subordinate position in what became a Russian-led process. The US and French co-chairs would help prepare papers for the meetings, but the meetings themselves were tripartite Armenian-Azerbaijani-Russian affairs, after which the Russians would brief the Americans and the French.

That is all the more remarkable in light of outside events occurring at the start of Medvedev's involvement in the Karabakh conflict. On June 5, 2008, at the CIS summit in St. Petersburg, Medvedev unveiled a new European Security Initiative. The West greeted it with a mixture of derision and suspicion. Only a few paragraphs, the initiative seemed to call for an all-Europe security architecture that would give Russia a say, perhaps even a veto, over security decisions throughout the continent.

Meanwhile, relations between Georgia and Russia were steadily deteriorating. Russia had imposed a series of sanctions on Georgia, its rhetoric was inching closer to recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent, and military incidents were increasing in severity and frequency along the front lines in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On August 7 fighting broke out in South Ossetia, the Georgian army intervened, and Russia and its Abkhaz proxies invaded Georgia from the north and west. Russia emerged from the diplomatic fallout unscathed, owing to a combination of factors, including the widespread perception that Georgian President Saakashvili was erratic and juvenile, the fact that Europeans were fed up with the perceived arrogance of the United States' Bush administration and were unwilling to share Washington's outrage, and the reflexive ambition of Nicolas Sarkozy, who elbowed the rest of the EU and the OSCE aside to wade into negotiations with the Russians without adequate preparation, expertise, or awareness of the situation on the ground. The crisis over Georgia, and with it the Russian security initiative, took up most multilateral diplomatic efforts in Europe for the rest of 2008 and into 2009.

FIRST MEETING: THE MOSCOW DECLARATION

The Medvedev process on Karabakh started off promisingly. On June

6, 2008, the day after Medvedev unveiled his security initiative and nearly one year to the day since the last meeting of the presidents of the two countries, Ilham Aliyev and Serzh Sargsyan met on the margins of the CIS summit in St. Petersburg (they had passed up the chance to meet a few days earlier at a NATO event).¹ The sole result of the meeting was to approve continued talks at the foreign minister level. On November 2, however, Medvedev hosted the first real meeting in his new high-level process, and Aliyev and Sargsyan joined him in issuing the Moscow Declaration.² It was the first declaration signed jointly by leaders of the two countries since the Tehran Declaration of May 1992 and the first between the two sides since the Bishkek cease-fire of 1994. Like the Tehran Declaration, the Moscow Declaration was brief, at a high level of generality, and rather pompous and long-winded.³

One close observer commented a day later that the text was “a victory for Armenia,” noting that the Azerbaijanis were pledging to resolve the conflict by political, not military, means; that mediation efforts should be those of the Minsk Group, building on the Madrid Principles, and not, for example, on Turkey’s recent offer to mediate; and that the sides wanted “legally binding international guarantees,” which would mitigate the effects of Armenia’s giving up its main bargaining chip—the occupied territories—before a referendum could be held.⁴ That commentary is perhaps an over-interpretation. Had Azerbaijan really agreed to give up the prospect of a military solution, the text would have included an explicit renunciation of the use or threat of force (which Russia has sought in all the frozen conflicts in which it has mediated). Turkey’s offer was a non-starter, given the attitude of the Armenian Diaspora. And the “legally binding international guarantees”—a phrase Russia has also sought in other contexts, and which would give Russia *locus standi* in future disputes—are a confidence-building measure that would in theory also prevent the Karabakh authorities from holding a referendum in a way that Azerbaijan had not agreed. On Medvedev’s first outing, he was able to achieve something the Minsk Group had been unable to accomplish in all its years of mediation.

But for a year Medvedev undertook no further activity, perhaps under the impression that he had made a breakthrough that could be

exploited by Minsk Group co-chair business as usual, or perhaps diverted by more pressing matters, including the continuing fallout from the Georgia war. Meanwhile, the co-chairs continued their cooperative efforts, no mean accomplishment given the strong disagreements of the co-chair countries over Georgia and the personal involvement of one co-chair, Bryza, in formulating US-Georgia policy both before and after the crisis.

Sargsyan and Aliyev met in Zurich on January 28, 2009, on the margins of the World Economic Forum in Davos. They met privately and then together with their foreign ministers and the Minsk co-chairs. The co-chairs followed up with shuttle diplomacy in the region from February 27 to March 3, and in April Sargsyan and Aliyev paid separate visits to Moscow to meet with Medvedev. The two presidents next met on May 7 at the residence of the US ambassador in Prague on the margins of the EU summit to launch the Eastern Partnership Initiative, which included both countries. After the talks, US Co-Chair Bryza told the press, “For the first time, the presidents agreed on basic ideas surrounding” certain points of the Basic Principles text under discussion.⁵ The co-chairs returned to the region at the end of May to prepare for another meeting of the two presidents, once again in St. Petersburg, on June 4.

THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE GREAT

In July 2009 the Medvedev-led OSCE mediation intensified. In preparation for a Sargsyan-Aliyev meeting scheduled for July 17 in Moscow, the presidents of the Minsk Group co-chair countries—Obama, Medvedev, and Sarkozy—issued a statement on July 10 in L’Aquila, Italy, the first of what came to be a ritual for G8 summits. The brief L’Aquila statement expressed support for the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan in finding a solution and urged Sargsyan and Aliyev to “resolve the few differences remaining between them and finalize their agreement on these Basic Principles, which will outline a comprehensive settlement.”⁶ The statement was accompanied by a fact sheet outlining six of the basic principles (interposing an “inter alia” to stress that there were more than six):

- Return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control;

- An interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance;
- A corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh;
- Future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will;
- The right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence; and
- International security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation.⁷

The new wording (“legally binding expression of will”) in place of a simple reference to a referendum caused consternation in Armenia, as did a statement by Aliyev to Russian television that the mechanism foreseen in the Basic Principles provided for a final status for Karabakh “in one year, in ten years, in 100 years, or this could never happen.”⁸ As the Madrid Principles became public, they provoked outrage in the Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Karabakh-Armenian populations alike, none of which had been prepared by their leaders for compromise.⁹ The Moscow talks on July 17 made no headway. On July 25 and 26 the co-chairs met in Kraków, Poland, to find minor rewordings that might close the gaps.¹⁰

INVISIBLE “IMPORTANT PROGRESS”

After a summer break and some personnel changes, including the appointment of a new US mediator, Robert Bradtke, the Russian hosts and the co-chairs were ready to start again at the beginning of October. But by then the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement was in full swing (see following paragraph), and it is likely that both sides were waiting to see what new opportunities or risks that might bring. The presidents met with Medvedev in Chişinău, Moldova, on the margins of a CIS summit, and followed up on November 22 in Munich, where they met with the Minsk co-chairs in the French consul-general’s residence. On both occasions (especially after the four-hour meeting in Munich), the co-chairs said that “important progress” had been made but noted that “issues remained open.”¹¹ A Russian close to the negotiations said that the expression of popular will to determine Karabakh’s final status was not on the agenda of the

meeting. Perhaps because the Munich meeting was contentious, it is omitted from the “Chronology of Meetings of President in Connection with Nagorno-Garabagh” on the official website of the president of Azerbaijan.¹²

In parallel, the co-chair countries were pushing another process: the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey. This had started in 2007 with Swiss mediation following the shocking assassination of Hrant Dink, a prominent Turkish journalist of Armenian ethnicity. The process progressed in 2008 through “football diplomacy.” Sargsyan invited Turkish President Abdullah Gül to Yerevan on September 6, 2008, to attend a match between the two countries’ national teams. Talks intensified following the visit to Turkey in April 2009 of new US President Obama, who strongly supported normalization. The announcement on April 22 that “a road map” to normalization had been elaborated was warmly welcomed by the co-chair countries. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attended the signing in Zurich on October 10 of Turkish-Armenian protocols to establish full diplomatic relations and reopen the land border between the two countries, which had been closed since the invasion of Kelbajar in 1993.

These steps, however, created great concern in both Baku and Yerevan. In Azerbaijan, Aliyev worried that normalization with Turkey could reduce pressure on Armenia to resolve the Karabakh conflict. He told a Russian interviewer after the Munich meeting that Armenia was taking an unconstructive position “based on the mistaken belief that the Turkish-Armenian border would open and the Karabakh issue will be put aside.”¹³ He did all he could to counter the Turkish move, and at least in part due to his efforts, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan undermined President Gül’s move by stating that the border could not reopen until Armenians withdrew from some of the Azerbaijani territory they occupied.

At the same time, the Dashnaks in Armenia and many like-minded members of the Armenian Diaspora were dead set against the protocols, fearing that they would undermine their irredentist claims against Turkey, in particular compensation (for losses in 1915) and territorial concessions. As noted above in the discussion of the birth of

the Armenian Karabakh movement, the Dashnaks originally opposed Armenia's independence from the Soviet Union on similar grounds. An organized movement sprang up both inside Armenia and in the Diaspora to lobby against the protocols and to call for the resignation of Sargsyan for agreeing to them. Erdoğan's remarks about the border only fueled the movement. Ultimately, on April 22, 2010, Sargsyan announced that he was suspending ratification of the protocols.

MEDVEDEV TRIES AGAIN

Medvedev continued with his efforts. He invited Sargsyan and Aliyev to meet with him in Sochi on January 25, 2010, and achieved another deliverable: after the meeting, Foreign Minister Lavrov announced that the sides had agreed on the wording of the preamble of the current version of the Madrid Principles.¹⁴ But having made this effort, the sides descended into a five-month public spat, each side expressing adherence to what it said were the Madrid Principles and accusing the other side of secretly rejecting them (their versions of the principles were at considerable variance with one another). The first part of 2010 was spent in public exchanges about the sequencing and timing of Armenian withdrawals from occupied territory. This period encompassed the time at which the Turkish-Armenian protocols were in their death throes (including Erdoğan's public insistence on withdrawals before the Turkish-Armenian border could open). It is likely, therefore, that the motivation of the sides was either to hasten the protocols' death or play for time to see what would happen if the patient survived.

Meanwhile, Russia replaced its long-serving negotiator Merzlyakov with Igor Popov. Apparently the story of Popov's appointment broke in the Armenian press on February 23, 2010, before the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had informed Popov, who was then Russia's ambassador to Mozambique. When the press contacted him, his office answered, "The ambassador...said that there has been some mistake. He has no connection with the OSCE Minsk Group and was surprised by this information."¹⁵ In April, after Popov accepted his fate, the co-chairs visited the region.

Then on June 17, 2010, Sargsyan and Aliyev met with Medvedev on the margins of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

Once again the co-chairs were upbeat but vague in public. But in fact the meeting must have been contentious. The waters were further muddied when a Russian newspaper reported that Russian peacekeepers would soon be in Karabakh; Turkey responded that if so, Turkish troops would soon be in Nakhchivan.¹⁶ In response, Medvedev, Obama, and Sarkozy issued another joint declaration at the G8 summit in Muskoka, Ontario, calling on Sargsyan and Aliyev to “take the next step and complete the work on the Basic Principles to enable the drafting of a peace agreement to begin.” The three presidents continued, “We instruct our Ministers and Co-Chairs to work intensively to assist the two sides to overcome their differences in preparation for a joint meeting in Almaty on the margins of the OSCE Informal Ministerial.”¹⁷

At that ministerial meeting in Almaty, Mammadyarov and Nalbandyan met privately on July 16, and they met the next day with Lavrov, Kouchner, and US Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg. The high-level pressure produced no results. After the meeting Mammadyarov and Nalbandyan traded accusations of bad faith, and the mediators issued a joint statement, full of frustration, rebuking the sides in barely diplomatic language:¹⁸

[Lavrov, Kouchner, and Steinberg] reiterated that the elements articulated by Presidents Medvedev, Sarkozy, and Obama on July 10, 2009, at L'Aquila and repeated at Muskoka on June 26, 2010, must be the foundation of any fair and lasting settlement to the conflict. These proposed elements have been conceived as an integrated whole, and any attempt to select some elements over others would make it impossible to achieve a balanced solution.... [They] stressed that the efforts made so far by the parties to the conflict have not been sufficient to overcome their differences. They deplored recent developments which have increased tension in the region, including the serious armed incident of June 18–19, 2010, and inflammatory public statements. They warned that the use of force created the current situation, and its use again would only lead to suffering, devastation, and a legacy of conflict and hostility that would last for generations. They urged a greater spirit of compromise to reach agreement on a common basis for continuing the negotiations. Additional actions by the sides are needed to reinforce the cease-fire of 1994 and to create a more favorable atmosphere for further political dialogue and reaching agreements.... [Lavrov, Kouchner, and Steinberg] reiterated that the

primary responsibility to put an end to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict still remains with Azerbaijani and Armenian leaders.¹⁹

Eager to find deliverables for the next meeting Medvedev would host, Lavrov revealed on August 27 that Russia had proposed, and the other co-chairs had agreed, that the sides should sign a document comprising most of the Basic Principles with a notation that “two or three questions” remained unsettled and would be subject to further negotiation and with a further stipulation that “there will be no final agreement without these two questions.”²⁰ In addition, the co-chairs, also apparently looking for deliverables, visited the region from September 6 to 9 and undertook a fact-finding mission to the Armenian-controlled territories in October.²¹

In the event, the next meeting with Medvedev in Astrakhan on October 27, 2010, did produce a deliverable in the form of a brief joint statement that recognized the need for “further efforts to reinforce the cease-fire regime and confidence-building measures in the military field. [Aliyev and Sargsyan] agreed as a first step to carry out without delay an exchange of prisoners of war and the return of the bodies of those who died.”²² However, it is not clear that there was any substantive discussion of (let alone progress on) narrowing differences between the sides on the Madrid Principles or progress on signing those principles on which there was supposedly agreement. The Russians and the Minsk co-chairs followed up, hoping for a deliverable at the upcoming OSCE summit in December in Astana, the first OSCE summit in a decade and the first OSCE chairmanship in a former Soviet republic, for which the Russians had pressed hard. The Minsk co-chairs shuttled throughout the region in November, and Lavrov met with Mammadyarov and Nalbandyan in Moscow on November 22.²³

But the efforts were in vain. Sargsyan and Aliyev did not meet at the summit; instead, they traded bitter accusations and threats in their statements.²⁴ As a favor to their host, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, they produced a deliverable in the form of a statement signed by Aliyev, Sargsyan, Medvedev, French Prime Minister François Fillon, and US Secretary of State Clinton. But the statement was devoid of content: the signatories opined that peace was good but found anything much more specific too hard to include.²⁵

THE ROAD TO KAZAN

The Russians continued their efforts. Lavrov convened Mammadyarov and Nalbandyan in Moscow on January 24, 2011, to prepare for the next Medvedev-Aliyev-Sargsyan trilateral, which took place in Sochi on March 5. The notice on the Russian presidency's website archive reveals that they discussed the implementation of the prisoner and body exchanges they had agreed to (but evidently not carried out) at their previous meeting in Astrakhan. The deliverable this time was a brief joint statement committing Sargsyan and Aliyev to carrying out the prisoner exchange and investigating incidents along the line of contact "under the aegis of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and with the assistance of the Special Representative of the Chair-in-Office of the OSCE."²⁶ Ominously, there was no mention of the Madrid Principles, either in the report of the meeting on the Kremlin website or in the joint statement.

After that lack of results, and amid an increase in casualties along the line of contact, Medvedev and the other Minsk co-chairs made a last-ditch effort in the run-up to the next summit, to be held in Kazan in June 2011, to pressure Aliyev and Sargsyan to sign a document including those basic principles whose text had supposedly been agreed in previous meetings. Again, this would not have been a finalization of the Madrid Principles text, since "two or three" of the principles would be left open, with a notation that there would be no final agreement until the open issues were resolved. But it would have been a milestone that could keep the process going.

To that end, Lavrov convened Mammadyarov and Nalbandyan in Moscow on April 22 and again on June 11. Before the Kazan meeting, President Obama called Sargsyan and Aliyev, and Sarkozy sent them letters, both urging that they sign.²⁷ At the G8 summit in Deauville, France, on May 26, Medvedev, Obama, and Sarkozy issued a joint statement forcefully and repeatedly urging the sides to sign in Kazan the version of the Basic Principles that they had seen in Sochi and warning that "further delay would only call into question the commitment of the sides to reach an agreement."²⁸

But the Kazan summit was as clear a failure as the Key West and Rambouillet talks. A translation of the Russian-language joint

statement issued after the meeting reads in full:

The Presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Russian Federation met on June 24, 2011, in Kazan and reviewed the course of the work, per their instructions, aimed at agreement on a draft of the Basic Principles for a Karabakh resolution.

The Heads of State stated that they had achieved mutual understanding on a series of issues, the resolution of which would create conditions for the approval of the Basic Principles.

The Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia expressed their appreciation to the leaders of Russia, the US and France, as Co-Chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group, for their constant attention to the problem of a Karabakh resolution, and they highly valued the personal efforts of the President of the Russian Federation to assist in the achievement of an agreement.²⁹

After the meeting the sides traded accusations. Armenian Foreign Minister Nalbandyan accused the Azerbaijani side of reopening supposedly closed issues.³⁰ The charge may be true, as it meshes with Mammadyarov's accusation that the real problem was inflexibility and maximalism on the Armenian side.³¹ In any case, Mammadyarov had previously made the same charge of reopening closed issues against the Armenians. The Russian press reported that both sides were moving the goalposts: "There are issues of both a technical and fundamental character, such as the determination of the future status of Nagornyy Karabakh. But the problem is not in the disagreements themselves, but that the sides each changed their positions several times."³² Medvedev was reportedly ready to abandon his mediation efforts unless the sides showed greater willingness to solve problems.³³

Medvedev met with Sargsyan and Aliyev once more, in Sochi on January 23, 2012, but this meeting was a formality. The farewell character of the meeting was implicit in the wording of the joint declaration the presidents adopted: "The three heads of state noted the great amount of work that had been carried out on the settlement of the Nagornyy Karabakh conflict since the time of their meeting on 2 November 2008, when the Moscow Declaration was adopted."³⁴

That meeting marked the end of Medvedev's initiative. Already on September 24, 2011, he had announced publicly that Putin, not he,

would be running in the Russian presidential elections set for March 4, 2012. Putin had no need to establish himself as an international figure and saw no need to continue Medvedev's work. When he finally met with Aliyev and Sargsyan, on August 10, 2014, the world was a different place: Russian military actions in Ukraine had once again polarized the co-chair countries, as had Putin's successful pressuring of Sargsyan in 2013 to join Russia's Customs Union instead of accepting an EU association agreement. The Minsk Group might survive, but it was clear that Aliyev and Sargsyan were on their own.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The history is stark. From the beginning of the Karabakh conflict, every attempt at finding a political settlement through mediation has failed. Although mediation may have played an important role in keeping tensions under control and thereby maintaining the cease-fire, it has failed in its primary role of finding a durable political resolution. The only successful agreement between the sides has been the Bishkek cease-fire, and that was limited to military actions and signed when both sides were logistically unable to pursue the war further. The closest the sides ever came to a political agreement was the 1999 deal that Heydar Aliyev and Robert Kocharyan negotiated by themselves without mediation—and that failed owing to violence after the two presidents hinted that they were close to a solution and others learned what they were discussing. The only other time the leaders of both countries accepted a political settlement, in 1997, a coup displaced one of them.

Mediation has failed even though the building blocks of a settlement have been falling into place over the more than twenty years since the Bishkek cease-fire. In May 2014 US Minsk Group Co-Chair James Warlick gave a speech at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington listing six elements currently under discussion (and naming some others, such as the reopening of transportation and communications links). None of them is new:

- *“First,...determining [Karabakh’s] final status through a mutually agreed and legally binding expression of will in the future.”*¹ As we have seen, this has been under discussion since 2005 and is the most recent of the building blocks. The concept has been accepted, but the terminology, sequencing, and participation have never been agreed by the sides.

- “*Second,...an interim status [for Nagornyy Karabakh] that... provides guarantees for security and self-governance.*”²² This point was implicit in the Lisbon Statement of 1996 and was a major theme of the OSCE co-chair step-by-step plan of 1997, which was accepted by Ter-Petrosyan and Heydar Aliyev.
- “*Third,...the occupied territories...should be returned to Azerbaijan’s control.*”²³ This point has been under discussion and the subject of four UN Security Council resolutions since 1993. Again, the concept has been accepted but the sequencing and exact boundaries have not.
- “*Fourth,...a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh.*”²⁴ This concept has been accepted since at least 1996 and was explicitly included in the 1997 Minsk co-chair plan accepted by Aliyev and Ter-Petrosyan. It was also the heart of the territorial swap plan agreed to by Aliyev and Kocharyan in 1999.
- “*Fifth,...the right of all IDPs and refugees to return to their former places of residence.*”²⁵ This has been a building block since 1997, but its scope has never been spelled out, let alone accepted. Even the 1997 plan only called for future negotiations on the return of refugees driven out of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the earliest days of the conflict.
- “*Sixth,...international security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation.*”²⁶ As a concept, this has been accepted since 1992. In the last decade, the major power rivalries that infused this argument gave way to a consensus that the operation would not include co-chair or neighboring countries (i.e., it would exclude Russia, France, the United States, Turkey, and Iran). But this consensus could at any moment fall victim to current tensions between Russia and the West.

Thus the building blocks of the outline of a settlement have all been under discussion for at least a decade, and some for two decades. In their broadest outlines, they have been accepted by both Azerbaijan and Armenia, and though the two sides have very different conceptions of more fine-grained solutions, no alternatives have been put forth in the last decade. Nonetheless, all attempts to mediate have ended in failure.

That does not mean that mediation *cannot* work, only that it has not. The leaders of the two countries agreed on one mediated approach, the 1997 Minsk co-chair “step-by-step” proposal, and taken along with the 1999 agreement worked out by the leaders themselves, it is clear that there are a number of variants that can appeal equally to the leaders of both sides. Both of those agreements ultimately failed because of violence or the threat of violence against anyone on the Armenian side who supported or potentially supported the agreements.

That violence leads to the first lesson learned: the most potent factor in the failure of negotiations has been, and remains, that no one has prepared the Azerbaijani, Armenian, or Karabakhi populations for compromise, or indeed for anything but total victory. In consequence, the leaders fear that compromise can lead to catastrophe for themselves personally. The primary responsibility and accountability lie with those same leaders, who with very few exceptions have led their people to believe that victory without compromise is achievable. The people have drawn the logical conclusion that if a solution is reached that does not achieve their maximalist demands, then it is because their leaders have failed to negotiate competently, or because they have been corrupted or have turned traitor. In a very real sense, the leaders, by being dishonest with their own people, have painted themselves into a corner.

Can the mediators help the leaders be honest with their own people? It is clear that “political cover” is essential for the success of any agreement and that political cover for a leader is most effective when provided by large and powerful outside powers such as Russia, France, and the United States. An Armenian or Azerbaijani president who compromises can point to the Minsk Group and say to his people, “We know that this compromise is hard to accept, but the international community has put its weight behind it.” It is this political cover that Heydar Aliyev was seeking when he revealed the 1997 OSCE proposals in his speech in Washington and when he took the United States into his confidence in 1999. It is one thing to have experts from the Minsk Group turn an oral agreement into a written treaty, but it is much more significant to have something on the table that comes from the United States, Russia, and France.

The political cover of the international community, however, only goes so far. It was useful to Heydar Aliyev, who did not need to worry about losing power because of an unpopular compromise. But his son Ilham does need to worry, as would—all the more so—any Armenian leader faced with irredentist organizations that have in the past resorted to lethal violence over this issue and whose members believe passionately that “Armenians who deny the fundamental historical role of Karabakh in Armenian *national* history are...traitors to the Armenian nation.”⁷

Mediators have been willing to provide political cover, but they have tended to focus, understandably enough, on inducing the leaders to accept a peace agreement first, believing that the time to give political cover would come after there was something to cover. This attitude began to change with the Madrid Principles, whose nature as a halfway stage to a full agreement was designed to allow the populaces to get used to the idea of compromise. It is not clear, however, whether any work was actually done before Medvedev’s initiative to change public hostility to compromise. Medvedev made a real effort to provide political cover by giving Aliyev and Sargsyan the royal treatment throughout his initiative. This may have been primarily to induce the two to agree on basic principles, but it also had the effect of providing political cover in advance—though we never got the chance to see whether that would have been sufficient to stave off a resort to violence by the disaffected. One lesson for mediators is that the star power of very senior officials should be used from the start as a way of providing political cover, not to try to dazzle the sides into an agreement.

WHAT HAS WORKED ELSEWHERE?

When we look at attempts to mediate settlements for analogous conflicts, we see precious few successes. “Analogous” may be in the eye of the beholder, but for the purposes of this study the analogies must be to ethnic or quasi-ethnic conflicts with an international (i.e., not purely domestic) aspect, taking place in a relatively similar political/cultural context (thus excluding, for example, Sudan, Eritrea, and Southeast Asia). Clearly the other three “frozen conflicts” mentioned previously, Transdnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, can be considered analogous, as can Cyprus, Chechnya, Northern

Ireland, the Balkans, and Israel-Palestine, to which we can now add the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine.

The three other “frozen conflicts” present no more success for international mediators than Karabakh. Transnistria has only been close to resolution once, when Moscow, circumventing the multilateral mediation it was part of, made a unilateral deal with the Communist leader of Moldova, Vladimir Voronin. Voronin ultimately refused to sign under Western pressure, popular discontent, and the example of watching Eduard Shevardnadze’s overthrow in Georgia, as it unfolded just as the Transnistria settlement was due to be signed. Not long thereafter, official negotiations broke off, resuming only in 2011. Neither South Ossetia (with OSCE-led mediation) nor Abkhazia (with UN-led mediation) was ever close to resolution before the 2008 war, and the recognition of the two separatist polities by Russia marked the definitive end, for the foreseeable future, of prospects for real negotiations over a political resolution.

Especially in these “frozen conflicts,” the cycle of expectations mentioned at the beginning of this study has taken hold: all parties share an expectation that there will be no resolution in the foreseeable future, *and they have adapted to that expectation*. Politicians in these conflicts view negotiations not as an investment in a solution but as an arena for scoring points, impressing patrons, and posturing to build a political career, while criminals and shady dealers (some of them doubling as politicians) capitalize on the contraband potential of the frozen situation for economic gain.

Chechnya and the Balkan conflicts were resolved through massive military intervention and occupation. The final resolution to the former was based on a direct and very personal arrangement, without mediation, between Russian President Putin and Ahmad-Haji Kadyrov, the leader he installed in power—an arrangement inherited by Kadyrov’s son Ramzan. The various Balkan conflicts ended after an overwhelming Western military effort, without which no negotiated solution might have been reached. The Israel-Palestine conflict has, over the course of two-thirds of a century, seen a number of mediated agreements that required truly massive commitments of political resources and funds from a large number of countries and international organizations; notable among these were the Oslo Accords of

1993 and 1995. Yet a comprehensive settlement of the basic conflict appears no closer to reality than in 1948.

The Cyprus conflict presents a surprisingly close analogy to Karabakh, especially in the separation of the two ethnic groups and the idea that the “other” had no place on the territory. The Annan Plan, mediated between 1999 and 2004 through negotiations without preconditions, was the model of what a mediation effort should be: serious, confidential, and resulting in a detailed, comprehensive document. It was, however, the victim of bad timing: both sides were still dominated by an older generation that had entrenched itself into the stasis resulting from the protracted conflict and had made its political career on the preservation of that stasis. The Turkish Cypriots did not elect a leader born after 1935 until 2005, nor did the Greek Cypriots until 2008. In the 2004 referendum, the leaders of both sides campaigned for a “no” vote.

The Northern Ireland conflict, also surprisingly close to Karabakh in its deeper dynamics, is the only other success for mediation that did not depend on massive military operations. The 1993 Downing Street Declaration marking the public start of negotiations was preceded by long, secret negotiations in which the issues were crystallized. The declaration launched multiparty talks—of necessity less secret than the previous talks, since they involved two sovereign governments and eight local political groupings—that led to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

Confidentiality, indeed, is the common factor in the cases of the success or even partial success of mediation. Secrecy underpinned the success in Northern Ireland, the progress in Cyprus, and the hopes represented by the Oslo process for Israel/Palestine. In the final analysis, the erosion of secrecy in Karabakh negotiations led directly to the failure of the OSCE step-by-step plan in 1997 and of the Aliyev-Kocharyan land-swap plan in 1999, which were the two attempts at peacemaking that came closest to success. Should mediation succeed in Karabakh, or in any of the unresolved conflicts mentioned above, it will not be a case of “open covenants, openly arrived at.”

The Cyprus and Northern Ireland conflicts share one other characteristic that will apply to any successful negotiation in Karabakh

or the other frozen conflicts: sustained effort over many years. Each of the successful negotiation campaigns took years to result in long, detailed plans that were truly comprehensive. There is no shortcut to peace.

TACTICS THAT DO NOT WORK

Though the primary responsibility for the failure of negotiations to date rests with the leaders of the parties to the conflict, not every tactic used by the mediators was wise. In particular, four tactics used by mediators have met with a notable lack of success both in the Karabakh conflict and in other conflicts mentioned above.

“WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY”

Throughout the history recounted in this study, mediators have tried to use “forcing events” to persuade the sides to agree to a document. They have pointed to elections in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Karabakh, the United States, Russia, and other entities, or to international gatherings, such as OSCE summits, as events that impose a rhythm onto mediation efforts. This tactic is used to spur agreement on something before the forcing event occurs—during the “window of opportunity.” Otherwise that window will close, and everyone will have to wait until the next one opens. We have only mentioned one time the phrase was used (2008), but it has been used often since the beginning of international mediation.

The sides rightly understand that a “window of opportunity” affects not them but the mediators. No rational Azerbaijani or Armenian leader will agree to concessions just because the mediators will find it inconvenient to mediate during election season in countries X, Y, or Z or because the mediators will have nothing to report at a summit in capital A or a ministerial meeting in capital B. Rather, it turns the mediators into *demandeurs* begging the sides to throw them a bone. The present author has heard mediators using the phrase time and again with regard to any number of conflicts, with no observed instance of positive results.

“POLITICAL WILL”

Mediators of all stripes regularly call on the parties in this and other conflicts to show “political will” without defining what they mean by

the term, as if it were self-explanatory. The parties, free to devise their own definitions, interpret the phrase to mean the following: “Make the concessions that we, the mediators, demand of you despite the opposition that you know those concessions will engender in your own people, potentially resulting in your political or physical death.” To be successful, therefore, mediators have one overriding imperative: to show the leaders that they can survive a display of “political will.”

One way of doing that is to outline the tangible benefits that the people would see from a particular peace deal, benefits that can offset opposition to compromise. Most of the compromises that have been discussed give the Azerbaijanis something that they can show their people to offset negative reactions. Perhaps the prospect of returning to Shusha is over the horizon, but Azerbaijani leaders could point to the return of internally displaced persons to Ağdam, Füzuli, Jebrayil, Qubadli, and Zangelan as a concrete accomplishment. For the Armenians, the offsets are less concrete, including such gains as internationally recognized status, international security and other guarantees, opening up to the outside world, the opening of trade links, and so forth. For a people who feel that the international order has persecuted them, deprived them of their rightful place, and confined them to an “Indian reservation,” the idea of depending upon the international community is no great attraction. Nagorny Karabakh may not have won internationally guaranteed security, economic prosperity, or a “normal” life on the battlefield, but neither are the Armenians, especially members of the Diaspora who do not live in either Karabakh or Armenia, convinced that they need to give tangible concessions to gain these things. For any peace deal to work, the parties’ leaders must be able to show suspicious populaces that the gains are worth the concessions.

“LEGACY”

When Heydar Aliyev’s health was in decline, mediators talked to him of the “legacy” he would leave behind, implying that he should want to be remembered as the man who brought peace to his country. The mediators have since reiterated this argument to all the other leaders, asking them to take risks for the sake of a peace that would establish their reputations worldwide. Ironically, even without appeals to his legacy, Heydar Aliyev was the most willing to make peace of all the

participants in the history of the conflict. Unaffected by sentiment for Karabakh, his only priority was to ensure that Karabakh did not destroy his reign as it destroyed those of the Azerbaijani leaders before him. The only way he saw to ensure that was to secure peace on terms that gave him even a minimum of material with which to win over the Azerbaijani population.

Other leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia, more sentimentally attached to their national cause and less secure in their control, have had a different concept of legacy. Their concern has been to ensure that their legacy is not the shame of being recorded in their country's history as the national traitor. This concern goes hand-in-hand with the struggle for political and physical survival embodied in the phrase "political will." The leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia know that the victors write the history. If they can survive politically, they can influence history to be kind to their "legacy." But if they do not survive, they will be reviled forever. Appealing to legacy evokes not what they can accomplish, but what they fear.

"DAYTON"

The success of the Dayton Accords process for Bosnia and Herzegovina left many with the idea that if the great powers can herd the belligerents in one of the frozen conflicts into one room and keep them there in a marathon negotiating session chaired by an internationally authoritative figure, the sides will sooner or later make the necessary concessions. This was the idea behind the Minsk Group talks in Key West and, modified somewhat, the Medvedev initiative.

This approach is problematic. First, the Dayton process took place after the collapse of the Soviet Union left the United States with an undisputed political and military superiority that it used in a massive operation to force the Serbs to make peace. The Dayton talks were held against the backdrop of a NATO air campaign against Bosnian Serb targets, a land offensive by strongly reinforced Croat and Bosniak troops, and the threat of unrestricted NATO air and potentially ground intervention. Those circumstances will not recur. The talks took place after the Srebrenica massacre eroded any lingering great power support for the Bosnian Serbs. And US envoy Richard Holbrooke could use American power and prestige to keep represen-

tatives of all other Contact Group countries cooped up in a separate venue while he conducted his own negotiations without oversight or interference; non-US representatives were allowed to meet en masse with the sides once per day, in what one NATO-country representative compared to the daily viewing of animals at a zoo. It is hard to see any of these factors obtaining in the foreseeable future.

Second, as senior statesmen from Colin Powell to Dmitriy Medvedev have learned, star power cannot dazzle the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders into concessions that they view as unsustainable in domestic politics (for the Armenians, that includes Diaspora politics). When the former Yugoslav republics negotiated at Dayton, the military engagement by NATO made all sides accept NATO's outlines for a peace plan; that engagement also meant that outside powers enforced the internal political sustainability of the settlement. For Karabakh, there is at present no politically sustainable outline, even though the building blocks of a settlement have been falling into place over the decades since the cease-fire of 1994. On the Armenian side, it is not, at least for now, sustainable to agree to withdraw from occupied territories unless Karabakh first gains international recognition, either as an independent state or as a part of Armenia. For Azerbaijan, it is not, at least for now, sustainable to agree to a referendum that limits participation to an overwhelmingly Armenian electorate. In addition, most countries—not just the belligerents—would reject the prospect of imposition by an outside power.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mediators coming for the first time to a conflict such as Karabakh are tempted to believe that not everything has been tried, that all who came before were missing some important piece of the puzzle, and that there is an Alexandrine sword, if only they can find it, that can cut through the Gordian knot. Clearly, this is not the case. Mediators have not all been feckless, unwise, or ignorant for all these years. It is the parties who have refused to make peace, for reasons that we have outlined, and those reasons boil down to one word: survivability. The leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia must believe that they *personally* will survive an agreement. Laying the groundwork for survival is not a task they can begin once they sign an agreement; it is a task they need to begin now by preparing their peoples for compromise.

Acknowledging the importance of personal survival does not mean to ignore or minimize the very real difficulties. Overcoming these is easier to do on the Azerbaijani side, where (for the moment, anyway) Ilham Aliyev has first and foremost his own clan to deal with and only secondarily a populace with a weak domestic political opposition and no foreign diaspora. It is harder on the Armenian side. Serzh Sargsyan must take into account the aggrieved and irredentist nationalism of his own population, as well as the even more aggrieved and irredentist nationalism of the Diaspora. In the past, opposition to compromise has expressed itself in terrorism and assassination.

Mediators must understand that creating political cover for compromise and convincing leaders that compromise is survivable are long-term projects. Until the final breakthrough occurs, progress will be in millimeters. Mediators should remember that the sides now have long experience in prevarication, manipulation, and the imposition of “non-negotiable principles.” Wherever these are not just crude bargaining positions, they mask the sides’ estimation that compromises under discussion are not survivable.

After the failure of the Medvedev initiative, Aliyev and Sargsyan began to talk without outside mediation, and that is a good sign. They know better than any mediator what they can sell to their people. Until Aliyev and Sargsyan (or their successors) come up with some ideas for a political settlement, the mediators should focus on political cover, helping the leaders to start preparing their peoples for compromise through public policy. This is especially relevant for the large Armenian Diaspora populations of the three co-chair countries. While most traditional confidence-building measures have been vetoed by one or both sides, regional track II approaches involving members of the Armenian Diaspora, Turkey, and Azerbaijan may help to humanize the opposing sides for one another.

Two other countries can play a part in making a future peace plan attractive, though for obvious reasons they cannot be involved in mediation: Turkey and Iran. Turkish reconciliation with Armenia and Armenians—without or with reduced linkage to the Karabakh conflict—can help to ease regional tensions, increase the number of “vectors” in Armenia’s “multi-vectoral” foreign policy, and help neutralize the visceral irredentism of the Dashnak-led Diaspora,

which fuels opposition to any compromise on Karabakh. But both Turkish and Armenian memories and prejudices are slow to fade, and both sides are hampered by the willingness of a few to commit acts of terrorism that keep passions high among the many. Perhaps the best long-term approach would be traditional confidence- and security-building measures, including expanded programs of track II exchanges. The failure of the initial effort that began in the wake of the Hrant Dink murder shows that faster and more comprehensive approaches provoke overwhelming opposition.

The involvement of Iran is fraught with both problems and promise. Dealing with Iran remains—as the Russian adage about the Orient has it—a “delicate matter.” For obvious reasons, there can be no implied linkage to the recently signed agreement on nuclear issues. Rather, Iran has an incentive to contribute to efforts to resolve a problem on its own borders, expanding linkages both for itself and for the South Caucasus. To be sure, sanctions, especially for the United States, are not based on nuclear issues alone, but on other arms-control issues and support for terrorism. For the present, that closes off one avenue to cooperation on Karabakh: a partnership association with the OSCE. But if these problems can be resolved, Iran has much to offer, both in negotiating with two peoples with whom it has extensive historical ties and present commerce and in providing infrastructure for settlement mechanisms.

As we have seen, finding a lasting peace in the Karabakh conflict is not a matter of finding a *deus ex machina*, dazzling leaders with the flattery of the powerful, or exhorting them with buzzword clichés such as “legacy” and “political will.” The focus generated by international mediation may have succeeded in deterring the parties from resuming large-scale armed hostilities, and this may in itself justify all the efforts of the mediators; but the mediation has failed in its primary goal of resolving the conflict. The mediators can best influence the issue by addressing a clear message to the leaders: the international community is here to help, to provide political cover, and even to serve as a scapegoat if that is what they need, but ultimately it is the leaders who need to work out a sustainable peace for themselves and a normal life for their countries.

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The sources for a significant part of the study have been the author's personal experiences, conversations, notes, and documents. Other original documents, such as UN Security Council resolutions, statements, drafts, and reports, are cited in the text.

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- EurasiaNet (eurasianet.org)
- Garabagh.net (Azerbaijan)
- Hetq.am (Armenia)
- Heydar Aliyev Heritage Research Center (aliyevheritage.org)
- Institute for War and Peace Reporting (iwpr.net)
- Interfax (interfax.ru)
- International Crisis Group (including CrisisWatch database) (crisiswatch.org)
- Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (jamestown.org)
- *Kavkazskiy Uzel* (kavkaz-uzel.ru)
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Endnotes

INTRODUCTION

1. A note on methodology: The source material for this study derives from the author's personal participation in the peace process, contacts, conversations with other participants, and published sources. The author uses the terms "personal conversation" and "personal observation" to denote conversations and events at which he was present, though not necessarily as a principal. The author's interpretations may be at variance with those of other participants and with the nationalist narratives that have clashed both in the conflict itself and in efforts to resolve it.
2. See text box "Note on Terminology and Orthography" following introduction.
3. There is no need to duplicate the masterly work of Thomas de Waal, whose book *Black Garden* will serve as the seminal reference on the conflict for years to come. This report investigates aspects that were outside the parameters of de Waal's book. See de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).
4. See de Waal, *Black Garden*.

CHAPTER ONE

1. This was, for instance, a theme of US analyst Paul Goble during the final few years of the Soviet Union.
2. Note that some countries, including the US, never recognized the Soviet annexation of the three Baltic states in 1940.
3. The Russian word "natsional'nost'" is a false cognate: it usually means ethnic group, not nationality as understood in English. However, in Western scholarship the word "nationality" has taken hold as its translation, for better or worse, and that is how it is used in this book.
4. The Nakhchivan ASSR was an exception. Its titular nationality was the same as the Union Republic's (i.e., Azerbaijani) owing to Nakhchivan's

exceptional circumstances as an exclave of Azerbaijan surrounded by Armenia and created by an international arrangement (the Treaty of Kars).

5. “Dagestan” is Perso-Turkic for “Land of Mountains” and does not refer to any ethnic group.
6. David Laitin and Ronald Grigor Suny, “Armenia and Azerbaijan: Thinking a Way Out of Karabakh,” *Middle East Policy* 7, no. 1 (1999), p. 148.
7. Armenica.org and the Union of Armenian Associations in Sweden, “The Conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh,” n.d., available at www.mountainous-karabakh.org/chronology_1921-86.html#21 .
8. In 1918 the newly established independent governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia signed the Treaty of Batum with the Ottomans, essentially recognizing the borders set by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as applying to the successor states of the Caucasus. When Turkish nationalist forces (those loyal to Mustafa Kemal, later Atatürk, and the Grand National Assembly, later forming the Republic of Turkey) replaced Ottoman armies, they signed the Treaty of Alexandropol (1920) with Armenia. After the Bolsheviks suppressed the new independent republics and installed Soviet regimes, the Turkish Grand National Assembly forces signed the Treaty of Moscow (1921) with Soviet Russia and the Treaty of Kars (1921) with the new Soviet republics of the Caucasus. The borders set in the Treaties of Moscow and Kars are the ones in place today.
9. Audrey Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), pp. 122, 168.
10. Personal conversation, Yerevan, 1996.
11. His official biographies, however, claim that he was born in Nakhchivan.
12. By and large, post-Soviet Armenians in Tbilisi could speak Georgian, but fewer could in Javakheti.
13. Armenians and Turks in general have different perceptions of the events of 1915 and thereafter and have made the current evaluation of those events—and especially the use of the term “genocide”—a mutually exclusive litmus test. *This study is not about the events of 1915 or that controversy*. However, the attitudes of Armenians—in Armenia, Karabakh, and throughout the Diaspora—toward the Karabakh conflict

are infused with the perception of centuries of victimization, culminating in what Armenians unanimously call genocide; those attitudes, and their effects upon the peace process, are significant for this study.

14. For example, the founder of the Safavid dynasty of Iran, Shah Isma‘il, was also one of the founders of Azerbaijani poetry, with his *Divan-i Khata‘i*. He wrote in the dialect of the central and eastern Anatolian tribes that had conquered Iran in previous generations and formed the Qaraqyunlu and Aqqyunlu states out of which the Safavids emerged. In contrast, the Soviet-era designated “national poet” of Azerbaijan, Nizami of Ganja, wrote poetry almost exclusively in Persian (the literary language of Azerbaijan before the large Oghuz Turkish population influx of the thirteenth century), as did Shah Isma‘il’s nemesis, the Ottoman Sultan Selim I.
15. See Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe: Armenians and Turks in the Shadow of Genocide* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015).
16. Gerard J. Libaridian, ed., *Armenia at the Crossroads: Democracy and Nationhood in the Post-Soviet Era* (Watertown, MA: Blue Crane Books, 1991), p. 7. This was not a new split; the Armenian nationalist hero Andranik Ozanian refused to recognize the First Armenian Republic after it signed the Treaty of Batum with Ottoman Turkey in 1918. The treaty recognized Turkish sovereignty over the easternmost provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Since then, irredentists in the Armenian Diaspora have looked to the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire, as the “rightful” treaty, since it carved out large parts of the Ottomans for an independent Armenia. However, the treaty was rejected by the Turkish nationalist forces of Mustafa Kemal and the Grand National Assembly, which struggled successfully against the Allied occupation, the Ottoman regime under Allied tutelage, and a Greek invasion, in the Turkish War of Independence (*Kurtuluş Savaşı*). The Grand National Assembly signed the Treaty of Kars (1921; see above) with the Soviets and the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) with the Allies; those treaties recognized the borders in place today.
17. For example, see Gerard J. Libaridian, *The Challenge of Statehood: Armenian Political Thinking since Independence* (Watertown, MA: Blue Crane Books, 1999) for a close analysis informed by Libaridian’s own experience as adviser to post-Soviet Armenia’s first president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan.

CHAPTER TWO

1. See Armenica.org and the Union of Armenian Associations in Sweden website, “The Conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh,” available at www.mountainous-karabakh.org.
2. Karabakh-Armenian envoys also traveled to Moscow from November to December 1987 to seek support from Armenians in Gorbachev’s ruling circle, according to Georgi M. Derluguian in his book *Bourdieu’s Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 191–192. Derluguian’s overall analysis is debatable, but he reports this as what Robert Kocharyan told him in a 1994 interview.
3. The Ukrainian movement Rukh, for example, was not founded until September 1989, nearly two years after clashes started in Karabakh.
4. Yazidis are a non-Muslim Kurdish-speaking people defined by their own religion. Their communal and religious centers are in Iraq’s Shekhan region. Nearly 40,000 may still live in Armenia.
5. “All-Soviet Population Census of 1979: Ethnic Composition in the Republics of the USSR,” available at demoscope.ru.
6. Personal conversations, Baku and Kalaki, 1992–1993.
7. Personal conversation, place and date omitted to protect source.
8. Personal conversations and observation, Kazakh-Ijevan region, December 1992.
9. Personal conversation, Yerevan, 1993.
10. See Wikipedia, “Operation Nemesis,” available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Nemesis.
11. Personal conversation, Yerevan, 1993.
12. For example, the Abu Nidal Organization was founded in 1974, the year before the establishment of ASALA and JCAG and similarly engaged in airport terrorist attacks.
13. ASALA newsletter sent to the author in early 1987.
14. Something of a misnomer in that, as one OSCE official noted, it is not the conflicts that are frozen—it is their peace processes.
15. Personal conversation, Tbilisi, 2001.
16. One other coincidence linking Karabakh to Abkhazia is the participa-

tion of the Russian-trained fighter, freebooter, and later Chechen nationalist and terrorist Shamil Basayev in both conflicts. Basayev fought for the Azerbaijanis in Shusha before its fall, after which he moved on to join other North Caucasians supporting the Abkhaz fight against the Georgians. Personal conversation, Groznyy, 1995.

17. Catherine Dale, unpublished manuscript.
18. The Miatsum slogan calling for the unification of Nagorny Karabakh with Armenia was dropped shortly after independence, as unification with an independent Armenia would indeed have constituted annexation and caused problems for Armenia with its foreign partners.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Personal observation, Groznyy, 1995.
2. The term “blockade” has often been misused in this conflict. When used accurately, the term refers to an act of war: the interdiction of all traffic to and from an enemy, as in the Union’s *blockade* of the Confederacy during the American Civil War. One entity’s ban on trade from or through its own territory to another entity (as, for example, the US imposed on Cuba) is an embargo, not a blockade. The embargoes and border closures Turkey and Azerbaijan imposed on the Republic of Armenia are often referred to, incorrectly, as a “blockade.” To be a blockade, Turkey and/or Azerbaijan would have to attempt to interdict shipments going to and from Armenia via Georgia and Iran and by air. In fact, Turkey is a significant trading partner of Armenia and makes no attempt to block the cargoes shipped via truck from Turkey to Armenia through Georgia. There is no blockade of Armenia. However, the Azerbaijani attempt to interdict shipments to and from Karabakh in 1988 does fit the definition of a blockade.
3. De Waal, *Black Garden*, p. 70.
4. Libaridian, *Armenia at the Crossroads*; Libaridian, *The Challenge of Statehood*.
5. The *coup de main* tactic was part of Soviet military doctrine. The Soviet Army had used it successfully the previous April to quell unrest in Tbilisi by sending in tanks in a show of strength and scattering the mutinous populace by demonstratively scattering fire through the town. After similar success in Baku, the army tried this tactic once again in Groznyy, Chechnya, on New Year’s Eve 1994–1995 with less successful results.

6. Tats are not to be confused with Azerbaijan's Mountain Jews, whom Muscovites incorrectly call "Tats." Both speak forms of Persian. Some Tats are descended from Mountain Jews who converted to Islam in the eighteenth century.
7. Libaridian, *Armenia at the Crossroads*, pp. 47–50.
8. Typically, losses from military stores would be covered up by "accidental" explosions that destroyed the remaining inventory and left it impossible to determine what had been in the stores at the time of the "accident." A spate of such explosions occurred in Soviet military stores in the Caucasus in the early 1990s.
9. Personal conversation, Ağdam, 1992.
10. Personal observation, Mardakert, July 1992.
11. De Waal, *Black Garden*, p. 208.
12. From "fidā'ī" (vernacular plural "fidā'iyīn"), Arabic for a person who sacrifices himself and Ottoman Turkish for a volunteer for a dangerous cause. The title was adopted by Armenian pro-independence fighters in Ottoman times.
13. Conversation with Scott Horton, 2015.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Neither of these terms was further defined, and although the "enactments" presumably included acts by the Armenian and Nagornyy Karabakh Supreme Soviets, there was no definition of which constitution was referenced or which bodies of power were legitimate and where they held authority.
2. This can be seen as a functional successor to Vol'skiy's Special Administrative Committee.
3. For example, on December 26, 1993, a Russian military transport crashed in Armenia. It turned out that most of the victims were civilians who were using the military plane as an informal airline service.
4. In 2014, Armenia welcomed Russia's annexation of the Crimea. One factor may have been that Russia's action undermined the commitments undertaken by the CIS countries, including Armenia, in the Alma-Ata Declaration.

5. The Baltic states, whose annexation by the USSR had not been recognized by the United States and others, had already joined the CSCE on September 10, 1991, and the UN on September 17, 1991. Russia, as successor to the USSR, took over the Soviet Union's accession dates of October 24, 1945 (UN), and June 25, 1973 (CSCE). Belarus and Ukraine took over the UN seats they had held as Union Republics from the foundation of the organization on October 24, 1945. Georgia, wracked by internal upheavals, only joined the CSCE on March 24, 1992, and the UN on July 31, 1992.
6. De Waal, *Black Garden*, p. 171.
7. Personal observation and conversations on the front line, April 1992.
8. Conversations with medical students in Baku at the time indicated that they were expected to pay hefty bribes both to gain entry into medical school and, after that, to receive passing grades from their professors throughout their academic careers.
9. Personal observation, Ağdam and Baku, April 1992.
10. Population estimates of the ethnic Armenians vary greatly, especially as many emigrated following the Islamic Revolution of 1979; before that their numbers were estimated at between 300,000 and 800,000. Azeris are Iran's largest ethnic minority, estimated at between 12 and 20 million. The lands that now make up much of the Republic of Azerbaijan were for most of history sub-provinces of Azerbaijan proper, the classical province of Atropatene, now centered on the city of Tabriz in Iran. The Safavid dynasty originated in Ardabil, close to today's border between Iran and Azerbaijan; it ruled Iran from 1501 to 1722, established Shia Islam as the official religion, and has remained the country's strongest cultural influence in the last millennium. Numerous prominent Iranian historical figures, including today's Supreme Leader Sayyid Ali Khamenei, have had ethnic Azerbaijani backgrounds.
11. For example, see Libaridian, *Armenia at the Crossroads*, p. 49.
12. Visits in 1992 to mosques in northwestern Azerbaijan, where many inhabitants are Sunnis, indicated that Sunnis and Shia were sharing mosques. They were aware of the labels as vague identity affiliations but mostly ignorant of the underlying religious differences.
13. Ali Abasov and Haroutiun Khachatryan, *The Karabakh Conflict, Variants of Settlement: Concepts and Reality*, 3rd ed. (Baku-Yerevan, 2006), Appendix 3.

14. Personal observation.
15. Personal observation near Mardakert, July 1992.
16. De Waal, *Black Garden*, p. 209.
17. Known in Russian as “Посредническая миссия России по Нагорному Карабаху.” See V. N. Kazimirov, *Мир Карабаху: К Анатомии Урегулирования* [Peace for Karabakh: Toward the Anatomy of a Resolution] (Moscow, 2009), available at vn.kazimirov.ru .
18. The Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs had, naturally, no diplomats who dealt with Soviet republics, those being domestic affairs. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the new Russian ministry had no one to deal with Russia’s new neighbors. At the same time, it had excess personnel from downsizing formerly Soviet embassies in Africa, which had been very large as part of Cold War competition with the West. Many Russian diplomats with African experience were assigned to the newly independent states.
19. Personal conversation, Baku, 1992.
20. UN Security Council Resolution 822 (April 30, 1993), UN Doc. S/RES/822.
21. Daniel Sneider, “A US-Turkish-Russian Plan May Halt Karabakh Fighting,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 13, 1993.
22. Personal conversation, Baku, 1993.
23. Personal conversation, Baku, 1993.
24. Personal conversation, Baku, 1994.
25. Personal observation, Baku, 1993.
26. Personal conversation, Nakhchivan, 1993.
27. Personal conversation with Sıtkı Aslan, governor of Kars province, February 1993.
28. Personal conversation, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 1993.
29. Paraphrase from a personal conversation, Demirel adviser.
30. Kazimirov, *Мир Карабаху*. This was not the first such communication. Prior to the summer of 1992, there had been direct radio telephone communication between Azerbaijani and Armenian commanders in Ağdam and Nakhchivan. Personal observation, Ağdam, April 1992.

31. Grapes from the entire region, both lowland and upland, were sent to Ağdam to be made into wine, and in Soviet times the town gave its name to a particularly foul sweet white wine, popular among alcoholics throughout the USSR. Karabakhi negotiators later cited its poor quality as evidence of Azerbaijan's exploitation of Karabakh.
32. Now for the first time being called the "Minsk Group," although its formal designation only came in December 1994; the earlier Resolution 822 had only mentioned the CSCE "framework." See UN Security Council Resolution 853 (July 29, 1993), UN Doc. S/RES/853.
33. Turkey was given an official role in Nakhchivan by the Treaty of Kars, and an Armenian attack against it would have risked a major Turkish retaliation.
34. UN Security Council Resolution 874 (October 14, 1993), UN Doc. S/RES/874.
35. De Waal, *Black Garden*, p. 238.
36. UN Security Council Resolution 884 (November 12, 1993), UN Doc. S/RES/884.
37. See Hayk Demoyan, *The Islamic Mercenaries in the Karabakh War* (Yerevan, 2004), p. 9. Demoyan adduces no evidence to support his speculation that Afghanistan veteran Arabs were among the mujahidin who came to Azerbaijan, nor have we seen such evidence (or indeed speculation) anywhere else. That there were Afghan mujahidin in Baku is attested by numerous press reports of the time and by the personal observation of the present author, who saw a planeload of them debark. They were also to be seen in bars in Baku, not an activity one associates with mujahidin; this may indicate how serious these particular Afghans were as a combat force.
38. Kazimirov, *Мир Карабаху*.
39. Heydar Aliyev, speech at the CIS summit, Moscow, April 15, 1994.
40. The UN subsequently created an observer mission—the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG)—through UN Security Council Resolution 858 (1993) to observe the operations of the CIS peacekeeping force. UNOMIG's mandate was linked to the existence of the CIS peacekeeping force.
41. Personal conversations with Azerbaijani officials, Baku, 1993–1994.
42. See Kazimirov, "Бишкекский Протокол," [The Bishkek Protocol] in

Мир Карабаху. Note that Kazimirov here implies that Armenia's rejection of Turkish peacekeepers was legitimate but that Azerbaijan's rejection of Russian peacekeepers was not.

43. Aliyev, speech at the CIS summit, Moscow, April 15, 1994. Aliyev claimed the Azerbaijanis repelled the attacks.
44. In fact, the line in the protocol that Jalilov signed was marked "Rasul Quliyev, Chairman of Parliament," but Quliyev did not go (he probably did not want to have his name on the paper, though Kazimirov says it was because Aliyev was away from Azerbaijan at a NATO function, leaving Quliyev in charge); Jalilov was both the next highest-ranking parliamentarian and absolutely loyal to Aliyev.
45. Kazimirov, "Бишкекский Протокол," in *Мир Карабаху*. It should be noted that Russian Defense Minister Grachev was widely quoted in Azerbaijan as having said, with regard to CIS forces, "The CIS—that is Russia." Azerbaijani fears of a CIS peacekeeping force were homegrown, not imposed by the West.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. E-mail to author from Wayne Merry, the US diplomat who facilitated the meeting, 2015.
2. CSCE, *Budapest Document 1994*, Decisions, December 21, 1994, p. 5.
3. Abasov and Khachatryan, *The Karabakh Conflict*, Appendix 13, p. 107.
4. *Ibid.*, Appendix 12, p. 105.
5. All members of the Finnish team remained active in the diplomacy of the region: Minsk Conference Co-Chair Heikki Talvitie, who had been Finland's ambassador in Moscow, was later the EU special representative for the South Caucasus and special envoy of the OSCE chair-in-office for conflict resolution; Minsk Group Co-Chair René Nyberg was later appointed ambassador to Russia; Christer Michelsson was later ambassador to Ukraine and Armenia; and Terhi Hakala was later head of the OSCE mission to Georgia.
6. One issue that had already surfaced was the status of the Karabakh Armenians in the talks. Azerbaijan, which claimed that it was at war with Armenia, not in an internal separatist conflict, refused to talk with the Karabakh Armenians except as "armed formations." A ritual developed in which the Armenian delegation would bring along

representatives of Karabakh, and the Azerbaijanis would bring along a representative of the (displaced) Shusha Azerbaijanis, putting them forward as equivalents; the Armenians would counter by demanding representation for the (displaced) Armenians of the Shaumyan region (outside Karabakh). After this kabuki, the issue would be quietly ignored, with negotiations proceeding between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The issue has resurfaced at times but is by now a red herring. First, the last two leaders of Armenia have been Karabakhis who have had more power in the enclave than the leaders they left there as placeholders. Second, the absence of Nagornyy Karabakh from the negotiations provides Armenians with a potential second stage for bargaining with and extracting concessions from Azerbaijan.

7. For more on this, see the author's analysis of the Meseberg initiative: Philip Remler, "Negotiation Gone Bad: Russia, Germany, and Crossed Communications," Carnegie Europe, 2013, available at <http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=52712>.
8. Abasov and Khachatryan, *The Karabakh Conflict*, p. 54.
9. OSCE, *Lisbon Document*, 1996, Annex 1.
10. This gave rise to one of the great moments in the diplomacy of the conflict. The US ambassador in Baku, Richard Kauzlarich, was lobbying the Azerbaijani foreign minister, the inimitable Hasan Hasanov, who responded that the French ambassador had just tried to persuade him with some convoluted arguments. Kauzlarich explained that, while the French might be devotees of "Cartesian logic," Americans were more straightforward. Hasanov immediately went on the alert: "Kartizyan—this is an Armenian?"
11. De Waal, *Black Garden*, pp. 241–242.
12. Personal conversation, Baku, 1994.
13. Because the participating States of the OSCE could not agree on what to call the conflict, Kasprzyk has, since 1997, been burdened with this title.
14. Kasprzyk was acting personal representative from July 1996 until his formal appointment in January 1997.
15. This evaluation of motivations is based on the present author's participation in formulating the 1997 Minsk Group proposal, as well as on his participation in peace negotiations in Grozny in 1995.
16. *Annotated Agreement*, 1997 (unpublished text of the OSCE proposal

with speaking notes agreed by the co-chairs), Introductory Talking Points.

17. See Abasov and Khachatrian, *The Karabakh Conflict*.
18. Ibid.
19. *Annotated Agreement*, 1997, Agreement II: Status, Introductory Talking Points.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Republic of Armenia, unpublished letter to co-chairs, 1998 (official English translation that accompanied the Russian original; typos have been corrected).
2. The Lisbon Statement was adopted as a statement from the chair, not as a consensus of the OSCE participating States (Armenia refused to engage on a compromise statement and blocked consensus), taking a straight line of support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.
3. Republic of Armenia, unpublished letter to co-chairs, 1998.
4. Abasov and Khachatrian, *The Karabakh Conflict*, Appendix 19, p. 124.
5. David I. Hoffman, "Azerbaijan: The Politicization of Oil," in *Energy and Conflict in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, edited by Robert Ebel and Rajan Menon (Oxford, UK: Roman & Littlefield, 2000), p. 77.
6. Early on in the conflict, US analyst Paul Goble had theorized on the possibility of such a swap, and the concept came to be known as the "Goble Plan." Though neither Aliyev nor Kocharyan needed inspiration (much less a geography lesson) from an American, some in the West have inaccurately applied the name as a shorthand description of the Aliyev-Kocharyan plan.
7. Transcript from "Briefing of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev and President of the Republic of Armenia for the Representatives of Mass Media—District of Sadarak, October 11, 1999," *AliyevHeritage.org*, available at <http://lib.aliyevheritage.org/en/9623844.html> .

8. The Russian Aerospace Defense Forces personnel who remained at the Gabala Radar Station until 2012 were exempted. Gabala was part of the Soviet (later Russian) early-warning system against strategic missile attacks. As this arrangement helped maintain nuclear stability, the US and NATO supported it.
9. The Second Chechen War had begun, and Boris Yeltsin had called Georgian President Shevardnadze to demand that Russian troops be permitted to deploy to Georgia to attack the Chechens from the south; he also demanded that Russian border forces, which had just left Georgia, be reinstated and take over all Georgian border functions. Shevardnadze, unwilling to confront Yeltsin directly, played for time and called Talbott, desperately asking him to reject Yeltsin's demands on behalf of Georgia.
10. "Armenia: Portrait of a Radical," BBC News, October 30, 1999.
11. But as the exceptionally astute regional statesman (and biologist) Zurab Zhvania commented, "Such groups operate on the intellectual level of a single-celled organism." Personal conversation, Tbilisi, 1999.
12. Emil Danielyan and Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Caucasus: Azerbaijan and Armenia Detail Karabakh Peace Plan," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 22, 2001.
13. Personal conversation, 2001.
14. Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Armenia/Azerbaijan: International Mediators Report Progress on Karabakh Dispute," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, April 10, 2001.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Personal observation and conversations, Washington, DC, 2001.
2. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "Personal Representatives of Armenian and Azeri Presidents Held Nagorno-Karabakh Talks in Prague," press release, May 15, 2002, available at <http://www.osce.org/mg/54340> .
3. Ibid.
4. "Armenian, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers Meet," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newline, May 13, 2004, available at <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1143158.html> .

5. "Caucasus Report," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 11, 2004.
6. "Caucasus Report," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, January 21, 2005.
7. International Crisis Group, Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace, October 11, 2005.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. "Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Looks Ahead to Paris Talks," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newline, June 8, 2005.
2. "Nagorno-Karabakh: Timeline of the Long Road to Peace," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 10, 2006.
3. Liz Fuller, "Armenia/Azerbaijan: Foreign Ministers Seek to Finalize 'Basic Principles' for Resolving Karabakh Conflict," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, January 16, 2006, quoting Russian Co-Chair Yuri Merzlyakov.
4. Harry Tamrazian, "Officials Say Karabakh Deal Close at Hand," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, July 12, 2005.
5. Fuller, "Armenia/Azerbaijan: Foreign Ministers Seek To Finalize 'Basic Principles' For Resolving Karabakh Conflict."
6. "Caucasus Report," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, January 27, 2006.
7. Tatul Hakobyan, "Presidents Kocharyan and Aliyev Look for the 'Key' to the Settlement in Rambouillet Palace," Hetq.am, February 13, 2006, available at <http://hetq.am/eng/news/9850/presidents-kocharyan-and-aliyev-look-for-the-key-to-the-settlement-in-rambouillet-palace.html>.
8. "OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs Urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to Prepare Their Respective Publics 'for Peace, Not for War,'" March 9, 2006, available at www.osce.org/mg/47148.
9. International Crisis Group, "CrisisWatch," April–May 2006, available at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch/crisiswatch-database.aspx>.
10. "Deputies Deny Azerbaijan Parliament Speaker Congratulated Armenian Counterpart," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newline, June 12, 2006; "Caucasus Report," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 16, 2006.

11. Personal conversation, 2006.
12. "Statement by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to the OSCE Permanent Council," OSCE Doc. CIO.GAL/117/06, June 22, 2006, available at <http://www.usa.am/news/2006/june/news062806.pdf>.
13. "Statement by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs," July 3, 2006.
14. "Caucasus Report," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 30, 2006.
15. "Statement of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to the OSCE Permanent Council," June 22, 2006.
16. "Caucasus: U.S. Says Aliyev, Kocharian Must Show 'Political Will,'" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 23, 2006.
17. Ibid.
18. Taleh Ziyadov, "Statement by OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs Sparks Debate in Armenia and Azerbaijan," Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, July 7, 2006.
19. "Caucasus Report," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 30, 2006.
20. "Armenian, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers Meet," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, November 16, 2006.
21. Ibid.
22. "Vartan Oskanian: Karabakh Talks Going On," PanArmenian.net, December 1, 2006; "Oskanian and Mammadyarov Not to Meet in Brussels," PanArmenian.net, December 4, 2006.
23. Emil Danielyan, "Has a New Chance Emerged for Karabakh Peace?" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 15, 2007.
24. "Armenia Official: Territory Deal Close, Azerbaijan Less Upbeat," Associated Press, April 20, 2007.
25. Liz Fuller, "Caucasus Report," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 22, 2007.
26. The text is also referred to as the Basic Principles.
27. International Crisis Group, "CrisisWatch," March 1, 2008.
28. Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Nagorno-Karabakh: Mediators Strive to Keep Peace-Talk Participants 'On the Same Page,'" EurasiaNet.org, December 6, 2007.
29. UN General Assembly Resolution 62/243 April 25, 2008, UN Doc.

A/RES/62/243.

30. Armenian Foreign Ministry, "Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian Meets Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs in Strasbourg," press release, May 7, 2008, available at <http://mfa.am/en/press-releases/item/2008/05/07/mamed/> . Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Mammadyarov used the same term in a press interview before the meeting: "Baku: Meeting with New Armenian FM Will Be of Familiarization," *Trend News Agency*, April 26, 2008, available at www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?130921-BAKU-Meeting-with-New-Armenian-FM-Will-be-of-Familiarization .

CHAPTER NINE

1. Liz Fuller, "Presidents Give Green Light for Continuation of Karabakh Talks," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 12, 2008.
2. For a full text of the declaration, see the president of Russia's official website, available at www.kremlin.ru .
3. "Declaration of the Azerbaijan Republic, the Republic of Armenia, and the Russian Federation," author's translation, November 2, 2008:

The Presidents of the Azerbaijan Republic, the Republic of Armenia, and the Russian Federation, having met on November 2 in Moscow at the invitation of the President of the Russian Federation, having discussed materially and substantively, in a constructive atmosphere, the current state and future prospects of the resolution by political means of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, through the continuation of direct dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia with the mediation of Russia, the USA, and France as Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group,

- (1) Declare that they will facilitate the improvement of the situation in the Southern Caucasus and the securing of the establishment in the region of a condition of stability and security through the political resolution of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict on the basis of the principles and norms of international law and the decisions and documents adopted in that framework, which will create conditions in the region favorable to economic development and the cooperation of all sides.
- (2) Confirm the important significance of the continuation of mediation efforts by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, in consideration of their meeting with the sides in Madrid on November 29, 2007, and subsequent discussions, with the goal of further elaboration of the basic principles of a political resolution.

- (3) Agree that the accomplishment of a peaceful resolution, in all its aspects and stages, must be accompanied by legally binding international guarantees.
 - (4) Note that the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia have agreed to continue work, including in further contacts at the highest level, on an agreement on the political resolution of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, and have instructed their foreign ministers to increase the tempo of further steps in the negotiating process in collaboration with the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.
 - (5) Consider it important to encourage the creation of conditions for the realization of confidence-building measures in the context of settlement efforts.
4. Liz Fuller, “‘Moscow Declaration’ a Victory for Armenia,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 3, 2008.
 5. “Enclave Talks 'Making Progress,’” BBC, May 7, 2009.
 6. White House, “Joint Statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict,” July 10, 2009, available at www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/joint-statement-nagorno-karabakh-conflict .
 7. Ibid.
 8. Quoted in Armenica.org and the Union of Armenian Associations in Sweden, “The Conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh: Chronology,” available at http://www.mountainous-karabakh.org/chronology_1995-2011.html#.VivSnrxuZX8 .
 9. “Обнародованными 'Мадридскими принципами' недовольны и в Азербайджане и в Армении” [Unhappiness in Both Azerbaijan and Armenia with the Published "Madrid Principles"], *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, July 17, 2009.
 10. “Mediators Amend Draft Karabakh Peace Proposals,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, July 28, 2009.
 11. “Mediators Note Progress in Munich Karabakh Talks,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 24, 2009.
 12. See the president of Azerbaijan’s official website, available at <http://en.president.az/> .
 13. “Мюнхен для Баку и Еревана: Новой войны за Карабах завтра не ожидается,” [Munich for Baku and Yerevan: A New War for Karabakh Is Not to Be Expected Tomorrow], *Online Vremya Novostey*, November 23, 2009, available at www.vremya.ru/2009/215/5/242301.html .

14. "Armenian, Azerbaijani Presidents Agree on Preamble to 'Madrid Principles,'" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, January 26, 2010.
15. "Igor Popov Denies Appointment as Russian Co-Chairman of OSCE Minsk Group," *Trend News Agency*, February 24, 2010, available at <http://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/karabakh/1644601.html> .
16. "Medvedev Convenes Third Meeting of Armenian, Azerbaijani Presidents," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 18, 2010.
17. "Joint Statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by Dmitry Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, and Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic," website of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Canada, available at www.rusembassy.ca/node/452 .
18. "Баку и Ереван не смогли найти взаимопонимание на встрече в Казахстане" [Baku and Yerevan Could Not Reach an Understanding at the Meeting in Kazakhstan], *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, July 17, 2010.
19. OSCE, "Joint Statement by the Heads of Delegation of the Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries," press release, July 16, 2010.
20. See interview with the Azerbaijani press, *Trend News Agency*, August 27, 2010, cited in *Chroniques Diplomatiques* as "Sergey Lavrov and Karabakh Conflict," available at www.chroniques-diplomatiques.eu/2010_08_01_archive.html .
21. International Crisis Group, "CrisisWatch," October 1, 2010.
22. "Meeting with Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan," website of the president of Russia, October 27, 2010, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/9350> .
23. "Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia meet in Moscow," *Vestnik Kavkaza*, November 22, 2010, available at <http://vestnikkavkaza.net/news/politics/8260.html> .
24. Emil Danielyan, "Prospects for Karabakh Peace Recede after OSCE Summit," Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, December 15, 2010.
25. The Astana 2010 Summit documents include the following text:

The Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan reaffirmed their commitment to seek a final settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, based upon: the principles and norms of international law; the United Nations Charter; the

Helsinki Final Act; and the statements of Presidents Medvedev, Sarkozy, and Obama, at L'Aquila on July 10, 2009, and at Muskoka on June 26, 2010.

The three OSCE Co-Chair countries pledged their support for the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia as they make the necessary decisions to reach a peaceful settlement. They urged the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to focus with renewed energy on the issues that still remain in the Basic Principles, and instructed their Co-Chairs to continue to work with the parties to the conflict to assist in these efforts. In order to create a better atmosphere for the negotiations, they called for additional steps to strengthen the cease-fire and carry out confidence-building measures in all fields.

OSCE, "Joint Statement by the Heads of Delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries and the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia," press release, December 1, 2010, available at <http://www.osce.org/home/74234>.

26. "Meeting with Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan," website of the president of Russia, March 5, 2011, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/10529>.
27. L. Ovanisyan and F. Mejid, "Безрезультативность встречи президентов Армении и Азербайджана была ожидаема, считают эксперты в обеих странах," [The Lack of Results from the Meeting of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan Was Predictable, Experts in Both Countries Consider], *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, June 26, 2011.
28. "Joint Statement by Presidents of Russia, France and the US on Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," G8 Summit, May 26, 2011. The statement reads:

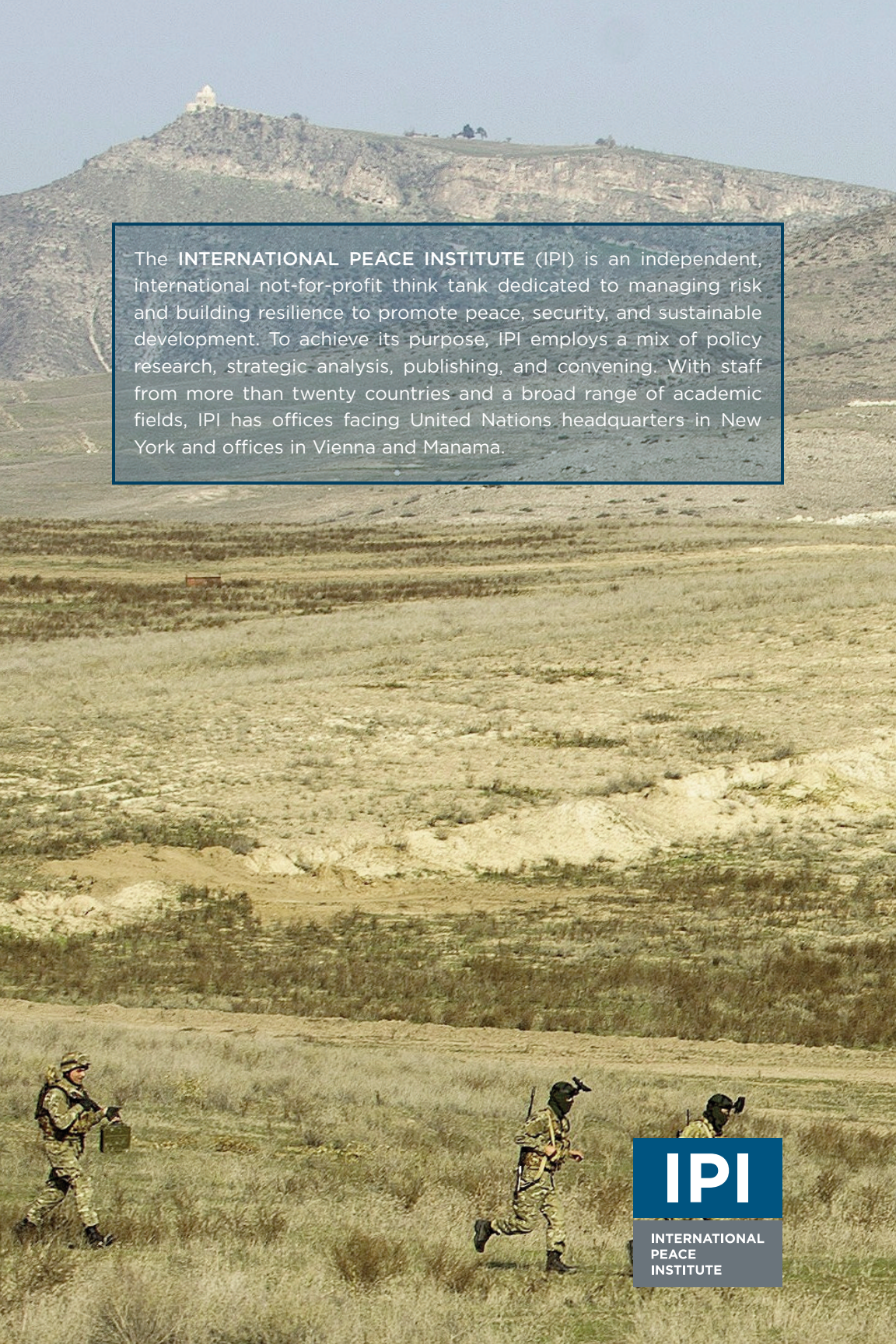
Presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group's Co-Chair countries...are convinced the time has arrived for all the sides to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to take a decisive step towards a peaceful settlement... We strongly urge the leaders of the sides to prepare their populations for peace, not war. As a result of efforts by the parties and the Co-Chair countries at all levels, significant progress has been made. The latest version of the Basic Principles, as discussed in Sochi on March 5, lays a just and balanced foundation for the drafting of a comprehensive peace settlement... We therefore call upon the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to demonstrate their political will by finalizing the Basic Principles during their upcoming summit in June. Further delay would only call into question the commitment of the sides to reach an agreement. Once an agreement has been reached, we stand ready to witness the formal acceptance of these Principles, to assist in the drafting of the peace agreement, and then to support its implementation with our international partners.
29. "Совместное заявление президентов Азербайджанской Республики, Республики Армения и Российской Федерации по нагорно-карабахскому урегулированию" [Joint Declaration of the

Presidents of the Azerbaijan Republic, the Republic of Armenia, and the Russian Federation on a Nagornyy Karabakh Resolution], author's translation, June 24, 2011, available at <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/977> .

30. Ovanisyan and Mejid, "Безрезультативность встречи президентов Армении и Азербайджана была ожидаема, считают эксперты в обеих странах."
31. Ibid.
32. Международный Институт Новейших Государств [International Institute of the Newest States], June 27, 2011.
33. Ibid.
34. "Совместное заявление Президентов Азербайджанской Республики, Республики Армения и Российской Федерации по нагорно-карабахскому урегулированию от 23 января 2012" [Joint Declaration of the Presidents of the Azerbaijan Republic, the Republic of Armenia, and the Russian Federation on a Nagornyy Karabakh Resolution of January 23, 2012], author's translation, January 23, 2012, available at <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/1135> .

CONCLUSION

1. James Warlick, address to Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 7, 2014.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Laitin and Suny, "Armenia and Azerbaijan," p. 147, emphasis in original.



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