Analyses the 30-year conflict between Soviet successor states Armenia and Azerbaijan over the contested territory of Nagorny Karabakh

The Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict for control of the mountainous Nagorny Karabakh is the longest-running dispute in post-Soviet Eurasia. This book looks beyond tabloid tropes of 'frozen conflict' or ancient hatreds to unpack both unresolved territorial issues left over from the 1990s and the strategic rivalry that has built up around them since. The book shows how more than two decades of dynamic territorial politics, shifting power relations, international diffusion and unsuccessful mediation efforts have contributed to the resilience of this stubbornly unresolved dispute – one of the most intractable of our times.

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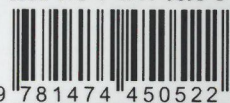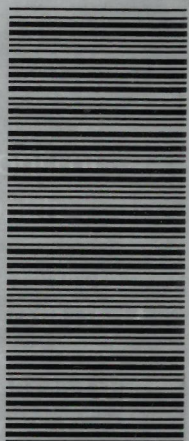
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Laurence Broers

Armenia and Azerbaijan

Anatomy of a Rivalry

Laurence Broers

9 'Land for Peace'

'Can you think of a conflict where the winning party has given up land for a promissory note?' I was in Washington, in the hubbub following the close of an event at a downtown thinktank in 2014. My interlocutor was an activist in one of the Armenian lobbying groups active in the US capital. Her question conceded too much to a victor's outlook, but captured the elusiveness of the 'land for peace' formula widely seen as the key to an Armenian–Azerbaijani peace. Nearly thirty years of diplomacy mediated by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has yielded only two documents signed by Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders, both brokered by Russia. These are the 12 May 1994 ceasefire, known as the Bishkek Protocol, and the Moscow Declaration of 20 November 2008, a symbolic commitment to a peaceful resolution that subsequent events proved meaningless. Despite continuous dialogue, plentiful peace proposals and intermittent high-level attention from global leaders, the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict still awaits its peace conference.

Why has mediation failed? The deep dynamics of rivalry explored in previous chapters offer a range of explanations, from overlapping and indivisible geopolitical visions, to the dynamics of hybrid regimes, the strategic parity of truncated asymmetry, the diffusion of international leverage, and the congealing of de facto realities in the territory at the heart of the rivalry. This chapter considers three sets of factors that can loosely be considered intrinsic to the process of mediation itself. They trace a broadly chronological arc from the earliest mediation efforts while hostilities were still ongoing in the 1990s to the

present day. The first is the impact of mediator rivalries. The domination of the OSCE's mediation body, the Minsk Group, by three global powers, France, Russia and the United States, which also represent three poles in today's competitive Eurasian geopolitics, accounts for the popularity of geopolitical perspectives in explaining mediation failure, especially in Azerbaijan. As Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov contends, 'the Minsk Group is an institution that has been used and abused for geopolitical purposes'.[1] Geopolitical perspectives also account for one of the most frequently asked questions about the peace process: whether other mediators could achieve more. There is ample evidence of mediator rivalries hampering early efforts. Yet after the mid-1990s the nexus of external interests in averting another Armenian–Azerbaijani war has resulted in what one former mediator calls 'shockingly good' cooperation between Russian and Western counterparts.[2]

Superseding mediator rivalries from the late 1990s were problems relating to the structure and sequencing of the negotiating agenda. This agenda, already confronting the contradiction between territorial integrity and self-determination, was overlaid by the dramatic outcomes of the 1992–4 war. Most obviously, the occupation by Armenian forces of seven districts surrounding Nagorny Karabakh gave rise to a working distinction between the 'consequences' and 'causes' of conflict. This distinction yields the 'land for peace' formula. Simply put, this proposes that the occupied territories return to Azerbaijani jurisdiction in exchange for an agreed determination of status for Nagorny Karabakh. Between 1997 and 2004 a succession of proposals attempted to manage this equation in a variety of different ways. None succeeded. On the Armenian side a more demanding alternative, 'land for *status*', vies with 'land for peace'. This ties the return of occupied territories to an explicit recognition of Karabakh's secession from Azerbaijan, casting the territories as bargaining chips in a game of geopolitical extortion. This approach never overcame Azerbaijani resistance to territorial fragmentation, and increasingly confronts deepening Armenian attachments over time to 'augmented Armenia' and perceptions of the territories as more existential than collateral in significance.

On the Azerbaijani side, 'land for peace' has been understood in a different way, where 'peace' implies a renewed contract between the Azerbaijani state and the Armenians of Karabakh within the preserved framework of territorial integrity. In the 1990s this accorded with the global hegemony of what is known as the 'liberal peace': an ambitious, interventionist approach seeking to resolve armed conflict across the world through negotiations, third-party mediation, elections and democratisation, the rule of law, protections for human, gender and minority rights, and liberalised market development.[3] Territorial integrity, so this thinking went, would be preserved but qualified by the introduction of a new constitutional settlement including new institutions, such as genuine self-rule for minorities. In other words, for the 'land for peace' equation to work for Azerbaijan, the formula implied 'land for a *liberal* peace'. What appeared to be a statist stance upholding the territorial integrity norm in fact presumed a far-reaching transformation of parent states in accordance with the heady, post-Cold War expectations of a 'third wave' of democratisation and the prescriptions of post-socialist transitology.

The normative assumptions of the liberal peace underpin OSCE mediation to this day. From the late 2000s, however, these assumptions were increasingly overtaken by a third set of problems in the form of illiberal strategies pursued by the parties dissolving the social, cultural and political basis for a liberal Armenian–Azerbaijani peace. Sophisticated formulas attempting to finesse the 'land for peace' equation were eclipsed by the devaluation of liberal-democratic norms and practices in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the accumulated effects of networked regime-building, and the revival of violence. The salience of these strategies transformed the meaning of mediation. Constrained from resolving and not mandated to directly arbitrate, mediation devolved to conflict management. Put simply, mediation became mitigation. Mediation 'failure' is therefore relative: while no agreement has indeed been signed, the process has inhibited violence and maintained a continuous dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan.[4]

Fractured Mediations (1991–6)

Mediation initiatives long preceded the termination of hostilities. Interventions by Russian and Kazakh presidents Boris Yeltsin and Nursultan Nazarbayev in September 1991 and by Iran in May 1992 generated commitments by the parties (the Zheleznovodsk and Tehran Communiqués respectively), but were almost immediately overtaken by escalating violence. These initiatives failed because they preceded escalation to war perceived as sufficiently costly for the parties to see mediation as an alternative.

In January and March 1992 respectively Armenia and Azerbaijan acceded to the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and United Nations. After fact-finding missions to the South Caucasus, on 24 March 1992 a special meeting of the CSCE's Council of Ministers mandated a conference to serve as a platform for a negotiated settlement of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict, to be held, at the suggestion of the delegate from Belarus, in Minsk. The UN declared its support for the CSCE's initiative, which was historic as the first mediation effort undertaken by a new regional security organisation growing out of the end of the Cold War. Untested, inclusive and founded on the equality of participating states, the CSCE was seen as a credible mediator. It brought both impartiality and ignorance to its mission: as American ambassador to the CSCE John Maresca observed, Western diplomats 'could hardly even discuss [the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict] because it was so obscure to them'.[5]

The foreign ministers who mandated the Minsk conference in March 1992 did so believing that it would be 'a question of months' before the conference would begin work.[6] Yet military action, unclear interests, rotating chairs and institutional unwieldiness resulted in its indefinite postponement. Armenian–Azerbaijani talks in Rome, Geneva and Stockholm in 1992–3 made little headway; CSCE ceasefire plans fell through in December 1992 and summer 1993.[7] Parallel and competitive Russian efforts, notably those led by Minister of Defence Pavel Grachev, undermined these multilateral initiatives. Wryly depicting himself as a

poor relation to Richard Holbrooke, US envoy to the conflict in Bosnia in the 1990s, Maresca recalls:

> I couldn't get the high-level attention from the Russians I wanted, and there was a lot of confusion because there was no single Russia policy. There were two or three policies, depending on whether you were dealing with the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I would have meetings with Ministry of Defence people and the Russian co-Chair, my negotiating partner, wasn't allowed in the room because he represented a different policy.[8]

Russia's policies oscillated between pushing for a Russian-led peacekeeping operation under the formal aegis of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) – similar to that introduced into Abkhazia, Georgia – and support for a multilateral CSCE operation. Yet although the Bishkek Protocol, brokered by veteran Russian diplomat Vladimir Kazimirov, commits the parties to 'suggest Parliaments of the CIS member-states to discuss the initiative . . . on creating a CIS peacekeeping force', this was never acted upon, largely due to Azerbaijani resistance. The Armenian–Azerbaijani ceasefire of 12 May 1994 emerged as self-regulating, overseen by neither a CSCE-led multilateral nor a Russian-led CIS peacekeeping force. It consequently owed its durability to belligerent exhaustion, not international oversight.

The CSCE's Budapest summit of 5–6 December 1994 solidified the mediation structure. At the summit, the CSCE transformed itself into the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, an ambitious jump in scope and purpose. With regard to the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict, the summit mandated 'a single coordinated effort' to consist of newly appointed co-Chairs of the still pending Minsk Conference, who would chair the Minsk Group, the collective of states originally designated as participants to the conference, and report to the OSCE's Chairman-in-Office (CiO).[9] The summit also mandated the establishment of a High-Level Planning Group (HLPG), 'to make recommendations on, inter alia, the size and characteristics of the [peacekeeping] force, command and control, logistics, allocation of units and resources, rules of engagement and arrangements with contributing States'.[10]

The co-Chair system replaced the earlier rotating single chair, initially held by Italy then Sweden. A dual system was introduced whereby Russia had a permanent chair and a rotating chair was held by a 'neutral' state (Sweden in 1994, then Finland in 1995–6).[11] This arrangement acknowledged Russia's role while embedding it within a multilateral format. Russian acquiescence reflected a newfound commitment to the OSCE as a regional mechanism balancing the perceived encroachment of Western-led structures, such as NATO's Partnership for Peace, into the post-Soviet space.[12] The addition in 1995 of the onerously titled Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference (PRCiO) completed the OSCE's mediation structure. Since July 1996 Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, of Polish origin, has filled the post of PRCiO; together with five field assistants, he is the OSCE's only field presence.[13] The PRCiO is responsible for monitoring the ceasefire with pre-arranged, bi-monthly inspections, and has played a critical role in, inter alia, crisis communication, prisoner exchanges and facilitating the exchange of human remains in the aftermath of April 2016's 'four-day war'.

The consolidation of the Minsk Group relieved but did not resolve the problem of fractured mediations. Under the Finnish–Russian co-Chairmanship in 1995–6, the Minsk Group held regular meetings. Concurrently a backchannel was opened between presidential envoys Gerard Libaridian and Vafa Guluzade, articulate negotiators with a good personal rapport. At the same time in February 1996 the new Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov also circulated a blueprint proposing loose confederal relations monitored by Russian-led peacekeeping operations.[14] Parallel international initiatives were finally reined in through the introduction in January 1997 of a permanent troika of Minsk Group co-Chairs, consisting of Russia, as before, in addition to France and the United States.[15] Carey Cavanaugh, former US co-Chair of the Minsk Group in 1999–2001, explains the virtues of this approach:

> Many countries would dream of having such a negotiating structure. You've got all the major powers at the table . . . If you have a solution,

no single party could implement it on their own: Russia has to be there, it is the only power with the local presence to provide security. But Russia doesn't have the finances nor the international influence with financial organisations like the International Monetary Fund, international NGOs, the donors ... that's where the US comes in, we could provide that. And you need Europe too, that's a geographic and political inevitability, that's where these countries are ultimately headed. So you have the political, military and economic backing for a settlement, and what's more, the endorsement of three members of the United Nations Security Council. You don't get much better than that.[16]

Not all actors see the Minsk Group troika in such a positive light. John Maresca observes that the arrangement 'brought the interests of the co-Chair nations into the mechanism. There were built-in incentives to bring geopolitical interests to the table, and it created disincentives to change the mechanism.'[17] Yet the finalisation of the troika also preceded the most productive era of the Armenian–Azerbaijani peace process. Mediator rivalries faded into the background of an equally complex set of challenges posed by the nature of the negotiations agenda.

Structure and Sequence (1997–2004)

Between 1997 and 2004 Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders discussed a succession of concepts for peace within the framework of the Minsk Group. In variable – sometimes diametrically contrasting – ways, all grappled with a set of problems associated with the structure of the conflict, the issues at stake, and possible sequences of their resolution. None found viable solutions.

A first problem was the structure of the conflict. The Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict confronts all mediation efforts with the contested primacy of territorial integrity and self-determination, and the presence of a non-state actor in the form of the unrecognised Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR). Unlike the four resolutions issued by the United Nations Security Council in 1993, all of which had explicitly highlighted territorial integrity, in its early

deliberations the CSCE, then OSCE, had fudged this issue.[18] The 1992 mandate for the Minsk Conference stipulated the participation of 'elected and other representatives' of Nagorny Karabakh as 'interested parties'.[19] This ostensibly covered both the Armenians of Karabakh, and the Karabakh Azerbaijani minority displaced from the territory. However, by 1996 the proliferation of secessionist claims in the former Yugoslavia, heightened international perceptions of the brutality accompanying secessionism, and the transformation of the CSCE into an organisation composed of ethnically diverse states, several of which confronted separatism or outright secessionism, resulted – in combination with an Azerbaijani diplomatic offensive – in a more statist vision of European security at the OSCE's 2–3 December 1996 Lisbon summit. The principle of territorial integrity was explicitly affirmed for Georgia and Moldova.[20] Owing to Armenia's exercise of its veto, a similar commitment to Azerbaijan was relegated to a separate statement by the chairman affirming the territorial integrity of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, self-rule for Karabakh within Azerbaijani borders, and security guarantees for the 'whole population' of Karabakh as the parameters for a solution to the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict.[21] Azerbaijan considered the Lisbon summit a diplomatic triumph and validation of its position. Its statist emphasis confronted Karabakh Armenians with the prospect that military victory might result in less than independence.[22] But this also flagged the problem of a state-based negotiation of a conflict in which a non-state actor – the NKR – was central.

A second problem was the structure of the issues comprising the negotiation agenda. Negotiators in the mid-1990s defined two agendas: 'military-technical issues', interpreted as addressing the consequences of conflict, and the 'status issue', interpreted as its original cause and concerned with determining the status and rights of Karabakh Armenians.[23] In addition to humanitarian issues shared by all parties, for Azerbaijan the salient consequences of the conflict included the occupation, in whole or in part, of the Azerbaijani regions of Agdam, Fizuli, Jebrayil, Zangelan, Qubatly, Lachin and Kelbajar surrounding the former autonomous oblast. For Armenians, the salient consequences

were the blockades maintained by Azerbaijan and Turkey, and the persisting insecurity confronting the NKR as an unrecognised entity in an international environment privileging territorial integrity. An implicit assumption accompanied this division of the negotiation agenda. This was that since Azerbaijan's losses had been greater in terms of territory and internal displacement, its fundamental interests were driven more by consequences than causes, suggesting that it would be tractable on causes in order to undo the consequences of conflict. This assumption underpinned the alternative formula of 'land for status', a hardline variation on 'land for peace'.

This division of the negotiation agenda generated in turn a third problem, namely whether consequences and causes of conflict should be dealt with simultaneously or sequentially. In the parlance of the Armenian–Azerbaijani negotiations, these distinct approaches are popularly labelled 'package' and 'step-by-step' respectively. The package approach implies a one-step, comprehensive agreement on all issues.[24] In theory, this enables trade-offs in which parties 'win' or 'concede' according to the variable importance they accord to individual issues in an over-arching grand bargain. This assumes, however, that the negotiating parties do not privilege the same issue as the most important. The package approach also introduces the element of conditionality, since agreement on one negotiation agenda is contingent on agreement of all. Conversely, the step-by-step approach reduces conditionality by delinking agendas and allowing progress on one independently of agreement on the other. The logic of this approach is that the most intractable issues are 'kicked down the road', allowing trust and confidence to build up through the resolution of lesser issues. The problem here is that implementation of the earlier steps has a direct causal impact on the shape and form that resolution of the more critical issues will eventually take. In the context of the Armenian–Azerbaijani negotiations the critical distinction between these approaches is whether to 'frontload' or 'backload' the issue of Nagorny Karabakh's status.

Three Package Proposals and a Step-by-Step Alternative

Between 1997 and 2001 Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders discussed what were essentially three package plans that – even if vaguely – specified the contours of a final status solution, and one step-by-step concept that only committed the parties to a deferred negotiation of status at a future, unspecified date (see Table 9.1). The three package proposals are the 'package' proposal of May–June 1997, the Russian-inspired 'common state' proposal of November 1998, and the 'territorial swap' concept discussed by Presidents Heydar Aliyev and Robert Kocharian in 1999–2001. These three concepts can loosely be interpreted as resolving the status issue through autonomy, confederalism and secession respectively. Each had a distinct political genealogy.

The Minsk Group co-Chairs elaborated the first package proposal through the early months of 1997, and presented it to the parties in May–June. There is some ambiguity over the labelling of this proposal as a package deal. US diplomat Philip Remler clarifies that the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaderships always understood the proposal as a phased negotiation, in which Agreement I on security issues would be adopted before the negotiation of Agreement II on status issues began.[25] Nevertheless, even if understood as a phased negotiation, the proposal followed closely in the wake of the Lisbon summit and reflected its emphasis on territorial integrity in prescribing a final status for Karabakh. The published text of Agreement II defined Nagorny Karabakh as 'a statal and territorial formation, within the borders of Azerbaijan'.[26] The proposal listed an extensive set of rights consistent with self-government for Nagorny Karabakh and free mobility and migration to Armenia, yet the envisaged status was less than independence. Karabakh Armenians would elect representatives to the Azerbaijani parliament, and hold Azerbaijani passports – albeit specially annotated – and their holders would not be considered foreigners in Armenia. This was, in effect, 'land for a liberal peace', additionally qualified by the fact that as per Agreement II, Armenia would only recognise Azerbaijan's territorial integrity once Karabakh's status had been mutually agreed.[27] Within its 1988 borders, Karabakh would be linked to Armenia

Table 9.1 Armenian–Azerbaijani peace proposals discussed by the Minsk Group, 1997–present

	Period	Approach	Associated with	Status mechanism
Package approach				
Package	May–June 1997	Divide issues into security and status clusters and agree guidelines for both	Minsk Group; back-channel between Vafa Guluzade and Gerard Libaridian	Self-government for Karabakh within Azerbaijan, to be negotiated at a later date after progress on Agreement I
Common state	1998	Confederal	Yevgeny Primakov	Karabakh becomes equal state-forming unit in horizontal arrangement
Territorial swap				
I.	1999	Exchange of territories in grand bargain	Paul Goble; Heydar Aliyev; Robert Kocharian	Karabakh plus corridor transferred to Armenia in exchange for Meghri corridor
II.	2001		Aliyev–Kocharian talks at Key West	Karabakh plus corridor transferred to Armenia in exchange for sovereign right of use of corridor linking mainland Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan
Phased approach				
Step-by-step	September 1997	Address consequences of conflict and defer status	Guluzade-Libaridian; Levon Ter-Petrossian	Deferred until progress on other issues has impact
Hybrid approach				
Madrid (Basic) Principles	2007– present	Agree framework first then comprehensive peace agreement	Prague Process; Elmar Mammadyarov, Vartan Oskanian	Agree status mechanism as part of framework, but defer implementation; interim status until then

via a corridor crossing Lachin, to be leased by Azerbaijan to the OSCE; the other occupied regions would return to Azerbaijani jurisdiction. While Yerevan and Baku conditionally accepted the plan as a basis for negotiations, its guarantees were insufficient to persuade the Karabakh Armenians to accept it.

The second package proposal was the 'common state' plan developed by Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and presented in November 1998. This proposal was not individually tailored for the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict, but reflected a wider vision of Russian-led conflict management and geopolitical influence in post-Soviet Eurasia:

> Taking into consideration that [globally] two thousand nationalities and peoples live in more than 150 states, one can conclude that the general policy should be to ensure the rights of national minorities in multinational states. This became Russia's guideline. We . . . advanced concrete proposals to safeguard the territorial integrity of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova while providing wide-ranging rights to such national formations as Abkhazia, Southern Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Pridnestrovie within the framework of those states.[28]

The concept had its roots in the short-lived Russian plan of 1996, and before that in the Russian Ministry of Defence's deliberations on wide deployments of Russian-led peacekeeping forces in post-Soviet conflicts. It proposed a loose, confederal arrangement of horizontal relations between two equal state-forming units, Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh. Although emulating the language of earlier Minsk Group proposals, the powers accruing to Nagorny Karabakh were significantly wider, including direct foreign relations and participation with a vague veto power on some issues in Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Azerbaijan was quick to reject the proposal, as 'a recognition of statehood in Karabakh . . . a violation of our territorial integrity and too much of a compromise'.[29]

There is some irony in the fact that the third package proposal, admitting secession as a route to resolution, was that developed by Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders on their own. President Robert Kocharian acceded to the Armenian presidency in 1998,

bringing about a situation where a Karabakh native occupied Armenia's top political post and negotiated on behalf of Armenia and Karabakh. President Heydar Aliyev, his health in decline and political succession on his mind, sought to simplify the conflict's legacy to his son. Over sixteen meetings in a two-year period, working 'often alone', the presidents elaborated the Aliyev–Kocharian plan.[30] The evolution of their plan and its details are still shrouded in secrecy and controversy. Unlike previous and later peace plans, no document exists today in the public domain: it was a 'two-man solution' never submitted to wider scrutiny.

The idea of a territorial exchange as a solution had circulated since the beginning of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict in 1988. Several external observers, including US State Department analyst Paul Goble, Nobel Prize winner Andrey Sakharov and Turkish President Turgut Özal, had all ventured ideas of this kind.[31] The idea's attractiveness lay in its potential to simultaneously resolve the territorial problems posed by Nagorny Karabakh's enclave and Nakhichevan's exclave status, two geopolitical 'islands' seeking access to their 'mainlands'. Aliyev and Kocharian developed a concept that accepted the post-war status quo, but also saw in it a historic opportunity to permanently disentangle Armenian and Azerbaijani geo-bodies. They discussed the transfer of Nagorny Karabakh to Armenian jurisdiction in exchange for the ceding of a corridor across Armenia's southernmost Meghri region to Azerbaijan. For Azerbaijan, a coveted corridor to Nakhichevan was the quid pro quo for losing Karabakh. No longer divided into mainland and exclave, Azerbaijan would have lost one form of territorial integrity, but gained another. For Armenia, a lost border with Iran was the corresponding quid pro quo for finally legalising possession of Karabakh. The underlying logic was 'land for status', but with a radical twist that included the ceding of de jure Armenian territory as part of the deal. It was the ultimate geopolitical solution, taking a transactional attitude to territorial integrity in quest of a cartographic fix.

An initial iteration of this plan failed due to the shocked reactions of elites when the presidents revealed their plan, and to the devastating impact of political assassinations whose connection to the proposal remains the subject of febrile speculation.

On the Azerbaijani side, three senior Azerbaijani officials, firstly presidential advisor Vafa Guluzade and then Foreign Minister Tofik Zulfuqarov and Presidential Secretary Eldar Namazov, resigned in October 1999 in protest at the ideas under discussion. Guluzade's response, on learning of the plan, was to tell Aliyev: 'You are not a landlord to give away our lands.'[32] Three days later, terrorism interceded when former journalist and political extremist Nairi Hunanyan, his brother and three others broke into the Armenian parliament on 27 October 1999 and shot dead Armenian Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan, Parliamentary Speaker Karen Demirchian and six other senior officials. The link between the assassinations and the peace process is much conjectured but unproven. It hinges on the assumption that the assent of war hero and networked strongman Vazgen Sargsyan was crucial to overcoming likely domestic resistance to the plan. Yet there is no evidence that the assassins could have known of his disposition towards the plan, on which accounts in any case vary.[33] Domestic political motives, rather than bringing down a peace plan, may account better for the assassinations, yet the impact was the same: the peace process halted for a year.

The territorial swap plan was revived in 2001 in a second iteration that offered Azerbaijan less. Former Foreign Minister of Armenia Vartan Oskanian explains what was under discussion:

Karabakh with Lachin was being given to Armenian sovereignty. Paragraph 2 was clear on this point . . . and what we were giving in return was sovereign use of the corridor through Armenian territory to link Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan. [There] was the difference between the two sovereignties: sovereign use meant that [Azerbaijani citizens] will cross the Armenian border without any border control, no one could stop them on that road to Nakhichevan . . . But you cannot put a gas station on that road because it is not your territory, you just have sovereign use.[34]

These ideas were discussed at talks in Key West, Florida, in April 2001. But no breakthrough ensued, and the peace process lapsed into desuetude. Even without the destabilising effects of political murder, domestic resistance to territorial swap concept
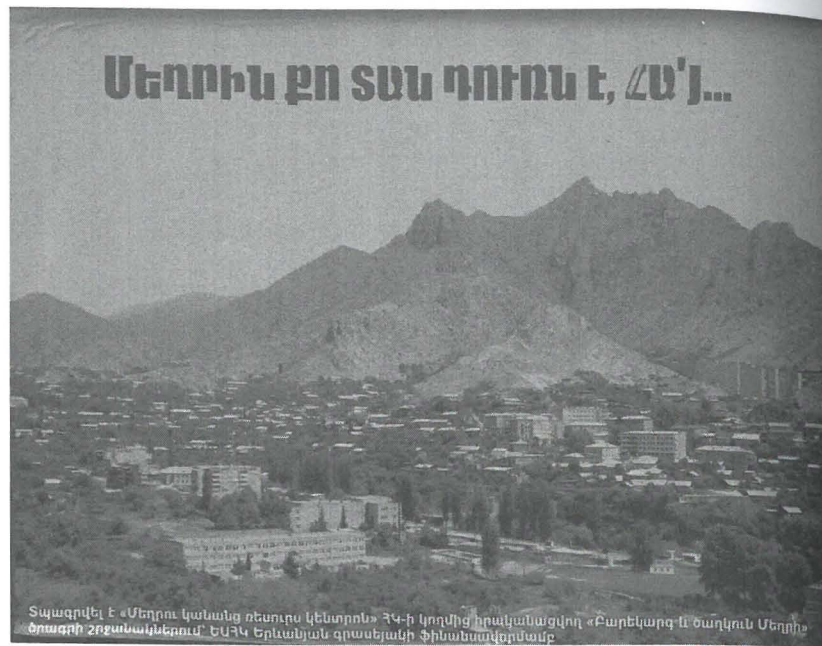
Figure 9.1 Poster-board, Meghri, Armenia, 2015. The legend reads: 'Armenians, Meghri is the door to your home!' Author photo.

was critical. From an Azerbaijani perspective, what was discussed at Key West 'was not even a territorial swap, because we were getting only a corridor'.[35] Even Oskanian concedes that the formula seemed uneven, and expectations that Azerbaijan would withdraw were high. On the Armenian side the conceding of the border with Iran was widely seen as prohibitively costly. Seventeen years later poster-boards in the town of Meghri still declared the region to be the 'door to Armenia' (see Figure 9.1).

The three package proposals are striking in their coverage of the full spectrum of possible outcomes. The logic of the first package proposal, in essence, was a solution consistent with Azerbaijani territorial integrity that compensated Armenians with wide-ranging rights and veto-points precluding – in theory – the imposition of a status not to their satisfaction. Conversely, the territorial swap proposal essentially accorded with the Armenian position and compensated Azerbaijanis with access to Nakhichevan. The

common state proposal sought an ambiguous third path of horizontal relations. That none of these three plans were accepted is an indication of the limitations of the package approach, and its promise of trade-offs, when the conflict parties privilege the same issue – the status of Nagorny Karabakh – as the most important. Each package plan demanded of one party or another concessions on this issue that they were not willing to make, which even generously conceived compensation could not indemnify, and which outside powers could not compel them to agree to.

What, then, of the phased approach? After the rejection of the first package plan in August 1997, the Minsk Group held further consultations and presented an updated, 'step-by-step' proposal in September. The essential difference from the first package proposal was the omission of Agreement II issues. Rather than a specified commitment to a status solution, Paragraph XI only committed the parties to further negotiation of the status of Nagorny Karabakh. Several sensitive issues previously explicit in Agreement I of the package proposal, such as the Lachin corridor and displaced community return to Shusha and Shahumyan, were also included in this basket of deferred issues. The plan consequently provided for the return of occupied territories and demilitarisation without an explicit determination of the crucial status issue. This was 'land for a peace subject to further negotiation'. With reservations, Baku accepted the concept. Armenian President Ter-Petrossian's advocacy of this plan, articulated in his article 'War or Peace? Time for Reflection', was rejected by Prime Minister Kocharian and his supporters, who then forced Ter-Petrossian's resignation in February 1998.[36]

The step-by-step proposal is remembered today as a significant moment when Armenian and Azerbaijani leaderships aligned around the same plan as a basis for negotiations, but did little to prepare or advocate for it. It failed for several reasons. First, it still had the shadow of the Lisbon summit hanging over it. The plan was closely associated with – indeed an outgrowth of – the package plan of only a few months before that had offered Karabakh Armenians a status less than independence. Second, the plan effectively entrusted the fate of the Karabakh Armenians to Yerevan, and consequently to President Levon

Ter-Petrossian. His and the Pan-Armenian National Movement's vision of a 'compliant Armenia' was ambivalent on the role of Nagorny Karabakh in a sovereign Armenian state. Moreover, his hold on power had been weakened by allegations of fraud and post-electoral violence at his re-election as president in 1996, accumulating discontent over the economy and corruption, and his own dependence on Kocharian's nationalist legitimacy to stay in power. But perhaps most significantly, the step-by-step plan failed because of the 'promissory note' problem identified at the beginning of this chapter. The NKR leadership saw no reason to concede to a vague 'land for peace' formula – which they saw as leading back to autonomy – when 'land for status' was within reach.[37] The plan contradicted a strategic calculus that Azerbaijan had more to gain from reversing the consequences of the conflict than it had to lose from being tractable on its cause: the status of Karabakh. As Heydar Aliyev's apparent pliability in 1999–2001 subsequently showed, this was not an outlandish calculation. But it proved ultimately untenable because of the under-estimation of the power behind the narratives constituting Azerbaijani geopolitical culture examined in Chapter 2, and an Azerbaijani calculus that the coming power asymmetry with Armenia made concessions on status unnecessary.

Towards a Hybrid Approach: From Proposals to Principles

Following the discarding of the territorial swap concept, talks resumed in the 'Prague Process' from 2002 between presidential envoys, Deputy Foreign Ministers Araz Azimov and Tatul Markaryan. In 2004 Foreign Ministers Vartan Oskanian and Elmar Mammadyarov took up the process and engaged in new ideas. First, they sought to reconcile the package and step-by-step conundrum through a hybrid approach. This envisaged agreement on the mechanism for deciding the final status of Karabakh, but the deferral of its implementation until after the return of the occupied territories and settling of security issues.[38] In other words, the strategy was to frontload agreement on the status determination mechanism, but backload its deployment in the process. Second, rather than setting out elaborated proposals, the

foreign ministers sought to agree a framework agreement of basic principles on the basis of which a comprehensive peace agreement would then be developed.

The result of these negotiations was the Basic Principles (informally referred to as the 'Madrid Principles'), presented by the Minsk Group co-Chairs in the Spanish capital in November 2007. The document presented in Madrid constituted a set of fourteen bullet points over two sides of A4, which remain the basis for negotiations to this day.[39] They provide for withdrawals of Armenian forces from the occupied territories (with a distinct timetable for the region of Kelbajar), a corridor 'of an agreed width' between Karabakh and Armenia, a right of return for all displaced persons and the deployment of an international peacekeeping force. Two of the Principles provide for a two-step solution to the question of status. Nagorny Karabakh would receive an interim status, effectively codifying its de facto status of today, until its final legal status is determined in a plebiscite at a time to be further negotiated. Vartan Oskanian explains:

Interim status plus the prospect of a referendum sometime down the road, for us, was almost tantamount to independence. You have interim [status] until the referendum, and you know the result of the referendum because it is clearly stated that the proportion [of Armenian and Azerbaijani voters respectively] cannot be more than 80:20, so that was guaranteed. We know how the Armenians would vote, so you have interim status which is almost independence and the prospect for self-determination expression through the referendum, the combination was for us independence. That was our face-saving.[40]

In this vision, the Madrid Principles essentially offer an alternative route to consensual secession that the territorial swap proposal had made imaginable, but with a 'softer landing'. The face-saving element for Azerbaijan was that at the moment of signing a framework agreement, the plebiscite would only be a future commitment; territorial integrity, for the moment, would remain intact as other territories returned to Azerbaijani jurisdiction. This is not, however, a vision shared in Azerbaijan,

where officials are less sanguine on the face-saving potential of the Madrid Principles. They highlight the problem of signing twice: the Madrid document commits leaders to signing off on the framework, and the subsequent negotiation of a comprehensive agreement within six months. This has significant political implications, as noted by Araz Azimov:

> The adoption of the Madrid Principles as a text would be lauded as a breakthrough, but there is no agreement in the Principles, it would be in a spiral coming out of them. The same problems would extend into the negotiation of a comprehensive peace agreement, they wouldn't end with a framework agreement. The practical effect of accepting the Basic Principles would thus be zero, you wouldn't get territories coming back or people returning to them straight away. But the political impact would be devastating.[41]

Given that the Madrid document stipulates the boundaries, electorate and unlimited nature of status options to be offered in the future plebiscite, its outcome can indeed be seen as a foregone conclusion. Unsurprisingly, there have been multiple working versions of the Principles circulating at different times, or even concurrently, with language suiting one side or the other. What are sometimes referred to as 'updated' Principles refer not to a plebiscite, for example, but to a 'mutually agreed and legally binding expression of will'. The Azerbaijani vision of this vote contrasts sharply with that elucidated above by Vartan Oskanian. As Azimov explains:

> Yes, there will be a vote on status at the end of the process ... We see interim status as the recognition of [Karabakh Armenians'] status until the determination of their final status within the framework of territorial integrity. It means the legitimation of a local authority, of economic relations, of tourism and so on. Karabakh Azerbaijanis would have the same legal rights, so they too would have some kind of interim status ... [Karabakh Armenians] have to agree to interim status with police forces, demobilisation of the army they have there, legal security forces. They have to become legalised within our system, not Armenia's.[42]

These perspectives indicate a growing divergence between an Armenian reading of the Madrid Principles in which the referendum is the first principle on which all the others hang, and an Azerbaijani reading in which the referendum is the last principle, the need for which is obviated by the successful enactment of the others.[43] The hybridity of the Madrid Principles thus did not overcome the essential problems of the structure and sequencing of the negotiating agenda:

> We ended up in a situation where there is no document on the table, and what we are arguing today is not the substance of one particular document, but we are arguing about which document should be the basis of our talks.[44]

A determined effort by President Dmitri Medvedev in 2009–12 generated the last occasion when a breakthrough was plausibly anticipated, at a summit in the Russian city of Kazan in June 2011, but was insufficient to secure an agreement on the Principles.[45]

Among mediators there is a sense of inevitability to the ideas contained in the Madrid Principles. As US co-Chair James Warlick noted in a speech at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 2014, 'after each failed round [of negotiations], the building blocks of the next "big idea" were similar to the last time'.[46] This is underscored by the sheer longevity of the Madrid Principles. While other proposals have come and gone in a matter of months, they have lain on the negotiating table for twelve years. Over that extended period, however, the conceptual refinement of the Madrid Principles was gradually eclipsed by a new political logic undermining the very assumptions on which they were based.

Liberal Assumptions, Illiberal Practices

The Madrid Principles, in their provisions for rights, electoral mechanisms, inclusivity and participation, represent a liberal model of conflict resolution. They reflect the core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, and the OSCE's foundational purpose

as a regional security organisation in post-Cold War Eurasia. The measures they envisage are increasingly at odds with a normative context evolving over their lifespan, both regionally and globally, challenging liberal norms and practices. Globally, the management of internal conflicts has become a key area of contestation as the United Nations Security Council has been repeatedly deadlocked over appropriate responses to conflicts in Sri Lanka, Sudan, Kosovo, Libya, Syria and Ukraine. The hegemony of the liberal peace as a model 'exporting' conflict resolution norms through democratisation, human rights and liberal governance, has been challenged both theoretically and empirically.[47] Regional hegemons, including Russia and China, openly reject international liberal norms and manage their own internal conflicts through authoritarian alternatives. While the threshold of recognition for new states remains high, the fracturing of global opinion on the secessions of Kosovo and Crimea in particular undermined prior assumptions of a unified, law-bound approach to internal conflicts in Eurasia. These factors have constrained the OSCE's peacebuilding impact.[48] Several of its mediation structures have never in fact been activated, while consensual decision-making has held the organisation hostage. In 2017 the OSCE conceded the closure of its field office in Armenia, its last ground presence in the South Caucasus, due to Azerbaijani objections to its support of demining activities in Armenia.[49]

Beyond these issues, however, the OSCE's commitments to liberal norms of conflict resolution are increasingly at odds with the challenge of non-liberal approaches to conflict. In the 1990s the liberal peace was conceived, like democratisation, as diffusing across a global normative periphery. As was the case for democratic transition, this vision was rapidly understood to be over-ambitious. Alternative conceptions of 'post-liberal' or 'hybrid' peace subsequently emerged that allowed for combinations of liberal international and local political norms in addressing conflict.[50] Over time, however, it became clear that the liberal peace confronted more than the residual resistance of non-liberal actors. Rather, the problem was the development of a coherent, illiberal alternative that did not seek to adapt, hybridise or cohabit with the norms and practices of a liberal peace, but to manage conflict in ways consistent with the preservation of authoritarian rule. This alternative entails the suppression of armed rebellion through an array of political, social and economic policies, and has been termed 'illiberal peace' or 'authoritarian conflict management'.[51]

In the context of the Armenian–Azerbaijani rivalry this alternative might be called the 'authoritarian conflict strategies' of the parties. These are premised on the idea that liberal peacebuilding cannot arrive at resolutions of the conflict compatible with the continued rule of networked regimes. Authoritarian conflict strategies do not seek to de-escalate or terminate rivalry, but rather to exploit it as a domain for the development, experimentation and deployment of practices embedding existing power hierarchies. They entail the homogenising of political space, the legitimation of the state to the detriment of other actors, and the strengthening of illiberal political and security controls diminishing accountability. Their impact on mediation, and the solutions envisaged in the Madrid Principles in particular, is to dissolve the basis for liberal norms to govern measures such as interim status, the return of displaced communities, inclusive governance and electoral mechanisms, or credible security guarantees. Authoritarian conflict strategies are Janus-faced in that they seek both to contain conflict without recourse to liberal norms, and to exploit it in order to embed illiberal norms in the wider governance of the state. They channel the generalised insecurity of enduring rivalry into a resource for political domination.

This argument comes with important caveats. First, authoritarian conflict strategies do not imply a normative association only with authoritarian regimes. They define a set of practices enacted within specific policy domains related to conflict, and as such can also be enacted by ostensibly democratic states.[52] Israel and Sri Lanka in 2006–8 offer examples of formally democratic states enacting authoritarian practices in specific, conflict-related spaces or issue areas. Such zones of exception beyond democratic oversight are typically unsustainable, however, as they ultimately undermine the wider democratic order. A second caveat is that the underlying logic of authoritarian conflict strategies may vary. In Azerbaijan's case, such strategies are congruent with the wider

practices of a hegemonic authoritarian regime. In Armenia's case, they can also be seen as instruments aimed at the consolidation of military victory as an alternative to a peace agreement. The nature of the victory, involving substantial territorial overspill and the growing power asymmetry with Azerbaijan, builds in a dependence on authoritarian conflict strategies in order to sustain a tenuous victor's peace. Finally, I am not arguing that those negotiating on behalf of Armenia and Azerbaijan since the mid-2000s, often with great skill and sophistication, have done so cynically. Indeed, most of their labour has been undone by the impacts of these strategies, which generally serve the interests of the networked regimes to which foreign ministers are not traditionally close.

I examine here three aspects to authoritarian conflict strategies. The first concerns a strategy of control that disables the voice and representation of significant constituencies affected by conflict, prevents dialogue, and produces a singular, hegemonic discourse about the conflict. The second defines a process that I call the communalisation of the narratives, issues at stake, and essence of the conflict, binding people into homogenised, ascriptive identities and silencing other political agendas and conceptions of identity. The third involves the deployment of coercion that transforms the political arena through violence and justifies the strengthening of authoritarian political and security controls.

Control

Liberal models of conflict resolution seek to open up peace processes to diverse stakeholders and, by acknowledging and reconciling opposed views, to legitimate peace through inclusivity. These are the principles on which the OSCE defines its approach to mediation.[53] Authoritarian conflict strategies conversely seek to limit the expression of differing views and the agency of other actors, and to promote a single hegemonic narrative that exclusively legitimates the state.[54]

The strategy of control has been visible first in the narrowing of the negotiating table in the Minsk Group itself. The original mandate for the Minsk Conference, as already noted, specified the participation of 'elected and other representatives' from Nagorny Karabakh as interested parties. Early Minsk Group talks in 1992–6 took place in this wider format. This not only created concerns for Azerbaijan regarding the tacit recognition of the NKR, but admitted an official platform where Karabakh Armenian grievances could be legitimately raised and expressed. Azerbaijan sought to preclude this through the elaboration of a discursive and political equivalence between the 'two communities of Karabakh', with equal claims to self-determination:

> Our vision is of two communities equally footed, equally provided for and engaged in self-rule, whether bi-communally or separately. I would prefer it to be bi-communally in shared institutions, but if that is not possible then separately. But both should have equal status.[55]

Rancorous argument regarding the status of delegations from Karabakh ensued. Maresca recalls of the Minsk Group's first meeting in 1992: 'after a day of wrangling we found a solution by agreeing that the representatives of the two ethnic population groups from Nagorno Karabakh would be associated with the delegations of Armenia or Azerbaijan'.[56] This wider format ended in 1997 as Azerbaijan successfully leveraged the more statist emphasis of the Lisbon summit, and as former NKR leader Robert Kocharian acceded to the Armenian presidency and negotiated for both Armenia and Karabakh from 1998. Since then the Minsk Group has narrowed to become the near-exclusive preserve of presidents and foreign ministers: 'the presidents refuse any translation by their own staff. We work in English with Aliyev and in Russian with Sargsyan and there are no local interpreters involved. Overall, there are not more than five people involved from both sides.'[57] This format affirms the exclusive legitimacy of the heads of state, emphasises the interstate dimension of the conflict and denies agency to other actors. One Azerbaijani official likens dialogue between Armenians and Azerbaijanis of Karabakh on status and security to talks between Presidents Aliyev and Sargsyan on nuclear disarmament: 'They simply cannot decide on such matters because it is beyond their remit.'[58] According to another Azerbaijani official: 'of course the two communities in Karabakh do not decide anything'.[59] Articulated in this way,

the 'communities approach' unravels the initial inclusivity of the Minsk Conference mandate, and deprives constituencies on both sides of a voice in matters relating directly to their own status and security.

Azerbaijan has also sought to delegitimate Karabakh Armenian claims by portraying the conflict solely through the framework of occupation. Official Azerbaijani discourses reject interpretations of the conflict in terms of 'civil war', 'inter-communal violence' or 'self-determination'. Emphasis on Armenia as an occupying power excludes the idea that there are legitimate local grievances in Nagorny Karabakh. By this reading, as several Azerbaijani policy-makers have impressed upon me over the years, there *is* no conflict in Nagorny Karabakh. There are only interfering geopolitical forces, to which only securitised responses are appropriate. Azerbaijan has also sought to map the conflict onto the discourse of the global 'war on terror'. Addressing the United Nations Security Council on 4 May 2012 during Azerbaijan's non-permanent accession to that body, President Ilham Aliyev argued that 'Areas affected by armed conflict – especially territories under foreign military occupation – create conditions conducive to networking between terrorists and those acting in such territories.'[60] Securitising external powers as the source of conflict justifies colossal military spending, the secrecy that enshrouds these flows, and precludes attempts to initiate more liberal policies that could acknowledge local dynamics.

Armenians similarly depict Karabakh Azerbaijanis as illegitimate interlocutors, with whom dialogue is 'a waste of time. We maybe could have discussed this in the 1990s but not now.'[61] In a symmetry of exclusion, de facto officials depict Karabakh Azerbaijanis in much the same way as they are themselves depicted in official Azerbaijani discourse, as an instrument of hostile state power rather than a community with legitimate concerns, grievances and rights: 'we exercise statehood, but Karabakh Azerbaijanis are merely appointees'.[62] When posturing for international audiences, official Karabakh Armenian discourses admit the possibility of Azerbaijani displaced community return. In reality, a strong taboo on any interactions in a 'bi-communal' format reinforces the gradual effacing of the historical presence of Azerbaijanis in Nagorny Karabakh. The liberalism of the Karabakh Armenian self-determination claim thus gazes exclusively outwards. This also entails a denial of the claim of the larger Azerbaijani population internally displaced from the occupied territories surrounding the former oblast. Return to these areas, according to this logic, must be symmetric with the return of Armenian refugees to other parts of Azerbaijan.[63] Through such discursive deflection, displaced populations and the spaces from which they were displaced are homogenised in the service of a chilling equation dictating that all displaced persons must return, or none will.

Authoritarian actors also seek to control the media environment surrounding a conflict, and to suppress alternative sources of information and interpretation contradicting official lines. Since the late 2000s, Azerbaijan has compiled a 'black list' of foreign citizens deemed to have visited Nagorny Karabakh illegally.[64] Since 2010 between 50 and 100 people have been added to the list every year; by February 2018, 707 people appeared on it. Analysis of the professions of those visiting the territory indicates that the list is a highly targeted instrument driven by an awareness of the importance of narrative. Journalists, including bloggers, writers and other media professionals, accounted for just over 30 per cent (215 people). Foreign parliamentarians and those visiting the territory in the capacity of observers of its de facto elections are also a particular focus. The denial of access to seceded territories is a characteristic element of counter-secession strategies, allowing for the ongoing expression of the parent state's claim to the territory. But in 2017 the blacklist hit the headlines when Azerbaijan prosecuted blacklisted Israeli–Russian blogger Aleksandr Lapshin for having visited Nagorny Karabakh, after securing his extradition from Belarus.[65] In what was the first prosecution of its kind, Lapshin was sentenced to three years' imprisonment (he was released three months later).

The blacklist polarises the transmission of alternative narratives about life in Nagorny Karabakh, by leaving it in the hands of those already committed to the territory's Armenian identity or who have little to lose in their relationship with Azerbaijan. The main casualty of this situation is the field of independent

knowledge about the territory, and the possibility of triangulating the hegemonic narratives disseminated by the parties with observations from the field. Censorship, moreover, has not been limited to contested territory in Nagorny Karabakh. In 2011 US Ambassador Matthew Bryza to Azerbaijan was denied access to the site of an ancient Armenian cemetery deliberately destroyed at Julfa (Jugha) in Nakhichevan in 2005.[66]

Communalisation

Nationalism has of course been present in different forms since on the onset of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict. Communalisation describes a more specific process aimed at homogenising political identities through ahistorical story-telling centred on ethnic identities unqualified by time, place or circumstance:

> The enemy here is mythical, it's not about real people or real agendas. If you look back at the original demands, they were to do with textbooks and TV towers, not this zero sum fight to the death. It's a fight with an imagined enemy, sustained by historical memories.[67]

As we saw in Chapter 5, communalisation is central to demobilisation by framing other kinds of identity positioning as illegitimate.

In Armenia, a communal narrative structured around eternal images of the self and 'the Turk' has vied with a legal-political discourse of self-determination since the onset of the conflict. Militarism, considered by many necessary in order to mobilise sufficient resources in the context of an asymmetric conflict, competed with liberal discourses focused on rights, emancipation and harmonisation with global democratic norms. Growing Line of Contact violence, and April 2016's 'four-day war' in particular, strengthened the hand of the former. In the aftermath of the 'four-day war' figures in Karabakh condemned premature institution-building efforts, calling for an exclusive emphasis on the military.[68] In Armenia, this emphasis took the form of the 'Nation-Army' concept announced by Minister of Defence Vigen Sargsyan in October 2016. According to Sargsyan, the concept envisaged that the 'entire population, not just those who serve in

the armed forces, should have many scientific, economic, industrial or other projects related to the army'.[69] Initially manifested as a 1,000-dram levy (around $2.30) on monthly salaries, the concept extended to new recruitment programmes, amendments to arrangements for draft deferral among students, and directing financial and human resources towards the domestic defence industry. Public demand for the eradication of corruption in the army, heightened by Armenian losses in April 2016, was genuine. However, the Nation-Army concept spread into the sphere of 'military-patriotic education', identifying, inter alia, 'the existence of citizens reluctant to protect the country' and the 'tendency to communicate foreign cultural values' as internal threats. This signified for Armenian liberals a wider project in communalised militarism, taking Armenia in the direction of a 'garrison state' peopled by soldiers bound by duty, not citizens endowed with rights.[70] That most Armenian citizens did not share this vision was vividly demonstrated less than two years later in April 2018's Velvet Revolution.

In Azerbaijan, the shift to communalisation was starkly illustrated by the case of Ramil Safarov, an Azerbaijani military officer convicted of the gruesome murder of an Armenian counterpart, Gurgen Markaryan, with an axe at a NATO training seminar in Budapest on 19 February 2004. Sentenced to life imprisonment by a Hungarian court, he was extradited to Azerbaijan in August 2012 where he received a hero's welcome, a presidential pardon and promotion, and financial reward.[71] The Safarov case caused a furore in Armenia; in Azerbaijan, it marked a significant transition from the late 1980s, when those killing Armenians in communal violence were depicted as circumstantial hooligans. In the aftermath of Safarov's return, in January 2013 former parliamentarian and celebrated novelist Akram Aylisli released a draft novella, entitled *Stone Dreams*, set against the backdrop of the anti-Armenian pogrom in Baku in January 1990.[72] Depicting Armenians in an empathetic light, Aylisli was publicly condemned, his books burnt in the street, and a bounty placed on his ear by a member of parliament.[73] Azerbaijani arguments highlighted Safarov's origins in the occupied city of Jebrail, and the fact that Armenian political culture has similarly lionised terrorists operating in groups such

as the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia. Whataboutism is ubiquitous in Armenian–Azerbaijani rhetorics, but in this case ignores the fact that it is Azerbaijanis and not Armenians who seek a future cohabitation. The tragic irony of the Safarov case is the convergence it signified with a much-quoted and criticised comment by Armenian President Robert Kocharian claiming a fundamental 'ethnic incompatibility' between the two nations.[74] Since the late 2000s Azerbaijan has effectively implemented this axiom as policy through a near-total ban on entry into Azerbaijan by any ethnic Armenian – whatever their citizenship – with extremely rare and choreographed exceptions usually relating to political or sporting events. Others, such as Turkish citizen and professional pianist Burak Bedikyan, scheduled to perform at the tenth anniversary party of mobile phone company Azercell in 2006, or Estonian citizen Karina Oganesyan, a local government official in Tallinn and delegation member to a conference in Baku in March 2018, are deported on arrival.[75]

Coercion

A third aspect to Armenian and Azerbaijani authoritarian conflict strategies is coercion. This is a long-term trend with roots in the dynamism of evolving power asymmetry, accelerating in 2014–15 and culminating in the 'four-day war' of April 2016. These destabilising years saw the intensifying collision of two strategies of coercion: the embedding of Armenian deterrence and a gradual shift in Azerbaijan's policy from strategic patience to compellence. Increased Line of Contact violence in 2014–16 effectively suggested 'land for security', a strategy aimed at Armenian territorial concessions in return for basic security, along a revised Line of Contact. This reading of 'land for peace' makes it easy to portray Azerbaijan as the party driving the coercive turn. As Sergey Minasyan observes, 'Deterrence is typically a strategy of preservation, while compellence is a strategy for change.'[76] Yet both deterrence and compellence are strategies of coercion, and indeed the occupation of territory has long been seen as part of an Armenian calculus compelling Azerbaijan to submit to secession.

It can be argued, as many Armenian commentators have, that compellence is unlikely to succeed as a *military* strategy. The dynamic of truncated asymmetry discussed in Chapter 6 offers some support to this view. Yet this conclusion under-estimates the political utility of violence to authoritarian elites confronting domestic political challenges and popular mobilisation. Violence enacted at such times can be targeted just as much against the society in whose name it is committed, as it is against its direct victims.[77] Where such violence succeeds in demobilising domestic challengers and homogenising political space, military objectives may be secondary. The coercive turn culminating in April 2016's explosion of violence gave political cover to a wide range of illiberal outcomes in its aftermath. These included referendums that in different ways secured and prolonged the rule of incumbents in Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh. New military doctrines and legislation were introduced, such as Armenia's Nation-Army concept discussed above, and an Azerbaijani law strengthening presidential authority over other units with men-at-arms, such as the internal ministry troops, border guards and civil defence units under the Ministry of Emergency Situations.[78] Despite slow growth, continual public protest on socio-economic issues and continuing exposés of elite corruption, in 2017 both states increased their military budgets. In Armenia the overhanging security threat was taken to give cover to Serzh Sargsyan's reneging of a prior commitment not to assume the country's 'new' lead post of prime minister. This was a landmark in Armenia's steady regression from its early democratic promise, and was swiftly punished by an outraged citizenry in April 2018.

Authoritarian conflict strategies have provided networked regimes with cover for the indefinite deferral of democratic transition. It is telling that the solution on which Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders have come closest to agreement, the plans for a territorial swap of 1999–2001, avoided any need for transitions to new institutions or power-sharing arrangements challenging the flows of networked power. Authoritarian conflict strategies have also supplied leaders with otherwise scarce connective tissue with reservoirs of genuine popular sentiment, committed to the status quo in the case of Armenians, and unreconciled to it in

the case of Azerbaijanis. In this sense, these strategies are hardly 'authoritarian', but benefit from broad-based popular support for illiberal approaches to conflict. In Armenia, the 2018 Velvet Revolution demonstrated the limits to their effectiveness in deflecting the citizen's gaze from the domestic encroachments of an authoritarian state. Yet a central problem confronting the new Armenian leadership was whether Armenia could be liberalised while still upholding the practices of an illiberal peace, or whether only a limited variety of 'garrison democracy', undermined by continued reliance on islands of authoritarian practice to sustain rivalry, was possible.

In conclusion, despite uninterrupted dialogue, myriad peace proposals, the efforts of highly skilled negotiators, the intermittent attention of global leaders, the diversion of economic resources, and the continuing loss of life along the Line of Contact, the parties' positions a quarter-century after the ceasefire on the core issue at stake – Karabakh's political status – remain as implacably opposed today as they were in 1988. This is all the more remarkable given that the same basic components of a solution have been discussed for at least a decade, sometimes two. The Madrid Principles linger on the negotiating table, neither accepted nor rejected, a meta-proposal for peace that serves the sole – if still important – purpose of justifying continued dialogue. This outcome is often interpreted in terms of absence and insufficiency: of political will, preparation of societies, statesmanship, peacebuilding impact, and so on. In this chapter I have argued that mediation failure should be understood not only in terms of the absence of enabling conditions, but in terms of actively pursued strategies dissolving the basis for the liberal peace on which the current mediation approach is based. Rather than the convergence between a liberal peace and democratic transitions that informed thinking about conflict resolution in the 1990s, a dynamic emerged in Armenia and Azerbaijan that was more or less its opposite: stably non-democratic regimes developing in a co-constitutive dynamic with strategies harnessing the context of rivalry to authoritarian power. Control, communalisation and coercion form a coherent model completely at odds with the normative assumptions of a liberal peace based, inter alia, on

inclusive negotiations, the acknowledgement and expression of grievances, electoral mechanisms, power-sharing arrangements, and the desecuritisation of politics. They substitute the political earthquakes of compromise with a mythology of irreconcilable difference.

Afterword: Rivalry Unending?

I began thinking about this project in 2013 convinced of the inadequacy of 'frozen conflict' as an analysis of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict. Over the following three years a new dynamic of violence, culminating in the major escalation of April 2016, confirmed that conviction. To meet the analytical challenge of this evolving context, this book has argued for a new reading of Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict as an enduring rivalry. While it shares several formative aspects with other conflicts in the former Soviet Union, the Armenian–Azerbaijani rivalry has increasingly more in common with long-term militarised and violence-prone rivalries elsewhere in the world. It shares with the India–Pakistan and Arab–Israeli rivalries features such as territorial contestation, inconclusive strategic interactions, diffusion across fractured regional environments, the involvement of great powers, and nation- and state-building processes under conditions of long-term, competitive militarisation. A key implication is that the Armenian–Azerbaijani enduring rivalry cannot be understood through single-factor analysis. Rather, its persistence needs to be explained by the convergence of international, strategic, domestic and leadership factors.

At the international level, the enduring rivalry framework questions explanations of post-Soviet conflicts extrapolating causalities from the wider state of Eurasian geopolitics. Since their emergence in the early 1990s, understandings of the nature of these conflicts, and the terminology used to describe them, have taken their cues from over-arching scripts of geopolitics in Eurasia. An evolving terminology described conflicts first as residual ('ancient hatreds', 'post-Soviet conflicts') in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, then as inactive ('frozen conflicts', 'no war, no peace') through the period of relative détente to 2008, and more recently as instrumental ('Putin's frozen conflicts') in the era of confrontation that followed. This study acknowledges the roles of outside actors, above all Russia, in lending Armenia the necessary power to maintain the rivalry despite the growing power asymmetry with Azerbaijan. But the problem with geopolitical and great power-centred explanations is that the Armenian–Azerbaijani rivalry has outlasted several distinct geopolitical conjunctures and regional shocks, including Russian–Western rapprochement in the 1990s, 9/11 and the global 'war on terror', uprisings and civil war in the Middle East from 2011, the Georgian and Ukrainian crises of 2008 and 2014 respectively, and the Russian–Turkish crisis of 2014–16. None of these has been sufficient to alter the configuration of rivalry between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

To explain this, this study has argued that an instrumental or competitive attitude towards the rivalry among outside actors is less important than the peculiar balance of power that it sustains among them. Among Eurasia's conflicts it remains unique in the scale of its diffusion across both regional and global contexts, and as a post-Soviet theatre where an external consensus on preventing escalation has remained solid. Russia, an aspiring regional hegemon and a global entrepreneur of authoritarian conflict management, is embedded within the deep structure of the rivalry because of the power asymmetry. As the only external state with treaty obligations in the event of all-out war, however, Russia is also a key stakeholder in the tactical consensus with Euro-Atlantic partners on deterring renewed Armenian–Azerbaijani war. Yet that consensus appears incapable of conversion into a strategic partnership to bring about positive peace, and would surely be tested if Armenian–Azerbaijani negotiations were to move in the direction of a negotiated agreement – particularly one taking liberal form. The prospects of this are dim, however, owing to the fracturing of the global policy landscape dealing with internal conflicts, and the emergence of authoritarian models of conflict management as a rival to the liberal peace. The liberal peace is in retreat across the world, and across post-communist Eurasia in particular. The Armenian–Azerbaijani rivalry is

consequently embedded within a wider regional context where liberal schools of conflict resolution are likely to recede further. The OSCE's Minsk Group, for now, quietly works around these contradictions.

The regional policy landscape towards territorial conflict is highly fractured. There are inconsistent approaches by both Russia, which recognises some – but not other – de facto states as independent states, and the Euro-Atlantic powers, which enact sanctions in support of some parent states – but not others. This inconsistency intersects with the quite distinct projects in hegemonic regionalism pursued by the European Union and the Eurasian Union (EAEU), neither of which appears likely to offer inclusive regional ties capable of influencing the Armenian–Azerbaijani rivalry in the foreseeable future. Europeanisation, once considered plausible as a route to resolving Eurasian conflicts,[1] confronts both a lack of appetite for membership perspectives in either rival and the wider retreat of the liberal peace. The EAEU, meanwhile, comprises a security community of illiberal states invested in authoritarian models of managing conflict that is deeply unsympathetic to territorial revisionism. There is consequently no meta-region or security community bridging the security and normative priorities of both rivals within which the rivalry could be embedded and de-escalated.

Also at the regional level, the absence of connective infrastructure and the truncated power asymmetry are central to the rivalry's persistence. Economic interdependence is a commonly cited variable in reducing conflict between states, by establishing common interests in peace, cross-border flows and stability. The absence of economic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan is a direct result of the fracturing impacts of the rivalry. Owing to its oil and gas reserves, Azerbaijan enjoys a high level of structural autarchy. Armenia's isolation from regional projects and opportunities for development have in turn driven alternative strategies of dependency on Russia and on remittance communities, again overwhelmingly located in Russia. Yet isolation has never been sufficient to force Armenia to accept the opening of communications and borders as a substitute for its desired political status for Karabakh. Conversely, there are few grounds to convince

Azerbaijan that Armenia would become more politically tractable should its economic isolation lessen. Across the rivalry alternatives to regional trade, whether in the form of petro-dollars, diasporic funds or interstate credits, have been effective in supporting regimes while bypassing societies. This inhibits economic diversification and the development of socio-economic classes and interests autonomously from the state. There is consequently no basis for interdependencies to develop among plural and diversified actors and groups across the rivalry.

The truncated power asymmetry across the rivalry is a critical factor in its persistence. As the parties both understand, especially after April 2016's 'four-day war' did not escalate into a wider conflagration, this dynamic makes the chances of a major war slim. The low-intensity conflict over recent years indicates instead the presence of a stability–instability paradox, whereby major war is unlikely but there is increasing frequency of minor skirmishes and contained escalations. These take place, however, in a context marked by multiple and overlapping deterrents – Armenian and Russian – that have distinct strategic goals and targets. The risks of recursive, low-level violence in this context are high. Yet because of the truncated power asymmetry, neither rival has a logic for concessions. Armenia has developed what is certainly an uneven and unpredictable but still functional deterrent against an Azerbaijani blitzkrieg, diminishing the prospect of an existentially threatening war. Azerbaijan meanwhile continues to see its resource profile and development prospects as leading eventually to an overwhelming preponderance. The truncated asymmetry dynamic has two important implications. The first is Russia's strategic insertion into the rivalry, underscoring the fact that Russia's greatest single source of leverage over Armenia and Azerbaijan is the rivalry between them. The second is that while Azerbaijan's capacity to coerce Armenia outright is limited, for as long as Armenia must devote a substantial share of its resources to the rivalry and shape its geopolitical alliances accordingly, Azerbaijan effectively holds significant veto power over its future.[2]

At the domestic level, it needs to be constantly stated and restated that Armenian–Azerbaijani rivalry is not enduring because of fundamental cultural – still less religious – differences between

Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Rather, this study has sought to contextualise the Armenian–Azerbaijani rivalry against the contingency of the territorial homelands inherited from imperial and Soviet rule. In their Soviet templates Armenian and Azerbaijani homelands generated compelling perceptions of incompleteness that first cultural, then political elites found to be irresistible sources of social capital and power. Territorial unity became a compelling icon of national identity in both Armenian and Azerbaijani geopolitical cultures. But while irredentist ideas were more marginal in Azerbaijani geopolitical culture, they became hegemonic in its Armenian counterpart. The component of irredentism, hardwired into Armenia's political culture by the advent of sovereignty, military victory and the post-war migration of leadership from Nagorny Karabakh to Armenia, embedded a political elite defined by the idea of unification. This entrenched an irredentist ideology within Armenia's domestic politics to an unparalleled degree in any post-Soviet conflict. An imaginary parallel would be the capture of the Russian presidency by natives of Crimea for twenty years. Conversely, rather than the unity of the ethnic nation, it was the integrity of the territorial state that came to define resistance to Armenian irredentism in Azerbaijan.

Historically, states pursuing irredentism as a geopolitical creed have often been punished. For some scholars, indeed, irredentism and self-destructive behaviour go hand in hand.[3] Within Armenian geopolitical culture, however, affective commitments to territorial revisionism are perceived as positive and worthy ideals: the aspiration to self-rule, the right to self-determine, the obligation to prevent genocide, and the desire to overcome the burdens of an exceptionally traumatic twentieth-century history. The unrecognised Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) is the geopolitical embodiment of these ideals. But as is the case elsewhere in the post-Soviet space, the pursuit of these ideals has also been a 'will-to-power disguised as virtue'.[4] The NKR, particularly in its maximalist boundaries, silently incorporates the same practices of ethnic cleansing and exclusion to which it is also a response. An alternative project, which I have termed 'compliant Armenia', to normalise Armenian geopolitical culture – including through an interrogation of irredentist ideas – was a significant casualty of this

will-to-power. In the process Armenia conceded wider concerns over statehood, relations with neighbours and the country's place in the international state system to the politics of sovereignty over a peripheral and contested borderland. Over a quarter-century of rivalry with Azerbaijan deprived Armenia of its early democratic promise, much-needed development as resources were diverted into defence, and the human material of nationhood itself, by exacerbating demographic decline due to migration.

Yet assessments of Armenian irredentism as self-destructive can hardly ignore how Azerbaijan's responses have been a central factor legitimating the continued vitality of 'augmented Armenia' as a construct in Armenian geopolitical culture. The abolition of autonomy in Nagorny Karabakh in November 1991, the serious consideration given by the Azerbaijani leadership to conceding its secession a decade later, the failure to specify an alternative vision of status within Azerbaijani borders, and since the mid-2010s the coercive strategy of compellence have denied conditions of possibility for the Armenian–Azerbaijani cohabitation on which Azerbaijan's formal position rests. These strategies have only consolidated 'augmented Armenia' as a security imperative as well as geopolitical cause. Abundant oil and gas reserves have enabled Azerbaijan to present the façade of a developmental state to the outside world and its own population. Yet having developed as a state that distributes, rather than extracts, resources, Azerbaijan's institutional capacity to accommodate contested politics remains extremely limited. In the medium to long term, as oil and gas reserves decline, the limits to hegemonic authoritarianism at home and compellence as a strategy towards Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh will be reached. A visionary elite and autonomous civil society will be essential if Azerbaijan is to successfully transform itself into a state that can institutionalise political pluralism and an effective peace strategy as a route out of rivalry.

Obstructing these possibilities is the fact that Azerbaijani geopolitical culture has imbibed its adversary's preoccupations with territorial palimpsests, insurgent cartographies and the rhetoric of maps. 'Wide Azerbaijanism' flexes the Azerbaijani geo-body across its Armenian counterpart in its entirety, a retroactive irredentism reciprocating Armenian practices similarly construing

Azerbaijan as a recent and artificial construct. Geopolitical cultures across the rivalry have converged on the ubiquitous conceit of 'lost lands' effaced by an alien geo-body. This relentless and uncritical imagining of places past and present as homogenous ethno-space entails its own effacements, and fails to account for the commingling of Armenian and Azerbaijani communities throughout history. Reproduced in political rhetoric, poetic mythscapes and school textbooks, these ideas belie the emancipatory promise of the territorial paradigm. They drive instead the continuing dominance of a partitioning politics that fails to acknowledge – and reconcile – the mutual embeddedness of Armenian and Azerbaijani spaces and human experiences.

Scripted in the vocabulary of sovereignty and statehood, these ideas provide powerful discourses of nationhood and community driving Armenia's irredentism, Nagorny Karabakh's secessionism and Azerbaijan's counter-irredentism, and legitimate the use of force in pursuing these goals. The question is why elites committed to these incompatible policies were able to capture the policy-making process for so long. This study has argued that domestic institutions, rather than geopolitical forces, provide answers. Authoritarian and hybrid regimes are more likely to escalate symbolic politics, and can more easily manipulate geopolitical cultures and inculcate particular narratives and suppress others among their populations. While there is no single explanation for the durability of authoritarian regimes, rivalry has been a crucial resource in shaping the political arena in ways that constrain proponents of change. It has allowed political elites to diverge from, and then discard, the ideals of increased political participation that many Armenians and Azerbaijanis aspired to, and mobilised for, in the final years of the Soviet Union. Securitised territorial nationalism, fed by the shifting power asymmetry and militarisation, has stood in for other kinds of legitimacy made redundant by the sheer longevity of incumbency. Political elites leveraged compelling storylines, such as the restoration of territorial integrity, the prevention of another genocide, and the empowerment of the army to achieve these goals, that resonated with most citizens – or which many found it difficult to question or refuse – and securitised alternatives.

Leadership is thus central to the enduring rivalry framework. This is significant because, unlike Warren Zimmerman's description of the Balkan wars of the 1990s, the Armenian–Azerbaijani *conflict* of 1988–94 is not easily told as 'a story with villains'.[5] But in answering the question of why the Armenian–Azerbaijani *rivalry* has not ended, the role of leadership is much more central. Rivalry is no longer limited to the territorial issues at stake, but also expresses an elite strategy to define the political arena in ways that secure power. Pervasive geopolitical framing, securitised politics and the exploiting of rivalry to quell dissent are witness to the failure of genuine public spaces – real civic *agora* – to emerge as responses to demands for political participation expressed in the late 1980s. Recurrent efforts in the 2010s to reclaim the street as a space for public contestation – even as regimes sought to mobilise ever-increasing numbers of citizens into the disciplining confines of the army – bore witness to this frustrated demand. It is telling that with the exception of demonstrations in the immediate aftermath of the April 2016 violence, Armenian and Azerbaijani protests were not related to the conflict. Their agendas overwhelmingly concerned political participation, social and economic well-being and the protection of rights from the encroachments of networked power. Swept to power by the Armenian street, Nikol Pashinyan's accession to the Armenian leadership in 2018 indicated that the politics of securitisation has limits. In the face of institutional degradation and visible policy failures, it is corrupt officials indefinitely wielding the rhetoric of insecurity that ultimately come to be seen as the gravest threat to public security.

This argument is not to caricature rivalry as an elite fabrication. On the contrary, Armenian and Azerbaijani elites over the last twenty-five years have tapped into deep reservoirs of popular sentiment with considerable success. There is little doubt that the official narrative depicting Armenia as the real source of conflict resonates more powerfully with most Azerbaijanis than a liberal conception of conflict resolution based on territorial autonomy addressing Karabakh Armenian grievances. In Armenia and Karabakh, intergenerational hatred towards 'Turks' to be passed from father to son remains a powerful and ubiquitous cultural schema. But it is an argument that seeks to interrogate

the instrumentality of rivalry. With an eye more on incumbency than legacy, the authoritarian conflict strategies of Armenian and Azerbaijani leaderships have committed to the cycle of conflict, and to the principle of personalised, networked power that is ultimately the greatest long-term threat to secure sovereignty and statehood in both states. Especially in Azerbaijan, an ageing networked regime, entering its third continuous decade in office with declining purchasing power, is likely to find growing temptation in rivalry as a strategy of demobilisation. Can democratisation, then, lead to a route out of rivalry? As political scientists warn, democratisation is not a panacea. Transitions to more democratic rule will be fraught as rival factions within each state could attempt to outbid one another as the best defender of ethnic interests. Unilateral, partial, stop-start and hybrid-democratic dynamics, involving an unforeseeable number of variables, could see tensions become more acute. In the long term, however, democratisation offers the prospect that coercion will no longer be seen as a legitimate means to resolve Armenian–Azerbaijani differences. Under those conditions a re-evaluation of possible means to achieving the underlying goals currently pursued through the strategy of coercion will be possible.

The enduring rivalry framework in some ways offers a pessimistic outlook. Neither frozen nor pliable, by the standards of some enduring rivalries, the Armenian–Azerbaijani rivalry may still be relatively 'young'. Yet its apparent imperviousness to surrounding change and resistance to coercive termination also underscore the poverty of interventionist geopolitics and militarism as approaches to its resolution. This points ultimately to the necessity of change from within, enacted through the agency of human communities and creative leadership. The only certainty is that for as long as Armenians and Azerbaijanis do not find a way to rebuild their relations, they will remain vulnerable to the thrall of expansive geopolitical visions, the strongmen who come to control them, and the narrowing of identities and liberties that inevitably follows.

Notes

Introduction

1. The total casualties for the Armenian–Azerbaijani escalation of April 2016 remain a matter of speculation as Azerbaijan treats this data as a state secret. Independent estimates by Azerbaijani media and researchers reach as high as more than ninety. For Armenian figures see *The Armenian Weekly*, 'Report: 165 Armenian Servicemen Died in 2016', 12 January 2017, <https://armenianweekly.com/2017/01/12/report-165-armenian-servicemen-died-in-2016/> (last accessed 3 July 2018). The 'four-day war' is covered in detail in Laurence Broers, *The Nagorny Karabakh Conflict: Defaulting to War* (London: Royal Institute for International Affairs, 2016).
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74. Author's conversation with a settler, Kelbajar, June 2013.

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78. Mikaelian, *Societal Perceptions*, p. 28.

79. Ibid.

Chapter 9

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2. Personal communication, Carey Cavanaugh, former US Minsk Group co-Chair 1999–2001, March 2018.

3. Michael W. Doyle, *Liberal Peace: Selected Essays* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

4. Carey Cavanaugh, 'OSCE and the Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Process', *Security and Human Rights* 27: 3–4, 2016, pp. 422–41.

5. John J. Maresca, 'Lost Opportunities in Negotiating the Conflict over Nagorno Karabakh', *International Negotiation* 1, 1996, pp. 471–99, p. 476.

6. Anders Bjurner, 'The Minsk Peace Process' (unpublished m.s., 1996), p. 8.

7. Maresca, 'Lost Opportunities'; on this period see also John J. Maresca, *Helsinki Revisited: A Key U.S. Negotiator's Memoirs on the Development of the CSCE into the OSCE* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2016), pp. 166–72.

8. Author's interview with John J. Maresca, former US ambassador to the CSCE, Baku, 10 June 2014.

9. In addition to Armenia and Azerbaijan, the following states volunteered to attend the Minsk Conference: Belarus, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Turkey and the United States. With the loss of Portugal and the Netherlands, these states form the permanent Minsk Group to this day. Maresca, *Helsinki Revisited*, p. 145.

10. CSCE, CSCE Budapest Document 1994 – Budapest Decisions II (Intensification of CSCE action in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict), p. 6.

11. Confusingly, in this early period these states designated co-Chairmen of both the pending Minsk Conference *and* the Minsk Group tasked with preparing for it.

12. Bjurner, 'The Minsk Peace Process', p. 10.

13. In May 2016 the parties agreed to increase the number of PRCiO field assistants to thirteen, although more than two years later this had still not been implemented.

14. Philip Remler, *Chained to the Caucasus: Peacemaking in Karabakh, 1987–2012* (New York: International Peace Institute, 2016), p. 64.

15. The Minsk *Group* co-Chairs definitively replaced the Minsk *Conference* co-Chairs, although one still finds reference to this earlier role in the literature on the early 1990s.

16. Author's interview with Carey Cavanaugh, former Minsk Group US co-Chair 1999–2001, Tbilisi, 3 September 2014.

17. Interview Maresca.

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20. OSCE, Lisbon Summit Declaration, Articles 20 and 21.

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27. 'Land for a liberal peace' similarly underpinned other plans put forward by practitioners and academics in the 1990s. Two examples are the peace plan devised by John Maresca in 1994, and a thirteen-point framework for a solution put proposed by scholars David Laitin and Ronald Grigor Suny in an article published in 1999. Both envisaged the formation of a Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh within the preserved boundaries of Azerbaijan, compensated by wide powers of self-government. John J. Maresca, *War in the Caucasus: A Proposal for Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1994); David D. Laitin and Ronald Grigor Suny, 'Armenia and Azerbaijan: Thinking a Way Out of Karabakh', *Middle East Policy* 7: 1, 1999, pp. 145–76.

28. Yevgeny Primakov, *Russian Crossroads: Toward the New Millennium*, trans. Felix Rosenthal (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 201.

29. Interview Azimov.

30. See Carey Cavanaugh's comments in Carey Cavanaugh, Hamlet Isaxanli, Ronald Suny and Brenda Shaffer, *Negotiations on Nagorno-Karabagh: Where Do We Go from Here? (Event Summary)* (Cambridge, MA: Caspian Studies Program, Harvard University, 2001), p. 10.

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32. Personal conversation, Vafa Guluzade, Baku, February 2005.

33. See Hakobyan, *Karabakh Diary*, pp. 260–1; Thomas de Waal,

Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War, 2nd edn (New York: New York University Press, 2013), p. 276.

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58. Personal conversation, Azerbaijani official, 2014.

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