

Conflicts of the South Caucasus: a case study of failed third party mediation in intractable conflicts

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Executive summary

The South Caucasus comprises the states of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is a volatile region, distressed by ethno political conflicts which erupted after the fall of the powerful USSR. Free from Russian domination, the peoples of the South Caucasus – Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians – started gaining independence in the beginning of the nineties. After living under a certain Soviet identity, these countries soon supported their own nationalism which caused fragmentation rather than consolidation. The minorities living alongside the majorities alienated themselves and finally also raised their voice for independence. Ethnic wars in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh followed causing deaths, a massive displacement of people and great suffering. Victories of the minorities led to the unrecognized independence of these secessionist states. The three conflicts are frozen along shaky ceasefires lines. Despite efforts made by international organizations none of the three is close to a solution. International law does not provide a clear solution as the conflicts swing between territorial integrity of the states and the right to self-determination.

The Caucasian countries are surrounded by regional powers such as Iran, the Russian Federation and Turkey, located on the invisible borders of Europe and Asia and influenced by Western powers: the United States and the European Union countries. In this respect, the South Caucasus has been at the center of geopolitical rivalries. To an extent, the oil and gas reserves in the Caspian sea, controlled in the Azerbaijani sector have augmented the regional interest and with that the political and economical influence in the region.

Instability, the influence of uncontrolled territories and corruption have caused a wave of crime in the South Caucasus. The region is a patch between the North Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. It has become a route for illegal trade in arms, drugs and human beings and this illegal money fuels the secessionist republics in Georgia and Azerbaijan. Their internal and external problems have worsened because of the influence of the regional powers. These powerful countries have taken advantage of the conflicts to secure their own influence over the weaker Caucasian states while trying to take control over the energy resources. In this perspective, third party mediation, which swings between dialogue and deadlock, has become doubtful. Egocentric regional interest is greater than the wish to solve the conflicts.

The combination of all these unstable factors lead to a dangerous situation within the Caucasian states in a volatile region. The three intractable conflicts are always at risk of escalating and erupting again. Moreover, events evolving in this region will always have a influence on the South Caucasus.

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Preface

This dissertation is written in order to complete my studies and with that obtaining the degree: Bachelor of European Studies. For the final year of this study, I decided to shift away from the heart of Europe and move to the far outskirts of our continent, almost crossing Asian borders: the South Caucasus. When you intelligently drop the name of this region, you often have to spell out the actual names of the countries before people know what you are talking about. Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. This region is often confusing for people. Is it European or Asian? Are they Christians or Muslims? East or West? It is not only difficult for people, half of the internet websites out there put them in the box Europe, the other ones in Asia. When you get to know these countries you will discover a rich history, interesting cultures and good food. However, the region has a little known festering sore, three unresolved conflicts which have been mostly forgotten.

During my internship at the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC), I became highly interested in conflicts between countries and their complex characteristics. Thanks to the many media monitoring experience I did, I got to learn a lot about different conflicts around the globe. I attended a short briefing concerning the South Caucasus, of Mr. Fredrik Wesslau, political advisor to the European Union's special representative for the South Caucasus.

Intractable conflicts will always pose a threat to international peace and security of people and even more so today in a shaky world of geopolitics, escalating events, religious tension and globalization. Intractable conflicts are the most challenging ones to tackle however history has shown that all conflicts are manageable, even the most complex ones.

May 21st

Aranya Naerebout

List of abbreviations

ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
BTC	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CIS PK	Commonwealth of Independent States Peacekeeping Force
GUAM	Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development including Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova
EU	European Union
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IIFMCG	Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
MG	Minsk Group
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKR	Nagorno-Karabakh Republic
OSCE	Organization of Security Cooperation in Europe
SCAD	South Caucasus Anti-Drug Program
UN	United Nations
UNDOC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UNOMIG	United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia

Introduction

The South Caucasus republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia erupted in conflict around the collapse of the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. First Nagorno Karabakh, and then South Ossetia and Abkhazia became the focus for violent conflict that has left the region divided and contested for more than 20 years. Among the consequences of these unresolved conflicts are large populations of refugees and displaced people, political upheaval and stunted economic development. The South Caucasus is now bisected by new roads and energy pipelines, but it continues to be divided by closed borders and fragile ceasefire lines. ("South Caucasus: Conflict overview", n.d.)

When the Cold War came to an end, many experts thought and hoped that this would mark the ending of the concept conflict, which had affected the twentieth century heavily. Conflict between many super powers characterized the bloodiest century in history. The biggest conflict that had captivated the world - the Western powers versus the Communist world - finally ended, which was supposed to be the start of a new beginning (Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 2005). However, nationalist and ethnic conflicts erupted after the Cold War in former communist countries and recurrent famines and instability hit much of Africa (Western & Goldstein, 2011). After five decades, the Israel-Palestine conflict still seems to be in a dark tunnel without sight on any peace settlement. Moving to other parts of the world, in the African continent, we have seen devastating ethnic conflicts in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone. But not only developing countries seem to be dealing with conflicts, Europe is still faced with the conflict in Northern Ireland and the never-ending conflict between Greece and Turkey on Cyprus. Not to mention the devastating conflicts we have seen in former Yugoslavia. Furthermore, we still see conflicts between great powers like the United States and Iran, which has flourished once again in the year 2012, over nuclear weapons. Tensions on the uprising in Syria also once again highlight the Western world versus powers like the Russian Federation and China in the decision-making process on humanitarian interventions. Not only countries, also great religions find themselves dealing over and over with differences which now seems to become a battle between the Western world and Islam (Huntington, 1993).

After the fall of the Soviet Union there was an emergence of civil and ethnic wars in the post-soviet space, which still remain unsettled until today, making them intractable. Intractable conflicts are known for being long-standing and unfortunately get more complex because of their duration. Therefore, these conflicts become deeply rooted in the minds of society members. Intractable conflicts pose a great threat to international peace and security, as violent outbreaks are bubbling underneath the surface. The states involved in intractable conflicts become unstable, a haven for

criminality and pose a threat to the international community. The involving states in the intractable conflict often prove to need a third party to reach a resolution.

Third parties in conflicts mediate between disputing parties to reach a peaceful resolution. Unfortunately, in intractable conflicts, we see third party interventions, which sometimes seem to be ineffective or even make the conflict more complicated. After decades of mediating without coming to a settlement conflicts get labelled as ‘frozen’ and are often forgotten. Often there is a relative peace which is manageable (D. Aghajanian, personal interview, 15 March 2012). Sometimes, the countries get comfortable in their *status quo* and conflicting states and mediators might consider leaving things the way they are because it is a safe approach for the moment. However, just because they are intractable, does not mean they will always stay this way, especially in an escalating 21st century where global tensions rise on a daily basis. This leads to my central question:

Does third party mediation in intractable conflicts facilitate negotiation efforts or create new obstacles to the peace settlement?

The methods selected to carry out the research for this dissertation is literature, a case study of the South Caucasus countries and interviews. The theories on intractable conflicts will be used to get a comprehension of the concept. The desk research will mainly be conducted through reports, papers, books, and news articles. Field research will be conducted in the form of interviews with the ambassador of the Republic of Armenia and the second secretary of the Republic of Azerbaijan. These have been elected for interviews because they are in conflict with each other. In this manner, the answers on the questions can be explained in a comparable analysis. Here is a brief literature review on the most important desk research.

Books

- *Grasping the nettle: analyzing intractable conflicts*. Editors: C. Crocker, F. Hampson and P. Aall. This book analyzes and defines intractable conflicts, while using different case studies. The United States of Peace convened a group of experts with academic and practitioner expertise. This book thoroughly outlines aspects of intractable conflicts.

- *The Caucasus: an introduction*. Author: T. De Waal. The author of this book is a writer and expert on the South Caucasus. In this book, de Waal provides an insightful analysis of the period after the fall of the USSR and gives insights on the three major conflicts examined in this dissertation.

Reports

- Reports on the South Caucasus come in many forms as it is an area which has been analyzed more than once. However, a recurring name is Svante Cornell, a research director of the Central-Asia Caucasus Institute for Security and Development Policy. *The South Caucasus: a regional overview and conflict assessment*, is a highly comprehensive report which has carefully assessed the entire region.
- *The South Caucasus: Nationalism, conflict and minorities*. Aiming to explain and highlight a region which is under-reported and little understood, Anna Matveeva offers a coherent and insightful look at the current political status of the South Caucasus and what its effect on minorities has been since the 1991 independence of the former Soviet republics.
- In 2008, *the International Fact Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia* was mandated by the Council of the European Union to investigate the conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. These two volumes shed light on the Georgian conflicts with respect to international and humanitarian law.

Websites

- The *Beyond Intractability* project was developed by the University of Colorado Conflict Information Consortium. Over 100 people contribute to this website sharing their knowledge on intractable conflicts and peace building. Several essays are displayed on the website created by Louis Kriesberg and Jacob Bercovitch, two writers who have been studying intractable conflicts for many years and also contributed to *Grasping the nettle*.

In order to answer the central question and provide a better insight on intractable conflicts and the success or failure of third party mediation, three conflicts in the South Caucasus will be examined and analysed. The first chapter will give theoretical grounds on intractable conflicts. Many sociologists, researchers and political scientists have published their thoughts on definition, causes and characteristics of intractable conflicts. This chapter will provide the commonalities between the different theories and types of intractable conflicts. The second chapter will give an overview of the South Caucasus. The third chapter will analyse the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The fourth chapter will analyse the interstate conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the Republic of Georgia. The dissertation will look at the historical background and predominantly at the position of regional players and third-party mediation efforts. The fifth party will give an analysis on the overall degree of the involvement and failure or success in the conflicts. The final chapter will provide an overall conclusion and answer to the central question.

Chapter One: Theory on intractable conflicts

1.1. Definition and meaning

When defining the word conflict, we must consider that the meaning of the concept is very broad. A conflict does not only refer to disputes within or between countries. A conflict is also a disagreement between two persons. In a larger sense, we can think of longstanding conflicts that take place in society; on abortion, homosexual rights and the death penalty (Burgess & Burgess, 2003). This chapter of the dissertation will provide a definition and the meaning of interstate and intrastate conflicts concerning countries. The following methodology is given on the conflicts that will be analyzed:

“Conflict is defined as a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle deaths in a year.” (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2012, “Definition: Armed conflict”, section, ¶ 3)

This is a definition on conflict in the broadest sense but the most accurate. It is important to understand this definition in order to comprehend that conflict is everything and everywhere. Many sociologists, political scientists and experts on the field of conflict have devoted their work to analyzing conflicts with the aim of preventing new ones to erupt. Nonetheless, conflict resolution and analysis is a new sphere in the field, as only recently, theories and methodologies have been developed on ongoing conflict and hatred (Solomon, 2005). Conflicts are hard to differentiate and hard to define. According to Bar-Tal (2000) “a conflict becomes a reality for society members only when a particular situation is identified as conflictive by them (Bar-Tal, Kruglanski & Klar, 1989). This perception is a crucial condition for the outbreak of the conflict and serves as a basis for its further evolution.” (p. 352). International conflicts cannot be viewed as one phenomenon. They have different characteristics and features (Bercovitch, 2003). There are also different types of conflict between the definition that has been given. Nevertheless, this study will focus on intractable conflicts. A group of experts on conflicts came with a broad concept to define intractable conflicts, which is the following:

“Intractable conflicts are conflicts that have persisted over time and refused to yield to efforts – through either direct negotiations by the parties or mediation with third-party assistance – to arrive at a political settlement.” (Crocker, Hampson, Aall, 2005, p. 5)

According to Peter Coleman, in his interview with International Focus, “five percent of all conflicts are intractable and get stuck” (2011). However, even labelling conflicts as intractable is quite controversial since you are already labelling them in the box of ‘impossible to solve’, that might enforce the idea of intractability. The best examples to give, when it comes to intractable conflicts is the Israeli-Palestine conflict as part of the greater Arab-Israeli conflict, India and Pakistan over the Kashmir region, the dispute between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Colombia and its armed conflict between government, left and right-winged forces and of course, there are many others (Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 2005).

Intractable conflicts do not start with being intractable, they often become intractable. It might start with one principal issue that initiated the conflict, but throughout the years additional issues will come to surface, which could make the conflict more complex. Not only that, but also geopolitics can make a conflict more intractable, more players get a saying in the conflict. You can compare it with a family dispute or a fight between colleagues, which can initially start with two people about one matter but as the conflict lingers on, friends and family are going to choose sides, old incidents will be used to win the conflict. You cannot compare all intractable conflicts with each other but the dynamics are the same. According to Crocker, Hampson & Aall (2005) “their resistance to a settlement may appear to derive from a single cause or principal ingredient, but closer examination usually points to multiple causes and many contributing factors”. (p. 5) Moreover, intractable conflicts are driven by their complex dynamic but simply concluded: “It is us versus them: we are the victims because of them” (International Focus, 2011).

1.2. Characteristics of intractable conflicts

Intractability is not one concept. There are not two types of conflicts, tractable and intractable. It is rather more a continuum with highly complex and long-lasting conflicts on one end and apparently resolvable conflicts on the other end (Burgess & Burgess, 2003). All other conflicts lay in the middle of the two extremes.



Intractable conflicts are not all the same, for example their rate of violence can vary in what the UN (UN) has defined as *high-intensity conflict* or *low-intensity conflict*. When you look at the Mexican drug war, in 2011 almost 20,000 people died (“Quinto año de gobierno: 60 mil 420

ejecuciones”, 2011), compared to the Northern Ireland dispute that stays very quiet and much less bloody throughout the years. It must be taken into account, that not everyone will agree on certain conflicts being intractable. Some might define the Arab-Israeli as not intractable as the costs of an agreement may be higher than the costs of staying in the conflict (Burgess, 2003). Intractability is not a characteristic: it is a perception on the conflict (Kriesberg, 2005). However, there is a series of commonalities that all intractable conflicts share: *protraction, identity, destruction, historical grievance and refusal for settlement* (Bercovitch, 2003; Zartman, 2005; Coleman, 2011). All these characteristics develop and evolve from the beginning of the conflict and these features will become stronger the longer the conflict lasts.

Protraction is the most definite characteristic of intractability because, simply said; without protraction there is no intractability. Conflicts never start off as intractable; they have the chance to become so over time. The conflict becomes prolonged over time, as intractable conflicts are those that are resistant to conflict resolution methods. It is not intractable if it has not lasted for a while. How do we define a while? For most of the intractable conflicts it is rather difficult to define the starting point of the conflict, because often the disputing parties cannot agree on when the conflict originated. All intractable conflicts are protracted as they take place over a long period of time. However, the concept of protraction in intractable conflicts is not about the longevity of the conflict in years, but more about the effect of the duration of the conflict (Zartman, 2005). The longer the conflict lasts, the more problems will add to the original cause of the conflict which will ‘protract’ the conflict over the course of time and make it harder to come to a peace settlement. More hurdles will come on the path and moreover, problems will accumulate during the conflict. Also, the protraction will cause the disputing parties to ‘learn how to live with the conflict’ in which the conflict will become institutionalized in societies (Coleman, 2011).

Identities, in intractable conflicts, make a conflict become a battle of ‘Them’ versus ‘Us’. Identity is what we become, “each person’s self-conception is a unique combination of many identifications (...) as a woman or man, Catholic or Muslim, or as narrow as being a member of one particular family” (Kriesberg, 2003, “The nature of identity”, section, ¶ 2). Normally there should not be automatically a conflict between different identities. Unfortunately most conflicts in the world are based upon identity conflicts. Conflict originates when identities become polarized; you have to choose a side. According to Zartman (2005) “the polarized conflict moves toward intractability when identities become zero sum and one identity actually depends on demeaning and demonizing the other: being myself requires me to put you down and deny your full identity as a human being” (p. 50.) This general thought fuels intractability as working towards a compromise gets extremely difficult in this Winner-Loser situation of the conflict (International Focus, 2011).

Destructive is what an intractable conflict becomes because of the protraction. The longer the conflict lasts the more harm it will do. There are also some conflicts that might not do much damage but (as cited in Burgess & Burgess, 2003) according to Louis Kriesberg intractable conflicts are especially destructive. If they are not destructive they are not intractable. With destruction we do not only mean the tangible consequences such as casualties, internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugees but also the psychological costs: hatred, fear for the disputing parties and the international community and the downward spiral the countries are in (Burgess & Burgess, 2003). Even in intractable conflicts where the number of deaths is not that high, for example in the South Caucasus, the consequences of the intractability of these conflicts are still destructive as they cause e.g. economic downfalls, regional instability and crimes as drug trafficking and arms smuggling (Cornell, Ismailzade, Makarenko, Salukvadze & Tcheishvili, 2002)

Historical grievance derives from the duration of the conflict. The power of what happened in the past overwhelms the interests of people. What has happened in the past, the negativity of that, is so attractive that it is easy for parties to get sucked into that spiral. Often, the conflicts were already based on tensions between the parties about things that happened earlier on. Disputing parties can always blame the Other for committing crimes in the past and that can go far back in history, or refer back to events that happened in the great past. A clear example is the Middle East conflict, which goes back to clashing theories from the Hebrew Bible and the Quran on claims of territory (Rizvi, 2009).

Refusal for settlement – one of the main reasons why the conflicts prolong is because either party, one way or another, refuse any sort of peace settlement. Not because the parties not necessarily want to get out of the conflict but because it is very complex to find a solution because of the ‘Them’ versus ‘Us’ dynamic. There are two competing solutions which are completely opposite from each other and a middle way is hard to find in that situation. This is very frustrating for the international community as they are the ones trying to mediate the conflict by actually reaching a compromise. They are both resistant towards basic conflict resolution techniques. Coleman (2011): “If you see that many attempts of either mediation or diplomacy or even military victory seemed to not have had an impact they are most likely intractable” (International Focus). It is important to comprehend that the reason for failed mediation does not only have to do with the fact that the techniques and tools that normally work in conflict not function. It can also be that disputing parties have maybe become comfortable in their status quo of relative peace or maybe that the parties can even profit economically from the conflict or as mentioned before are ‘safer’ in their current status.

It must be outlined that these are the main characteristics that most intractable conflicts have in common. No intractable conflict is the same but it is about the dynamics, which are the same. When a conflict becomes intractable, it does not have to mean that there is not a single chance for a peace resolution one day. There have been intractable conflicts that ended, such as the Cold War and the end of Apartheid in South Africa. Categorizing intractable conflicts as intractable, should not automatically define that they are not insolvable. It just means that they are more complex and long lasting than others and foremost, harder to deal with.

1.2. Internal and external causes

The characteristics of intractable conflicts have been outlined, but what actually causes the conflicts? The actual cause of the conflict can change throughout the duration of the conflict. For example the conflict over Kashmir, between India and Pakistan, has developed into a multi-layered conflict including disputes on nuclear risk, trade/travel issues and religious differences (Schaffer & Schaffer, 2005). It will get much more complicated over time if the conflict develops into more issues. Irreconcilable moral differences cause intractability, meaning the conflict between right and wrong, good and evil. Conflicting parties will always continue to fight for what they believe in and will never easily compromise or negotiate (Bar-Tal, 2000). A good example is that opponents of abortion rights will never change their opinion on the fact that they believe abortion is murder, just like homosexuals will always advocate that they deserve equal treatment.

Geography and geopolitics can also promote intractability: large civilizations who live in the same country might clash in terms of values and ideologies. Examples are, the conflict between Christians and Muslims in Sudan, and Muslim versus Hindu clashes in Pakistan and India (Zartman, 2005). Moreover, conflicts may incite conflicts in neighboring countries, a phenomenon that has occurred more than once in Africa with Congo and Rwanda but also in Europe, with former Yugoslavia and the South Caucasus (Zartman, 2005). In times of globalization, news travels fast and people are incited to follow each other's patterns of behavior.

Identity and grievance issues that have been playing for a long time are also likely to fuel a conflict. Poverty and bad living conditions can also be additional factors of grievances. Crocker, Hampson, Aall (2005): "The extent to which certain groups in society are systematically discriminated against and/or have their basic needs denied by those in power can lay the seeds for conflict, especially if there is no legitimate way to channel those grievances through the political process" (p. 6).

Another cause of intractability might be controlled by authorities of the country the conflict takes place in. Governments may benefit from the conflict and because of that, not be fully committed to reach a peace settlement (King, 2005). This situation occurred more than once, in the conflicts of the South Caucasus, where considerably stable ceasefires made it easy for both parties to settle in. Domestic politics can also contribute to intractability. In the Israel-Palestine conflict, groups in the society rely on the political parties who fuel on the promises they make in their political agenda towards concessions. Not only that, but also the violence that takes place in this active intractable conflict is used to block cooperation between the parties.

Long lasting mediation may also promote intractability as peace talks can be manipulated which can lead to a resistance from the conflicting parties towards mediation over time. Moreover, failures in previous mediation talks can also contribute to resistance. Often, all these causes overlap each other, which leads to major resistance towards a settlement. Time promotes the ultimate intractability: the longer the conflict lasts the more causes accumulate, which can be seen in Colombia, Cyprus, the South Caucasus, Northern Ireland and Kashmir (Bercovitch, 2003).

1.3. Types of intractable conflicts

To increase the understanding of intractable conflicts, we can distinguish them in different types. They can be divided into *intrastate* or *interstate* type of conflicts. In this typology, intrastate conflicts are those that take place within a state or republic, and interstate conflicts those between countries. Most intractable conflicts are intrastate, although the division sometimes can get blurry as some conflicts confine a fight over areas like for example Cyprus (Acklkalln, 2011). Furthermore, intrastate conflicts can attract regional players to get involved, which can lead to the development of an interstate. Another distinction can be made between *active conflicts* and *abeyant conflicts* (Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 2005). This distinction defines the level of violence going on in the conflict. Active conflicts are conflicts that experience a high level of violence. This does not have to mean that violence is consistent but it does mean that it is a distinct feature of the conflict. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is a clear example of an active interstate conflict. Throughout the decades it has been sporadically violent in episodes, but it always returns to the surface. Another feature of active conflicts is that the parties are not willing to give up the violence, which they use to achieve certain political objectives; this is also what we see in Sudan, Mexico and Colombia (Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 2005). The other type of conflict is abeyant conflicts, these often have experienced a ceasefire and are in a status they are comfortable in. The peace settlement is most likely shaky but it is still there. Violence is suspended and the situation is relatively stable. Here, the conflict over Cyprus between Greece and Turkey is a classic example.

In the table below, there is a categorization of conflicts in interstate/intrastate and active/abeyant classifications.

Table 1. Classification of conflicts (Naerebout, 2012)

Activity	Types of conflicts	
	<i>Intrastate</i>	<i>Interstate</i>
<i>Active</i>	Mexican drug war	Afghanistan
	Colombia armed conflict	Sudan and South Sudan
	Israel and Palestinian territories	Kurdish-Turkish
	Violence in Iraq	Argentina and the UK
	Pakistan	
	Democratic Republic of Congo	
	Sudan	
<i>Abeyant</i>	Cyprus	North and South Korea
	Northern Ireland	Nagorno-Karabakh
	Georgia	Western Sahara
		Iran and the United States

1.4. Third party mediation in intractable conflicts

The international community cannot leave conflicts linger on as they are dangerous for international peace, that is why in most intractable conflicts mediation efforts are made. The engagement of third parties is highly supported by theories and the globalized modern world (Barseghyan & Karaev, n.d.). Mediation is a principle of conflict management and is a tool that is used in all conflicts over the world. According to a study of Huang (2008): “(Mediation is) a reactive process of conflict management whereby parties seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an individual group or organization to change their behaviour, settle their conflict, or resolve their problem without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of the law. (Bercovitch and Houston, 1996:13)” (p. 147.) Mediation is used to solve conflicts by finding a mutual accepted settlement for the conflicting parties in a peaceful manner.

There are different motives for states to step up as mediators. Sometimes, the third party steps up out of a geographical obligation. For example, in the conflicts of the South Caucasus, the Russian Federation has stepped up as main mediator seen from a historical and geographical position. In

more violent conflicts, the UN will step up as mediator with its peacekeeping missions out of obligation for the institutional and humanitarian role. This also accounts for other international organizations like the EU, the African Union, and the OSCE etc. In other cases it can be for moral concerns like the diaspora of people, for example, the United States has always been a mediator in the Israel-Palestine conflict because of the Jewish diaspora in the country (Schoenbaum, 1993).

Mediation efforts are desirable, as often the conflicting parties cannot come to a resolution. There are different types of intervention techniques ranging from facilitation to power/military intervention. In intractable conflicts, the most used technique is that of third-party mediation, in which mediators facilitate discussion, draft resolution text and get the disputing parties together to discuss their wants and needs. It is important to understand that mediators do not impose the solution – they create the ideas towards a peace solution and in the end the concerning parties have to agree (OTPIC, n.d.). Imposing solutions on countries in conflict is often criticized, as it clashes with the rule of sovereignty.

Recent studies in the field of international relations have shown that not all attempts of mediation techniques are successful (Haixia, 2007). The success rate is related to the type of third-party mediation and the strategies that are executed. Furthermore, the degree of success can also depend on external factors. Especially in intractable conflicts, third party mediation can be affected by a number of factors and can fail. Intractable conflicts are so complex that even intense mediation efforts may result into no solution or just endless peace talks without progress (Bar-Tal: 2000, Zartman: 2005, Haixia: 2011). Many international experts on conflict resolution even blame mediators for intensifying the resistance of peace settlements by focusing too much on their own interests whether economic, political or sociological. This leads to cynicism and distrust in the mediators and the process (Solomon, 2005). Zartman and Toouval (1985) discuss that the personal interests and motives of the mediators can be defined in the context of a political power game and that mediators are rarely “truly indifferent to the issues and terms being negotiated” (p. 11).

Third party involvement has varying degrees of success in conflicts. Despite the notion that the conflicts of the South Caucasus erupted out of more or less the same causes, which make the conflicts quite similar to each other, the international community managed to make them more complicated by increasing the number of third parties (Barseghyan & Zainiddin, n.d.) Multiple countries and international organizations (UN, OSCE, EU, etc.) defined themselves as influential third parties. Seen from its geographical location and economic resources, the South Caucasus forms many underlying interest for influential parties who are at times also part of the mediation efforts which has led to decades of mediating and shaky ceasefires (King, 2005).

Chapter Two: An overview of the South Caucasus

2.1. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia



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The South Caucasus area covers the states of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and is a region of countries that are in between borders, ideologies and cultures. They are between continents, great religions and political systems. A region which functions as a patch between Europe, the Middle-East, and the Russian Federation, located between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and marked by the Caucasus Mountains¹. The region has experienced limited intermixing between the inhabitants of the three countries, leaving the populations considerably homogenous. Examining the region, the Caucasus countries are relatively small compared to their big neighbours, - Iran, the Russian Federation and Turkey. This geographical position has also made the region a field of interest and battle throughout the centuries between great empires like the Ottoman, Persian and Russian Empires. The South Caucasus owns various identities, it is European and Asian but also influenced by the Middle East and Turkic nations (de Waal, 2010). The countries of the South Caucasus share an ancient and cultural heritage. Armenia was the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as official religion. “The conversion of Armenia to Christianity was probably the most crucial step in its history. It turned Armenia sharply away from its Iranian past and stamped it

¹ In Arabic, the Caucasus means “mountain of many languages”.

for centuries with an intrinsic character as clear to the native population as to those outside its borders, who identified Armenia almost at once as the first state to adopt Christianity” (Garsoian, 1997, p.81). Azerbaijan is accounted to be among the cradles of mankind characterized by ancient civilizations and is also known to be one of the most progressive Islamic societies of all Muslim countries (de Waal, 2010). Not only Azerbaijan and Armenia but also Georgia has a rich culture, recent discoveries by archaeologists prove that Georgian bones dating back 1.8 million years ago are the oldest humans ever found outside of Africa (Derbyshire, 2009).

After the fall of the Russian Empire, the three South Caucasian countries experienced a short period of independence, mainly because after the Russian Revolution in 1917, there was still struggle over leadership between different movements. The countries of the Caucasus seceded and formed their own federation called the Transcaucasia Federation (“History, the Soviet period”, n.d.). In the beginning of the Soviet period, the Bolsheviks annexed all three of the countries, which was accomplished quite easily due to a great presence of Communist groups in the regions. The Transcaucasia Federation merged into the Soviet Union together with other Federations. Within the Soviet Union, the countries became the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), Armenian SSR and Azerbaijani SSR. It was not only the power of Communist presence but also promises that Joseph Stalin made towards minorities within the state they were in. He made autonomous republics to initially split up populations to weaken them, so they could not group together. It was a so-called tactic of ‘divide and conquer’ (Matveeva, 2002). “The very structure of the Soviet state was built on ethnic federalism; minority groups were mapped, evaluated, and assigned a certain status, often according to the whims of the highest decision makers, notably Stalin himself” (Cornell, 2002, “Autonomy and rival explanations”, section, ¶ 6). However, there was no attention given to the ethnicity of the citizens of the republics. The resistance of the annexation was small because of the promise certain national demands would be acknowledged this would later turn into ethnic conflict and nationalism amongst the ethnic groups in the South Caucasus (Matveeva, 2002). For seventy years, the Caucasian countries lived under the Soviet rule dealing with Communist oppression.

The Soviet Union era lasted from 1922, with the Treaty of Creation, until 1991 when the Union officially dissolved (“History, the Soviet period”, n.d). A combination of factors led to the dissolution, amongst them the crumbling of the political and economic structures. Mikhail Gorbachev made efforts to change the leadership by modernizing the USSR by implementing *perestroika*² and *glasnost*³. The latter finally opened the chapter of ‘freedom of expression’ in the USSR, which led to political expression. Under *glasnost*, nationalism grew and led to a greater call

² Perestroika means ‘restructuring’ in the Russian language.

³ Glasnost means ‘openness’ in the Russian language.

for independence amongst the republics of the Union. By the end of the eighties, many republics of the USSR started with processes towards obtaining sovereignty. According to Article 72 of the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, “each Union Republic shall retain the right freely to secede from the USSR.” In 1990, a law was passed which stated that republics were allowed to secede when two-thirds of the residents voted in favour through a referendum. This is also what happened in the South Caucasus: Armenia declared independence on the 21st of September 1991, Azerbaijan on the 18 October 1991 and Georgia on the 25 December 1991. “In all three countries, populist nationalist leaders came to power after the collapse of the Soviet Union” (Faber & Kaldor, 2006, p. 122). Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the three states of the South Caucasus have experienced war, ethnic conflicts, displacement, criminality, corruption, slow political and economic reforms and little respect for basic human rights. The revival of long-pressed cultural longings has been a great factor in the eruption of many of the South Caucasus conflicts (King, 2006). Five of the nine armed conflicts in the former Soviet Union took place in the South Caucasus (Cornell, et al., 2002). It turned out that it was not easy to create fifteen independent well functioning states (the number of Soviet republics after the USSR). Nationalism grew and minorities fought for their existence. King (2006) explains that “conflicts often involved an ethnic minority that was distinct from the majority population in the country (or soviet-era republic) as a whole and that had enjoyed a relatively privileged position during the Soviet period, usually within an ethnically defined administrative subunit” (p. 271). “Initially, ethnic grievances in the Caucasus were driven by demands for greater freedom in local affairs rather than for complete independence. The quest for more cultural rights for minorities also formed part of the agenda in what was regarded” (Matveeva, 2002, p. 8).

According to a joint statement by the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova foreign ministers to the General Assembly: “In the last 15 years, frozen conflicts in the GUAM region, namely in Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, have affected the lives of over 16 million people. Not only that, but they've remained a threat to international peace and security” (Krastev, 2006, “UN: GUAM Brings Frozen Conflicts To World Stage” section, ¶ 3). The conflicts swing between territorial integrity beliefs and self-determination ethics. They linger between dialogue but also deadlock, which causes instability and insecurity in the South Caucasus.

2.2. The regional players

The South Caucasus region has a very interesting geographical location and has become an attractive area for a number of countries, which increased after the Soviet period. This strategic region serves as a patch between the East and the West – connecting Asia and Europe, many cultures and connects the Christian and the Islamic world. Politically and historically, it has always been located between great empires like the Russian, Persian and Ottoman empires. In modern

times it remained like that: Russia, Turkey and Iran have a natural and a logical influence on the South Caucasus. This influence is compounded by historical events and developments. However, regional influence reaches further than neighboring countries: the United States and the EU countries have also shown interest in the last decade. For the size of the region – approximately 17 million people – the South Caucasus attracts many foreign players from different corners of the world (de Waal, 2010). Foreign interest in the region has increased after the fall of the USSR as borders finally opened. Furthermore, the discovery of energy resources and with that specifically the Caspian oil and natural gas that serves as a new energy supplier. This increases the private but also public interests in especially Azerbaijan, but with that also the countries that border and connect to Azerbaijan. This geopolitical competition can present as a threat but also as an opportunity. Issues on ownership as well as the transport of the energy into world markets are part of the dialogue and the competition nowadays (Cornell, et al., 2002). The interaction between the three Caucasus states in combination with their regional players have formed a security complex in the region. These foreign interests also affect the regional conflicts of the three states either in a positive or negative way. Regional stability is a shared goal of most countries involved, but tensions between the superpowers that are involved can also increase tensions in the region. In addition, the political situations in the Middle East, Central Asia and even Afghanistan and Pakistan affect the region's stability because of the geographical features (Cornell, et al., 2002). All these factors lead to an unpredictable and volatile region. The South Caucasus has become a playfield of energy and conflict politics between old friends, alliances and rivalries. All these factors influence the third party mediation in the conflicts of the South Caucasus.

A varying range of states have interest and are involved in the South Caucasus states. Although the combination of countries that show interest in the region might have their own issues, which could provide to be an arena of conflict, it is contested if this proves to be an obstacle or not. Most of the interests are shared and have actually supported new alliances and partnerships. As was mentioned before, the South Caucasus has shown to be an area of opportunities. However, it must be remarked that the energy interest may win over the interest to solve the conflicts.

Recent events have shown that the area is becoming a battleground for greater power politics. About a month ago various attempts on assassinations from Iranians have been initiated on Israeli targets in Azerbaijan and Georgia. Iran has made its views towards Israel very clear. It is to be expected that Iranians might do things to friends of Israel and the U.S. According to Caucasian experts the South Caucasus is likely to be used for a hidden war serving as a base for many countries (Clayton, 2012).

Chapter Three: The Nagorno Karabakh conflict

3.1. History of the conflict

The conflict in Nagorno Karabakh originates from around 1988. Nagorno Karabakh is a mountainous area, which belongs to Azerbaijan, however historically dominated by Karabakh Armenians. The conflict takes place between the Republic of Azerbaijan on one side and the Karabakh Armenians who have been supported by the Republic of Armenia on the other side.

In order to receive public support from Armenia, the Bolsheviks promised Karabakh and various other disputed areas to Armenia, however in a broader political agenda to extend relations with Turkey; Stalin allotted the areas to Azerbaijan (Cornell, 2002). The Soviet Union made Nagorno Karabakh an Autonomous Oblast within the SSR of Azerbaijan although 94 percent of the population of Nagorno Karabakh was ethnically Armenian (Companjen, 2010). Demands for unification with Armenia started around 1980 in a rather peaceful way. In February 1988, the leaders of Nagorno Karabakh voted in favour of a unification of the autonomous region by “asking for borders to be redrawn and territory to be transferred from Soviet Azerbaijan to Armenia” (de Waal, 2010, p. 98) however, the Kremlin refused, this led to inter-ethnic tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Nagorno Karabakh which eventually became the main cause of the conflict. In February, a series of events took place starting with the alleged rape of two Azerbaijani girls in the capital of Nagorno Karabakh which was followed by confrontations in a town nearby named Askeran (de Waal, 2003). The Sumgait riots of January 1988, where the Armenian population of this Azerbaijani town were attacked, killed and forced to flee, mark the deadlock of the hatred between the Azerbaijanis and Armenians (de Waal, 2003). The Nagorno Karabakh conflict would become the first separatist armed conflict of the Soviet Union. The demand for independence derived from growing nationalism amongst the Karabakh Armenians and also the fact that they felt deprived from rights that were enjoyed by the Azerbaijanis of Azerbaijan. “When Stalin put Karabakh under Azerbaijani control it just rejected the people’s will and since that day, these people have been fighting to get their right back to where they belong, instead they were getting repression and discrimination all those seventy years they were under Azerbaijani control” (D. Aghajanian, personal interview, 15 March 2012).

As mentioned before, according to the Constitution of the USSR, republics were free to secede. However, Article 78 of the Constitution also said that ‘a Union Republic may not be altered without its consent’. The declaration of secession from Azerbaijan was the final result of a territorial conflict regarding the land (Croissant, 1998). As soon as they wanted to become independent, Armenia send in troops to back up the Karabakh armed forces and “military

confrontations began around the frontiers of Nagorno Karabakh and the conflict took on all characteristics of war” (Maresca, 2000, p. 68). During the years, accusations on the initiation of hostilities came from Armenians as well as from Azerbaijanis. Ethnically motivated killings came from both sides and Armenians and Azerbaijanis fled their countries out of a fear of being forced out or expelled, which resulted in enormous numbers of refugees and IDPs.

When the Soviet Union fell apart, Nagorno Karabakh proclaimed the NKR – Nagorno Karabakh Republic which escalated the conflict into a full blown war. In 1991, Nagorno Karabakh proclaimed independence as the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR) although they were still a part *de jure* of Azerbaijan and not recognized by any other state, not even Armenia (de Waal, 2003). In 1992, full scale fighting erupted with Operation Goranboy, one of the few great offensives of the Azeri army to retain occupied districts (Goldberg, 1992). After six years of fighting, both parties were in need of a ceasefire mostly out of economic reasons. In 1994, the involving countries, Armenia and Azerbaijan, plus the unrecognized NKR and the Russian Federation signed the Bishkek Protocol, this Protocol later developed into the ceasefire agreement which is still in force as we speak. The protocol ended the war and froze the conflict. The protocol contains a series of provisions (Hirose, 2007):

- Autonomy of Nagorno Karabakh under the sovereignty of Azerbaijan
- Withdrawal from occupied territories in Azerbaijan
- The returning of refugees on both sides
- Security guarantee for the NKR

After the ceasefire was signed, Armenia occupied almost the entire region and seven more districts of Azerbaijan (Companjen, 2010). In total, Azerbaijan lost 20 percent of its territories. Some of these other districts are even bigger than the initial Nagorno Karabakh region (J. Musayev, personal interview, 6 April 2012).

3.2. Mediation and conflict settlement

Since the beginning of the conflict there has been a debate on whose conflict it really was. Before the break-up of the USSR, the conflict was seen as an internal conflict within the Soviet space, which left the focus of the international community absent in the mediation efforts. Moreover, around the same time, the war in Yugoslavia broke out and the world’s attention was focused on the shocking events in that part of the world (Maresca, 2000).

Mediation efforts have been ongoing since the beginning of 1992. Three organizations have been occupied with the mediation and peace making process over the Nagorno Karabakh conflict:

the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the OSCE and the Commonwealth of Independent States. After the dissolution of the USSR, the OSCE Minsk Group (MG) stepped up as mediators in the conflict. In general, the settlement of the conflict has been laid out in the principles of the UNSC and the resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884. These resolutions, all adopted in the year 1993, repeatedly demanded for immediate cessation of all hostile acts and asked for withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (UNSC, 1993). The UN limited its role in resolving the conflict to political statements made by the UNSC. The resolutions have always been rejected by Armenia as they felt they were biased (Barseghyan & Karaev, n.d.). The Security Council later recognized the MG as the official mediators in this particular conflict. The MG was created in 1992 by the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the then OSCE. The aim of the MG is to find a political solution to the conflict in a peaceful manner. Under their mandate, they are guided by the principles of UN (OSCE, 1995). The MG is co-chaired by the Russian Federation, France and the United States. Azerbaijanis believe that the MG is in favour of Armenia because of the chairing countries and the international relations they have with Armenia. “Armenians, like Jews, are a diaspora nation, with powerful communities in France, Russian Federation and West Coast USA. Many Armenians also live in the Middle East and Iran. Diaspora sponsorship and political influence play an important, sometimes controversial, role in Armenian politics” (Matveeva, p. 6). Nevertheless, all decisions made by the international community have been more condemning towards Armenia. At the OSCE Lisbon Summit in 1996, the Chairman-in-Office made a statement on the conflict resolution:

- Territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijan Republic
 - Legal status of Nagorno Karabakh defined in an agreement based on self-determination which confers on Nagorno Karabakh the highest degree of self-rule within Azerbaijan
 - Guaranteed security for Nagorno Karabakh and its whole population, including mutual obligations to ensure compliance by all the Parties of the settlement
- (Giragosian, 1996)

Because of the OSCE’s consensual decision making format, the principles of the peacemaking process was vetoed by Armenia (Giragosian, 1996). After the Lisbon Summit, Azerbaijan doubted the capabilities of the MG and Armenia claimed that the MG was not an objective mediator (Carley, 1998). New proposals were made in 1997 based on a “stage-by-stage” approach, planning at the first stage to liberate six occupied districts, to deploy the OSCE peacekeeping operation and to return the displaced persons to the liberated territories (J. Musayev, personal interview, 6 April 2012). This plan was accepted by both parties but when the President of Armenia resigned, Armenia withdrew from the proposals (Carley, 1998). The Co-Chairmen emphasized that the continuous disagreements on the proposals would leave as only solution the Presidents of the

3.3. Regional interest in Armenia and Azerbaijan

Diagram illustrating the relationship between the United States, Europe, and the Caucasus region. The United States and Europe are grouped together on the left. The Caucasus region includes Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Iran. The Russian Federation is shown at the top. Arrows indicate relationships: Georgia is connected to the Russian Federation, Turkey, and Armenia. Armenia is connected to Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Iran. Azerbaijan is connected to Georgia, Armenia, Iran, and the Russian Federation. Turkey is connected to Georgia and Iran. Iran is connected to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey.

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pipeline in 2005 was also made to weaken Russian influence in Georgia and Azerbaijan and to counterbalance its economic and military dominance in the region (Cornell & Ismailzade, 2005).

The Islamic Republic of Iran is situated south of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Iran is an incredibly powerful neighbour of the South Caucasus (J. Musayev, personal interview, 6 April 2012). Poor relations with the United States have made economic trade relations with many countries difficult for Iran (Oliker, 2003). Ethnically it is close to Azerbaijan, almost one quarter of the Iranian population is ethnic Azeri (Borhani, 2003). However, Azerbaijan is a secular Muslim state, Iran is an Islamic Republic: both sides fear for bad influences. On Teheran's part this is the idea of a greater Azerbaijan, which will put secessionist ideas among the Azeri in Iran. On the part of Baku it is the influence of Islam extremism in Azerbaijan (Ismailzade, 2005). For a long time, Iran aided Christian Armenia in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Poor relations between Azerbaijan and Iran are also fuelled by good relations between Washington and Baku, which are not welcomed by Iran. Many U.S. companies were established in reaction to the oil resources in the Caspian (Ismailzade, 2005). Iran and the Russian Federation are strategic partners when it comes to weapon supply and nuclear technology. When it comes to the South Caucasus the thing they have in common is their goal to limit U.S. presence in the region.

Turkey has been the international player that is tied not only because of its geographical location but also due to its ethnic and religious ties with the Islamic states in the region (de Pauw, 1996). Turkey's position in the region is complicated by its poor relationship with Armenia because of the Armenian genocide in 1915. Turkey has always had strong relations with Azerbaijan that derives from ethnic and cultural ties but also that fact that they are both secular Muslim states (Cornell, et al., 2002). In addition, with this partnership, Azerbaijan also felt it secured itself from the rival Armenia and its alliance with Russia (Chkhutishvili, 2011). These strong ties combined with the rivalries they both have towards Armenia, does not help the regional stability. Therefore, the opening of the borders is very much supported by the United States as well as the EU. Turkey's interest in the region derives from energy corridors and also the desire to become more active in the region. The construction of the BTC pipeline increased the geographical importance of Turkey. The East-West energy corridor has strengthened relations between Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Besides the regional players, the United States has also been involved in the South Caucasus for various factors. Their involvement mainly derives from two reasons: energy reserves and the geographical location of the region in the war against terror. In 1994, Baku and U.S. companies as well as other Western companies signed a contract to exploit the oil fields of Azerbaijan. The BTC pipeline was also supported by the United States. The reasoning for this support has been the wish

for aspiring more Western integration with the South Caucasus and also to decrease the dependence on energy resources from the Middle East (Ismailzade, 2005). Since the fall of the USSR, and because of the Armenian diaspora in the United States, they have also been engaged in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and are also part of the OSCE Minsk Group. The United States have strongly aided Armenia and Georgia after 1990 and has been a main investor of Azerbaijan (Cornell, et al., 2002).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the focus of Europe towards the South Caucasus was not particularly great from the beginning. Later on the focus developed through EU created projects (Boonstra & Melvin, 2010). European companies are also involved in the energy projects of the Caspian Sea as well as the Blue Stream pipeline cooperation between Russia and Turkey (Cornell & Ismailzade, 2005). Some countries of the EU have been more involved in the South Caucasus, than others. For example, France is one of the main players in the mediation process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict also because of strong relations with Armenia.

“Economic competition is not always mutually exclusive and is open to compromises. Negotiations and compromises over Azerbaijan’s rich oil resources are perceived by many mediators as the key factors in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement and the establishment of peace in the region. Nevertheless, despite all efforts to overweight the economic benefits that conflicting parties may have from fostering the peace building process, the Nagorno Karabakh conflict remained unresolved”, (Barseghyan & Zainiddin, n.d., “Regional interests and their influence on peacemaking”, section, ¶ 5)

3.4. Aftermath of the conflict and effects on the region

Both countries have been affected by the aftermath of the war and are still until today influenced by the still vivid conflict. The effects influence the countries in different ways but there is an overall economic, psychological and cultural effect. One of the greatest consequences has been the huge displacement of people. Most Azerbaijanis from Nagorno Karabakh were forced to flee the region and according to the IDMC⁴ more than half a million Azerbaijanis remain internally displaced in Azerbaijan after the end of the war (IDMC Europe Report, 2011). “We still have over one million refugees and IDPs. The majority of them don’t work and don’t pay taxes and they still receive too many subsidies from the government. We are paying them every month for all the families. They are getting free food. The government every year, pays approx 1.2 billion dollars to IDPs and refugees. It has a very big effect to the economy of Azerbaijan” (J. Musayev, personal interview, 6 April 2012).

⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the leading international body monitoring internal displacement worldwide, recognized by the UN.

As for Armenia, they have mostly been hit economically. They already are a landlocked country but struggling under the fact that they are closed off from neighbouring countries Azerbaijan and Turkey⁵ makes growth hard. “One major consequence is that the Turkish-Armenian border is closed because of Azerbaijan and I’m not even speaking of the Azerbaijani border, which is actually the frontline and there are shootings going on and despite for the call of removal snipers, Azerbaijan is refusing to do that. So economically it makes it harder for Armenia to advance at the pace that it could have advanced. Because nowadays the transportation is about 80 percent through Georgia. It means about 30 percent cost increase simply because of the transportation costs. (...) It means that any time, because of their political affiliation and economic interest in the pipelines they would try to come up with policies attempting to stifle the Armenian economy. So yes this does affect the Armenian people. (D. Aghajanian, personal interview, 15 March 2012).

The South Caucasus is because of its location, part of the major trafficking routes from the markets in Afghanistan to Europe and Russia. Real and potential conflict and disturbances fuel trafficking in humans, drugs and arms. There is a loss of control from central governments, Azerbaijan does not have control over Nagorno-Karabakh and by that do not take responsibility or is accountable of any illegal actions that happen there (J.Musayev, personal interview, 6 April 2012). Azerbaijan has lost at least a quarter of their territory to this conflict. Drug-enforcement officials say the self-proclaimed governments now leading these breakaway regions are suspected of profiteering from illegal trade, including drug trafficking. Authorities in Azerbaijan claim the breakaway enclave of Nagorno Karabakh has become not only a favoured transit route for drugs smuggled from Iran, but also a major heroin production centre (Peuch, 2004, South Caucasus: Region growing as hub for international drug trafficking”, section, ¶ 8).

Mezahir Efendiyev is Azerbaijan's national coordinator for the South Caucasus Anti Drug Program. “If one takes into account, on the one hand, the fact that the three South Caucasus countries are geographically located between Asia and Europe and, on the other hand, the fact that the CIS states represent a major market for heroin, it is natural that this route should suit the drug mafias,” he said. “This route, which originates in Afghanistan and goes to Europe through the South Caucasus and the rest of the CIS, is a very easy one. In addition, these countries acceded to independence roughly 10 years ago and they lack the modern technology that would enable them to prevent drug transit through the South Caucasus area.” (Peuch, 2004, “South Caucasus: Region growing as hub for international drug trafficking”, section, ¶ 9)

⁵ Turkish-Armenian borders are closed because of the dispute on the Armenian genocide in the beginning of the 20th century.

Chapter Four: Conflicts in Georgia – Abkhazia and South Ossetia

4.1. Introduction: Georgia

Georgian independence emerged out of a crisis and the downfall of their powerful northern neighbor. Due to the repressive Stalin era, Georgia took on a sharp pro-Western turn. However, there was one important legacy from the suppressing Soviet era: the division of Georgia into political-ethnic entities including the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Autonomous Oblast of South Ossetia (Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia [IIF-FMCG] Volume I, 2008). Out of the three Caucasus countries Georgia is the most mono-ethnic one. This table shows the ethnic composition of the Georgian SSR.

Table 2. Ethnic composition of Georgia (the Georgian SSR) in 1989 (IIF-FMCG, 2008)

Georgians	3.787.393	70.13 %
Armenians	4370211	8.10%
Russians	341.172	6.32%
Azerbaijanis	307.556	5.69%
Ossetians	164.055	3.04%
Abkhaz*	95.853	1.77%
Others**	276.601	4.95%
TOTAL	5.400.847	100%

* 98.822 Ossetians lived outside of South Ossetia

** 2.586 Abkhaz lived outside of Abkhazia

After the fall of the USSR, Georgia experienced a turbulent period in the running towards their independence. A great majority of Georgians democratically chose their leader - President Zviad Gamsakhurdia - on May 26, 1991. After a short period of time a bloody junta *coup d'état* followed due to his style of leadership and the separatist conflict with South Ossetia (de Waal, 2010). Gamsakhurdia incited Georgian nationalism and vowed to exert control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He did a lot of effort to alienate these entities, IIF-FMCG (2008) “proclaiming ethno-centrist slogans such as “Georgia for Georgians” (p. 13). During the time that the country was recovering from the coup, the disputes of the two aforementioned regions erupted into widespread inter-ethnic violence and wars. For a long time, the government of Tbilisi has been struggling to exert control over a number of territories and the breakaway territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia who both declared independence, supported by the Russian Federation. For Georgia, the situation with its breakaway territories is extremely hard for the country as there would be nothing left of the country if the international community would actually recognize the independence.

4.2. The Abkhaz Conflict

The Abkhaz people are a Caucasian ethnic group mainly living in Abkhazia, which lays in the southwest of Georgia. However, Abkhazia sees itself as an independent republic named the Republic of Abkhazia while Georgia designates Abkhazia as an autonomous republic. In 1931, Stalin named Abkhazia the Abkhazia ASSR, the Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic within Georgia SSR. The Abkhaz people felt the Georgian majority suppressed their ethnicity (“Regions and territories: Abkhazia, 2012). By the time the Soviet Union started to dissolve, ethnic tensions between the Georgians and the Abkhaz people started to grow. Georgia was one of the countries that worked towards obtaining independence by the end of 1980 and the Abkhaz feared for disappearance of their autonomy and tried to gain independence for Abkhazia.

On March 18, 1989, about thirty thousand people called for Abkhazia to be separated from Georgia (de Waal, 2010). The tensions flared up after this convention and resulted in counter protests from Georgians living in Abkhazia.⁶ First armed clashes took place in Sukhumi after a dispute at the University of Sukhumi, “the conflict was sparked by the decision of Georgian government to convert the Georgian sector of Sukhumi State University into the branch of Tbilisi State University” (Beissinger, 2002, p. 302). The unrest caused a number of deaths and many people got injured. The Georgian government tried to go back to the Republic the way it was before the USSR and annulled all legal acts installed by the USSR, thus also the status of Abkhazia and its autonomy (Krylov, 2001). In 1990, the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet adopted the “Declaration of the State Sovereignty of the Abkhaz Soviet Socialist Republic” in the absence of the Georgian deputies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia, 2002). This did not alter a political status for Abkhazia but it did demonstrate Abkhaz aspirations for independence. After this declaration, a war of adoption of laws and decisions followed by the Georgian government as well as from Abkhaz authorities.

A war in Abkhazia erupted in 1992, after the overthrow of Georgian President, Zviad Gamsakhurdia (IIF-FMCG Volume I, 2009). The outcomes of the war were devastating and a series of human rights violations took place on both sides of the conflict. Georgian authorities lost all control over the Abkhaz region. A campaign of ethnic cleansing was held when nearly the entire Georgian population of Abkhazia had to flee the region leaving many internally displaced. According to the OSCE, the capture of Sukhumi by the Abkhaz led to the killings of the ethnic Georgians living there. According to the General Assembly Plenary Session 2008 of the UN, “a representative of Georgia said that more than 500,000 people of various ethnic origins were suffering a humanitarian disaster as a consequence of the conflict.”

⁶ Georgians were the largest ethnic group living in Abkhazia, almost half of the population.

During the conflict, Russian involvement has been speculated more than once, as they were heavily involved especially on the Abkhaz side although they had endorsed the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 1995). Despite the fact they claimed impartiality, the international community noticed that the Russian Federation were on the side of the Abkhaz separatist movement. Georgia still claims that the Russian Federation contributed to their defeat in the Abkhaz conflict. According to Professor MacFarlane (1997) “notably, it is clear, that Russian Federation policy makers are uncomfortable with the idea of a prominent role being granted to external actors in dealing with conflict in the former Soviet space. Russian Federation has clear hegemonic aspirations in the former Soviet space. Although a wide array of opinions is expressed on Russian Federation policy in the newly independent states in the media and in parliament, a dominant consensus appears to have emerged among foreign policy influential on the need for active presence and influence in the area.”

4.2.1. Conflict mediation

The first international attempt towards a peace settlement in Abkhazia was made by the then President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, which resulted in an inter alia for a ceasefire, the withdrawal from Abkhazia of armed groups and the reduction of Georgian forces (IIF-FMCG Volume I, 2009). This agreement also appealed the UN and the OSCE to contribute to peace efforts in the area. Despite this agreement, hostilities in the region continued. Peacekeeping in Abkhazia was pressured upon Georgians and Abkhazians by means of a ceasefire agreement; concluded and signed in May 1994, which was later endorsed by the UNSC, which led to the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States Peacekeeping Force (CIS PKF) (IIF-FMCG Volume I, 2009). Even before any peacekeeping mission, the PKF was already dispatched in Abkhazia under the CIS mandate, in 1994 (Matveeva, 2002).

Security Council Resolution 858 established the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) in the summer of 1993 (UNOMIG, 2007). UNOMIG remains a controversial mission, as many of its peacekeepers came from the Russian Federation. The mandate of UNOMIG was to monitor the parties after their agreement of the ceasefire and to give special attention to the city Sukhumi (UNOMIG, 2007). The mission terminated in 2009, after the Russian Federation vetoed extension of the mission (UN News Centre, 2009). After the UNOMIG ended, the CIS⁷ took over peace talks, which have been going on for more than ten years now. Georgia has been a member of the CIS on and off for years. Until now, the Georgian-Abkhaz still remains unsolved. Peace efforts in Abkhazia mainly focused on the political status of Abkhazia and the return of the refugees and

⁷ The CIS is a regional organization consisting of former Soviet countries.

IDPs. Unfortunately, efforts made both by the UN and the Russian Federation have failed to bring a breakthrough. Relations between the two parties are still tense which is enforced by various factors. Georgia has imposed a Black Sea blockade on Abkhazia and although the Georgian government has offered autonomy to Abkhazia within Georgia, the Abkhaz people do not see a future in being reunited with Georgia. Abkhazia is not internationally recognized as they held elections on their sovereignty after the ethnic cleansing of Georgians in the region (HRW, 1998).

4.3. The conflict of South Ossetia

Along similar lines, a conflict with the same dynamics as the one in Abkhazia unfolded in South Ossetia. South Ossetia is a small territory which borders with northern Ossetia (located in the Russian Federation), north and south are separated by mountains. Ossetians make up for a large part of the population in South Ossetia and are mainly Muslims who speak in a Persian dialect (Coggins, 2006). South Ossetia was also an Autonomous Oblast during the Soviet period. In the beginning of the nineties, South Ossetia proclaimed the South Ossetian Democratic Republic, fully sovereign within the USSR passed through the Declaration on the Sovereignty of Abkhazia (Zverev, 1996). This was in response to the leadership of Zviad Gamsakhurdia whose leadership was at expense of the minorities in the Republic of Georgia. The Georgian government responded by abolishing the territory as an administrative entity (Matveeva, 2002).

Just as in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict there was a lot of back and forth decision-making by the Georgians and the South Ossetians. The situation for Georgians in South Ossetia quickly worsened and it did not take long before it led to an exodus of the Georgians from the region's capital, Tskhinvali (de Waal, 2010). The war lasted from 1991 until 1992 where the South Ossetians were supported by Russian troops, from the North Ossetia. A ceasefire was initiated by the Russian Federation in 1992 and with that also established a peacekeeping force (IIF-FMCG Volume II, 2009).

Throughout the years, tensions were increasing and in the summer of 2008 the Georgian government made an attempt to reclaim the territory (King, 2009). The attack escalated into a fight between Georgia on one side and the separatist movements of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on the other side. In all conflicts the Russian Federation was actively involved. The heaviest fighting took place in the capital of Abkhazia and surrounding territories and lasted for several days. The confrontation developed into a combined interstate and intrastate opposing Georgian and Russian forces as well as South Ossetians and Abkhaz fighters (IIF-FMCG Volume I, 2009). Through mediation by the European Union under the French presidency, all parties reached ceasefire agreements which were all signed in mid-August. Serious human violations and war crimes were committed during this period and also in the following months (IIF-FMCG Volume I, 2009). The

Russian Federation was involved in both conflicts which worsened Georgian-Russian bilateral relations. After the South Ossetia war of 2008 the Russian Federation recognized the independence of both breakaway territories of Georgia. Although condemned by the Western international community, Russian leader Medvedev said he had “taken into account the expression of free will by the Ossetian and Abkhaz peoples” (BBC, 2008, “Russia recognizes Georgian rebels”). The Georgian President responded by claiming that the crimes committed by these peoples was a brutal invasion and ethnic cleansing in the 21st century.

4.4. Regional players

Georgia is nestled between the Russian Federation, Turkey and the Black Sea, which makes it a very strategic location for the size of the country. Both Georgia’s neighbors, Armenia and Azerbaijan, depend on Georgia as a fundamental neighbor. For Azerbaijan, Georgia is a key transit country for the transportation of oil. The BTC pipeline increased the ties between Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan. Armenia is dependent on Georgia because of its own isolation, the Georgian-Armenian borders are the only open ones that Armenia has. However, the further integration of Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan will leave Armenia more on the side, isolating it more and more.

Georgia is in the sphere of Russian and American influence because of its position. Georgia serves as a corridor between Turkey and the Russian Federation. Therefore, Turkey has improved relations with Georgia to the level of a strategic partnership. The BTC pipeline increased the economic relations between Georgia and Turkey due to the fact that Georgia is the geographical link of the East-West corridor (Cornell, 2002). The construction of the BTC pipeline and proposed EU and NATO membership increased influence of the EU influence and NATO.

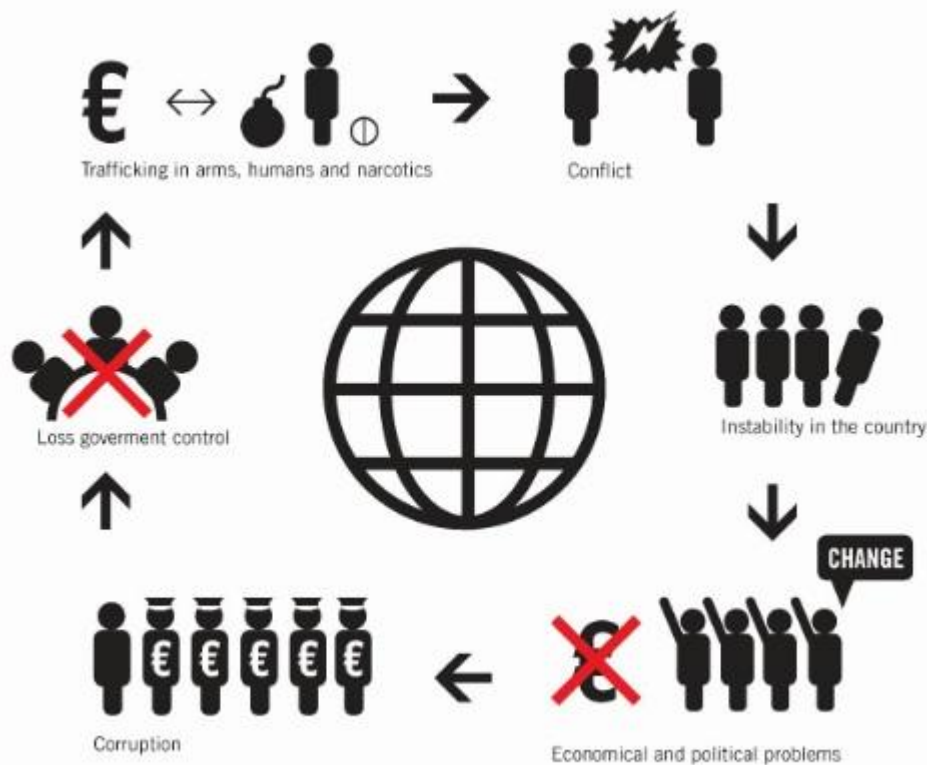
4.4.1. Russia’s role in the Georgian conflicts

Russia’s role in the conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia caused a fundamental breach in Georgian-Russian bilateral relations. The Russian Federation acted on behalf of their own self-interest and their actions were based on their own ambitions to increase their influence in the South Caucasus (Cornell, et al., 2002). In the eyes of the Georgians, the Russian peacekeepers who were operating in the regions, had become border guards who were defending the administrative borders of the breakaway territories (IIF-FMCG Volume I, 2009). Georgia repeatedly asked for an internationalization of the peacekeeping formats from the EU and NATO, however, the Western organizations conceded the peacekeeping and mediator role to the Russian Federation arguing that the Russian Federation recognized the Georgian sovereignty. According to de Waal (2010) “While in Armenia and Azerbaijan many activists blamed the other side rather than Moscow, the Georgian movement took an openly anti-Russian Federation and anti-Soviet line from the beginning – for Georgians, the “other” was Moscow itself” (p. 131). The Russian Federation was seen as the

protagonist responsible for keeping the conflicts in the region frozen, in order to maintain a “controllable instability” for the purposes of its own power projection in the South Caucasus (IIF-FMCG Volume I, 2009). Moreover, they were integrating Abkhazia and South Ossetia into its economic, legal and security space. A clear example of this policy was the granting of Russian passports and citizenship to residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Artman, 2011). In 2008, then Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, signed recognition of independence for the republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Rianovosti, 2008).

4.5. National, regional and international effects

Figure 2. Vicious circle of conflict (Meijer, 2012)



This figure shows the vicious circle of these conflicts. The separatist conflicts cause *instability in the country* which leads to *economical and political problems* which often leads to *corruption* – a well known phenomenon in the post soviet states. The corruption causes a *loss of government control* whereas in Georgia the government has a hard time to exert control over the Abkhaz and South Ossetian areas. The loss of government control paves a way into illegal activities: *trafficking in arms, humans and narcotics*. The money that is earned through this illegal interactions finances the standing of the conflicts.

Evidently, one of the main humanitarian challenges Georgia faced and is still facing is the great number of IDPs and refugees who were a result of the conflicts. At the end of 2011, the government had registered, in areas under its control, about 236,000 IDPs displaced since the 1990s, about 17,000 since 2008 and about 3,000 who were displaced in the 1990s and again in 2008 (International Displacement Monitor Centre [IDMC], 2012). The number of IDPs still displaced since 2008 was higher as some were still not registered as such. There was also an estimated 20,000 IDPs in South Ossetia from both waves of conflict. The number of IDPs in Abkhazia was unknown since their situation was never monitored; however some 50,000 people who fled Abkhazia in the 1990s had returned to their place of origin in the Gali district in Abkhazia. All these facts come from the IDMC Europe report made in 2011. Moreover, the costs of war has been a heavy burden for Georgia, estimates of actual cost of war damage run to one billion dollars (Macfarlane, 2008).

The separatist conflicts have led to the creation of uncontrolled areas in the Georgian territory. The national coordinator for Georgia's SCAD, Paata Nozadze, said (Peuch, 2004, "South Caucasus: region growing as hub for international drug trafficking", section, ¶ 12) "These so-called hot spots, or uncontrolled areas, perfectly suit drug traffickers," he said. "The money that is generated by drug smuggling is being used to purchase weapons and ammunition. It also serves to finance these separatist regimes. This situation perfectly suits drug traffickers because all they have to do is strike a deal with local governments. Elsewhere they would have to make separate arrangements with border guards, customs officers, policemen, or state security officials. For them these conflict zones are much more advantageous." Georgia is part of the so-called 'northern Balkan route' which transits drugs from Iran to Europe and the Russian Federation (UNODC, 2010). Abkhazia has a strategic location at the Black Sea, which makes it easy to transport towards Europe, through Ukraine and Romania.

Chapter Five: Third party mediation and their influence on peacemaking

At present, none of the conflicts in the South Caucasus have found a negotiated solution, which resulted in protracted conflicts that are currently frozen based on unsteady cease-fire lines. Because of the complexity of the South Caucasus due to geopolitical, historical and ethnic incentives, the mediation efforts became an enormous challenge for international organizations. All the efforts undertaken in the past decades turned out to be a fiasco.

5.1. Obstacles to peace settlements

The main obstacle to the peace settlement is caused by the fact that proposals made by conflicting parties are so far apart that it is hard to find a compromise. Thus, it does not matter how many international organizations mediate to find a solution if both parties cannot compromise there is no future prospect for a solution. International organizations can propose the most innovative and creative mediation proposals, however, if the parties do not consent it will not work (D. Aghajanian, personal interview, 15 March 2012). Another factor in the stalling of peace talks is the fact that Presidents of e.g. Georgia and Azerbaijan know that if they recognize independence they will not be able to get their societies behind them (Matveeva, 2004). Moreover, parties also blame each other for not willing to negotiate. In the Nagorno Karabakh conflict as mentioned before there are some controversies about the objectivity of the Minsk Group, as the Azerbaijanis believe that they are biased towards Armenians. In opposition the Armenians believe that the Azerbaijanis manipulate the international community by only putting the blame on the Armenian government. (D. Aghajanian, personal interview, 15 March 2012).

Another aspect of the unwillingness from the separatists' point of view is that they have international law on their side. In UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 "all peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." Nevertheless, on the other side of this international law there is also the right of national sovereignty. In this respect, international law does not offer a solution to the conflict as it swings between territorial integrity and national sovereignty. For the Karabakh Armenians it was illegal to proclaim a Republic within the territory of Azerbaijan (J. Musayev, personal interview, 6 April 2012). These minorities have fought long for their independence although it is not recognized by the international community but they will not give up this independence that easily. For future prospects it would be unimaginable for Georgia to seek reunification with Abkhazia and South Ossetia as all parties are too resentful by past events (Macfarlane, n.d.). Whatever happens towards a peace settlement, for all three conflicts it accounts: there will be no winners. This also what Mr James Appathurai said, the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia. "All the sides will

suffer political, military and economic losses. Negotiations are the only way to progress, he added” (“No winners in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict – NATO Rep”, 2012).

In addition to the primary obstacles, the chief obstacle in the South Caucasus conflicts has been that, according to a study of Charles King: “Beneath these unresolved grievances, political elites in the rebel areas have gone about the process of building states that now function about as well as the recognized countries of which they are still nominally constituents” (p. 284). The economic situation in Nagorno Karabakh is fairly good if you take into account that they are a landlocked in a mountainous area with hardly any import or export to survive (D. Aghajanian, personal interview, 15 March 2012). All breakaway regions have their own functioning governments, economies and benefit from the status quo that they are in. To this extent, the state weakness, which they are in is beneficial. Moreover, they do not have to pay taxes and live off smuggling and corruption. This leads to another obstacle: do these territories actually really want peace? Or do they benefit from the intractability?

Although intractable conflicts resist resolution, they are not absolutely impossible to resolve. At times, intractable conflicts are transformed into disputes which can be resolved. This often occurs after a prolonged standoff when neither side can prevail, yet both are being greatly harmed by continuing the conflict. Once both sides realize this is occurring, they are often more willing to negotiate a solution than they had been before. The end of Apartheid in South Africa is one example of a very intractable conflict that was transformed in the 1990s with the implementation of the South African National Peace Accord.

Dziunik Aghajanian, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands states that “over the time, any conflict has to ripen to its resolution and the ripening means that whoever deals with the negotiation, whoever sits there as a leader has to ripen to understand the society to accept what is being presented in the right way. All these elements have to come together. And the mediators are there to help these elements, help the advocacy to be carried out, help support it economically and politically. But again, all these things have to come to their natural course of ripening with the support of others.”

5.3. Happily intractable?

If the conflicts actually produced states with a functioning government and people are able to live in a society where they can manage this relative peace, is it necessary to solve these intractable conflicts? The conflicts give the central governments of the breakaway territories a reason to blame all their political and economic problems on without really having to look at their own functioning.

The international community is faced with incredibly complex conflicts and experienced many failed mediation attempts. Currently, these conflicts are of low-intensity rate, however what happened in South Ossetia in 2008 can happen again. Eruption of new violence is always at stake. Nonetheless, the international community views these conflicts with a lower priority than others. Meaning, they might as well continue peace talks but never having to put major pressure on the governments and societies of the countries. We might be able to say that these conflicts are happily intractable. Meaning that there is not really an established peace but there is also not a true war going on or lives at stake.

Like the first section of the dissertation outlined, sometimes it is easier to stay in the current status quo than shifting to a new dynamic of peace resolution. It might make things worse or more complicated and the price of a peace resolution in these Eurasian deadlocks would be very high considering that these states have already grown into their own functioning states. However, in the case of the conflicts of the South Caucasus we must take into account that not everyone profits from the intractability. These benefits of the intractability are relative. The three countries of the South Caucasus still remain unstable republics.

5.2. Failed third party mediation efforts

All three conflicts that have been discussed in this dissertation, broke out in minority territories and led to ‘victories’ of the separatist regions against the republics they are located in. In Abkhazia, most of the Georgian population was expelled or fled and in South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh the residing population have separated themselves from their host nations in a way that they can survive without them which only makes it harder to come to a peace settlement. There have been many mediation efforts made by various international organizations – the UN, the OSCE, the EU, the CIS and NATO - like discussed in the previous chapters. Not only organizations but also many influential countries have interfered in the mediation efforts – the Russian Federation, Iran, Turkey, the United States and the EU. All these mediation efforts have actually turned out into a remaining absence of peace resolutions. Many propositions have been made but there has never been real pressure as most of the formats were based on ‘mutual consent of the parties included in the peace talks’ (Macfarlane, n.d.). Unfortunately, most of the countries included in mediation efforts have operated out of their own interest.

The main constraints to the peace-building process in Caucasus should be found not in international formal structures but in latent structures of the regional politics (Barseghyan & Zainiddin, n.d.). As analyzed in the conflict chapters, there has been a lot of influence from regional and external powers. The interest in the Caucasus faces three layers – economic, military and security facets. When all economic borders opened, the idea of economic expansion became a

high priority for the Russian Federation, Iran and Turkey (Barseghyan & Zainiddin, n.d.). The collapse of the USSR also meant the emergence of new economic markets. Nevertheless, despite all efforts to overweight the economic benefits that conflicting parties may have from fostering the peace building process, the conflicts remain unresolved. On the contrary, the regional concepts of military expansion of the regional players still plays a role in the mediating and peace building process (Coppieters, 1996). After the fall of the USSR, the Caucasus became a battlefield of military and economic influence. Various countries have, in a way, worked on their position in the region by influencing international organizations and being part of the mediation groups. The Russian Federation for example, managed to get into the OSCE MG for mediating the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and also being part of the peacekeeping in Georgia and with these decisions it managed to maintain its dominant role in the South Caucasus.

Another aspect of conflicting third party efforts is the fact that the countries involved have their own issues amongst each other. As mentioned before, the Russian Federation, France and the United States are part of the MG mediation format. In Coppieters' (1996) book on the Caucasus, he mentions a quotation of an Armenian diplomat who said: "It is easier to bring the positions of Baku and Yerevan closer to each other than to reach an agreement between the mediators – the Russian Federation and the Minsk Group" (p. 202). Broader structure of regional powers if not overweighs, then largely determines the context and the dynamics of the conflict. Today it becomes more and more evident that before mediating intractable conflicts, first of all special 'mediation' is needed to solve conflicting interest of regional powers.

It would be misleading to conclude that the failure to reach a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict as well as the Abkhaz and the South Ossetian conflict is a direct outcome of the partiality of the third parties and the influence of the regional powers on the mediating structures and the overall peacemaking process. Conflicts are much more complex to be explained by one factor – the position of third parties.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The conflicts of the South Caucasus have lasted for over two decades making them intractable. Conflicts become intractable mostly through time and additional issues that make the conflict more difficult. The dynamics of intractable conflicts are the same. They are protracted, driven by identities, have a destructive nature, empowered by historical grievance and refuse any type of settlement. Third party involvement has varying degrees of success in various conflicts. Despite the notion that the conflicts of the South Caucasus erupted out of more or less the same causes, which make the conflicts quite similar to each other, the international community managed to make them more complicated by increasing the number of third parties.

Today, 2012 these conflicts remain unresolved despite mediation efforts. All three of the conflicts erupted after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990. Minorities who had obtained a special status during Soviet time raised their voice together with the majorities they were opposing. The want for independence originated out of suppression and alienation from their superiors. The revival of long-pressed cultural longings was a great factor of the beginning of many of the South Caucasus conflicts. The call to become independent states led to ethnic wars in the Republic of Georgia, in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. An intrastate conflict took place between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the Nagorno Karabakh region. The conflicts are based on the right of sovereignty but also territorial grounds. Two rights based on international law which makes the conflicts hard to solve. Nowadays these conflicts rest on ceasefires and have adapted to a certain extent to a status quo. In this respect they have become frozen as they are managing this relative peace in a certain way. Despite many mediation made by third parties, the conflicts remain unresolved causing regional instability in an already geographical challenging area. The Caucasus is surrounded by international super powers who have in their way interfered in mediation efforts. The interest is based on power politics of great powers like the Russian Federation and Iran. The interest increased because of the discovery of oil which is mostly managed by Azerbaijan. This has led to a further economic integration of the United States, Turkey and the countries of the EU and with that involvement of more players.

Third-party mediation and mediators are among the crucial factors in resolution of almost all forms of conflicts whether interstate or intrastate. The success of mediation by no means depends solely on the efforts of the mediator, but rather on whether the parties to the dispute agree to the mediator's plan of resolution. Disputing parties of the Caucasus conflicts have demonstrated a great amount of resistance. However, analyzing the conflicts of the South Caucasus, the mediators have created additional obstacles leading to the prolongation of the conflict. They took advantage of the conflicts focusing on their own interest, economy and power game.

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List of appendices

1. Interview with Dziunik Aghajanian, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 15 March 2012, the Hague.
2. Interview with Javid Musayev, Second Secretary, Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 6 April 2012, The Hague.

Interview 1

Date: 15 March 2012

Duration: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Interviewee: Dziunik Aghajanian

Function: Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Can you explain a bit about Armenia's position in this conflict?

Armenia since the beginning of the conflict has been dragged into it, by first attacks on its borders by the Azerbaijanis and later on by the blockade imposed on it and also by the fact that its compatriots were being endangered in Azerbaijan itself and it became a place where at least 400.000 refugees got settled and after massacres committed, so this is how Armenia was dragged into the conflict. Later on it became part of the mediation effort because of the Azerbaijani side's total refusal to negotiate with Nagorno Karabakh despite the fact that the OSCE decisions themselves clearly state the conflicting parties and who should the negotiations be conducted with. I'm not sure how much you know of the early years of the negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group. As you might have read they compromised almost twelve parties and nine of them were states, not involved in the conflict, and three were Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh and up until '97 when negotiations were being carried out, each of these three parties were sitting separately. In '97, when parallel tracks were introduced to help out the Minsk Group, Azerbaijan simply refused to go back to the full format and used this opportunity to shift the attention to the actual nature of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh, to that of being the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. So since then, they have been trying to depict it as a conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia and attempted to claim the accuser being the Armenian aggressor which has no bearing, no factual evidence, nor historic relevance. Because the territories which they claim to be about 20 percent, they are not 20 percent, they are simply 8 percent and they are under control of Nagorno Karabakh authorities and not Armenians control. Although Nagorno Karabakh is populated with Armenians it is still a different identity. By confusing the whole international community by this falsified and increased numbers, they are trying to make it forget the real history of the conflict and simply basing on the current look of the map simply trying and most of the time they again mis-represent the maps simply including all the regions in their full scale where as quite a number of regions only by 25 percent under Armenian control. By this kind of presentation they attempt to get the support to their understanding on how the issue should be resolved. However, they forget that neither the Security Council resolutions, nor any decision passed at the time, have ever, ever claimed Armenia is party to the conflict. If you have read the UNSC Resolutions you should have noticed that they call on the Armenian authorities to

insert pressure and to use its actual good offices to help the resolution of the conflict and that was actually what was happening on the ground and that is what Armenia has been doing since the, since '92 when the actual OSCE Minsk Group was established to negotiate. This is something that most of the people do not go into don't know because when Azerbaijan says that the UNSC Resolutions accuse Armenia and they play on the Armenia, the Armenians, the similarity of the word. Most of the people do not understand the difference and do not go deep into the Resolutions and reading it and trying to understand that Armenia and the Armenians are two different things, the Armenians living both in Armenian, in Nagorno Karabakh and all over the world. You cannot just claim that accusation and put it in front of people simply using their either misinformed character or just simply neglect to read about the conflict and know about it. So by using that, they tried to depict Armenia as the aggressor, to depict Armenia as the one that do not want the negotiation to succeed. Whereas, for the time that negotiations have been going on, there has not been a single case when Armenia was the one to blame when negotiations were stalled, it was always Azerbaijan, whatever proposal was put forward, they refused because their understanding of the resolution, of the conflict is whatever was ours at the Soviet time has to remain with us, no matter what we did no matter how we behaved no matter what ever belonged to us, no matter whether there is a legal background for that. But that is their position but the international community does not support that position. Since Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Republic even when it was put under Azerbaijani SSR control, it had been made a separate political entity, and it had its full representation in the National Council in the Soviet Union so there was a higher authority above Azerbaijan SSR that would decide on issues related to nationalities so whatever Azerbaijan proposes today it will be less than Karabakh had during the Soviet time. Besides, when Stalin put Karabakh under Azerbaijani control it just rejected the people's will and since that day, these people have been fighting to get their right back to where they belong, instead they were getting repression and discrimination all those seventy years they were under Azerbaijani control. There is no law in the world that says that if you have been under someone's control for seventy years, you and your family and the entire history belong to the people that is why we have the law on the self-determination of peoples this is something that they used to its full extent by declaring their independence. Article 3 of the Soviet Union Law stated on the secession of the Republics that if any of the Republics decides to succeed then ethnically compound areas of those countries, so not legal but ethnically, they had the right to decide whether they would like to secede with that republic or that they would like to stay with the Union or do something else. This is exactly what happened with Karabakh, because they had passed on a referendum based on that law which was the legal ground at the time. That was valued. The population voted for independence, they didn't vote for unification with Armenia. They voted for independence, because that was what the law said. They had to decide upon their own faith on a territory that belonged to them for millennia. At that time when no Azeri was there, no Iranian was there, no Turkish was there and no mixed

population was there. This is important to understand because most people go from present state of affairs and start making judgment on those things. That is not the picture and that is not the reality. You have to go back at least twenty years and more than that, actually a hundred years to understand what happened. Nobody in Karabakh forgets the massacres in Shusha where the whole Armenian population was killed in 1918. Nobody forgets that, because whatever continued afterwards just simply made them remember that as a cautious sign that says this is always happening to you and the massacres in Zunghai, which happened kilometers away from Karabakh itself but that happened to Armenians, it happened to Armenians in Baku. Why do you have to kill the people who have nothing to do with these issues? The mentality of how to treat these people is unchanged from the time when you killed them in 1918, to simply gain the territory. That is the reason that Armenia is very protective of Karabakh. There is no one to protect them, Armenia is the only outlet for them. Simply because of the rejection of Azerbaijan not to want to get to any resolution. It doesn't mean that their desire should be fulfilled, the only desire that should be fulfilled is that of Nagorno Karabakh to the fullest. The international community and the mediators understand that.

How does the conflict affect the lives of the people in Armenia?

Except for the affiliation, except for the fact that a lot of families have relatives in that part of Armenia. Except for the fact that there are a lot of refugees still in Armenia. These are just the ramifications of it. But one major consequence is that the Turkish-Armenian border is closed because of Azerbaijan and I'm not even speaking of the Azerbaijani border, which is actually the frontline and there are shootings going on and despite for the call of removal snipers, Azerbaijan is refusing to do that. That's another questions of searching for resolution to the conflict if you keep the snipers there and if you are shooting at the frontline. Where is the seriousness of the resolution? Is it words or deeds? It's also political affiliation within the GUAM contact with Georgia which creates a lot of difficulties for Armenia. So economically makes it harder for Armenia to advance at the paste that it could have advanced. Because nowadays the transportation is about 80 percent through Georgia. It means about 30 percent cost increase simply because of the transportation costs. It means that the Armenian gas going through Georgia is always at danger of being blown up like it has been before. It means that any time, because of their political affiliation and economic interest in the pipelines they would try to come up with policies attempting to stifle the Armenian economy. So yes this does affect the Armenian people. Armenia is landlocked and dependent on its neighbors whether we like it or not. So that's why Armenia has been attempting to have a "wise policy" of not giving up to the interests of this side or the other. Despite everything we have good connections with everybody, Russia, US, Europeans, Iran, Arab countries. Everybody has its own goal, their own place in political relations. Why should you sacrifice one relationship to the other? To prove someone's point? That is not the game Armenia plays and not a game Armenia can

afford to play given the situation. Georgia can do that because they have an outlet, they can survive on these conditions. But Georgia paid the price by losing territories. Armenia would pay the price of existence and that is something that we cannot afford. We are still trying to recover from the genocide and we are being reminded every day. So this is a situation that both psychologically, mentally and economically reminds of ongoing events around us. Culturally too because we have a huge cultural heritage and unfortunately in Azerbaijan they are totally being ruined. They just disappear. It's being erased from the ground, this is culturally paying too. Despite our calls for friendly relations and confidence building but there has been none since 2001 because of Azerbaijan. It does affect us whether we like it or not.

Is there a hatred amongst the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians?

I wouldn't say there is hatred in the Armenians towards Azerbaijanis, I would say there is some conscious aware of feeling. People treat them as normal, as anybody else. Even if you would speak to a lot of refugees, some of them are very thankful to those Azerbaijani neighbors. So if there is any kind of anger and frustration it would be towards the leadership of Azerbaijan that is constantly feeding its own people with the Armenian history. It is impossible for an Armenian to walk in that country and to walk in the street, if there is a delegation they need protection. That is something that they have been putting in the minds of people. It is terrible. The growing generation thinks of Armenians as the world greatest evil and they are afraid to say hello. That gets you thinking when something happens, it is easy for the leadership to manipulate the minds of these people and turn them into extremists. It is becoming a nest of fundamentalist extremists thinking people. The younger ones are very dangerous. They are not smart enough yet to understand the differences, they didn't have memory of living together with Armenians they do not have history to base their judgments on basing their understanding of whatever they hear. Anybody can use these people for any purpose. This is a natural outcome of that kind of a policy being carried out. It is very terrifying to imagine what would happen to a society if nothing is done to open up their minds and to make them realize that there are parallel universes.

How does the government look at the conflict?

Well there are different groups of people who have different understanding on how the conflict should be resolved, from the maximalist one to the minimalist. The maximalist one is that no areas should be returned, because the current frontline that exists is the maximum strategic protection that geographically could be drawn and that is why the ceasefire is holding so long since '94 without peacekeepers. If it wasn't advantageous, strategically to the Armenians on their side it would have been violated in no time. So you would hear the maximalist one and forget about everything they have their independence they have their government which has proved to be very sufficient. More than many other areas of conflict. They have had their administration since

eternity even at the time of the Persian Shah, they had their own ruler, an Armenian ruler. Because they knew if it wasn't an Armenian no one could cope with these people. They had their own mindset and their own rules and they work and live in their own homes. The minimalist, the other extreme, would say, we could agree to the return of certain areas but not to Kelbajar and Lachi. That used to be Armenian land. When in 1923 Karabakh was given to Azerbaijan, these areas were part of the Autonomous Karabakh Republic, Oublast. When the Resolution in 1936 was adopted by Azerbaijan they just re-drew the borders and cut that part out and it was called Red Kurdistan because there were seven Kurdish villages and they populated this area so that they could create a corridor between Armenia and Karabakh and then just start with cleansing the area slowly. They did a quicker job with Nakhchyvan because they knew it was far from them and the last Armenian left there in 1975. So they created this corridor and later on starting to populate with Azerbaijanis and the population increased because they had more favorable conditions to live than the Armenians in Karabakh. Imagine in 1923 when Karabakh was given to Azerbaijan there were only 3,000 Muslims there, and over 180,000 Armenians living there and that is in 1923. In 1988, when the conflict erupted, there were 30,000 Muslims in Karabakh and 180,000 Armenians, so no increasing of the Armenian population, ten-fold increasing the Muslim population. How does that happen? Because they were being discriminated and people had to leave the region to get a normal life. They couldn't even get a higher education in Baku. They changed their last names to something that wouldn't sound Armenian to announce themselves as Azerbaijanis to have a chance to advance in their careers. Despite their skills and knowledge. They were still forced out. If you look at this situation, even the extreme minimalist position in Armenia does not agree to anything less than independence of Karabakh. It's just inconceivable, it wouldn't work. It's just a simple property you wouldn't give. They wouldn't give away their homeland to someone's desire. No one would do that. It is natural. This is the range of opinions. In Azerbaijan there are probably also different opinions but they are not being heard.

What kind of a conflict is the Nagorno Karabakh conflict?

It's a conflict on the right of self-determination, Azerbaijan tries to present it as a territorial conflict but it is not. The thing is that you cannot discuss an ethnic group without understanding the territory it lived on. But the issue is beyond territory it is about the right and that is very important. Because, diminishing it to the territorial one, it would bring the issue to whom this territory belongs to. There, Azerbaijanis have no claim either because legally they have no right over those territories. The League of Nations refused to accept Azerbaijan and recognize Azerbaijan as a state in 1919. Stating, that it doesn't have any control over the territories it claims to be its own, and one of these was Karabakh. Before that never ever a country like Azerbaijan existed and Azerbaijan took the name of the Northern Iranian part because of some affiliations of the tribes and its understanding that they could later on claim these territories as theirs. Even if you go into the

documents of the League of Nations you would see a clear description of what that area is, who populates it and you wouldn't see a name Azerbaijani there, because it never existed, it was a creation of the Soviet time. Even if they go into those territorial claims, they cannot simply justify that it ever belonged to them, yes it was part of the Persian empire and later on the Russian empire but so what? It was always an Armenian territory, Armenians lived there and ruled there. No matter who ruled overall the region. They were the only natives and inhabitants of those regions. That was an Armenian territory. And that understanding was in the Azerbaijanis minds in the beginning of the conflict because they knew they wouldn't even have convinced their countrymen to leave Armenia because they were trying to get equal with the outflow of Armenians from Azerbaijan. The issue is not territorial, it is the right of the people living on the territory. The nature of the conflict is being distorted.

Do you think that so far the international community has been helpful in attempting to resolve the conflict?

Yes, very. As I said in '92 the Minsk Group was established, and it has been negotiation since then. The thing is that no mediation can solve the conflict, if the parties do not want to solve it. They might come up with enormous ideas, with very creative ideas, but if the parties do not agree to that it will not be resolved. There is always the question on how objective the mediating party is or was. I would state that maybe starting from '96, the mediating parties were trying to be as objective as possible and keeping the conflict itself void of any other interference issues and interest, maybe accept for a certain period when there was this oil interest trying to push the things towards Azerbaijan but still they understood that if the Armenian side do not agree it won't work. So they had to come up with an understanding that would serve the purpose of having a compromise solution. But if you look at the actual suggestions for a resolution you would always see that there has never been a tendency to force Karabakh Armenians back into Azerbaijan. In the initial years there was an attempt to come up with some kind of a confederative structure which they thought might work but Azerbaijan didn't agree. And you would always see an increased move towards understanding that independence is the only solution for Karabakh. The only thing that might have worked out was what kind of a face saving to give to Azerbaijan is to digest that this territory won't be theirs and how much of the territories under the Armenian control could be returned to them and under what conditions etc. The peak of this was in 2001 when the Key West negotiations were held and if unfortunately, the immediate family of Alijev didn't object to that we would have had a resolved conflict attempt. But that solution suggested independence for Karabakh, return of almost all of the areas under the Armenian control except for the Lachi corridor with a certain width which was going to be entirely under the Karabakh sovereignty. But suddenly they played the extreme position and based on the support from the West on its oil ambition it would be powerful to impose a solution on Armenians in Karabakh, it clearly showed that he didn't

understand the mentality of this people. You cannot force to do an Armenian to do anything he doesn't want to do. You either convince or step away. He pushed himself to such a corner that he doesn't know how to get out of there. There are reasons to keep the conflict going on, not to agree to a resolution. The three mediators that we have now they have tried to be as objective as possible despite issues between the U.S. and Russia it never reflected on the conflict. From the beginning they understood that the conflict was so acute and sensitive that if you bring in additional issues it would blow up. Azerbaijan are playing this card with other Islamic countries trying to get their support that the Minsk Group has not been successful, that they are not coming up with solutions etc. just playing on the ignorance of people and the countries. They have tried to get the issue to the UN having this Islamic support they would pass resolutions. They quickly realized this was not working. But if you look objectively at the mediation team, politically, economically, militarily, these are the three super powers of the world, the U.S, Russia and the European. These three have the most interest in the region. If you look around the world you wouldn't find anyone else that can exert that much and solid backing towards any resolution and make a success out of it. That is the reason that Armenia has always stated that the Minsk Group is the only format that can work. It has worked every single detail of the resolution. They have discussed and analyzed every detail. They have full understanding of the conflict. All options have been on the table. They have a full understanding of the conflict. UN, NATO and EU is behind the Minsk Group. However it takes the actual parties to agree, they can come up with innovative solutions but that has to be agreeable and acceptable by the parties to work. They are mediators they are not there to solve the problem they are there to help you solve the problem. You cannot blame them.

Is the government of Nagorno Karabakh involved in the mediation?

Of course they are. Every time the mediators go to Karabakh, these are the people they meet to discuss the issues with. It's a must, it's their obligation. They have to follow the rules of their mandate. Despite the rejection of Azerbaijan for other people to enter and to meet these people. These people exist and are in the country. If they lived under the Soviet rule for within your republic for seventy years. There are generations of people who grew up in that republic who don't even know what an Azerbaijani is. And it's been twenty years now and they have been successful in building their life out of extraordinary difficult conditions so if they can do that why would they give it up? Their minimum wage is almost the average income in Azerbaijan and they don't even have the resources, they don't have the open borders. They only have a road going to Armenia and that's it, the only road where things get in and out. They have a border which is being fired all day. So if they manage to almost have the same as Azerbaijanis, why should they go back to something that never treated them as normal human beings?

I have read the UN Security Council Resolutions on Nagorno-Karabakh and in my opinion they are condemning towards Armenia. What do you think of that?

They are not condemning towards Armenia, they are condemning towards Armenians, local Armenian forces and they are Karabakh. At the time, what really happened was that after every single resolution that came was after the violation of a ceasefire. Every time Armenians agreed to the ceasefire, Azerbaijanis would violate thinking that because Armenians follow other rules they would have the upper hand in gaining back something. In '92 Karabakh managed to get most of its actual territory back from Azerbaijani forces. In '93 they attempted to go further into securing those areas, to secure their positions as much as possible. They have been fired at all the time from these regions. So every time there was a ceasefire agreed, the next Azerbaijani would violate it and Armenians would go further to stop them from even attempting to get into the Karabakh area. These resolutions came from the outflow of people, civilians from these areas. But when Armenians would be fired at and killed, no one cared to pass an UN resolution at the time. So even if these resolutions call the local Armenian forces to stop the violence, they are also calling for the full access to humanitarian needs and that is a call to Azerbaijan which was never exercised. So Armenians were following the resolutions the next day Azerbaijan would violate it. No one cared to look at who was violating what. They have seen an outflow and need to call it upon someone and the easiest choice was the local Armenian forces than to Azerbaijan. So that is why these resolutions were passed, because of humanitarian facts of the issue. But that was the only way to force a ceasefire on Azerbaijan.

Why is the conflict never in the media?

Because it is not a hotspot. And it's a good thing. You do not hear about the Cyprus conflict either, it's the same situation. You would hear if there is a breakthrough so a positive development. Or if it's a very negative development like a full scale war again. In that respect, maybe it's good that it is not in the media. People who are interested follow it. It is in the media of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia. Certain aspects of the conflict happen to find their way into the media. Holding the ceasefire is holding the news. People have other issues to be concerned about, things that are closer to their heart.

I understand that but the only thing that is concerning is the number of refugees that people should maybe know about.

I would say, not as much now. There were over 400,000 Armenians living outside of Karabakh, who left Azerbaijan. About 200,000 something in Baku and the rest in commemorations. Majority of them came to Armenia some of them went to Russia. The majority stayed in Armenia, others on different refugee countries left the country. Those in Russia, mainly stayed in Russia. According to the numbers and this is not counting the refugees from Karabakh itself. We still have about 80,000

refugees in Armenia, the rest are naturalized. In Azerbaijan, they received 200,000 Azerbaijanis from Armenia. If I'm not mistaken, by 2004, they were all naturalized. If you compare the numbers, it is incomparable. We are much smaller, we are twice less in population as Azerbaijan, three times less the size of Azerbaijan. Armenia is totally blockaded, as a result of the blockade, the whole country economy totally stood still. There was no export. In this respect, if you look at the numbers it was an enormous burden over our country. In addition to that all these bordering areas were war zones because Azerbaijan was attacking. No matter what happened. No one asked why they attacked Armenia from Nakhchyvan side, because it was raging of full scale war. So people from these regions as well moved inside the country and these are not refugees these are IDPs. The same applies to Azerbaijanis, these were also IDPs. They are still citizens of Azerbaijan. So if you compare these numbers, according to the Demosenses at the time, the IDPs from these areas, if you take the whole population. According to the calculations there are about 500.000 IDPs that left these regions inside the country. When we calculated the numbers and put it on per capita bases, it clearly showed that the burden over Armenia, together with the IDPs from the earthquake zone, was higher than that of Azerbaijan. We had 500.000 people that were homeless so they settled all over the country, the ones from the border areas were over 70.000 and you got 400.000 refugees from Azerbaijan. All together we had almost a million people to take care of in a country of three million people. So it's 30 percent of your overall population you have to house, feed and take care of because these people have nowhere else to go. In Azerbaijan where there are 7 million people, they received 200.000 Azerbaijanis and they could have easily have housed them. In Azerbaijan they put camps and started smuggling humanitarian assistance to come to these camps to make money out of the situation, trying to make political advantage out of it. They didn't have any issues to support and feed these people and house them. They didn't do that up until 2004 when they were forced to recognize that they could spend money on military equipment and not on their people.

The EU also has a specialized program, the Eastern Partnership, what do they do?

They don't have anything to do with the conflict, but they do influence the regional stability. If this is carried out properly it might have a positive impact on the overall regional situation, which could have a positive impact on the conflict resolution. It can be a side effect. But before going to that we spoke about the UNSC Resolutions, but these resolutions, at the time were passed by the European Parliament in '89, '90 and '92. These are the resolutions that clearly state who is doing what and how. The Council of Europe as well passed a resolution at the time. With respect to the Eastern Partnership, this is a framework for democracy building, economic development, human rights and this is something that is being divided for the three Caucasus countries. They are being looked as one surrounding. On one side it is right because what happens with one side will affect the other. On the other side they tend to make one pot of all countries. This is something that

Armenia suffered a lot from, given the fact that Georgia has been a bit left out of that because their conflict was within the country and Armenia was always artificially being put on the same balance as Azerbaijan. We got our Council of Europe membership simply delayed for years because Azerbaijan was nowhere close to getting membership. Later on they dragged Azerbaijan into the Council of Europe just to have Armenia and Azerbaijan together at the same time. In many instances we see this fear again coming out. Armenia has always stated that every single country has to be judged according to its own merits and performance. You will always see this balance when it comes to decision makers.

For the future, do you see a resolution coming?

Definitely, there is no other way. It may go on for three years or twenty years but there will be a resolution. One thing I'm sure, and I would state it clearly: nobody, neither the mediators, nor the countries in the region, I'm not speaking about Azerbaijan, nor any of the Armenian parties would ever want a military action to resume. So everything has to be done to have a peace prevail no matter what, because there is no other choice or option to a peaceful resolution after conflict. There cannot and should not be any resolution that is not acceptable towards the Karabakh people, that simply will not work out. There cannot be any forced solution, that is impossible given the legal background and the history. Impossible given the developments, given the actual situation, given the international developments for the last century, for the developments of international law. It is simply impossible and any conflict resolution that we see right now is something agreed upon the parties, and it is peaceful, it may take longer but it is still peaceful. South Sudan is the recent one, before that you had Kosovo, before that East Timor, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it's something that evidently showed that you cannot force a resolution on people. If people do not want to you have to listen to them, no matter what kind of political game is being played in the world. No matter what kind of political interests are coming and going. These interest are irrelevant to the people who are living there lives and who are staking their lives and their existence. This is something that has to be taken into account and there is no other way. But, as history shows, no resolution goes forever. It may be very long or very short but there is still a resolution. I'm sure that in the unforeseeable future we will see a resolution but that would require tremendous change in the Azerbaijani society, in the way that the leadership looks at the issue. I'm sure that any kind of democratic development there would enhance the resolution process and would make it faster to happen. Because then the people will open up their eyes and will look at the issues at their own merit rather on what they're being told and fed all the time. And I'm sure that any kind of less politicized atmosphere in the region would also contribute to the resolution of the conflict. Because then the conflict itself and the resolution will be viewed simply on its own terms rather than within the context of certain political economical interest. In that sense, anything happening in the region and around us making it more acute, Iranian developments, the Arab Spring etc., it does negatively

affect the speed of the resolution because it polarizes the atmosphere in the region and people tend to shift their attention to more dangerous things. Knowing that this is sitting there at least untouched. There is a relative peace, at least this is manageable. Over the time, any conflict has to ripen to its resolution and the ripening means that whoever deals with the negotiation, whoever sits there as a leader has to ripen to understand the society to accept what is being presented in the right way. All these elements have to come together. And the mediators are there to help these elements, help the advocacy to be carried out, help support it economically and politically. But again, all these things have to come to their natural course of ripening with the support of others.

Interview 2

Date: 6 April 2012

Duration: 1 hour and 10 minutes

Interviewee: Javid Musayev

Function: Second Secretary

Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

What is Azerbaijan's position in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

I would like to mention the main points of the position of Azerbaijan. First of all we don't want a war again. Because it has been (...) at the end of the 1918s. We have lost approximately 20.000 people, 50.000 have been disabled and still we have over 5.000 people missing. Of course the majority could have been killed. The first point is we don't want war again that is why we prefer diplomatic matters, negotiations, that has been created since 1994. In 1992, an organization has been created by the OSCE, the Minsk Group, who have mediated the conflict. It is an international organization, specially mandated organ which mediates the conflict. From 1992, approximately 20 years, and no results have been achieved. It is very sad but during the 20 years we have received international importance. There have been four resolutions made by the UN Security Council which has clearly stated Armenian forces to leave Azerbaijan. The UN called on Armenian forces to withdraw from the acquired territory to restore the territory of Azerbaijan and to create a condition for coexistence of both communities, Armenian and Azerbaijan. The main objective of Azerbaijan is not to fight but to negotiate. Unfortunately the negotiation is not going in a good manner. That is obvious. We are referring to the mediation organization OSCE Minsk Group and their proposals, and of course to the UNSC Resolutions. All of their efforts are aimed at the first point is liberation of the territories of Armenian forces. It means that these territories should be liberated from the arms. Secondly, all Azerbaijani IDPs should return to their territory. And the third point, after the equal balance and after getting the just demographic situation in the territory and to make it self-ruling. It's our position, but self rule status cannot be created just with Armenians, which they are right now but also with 80.000 Azerbaijanis. Also, there are approximately 800.000 IDPs, it means that we should create a balance with the rules before 1988 and then we can negotiate the status. This status should not violate the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. It is a position of the international community and the UN and just in 2006 the Council of Europe also adopted a special document, it's Resolution 1416. This states that Armenia should leave the acquired territory, recognizes the human rights violations committed against Azerbaijanis. In order to get the achievement, all territories have to be liberalized, then all persons should be able to go back to their mother lands and after that to create a status of the Nagorno

Karabakh within Azerbaijan. The territory will have a high status. We have the same the same status for Nakhchyvan. They have their rules and army but they are in the territory of Azerbaijan. We have to know that it is a conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia not between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh. If we are talking historic background. What does Karabakh mean? It is an Azerbaijani word, Kara means 'black' and bakh means 'garden'. So literally *black garden*. Just to explain to you how were Armenians created in this territory. All things started from the 17th century when Azerbaijan was two times bigger, part of Georgia, Russia and Armenia but it were little divisions like districts, they were free but they had good contacts between them, we had approximately twelve divisions, but not a total Azerbaijan. But in 1805, a Russian Empire started the occupation of Azerbaijan. It was a very rich country from north to the south. They started from the bottom and went up and up. In 1805, they acquired the Karabakh region. There was a treaty between the king of Karabakh and the emperor of Russia. After this treaty, Karabakh was united to Russia. Azerbaijan had been acquired in 1910, all Azerbaijan belonged to Russia. Then, there had been war between Iran and Russia. They created a treaty. After the treaty, there had been a movement of Armenians from Iran and the Ottoman empire to Karabakh and from Russia empire to Karabakh. Armenian families had been send to Karabakh from Iran. Here history started from there. There was very good coexistence and good relations then. In 1918, when the Bolsheviks came, all three Caucasian countries got their independence and during this period, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia got independence and we gave Zangazur to Armenia. Why? Because it was a very fragile period for Azerbaijan. There were internal problems. There was a lot of pressure because Armenians started to claim they started to open contacts with Nagorno Karabakh. In 1920, both countries lost their independence again. This was very short. But during this period we created our democratic country. In 1918, the women got the right to vote, we had hard democratic views in the beginning of the 20th century. How did the conflict start? It was an initiative from the Armenians. Why? Firstly, this conflict started in 1986 when the Nagorno Karabakh parliament, the SSR. In 1986, the Nagorno Karabakh SSR, raised the voice for unification with Armenia. It was complete violation of the Constitution of the USSR and the Constitution of the Azerbaijan SSR and the Armenia SSR. It was a gap of Armenian policy to raise the voice. It was the first ignition. Then, the parliament of Azerbaijan raised the voice to ignore this demand of Armenians because it was violating the Constitution of Russia. When you accept that law, contra fight of this Constitution it's a fake law. The war had been started when a Azerbaijan family was killed in (...) and Azerbaijan families were mostly evicted from Armenia and from Karabakh, there were no families there. In Baku, we have an Armenian church and we have 10.000 Armenians living in Baku. It's very sad because one day we have to coexist again. It was an illogical position of Armenia. First they tried to unite but after they saw that it was violating the law they start the next step to create own country. Even nowadays, Armenia cannot. Because in 1921, Azerbaijan was member of the UN, their territory accepted it was with Nagorno Karabakh. It means that the

Azerbaijan territory, it was recognized by the international community. If they accept the independence of Nagorno Karabakh it is a violation of international law. Is there one nation who has two countries? It means that I'm Azerbaijani in the Netherlands, I know that there are 10.000 Azerbaijanis living in the Netherlands, that we would raise our voice to create our own country in the Netherlands. Then you should return to your own country, you have to respect the place where you are. This is the core of international law. No one has the right to violate the territorial integrity. You shouldn't create your own country. If you are living here under right conditions to create your own country is illogical and unacceptable. If you want your country then go back to Armenia. We want to create a balance which was historical. We are a multinational country, sometimes some people think that Azerbaijan is just a Muslim country. We are a very free country. We have Western values, we want democracy and good neighbor relations with all countries. To get back to the core of the question, we want liberation of all territories and the IDPs to return to their motherlands and to create the high status of Nagorno Karabakh within Azerbaijan. Of course they will have all the freedoms. We would like this proposal if Armenia would accept, it is a proposal of the UN and the Minsk Group as well. So this is our position.

How is the relationship between Azerbaijan and its neighboring countries?

You know we are bordering five countries, Russia from north, Georgia from north west, Armenia and Turkey from West and of course Iran from the south. We are also bordering the Caspian sea with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Let's talk about the good relationships. We have excellent cooperations with Georgia and Turkey. We are players on the international energy projects, we have good relations on many spheres it is a very high level. Some people wonder why we have very good contact with Georgia but not with Armenia as they are both Christians. We do not divide the people to their religion or political views. We are neighbors. When Georgia was fighting with Russia we were the ones that supported Georgia. It's about energy and economy, we have very good views. We are historical friends, very friendly country. With Georgia and Turkey we have excellent cooperation. What about Russia? Of course Russia is ruler in the territory, it is a big country with big ambitions. Sometimes these ambitions affect Europe when it comes to energy but it is a good and very big player. Of course Russia backs Armenia. If Armenia's side was free on negotiating we would get the good contacts and resolutions of this conflict. When we are talking about the BTC pipeline, from Georgia to Turkey. We could make it more logical and shorter and easier through Armenia and they could benefit from this but unfortunately our big neighbor didn't allow this. For Russia, we are trying to have a balanced policy with Russia, respect this country, we have good economical relations and humanitarian relations. There are Russians living in Azerbaijan, 200.000 or 300.000 live in Azerbaijan, Russian language is still taught in Azerbaijan, in Baku. We have Russian language schools, secondary schools and Russian high schools. This is too not lose heritage. We have good bilateral relations but sometimes we have some pressure. Not

only Azerbaijan but everyone. The cooperation is going higher and higher. As to Iran. People from the Netherlands ask me, why I always say that Azerbaijan is very fragile. Because we have Russia from the north and Iran from the south. This little country tries to survive in this situation. Iranians are not Arabs, they are Persians. They have a different mentality. They are very strong and powerful on energy and military. They are not like Iraq and Afghanistan, they are really strong. When we are talking about the contact between Azerbaijan and Iran. We are Muslims, eighty percent of Azerbaijan is Muslim, but Iran is an Islamic country. Islamic country, we are a democratic secular country. They have Islamic rules. That is why that sometimes the relations are a bit difficult from their side. We want democracy, freedom for women and everyone, freedom of speech. Azerbaijan is the single country which has excellent cooperation with Israel. Very good relations, the President visited Azerbaijan. We showed our Western friends, to Europe that we don't build on Islamic values. However, these attempts sometimes anger Iran because they claimed Israel as enemy of Muslims. Yes we are Muslims but we are not an Islamic country we want good relations with all countries. But we also have relations with Iran that are going in the right direction. Iran understands the necessity of Azerbaijan in the region. We have obligations to Iran. We have two projects with Iran. We are religiously the same, in views sometimes different but we want coexistence in the area concerned. We want to live together without any interactions from insides. In this stage, Azerbaijan keeps a balanced relation with Russia and Iran.

It is such a fragile region, especially what is happening now with Iran and the U.S.

Exactly, and one of your questions was, why the EU tries to help the conflict resolution. Because now it started, the EU understands how Azerbaijan is necessary. We are the single country from the Eastern Europe which is not knocking the door of the EU. We don't want the EU. Because.., Georgia wants because their economy is not that good. We have very good economy and at this stage the EU needs us.

I don't understand that because even for a far future that Georgia and Armenia would become part of the EU but then you stretch your EU so far.

Exactly and you know even in the EU the mentality is changing. We have to accept that the Western Europe and Eastern Europe have different mentalities. I understand that Dutch people and Romanians are so different. They have different views, attitude and culture. And the enlargement doesn't make any sense. It is very fragile, they are collecting very weak countries. If you keep adding those countries, it goes wrong. That is why we don't need the EU. They understand that they need us because of the energy and the location. It is the last point of Europe between Asia.

As for the relations with Armenia. Our fifth neighbor, the relations are bad because of the occupied territories and the IDPs and refugees and plus we have to think of the people who have been killed and disabled.

So do they live in refugee camps?

Yes, the refugee camps have been collected within the country. Before 2002, they lived in camps. It was very difficult because in the summer it's very hot and in the winter it's very cold. But the government of Azerbaijan made a very big area for them, we built homes for them we gave them lands for agriculture. Approximately one million people have their homes, they are getting the money from the government we are trying to make a working place for them. They are living in a high condition. It was very hard to build houses for that many people.

What is the point of view towards the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group?

First point is they want to achieve the negotiation matter towards the peace resolution. To avoid the war. Their point is, just one point, mediators cannot write to impose the countries, sometimes that is very bad for us because we need to show Armenians that they should respect obligations under the OSCE and the UN and if they had the mandate to pressure Armenia, we could get the negotiation and a result. All principles have been raised under the Minsk Group and that has been accepted by us. We are bound to these principles.

Does the conflict still have effect Azerbaijan?

Of course it has. We still have over one million refugees and IDPs. The majority of them don't work and don't pay taxes and they still receive too many subsidies from the government. We are paying them every month for all the families. They are getting free food. The government every year, pays approx 1.2 billion dollars to IDPs and refugees. It has a very big effect to the economy of Azerbaijan. I'm not talking about the death of the people. Sometimes people want to visit the graves of their parents and they can't, this is the moral side. We have lost 16 billion US dollars of the occupied territories. It is still a heavy burden for Azerbaijan economically. It is a pressure for the economy.

In which way would your country benefit from the peace mediation?

The main benefit for Azerbaijan and also for Armenia would be that people would not get killed anymore. After the ceasefire in 1994, we started to negotiate not only with Armenia but also with other countries on economical relations. In 1995, we signed the contract of the century with creating the pipeline. We used the period of ceasefire to raise our economy and get stronger to raise our social welfare. The sad issue is that the Armenian snipers still kill the children. If you would look up how many people are still killed after the ceasefire. Just six months ago, we have the Araz river, the Armenian side put little toys and inside there were bombs which killed an Azerbaijani girl. It is very bad playing with lives of children. We still have people killed by snipers. We have to

think about people before the territory, territory is for the people. People want to live there. The main benefit is saving of human lives and the economies.

Would both Armenia as Azerbaijan would be able to find a compromise? Looking into theories on intractable conflicts, the opposite solutions make it hard to find resolutions. They go on and on and on. There are many conflicts of this type.

Trying to find solutions takes time. Every time Armenia is not accepting the proposals from the Minsk Group and the Council of Europe from our proposals. It is in their interest to prolong the status quo. Why? Just to make my point, if I would take your pen and hold it in my hands you will look at it while we're talking. But when you leave I can put it in my pocket and you would forget about it. It is a psychological thing. That is the policy of Armenia. They acquired this territory almost 22 years ago and no international community raised their voice against the occupation. It is in their interest to keep this as it is. And after two decades all international community will accept 'these are Armenians why are Azerbaijanis on it'. Before 1989 this was territory of Azerbaijan. Why don't you read the history? We want to solve this conflict as soon as possible but not to lose the history.

It gets forgotten like most conflicts of the South Caucasus. People believe they're ok. The international community loses its focus.

Absolutely, even before 2002, there are children who are born in the refugee camps. Generations change and forget about this. For example, people who were born in 1991 are 20 years old. The status quo is that Armenia wants to prolong and win the situation but Azerbaijan will not accept this. The patience of the people is going down, every year, we have demonstrations on the conflict, the government tries to keep it alive. Still we have the chance for negotiation. We don't want to lose the people's lives.

The tricky thing is that these conflicts can outburst, it happened in Georgia in 2008 and then it goes calm again. And also, these regions sort of benefit from the situation they don't pay taxes they live in a region that has no rules. There is a lot of smuggling and trafficking.

There is no control. And sometimes we have the call from the UN why we are not controlling these territories. Come on, how can we control? If you want us to control let us then start a war and liberate these territories. We have too many reports on Nagorno Karabakh that there is a lot of smuggling and narcotic traffics and even human trafficking.

That is the region, it comes from Asia, Afghanistan and then it gets to Europe.

Yes it is very bad. It is a focus point for all illegal's, it is very good money for Armenia. There are using this territory and all international community's working there, from the UN to the institutions but not in Nagorno Karabakh. It is a free corridor, you can call it one of the bad effects of the

conflict. When signing the international agreements, the government of Azerbaijan made an obligation that we do not account for this territory. We don't take the obligations of illegal actions. We are not accountable for what happens there.

I'm confused on the conflict being between who? Because you mentioned it is between Armenia and Azerbaijan but there is also a government of Nagorno Karabakh. You have relations with them?

No, first thing, we don't accept this government because it is illegal territory. This country is not recognized by any country. For example, the independence of Azerbaijan has been accepted by 192 countries, independent states. Of course, the government should have a state but this is acquired territory. Even Armenia has not recognized Nagorno Karabakh as a state. That is why we don't negotiate with this government. State should negotiate with another state. States cannot fight with its people. It was Azerbaijani citizens. As a country, we negotiate with Armenia. From the starting views of UN and OSCE, they obliged us to negotiate directly with Armenia. But we want to create inter-communal relations. In 2004, 2006, 2011, three times we proposed to make some round tables to unite both Azerbaijan and Armenian communities of Nagorno Karabakh but three times they ignored it. We don't know why. If we are speaking about confidence building for the future, why don't we start negotiating between people. They know each other from Nagorno Karabakh, if they lived in one territory over 50 years of course they will know each other. They can find a much more easier solution than Armenians. The Armenian community can compel Armenian side what we can accept. What was a proposal by Azerbaijan? To create inter-communal relations. I gave you a paper about the proposal of Azerbaijan, of course after the restoration of Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijan wants to make corporation between two communities in the humanitarian sphere, implementation on tolerance. Tolerance means confidence building. We want to create peace between the communities.

What is a fear of what could happen?

War can happen in time because of the impatience of the people. Even if we are trying to make their life style better. But they are talking about their motherland, their origin, that is fragile. It is not good when you are excluding people from their homes. The main threat is another war.

Do you believe there will ever come a peace resolution?

The Armenian side unfortunately is trying to change the demographic situation in Karabakh. They evict from Armenia who live in poverty to Nagorno Karabakh and they promise them good money there. It's a subjective change of demographic situation. When they are raising the amount of people in Nagorno Karabakh it is violence of the territory. In finding a solution to the situation and

finding the legal status of Nagorno Karabakh, it should be like it was. People in Armenia are moving to Europe. The population right now is 3.8 million. There is a lot of migration, the government should understand. If you want respect of your nation you should cooperate you should not occupy the territory. If this conflict would get resolved their economy would get much higher. It is not a good policy from the Armenian side. Demographic situation is changing and it is not a good policy. One more point, it was about our proposal to create our own EU with Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan as it was Benelux. We can create our little EU, we can cooperate with no borders. It was our proposal to create this free zone space and to have our own project. Georgia accepted it, we still have good contact with Georgia. Armenia however ignores the cooperation with Azerbaijan and Armenia. This EU can cooperate with the present EU and this would be very interesting. I do hope after restoration of the territory that people will want that. We could start very good contacts with Armenia and cooperate in all spheres. I hope that the day will come. We need more pressure against Armenia. You have to respect the UN Resolutions, demanding Armenia to withdraw from Nagorno Karabakh. The Council of Europe Resolution as well.