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**THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH
CONFLICT AND FUTURE
PROSPECTS: ANALYSIS OF
PUBLIC OPINION IN ARMENIA.**

EL CONFLICTO DE NAGORNO-KARABAKH Y
PERSPECTIVAS FUTURAS: ANÁLISIS DE LA
OPINIÓN PÚBLICA EN ARMENIA.

O CONFLICTO DE NAGORNO-KARABAKH E
PERSPETIVAS FUTURAS: ANÁLISE DA
OPINIÓN PÚBLICA EN ARMENIA.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to analyze the roots of the conflict surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, a region located in the Caucasus whose control has been disputed between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan since the last century, as well as the future possibilities of new hostilities being initiated again between both ethnic groups. By conducting a bibliographical review and subsequently implementing the technique of the personal interview, we will determine the discourse of the public opinion in Armenia regarding the signature of the ceasefire agreement that ended the 2020's war, the ethnic components of the issue, and the willingness of Armenian society to engage in a new round of aggression.

Key words: *Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, Azerbaijan, public opinion, international conflict.*

RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene como finalidad analizar las raíces del conflicto que rodea Nagorno-Karabakh, una región localizada en el Cáucaso cuyo control ha estado disputado entre la República de Armenia y la República de Azerbaiyán desde el siglo pasado, así como las posibilidades de que las hostilidades se reinicien de nuevo entre ambos grupos étnicos. A partir de la realización de una revisión bibliográfica y la posterior implementación de la técnica de la entrevista personal, determinaremos el discurso de la opinión pública de Armenia con respecto a la firma del acuerdo que puso fin a la guerra de 2020, el componente étnico del problema, y la disposición de la sociedad Armenia a volver a enzarzarse en una nueva ronda de agresiones.

Palabras clave: *Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, Azerbaiyán, opinión pública, conflicto internacional.*

RESUMO

Este estudo ten como finalidade analizar as raíces do conflito que rodea Nagorno-Karabakh, unha rexión localizada no Caúcaso cuxo control ten sido disputado entre a República de Armenia e a República de Acerbaixán dende o século pasado, así como as posibilidades de que as hostilidades se reinicien de novo entre ambos grupos étnicos. A partires da realización dunha revisión bibliográfica e a posterior implementación da técnica da entrevista persoal, determinaremos o discurso da opinión pública en Armenia con respecto á sinatura do acordo que puxo fin á guerra de 2020, o compoñente étnico do problema, e a disposición da sociedade Armenia a volver a enguedellarse nunha nova rolda de agresións.

Palabras chave: *Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, Acerbaixán, opinión pública, conflito internacional.*

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BDFP: Bachelor's Degree Final Project

CSCE: Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

CSTO: Collective Security Treaty Organization

LoC: Line of Contact

MoD: Minister of Defense

NK: Nagorno-Karabakh

NKAO: Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast

NKR: Nagorno-Karabakh Republic

OSCE: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PM: Prime Minister

SSR: Soviet Socialist Republic

UN: United Nations

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

INTRODUCTION

“The term Karabagh may be used and is used to designate three different geographic entities. Traditionally, the Karabagh designation includes the plains as well as the mountainous segment of the region. Mountainous Karabagh often refers to that portion of Karabagh which is, in fact, the mountainous pan. The Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabagh or the region in question, on the other hand, is the legally defined political entity in question, which is in the geographic region of Mountainous Karabagh. The Autonomous Region is smaller than the geographic area known as Mountainous Karabagh (Libardian, 1988: xvi).”

The Republic of Artsakh, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh, is an independent republic of disputed autonomy located in the Caucasus region. It is currently the focus of the hostilities between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, as both states advocate for its control based on ethnically grounded claims. This conflict, which can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century, was reactivated from September 2020 until November 2020, and despite the agreements reached, remains an unsolved question that still creates major discontent in Armenian society.

RESEARCH PROBLEM, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The question which will be analyzed in this paper is the consequences of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, as well as the consequences of the peace agreement signed by PM Nikol Pashinyan on November 10th, 2020, for the public opinion in Armenia. On the one hand, we will address the motivations behind Pashinyan's decision to transfer Artsakh to Azerbaijan, as well as the different opinions found in civil society (opposition vs. supporters). On the other hand, we will try to understand the legal connotations of this process. The literature review will start on November 2020, and fieldwork will take place between the end of April 2021, and mid-May, 2021, mainly in Yerevan (Armenia), but also including contributions from the Armenian diaspora.

Therefore, the objectives of this research are the following:

- **MAIN OBJECTIVE:** to analyze the impact on Armenian's public opinion of the NK war and the signing of the cease-fire agreement by Nikol Pashinyan.
- **OBJECTIVE 1:** to understand the reasons why maintaining Artsakh sovereignty is so relevant for the Armenian people.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** to determine the readiness of the Armenian people to engage in conflict with Azerbaijan in the near future.

On the other hand, the hypothesis that will be analyzed include:

- **HYPOTHESIS 1:** A great part of civil society believes that Pashinyan's decision was damaging for the Armenian people, as they believe they should keep on fighting for Artsakh.
- **HYPOTHESIS 2:** due to the ethnic component of the Artsakh conflict the decision to give up the territory has a particularly negative effect on public opinion.
- **HYPOTHESIS 3:** Armenians are willing to engage in warfare with Azerbaijan if they feel that their identity or territory is being threatened.

OBJECTIVES	HYPOTHESIS
MO: to analyze the impact on Armenian’s public opinion of the NK war and the signing of the cease-fire agreement by Nikol Pashinyan.	H1: a great part of society has a negative perception of the conduct of the war and peace negotiations by PM Nikol Pashinyan.
O1: to understand the reasons why maintaining Artsakh sovereignty is so relevant for the Armenian people.	H2: due to the ethnic component of the Artsakh conflict the decision to give up the territory has a particularly negative effect on public opinion.
O2: to determine the readiness of the Armenian people to engage in conflict with Azerbaijan in the near future.	H3: Armenians are willing to engage in warfare with Azerbaijan if they feel that their identity or territory is being threatened.

Table 1: Objectives and Hypothesis.

Source: own elaboration.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that we will try to answer to are the following:

1. Why is Artsakh so important for the Armenian people?
2. What does the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan mean to ethnic Armenians?
3. What do Armenians think about the agreement signed on November 10th of 2020 by PM Nikol Pashinyan?
4. What steps do Armenians believe that should be followed next?
5. What is the role of other international actors, mainly Russia and Turkey, in this conflict?
6. Will the transfer of Artsakh lead to future hostilities?

JUSTIFICATION

The reasons behind the choice of this specific issue come from the interest of the author in the field of International Relations, especially International Conflict and Diplomacy. Although many current events could have been studied, when it was announced that I would have the chance to conduct a research stay at Eurasia International University (Yerevan, Armenia), the decision became obvious. Although in a first moment it was planned that this paper would focus on the ethnic nature of the NK conflict itself, once the author arrived in Armenia and lived through multiple disturbances in the social order that followed Pashinyan’s decision of to sign the ceasefire agreement, she decided to adopt a new point of view that could help her not only to

understand better the connotations of this event, but also the mindset of Armenian society regarding NK.

From a more theoretical point of view, this specific has wider theoretical significance than a mere regional conflict as it exemplifies an overlapping of causes of international conflict. We are facing an issue that has not been completely solved in a peaceful and long-lasting way for over 100 years, in which we find, on one hand, the ethnic arguments exposed by the main actors, the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, and, on the other hand, the prevalent interests of other international actors, mainly the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey, which try to maintain and increase their influence on the Caucasus region.

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Armenians consider that the “Azerbaijani national identity is solely a product of Soviet ethno-national construction” (Kuburas, 2011: 46); therefore, their historical arguments do not justify the claims over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, the Azeris argue that their people descend from “clans, tribes and Muslim peoples who have also lived in the area for centuries” (Kuburas, 2001: 46), making their demands more valid than the Armenians’. These allegations were already present before the establishment of the USSR, as it was shown by the breakout of the Armenian-Azerbaijani war of 1918, but it was reinforced by the Soviet policies. The measures were based on “strategically assigning titular nationalities to its various republics, while also situating ethnic enclaves within them” and helped them to maintain their power by avoiding the emergence of alliances that might try to overthrow their rule (Gasper, 2018: 52; Chorbajian, 2001: 59). The right of becoming an individual SRRs, in fact, was only given to those groups that were considered to have developed into “real nations” (Zurcher, 2007: 37), explaining why both Armenia and Azerbaijan were given that status, but Nagorno-Karabakh became an Autonomous Oblast.

Although the ethno-demographic composition of NK has been an object of dispute, the Armenians do have evidence to prove that their people have been present in the region since over a thousand years ago, while the Turkish population is supposed to have arrived into the territory only by the beginning of the 18th century (Starovoytova, 1999).

Understanding the ethnic background of the conflict, at the first moment, Kaldor’s (2012) approach to the new wars was used. However, after analyzing the issue, we came to the conclusion that Korostelina’s (2007; 2009) 4-C Model of the Dynamic of Identity Conflicts was more suitable for this case. Finally, we will also apply Korostelina’s (2007; 2009) Early Warning

Model for Identity Conflicts as a tool for determining if it is likely that future aggressions will take place in the near future.

METHODOLOGY

Two different techniques will be used in this research. Firstly, we will carry on an extensive bibliographical review of the historical background of the conflict surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh. Secondly, we will use the interview method. The interviews will be structured in two sets of questions (one related to our research questions and another one related to the models studied on the theoretical approach). The data obtained from the interviews will be later studied in order to reach the final conclusions.

WORK PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

This thesis will be divided into four chapters. After an introduction to the issue, a review of the history of Nagorno-Karabakh will be carried on, in order to give us a better understanding of the ethnic grounded arguments of the Armenian people that led them to justify their sovereignty over the region. This historical review will start in the 6th century B.C., emphasizing the most significant time periods for our research: the stage between the fall of the Russian Empire and the constitution of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Era, the fall of the USSR, and the First and Second War of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Subsequently, the theoretical framework will be presented in Chapter II, in which a clearer relationship of the IR Conflict Analysis and Resolution. Chapter III will be focused on the study of Armenian public opinion. In this section, the methodological aspects will be explained, as well as the chosen questions for the interviewing process. The reasoning behind the selection of the groups will be also exposed.

Finally, in Chapter IV we will trace some conclusions and we will study if our hypotheses will be either accepted or rejected, and the compliance of initial objectives will be assessed.

CHAPTER I. THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT

HISTORY OF ARMENIA AND NK: FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE SOVIET ERA

It is complicated to trace the origin of the Armenian people, as there are different historical opinions. Some argue that “Armenians originated in Thrace and migrated from there to north-east Asia Minor. They eventually emerged there as the dominant people in what had been the Kingdom of the Urartians” while “others argue that the Armenians were indigenous to the region and that they supplanted the Urartians and established their own kingdoms by the sixth century B.C.” (Chorbajian et al., 1994: 4). Despite this uncertainty regarding the exact moment when Armenian people emerge in the Caucasus region, they defend that Artsakh was part of the ancient Urartian Empire between the 9th and 6th century B.C., known as Urtekhe-Urterkhini, and noticed in the work of classic authors such as Strabo, Pliny the Elder, or Plutarch (*Against Xenophobia and Violence*, 2013: 2). Artsakh later fell under the Persian control after the division of the region between them and the Byzantine Empire in 378 A.D. It was merged with the Utik region during the rule of the Aranshahiks dynasty by the end of the 5th century A.D. (*Against Xenophobia and Violence*, 2013: 3).

Between the 9th and 11th century, it became part of the Armenian kingdom of the Bagratids, who established the monarchy “between the end of the Arshakuni dynasty in the fifth century and the restoration of monarchy under the Bagratunis (Bagratids) in the ninth century” (Hovannisian, 1997a: viii). This time period was characterized by the lack of political unity, and mostly based on switching alliances, which gave the Arabs emirs opportunity to remain in numerous Armenian regions and made them be threatened by both the Byzantine empire and multiple Muslim dynasties, especially the Azerbaijan based Sajids (Herzig and Kurkchiyan, 2005: 43). It was also during the 11th century when the Turkic tribe of the Oghuz Seljuq migrated to southwestern Asia and Transcaucasia, creating the dominant Turkish strain from which Azeris derive from (Encyclopedia Britannica).

When the Zakarid family became in control of northeastern Armenia, during the first decades of the 13th century, Artsakh became part of their kingdom. This period was marked by a growth of Armenian economic and cultural life (Hovannisian, 1997a: 253). However, due to the fall of the kingdom of Cilicia¹ at the end of the 14th century left “only isolated pockets of semiautonomous Armenian life”, one of them being “Karabagh (Artsakh) along the eastern perimeter of that highland” (Hovannisian, 1997a: viii). The expansion of the Ottoman Turks during the 15th and 16th century into the former Armenian regions made them exist “a religious-

¹ Annex II. Map 1: The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia.

ethnic minority with the legal status of second-class citizens” (Hovannisian, 1997a: viii). The ethnic related conflicts were exacerbated by the signing of the Treaty of Zuhab in 1639, which divided Armenia between the Ottomans, who took the western region, and the Safavids, one of Iran’s most important dynasties, who took the eastern part of Armenia. Therefore, Armenian provinces of Artsakh, Siunik, and Utik became part of their rule (Bournoutian, 2006: 213). They divided East Armenia, who was under their control for the following eighty years, into two administrative units: on one hand, Chukhur-i Sa’ad, formed by the historic provinces of Ayrarat, Gugark, and Vaspurakan; and, on the other hand, Karabagh, which was formed by the ancient provinces of Artsakh and Siunik (Hovannisian, 1997b: 81-82).

When the Treaty of Bucharest put an end to the Russo-Ottoman war in 1812, the Persians, left with no allies, were forced to sign the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813, which ended the Russo-Persian war. This Treaty gave to Russia “all the territory north of the Araxes and the Kura rivers except for Erevan and Nakhichevan”. They also renounced their claims to obtain Georgia and Daghestan. Therefore, the Russians became in control of most of the territory of Eastern Armenia, forming the Muslim province of Transcaucasia by combining Karabagh with the khanates of Baku, Sheki, Kuba, and Shirvan (Hovannisian, 1997b: 102-103). The disconformities of both sides with the principles of the Treaty of Gulian rose again after the death of Alexander I in 1826, leading to the invasion of Karabakh and Shuragol and starting the second Russo-Persian War. While the Mulsim population of the regions called for jihad, the Armenians stood on the Russian side (Hovannisian, 1997b: 104). The conflict ended in 1828, when the Russians were able to threaten the capital of the Persian province of Azerbaijan, Tabriz. The Treaty of Turkmenchay gave Russia the control of the khanates of Yerevan and Nakhichevan, as well as the remaining parts of Eastern Armenia, settling the actual border with Armenia: the Araxes River (Hovannisian, 1997b: 104). However, the dream of the Armenian leaders who had hoped for acquiring a certain state of autonomy under the Russian control were stuck with the ideas of tzar Nicholas I and Count Paskevich, which aimed to “russifying all the non-Russian areas of the empire and bringing them under the control of the central administration” (Hovannisian, 1997b: 106).

The fall of the Russian Empire after 1917’s October Revolution marked the start of a crucial period for Nagorno-Karabakh, under Lenin’s policy of self-determination of the nations. The region was in fact independent since October 1917 and governed by a diverse council, which included Tartars (or Azeris) and Armenians (Hille, 2010: 163).

The Russian Revolution led to the consolidation for a brief period of the Georgian Democratic Republic, the Democratic Republic of Armenia, and the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

These two last new-born republics start to vie for the control of NK, relying on ethnic and historical arguments. According to Hovannisian, in 1918 the region of Mountainous Karabagh's approximate population was 165.000 Armenians, 7.000 Russians, and 59.000 Muslims, mostly located in the town of Sushu and its surroundings (Hovannissan, 1971: 82). As the Azeri government asked Turkey to retrieve the control of the Baku province or *guberniia*, which included NK, the Ottoman forces invaded the region in the summer of 1918 (Hille, 2010: 163). However, before the invasion of NK, a new issue was being manifested in Baku: "the danger of an ethnic war between the Armenian and the Muslim communities" (Gokay, 1998: 35). When the Ottomans arrived at the city in March, as despite the fact that "Armenians first declared their neutrality as a Muslim rebellion started against the authority of the local Soviet", they later joined the Bolsheviks forces, and "the clash immediately developed into racial and religious warfare" (Gokay, 1998: 36). According to Gokay, "the March events in Baku became the first tragic incident in which the Bolsheviks sought the support of one ethnic power against another to strengthen their position in the region" (Gokay, 1998: 36).

The development of the events led to the constitution of the First Assembly of Karabakh Armenians, which took place on the 22nd of July 1918, and "declared Nagorno Karabagh as an independent administrative and political entity" (Avakian, 2015: 9). They elected "the so-called People's Government of Karabagh" (Hovannisian, 1971: 83), formed by seven ministers, as well as a National Council (Avakian, 2015: 9; Hille, 2010: 163). Not long after, at the beginning of August, the Azeri and Turkish troops intended to incorporate the NK territory into their newly created republic. However, they did not succeed on their claims (Avakian, 2015: 9; Hovannisian, 1971: 83).

The Second and Third Assemblies, which reunited in September 1918, reinforced the decision of not following the requests of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ottoman Empire (Avakian, 2015: 9). However, this decision "precipitated the September 15th, 1918 massacre in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital, which was followed by Karabagh's submission to Turkish troops on September 25" (Chorbajian, 2001: 63). During the massacre, it is estimated that between 15.000 to 20.000 were killed. When they allowed the Turks to enter Sushu, this tragic event was also followed by the arrest of 60 "prominent Armenians", the disarming of the inhabitants, and the display of gallows in the main square of the town (Libaridian, 1988: 5). The Forth Assembly took place on February the 19th, 1919, concluded with the proclamation of the defense of the right of self-determination of the NK people and claimed that they would not recognize Azerbaijan's sovereignty over the region (Avakian, 2015: 9). Therefore, they

addressed the Allied Governments to proclaim this decision ² (Libaridian, 1988: 11-12). According to Avakian, “This refusal to recognize Azerbaijan’s authority was reaffirmed by the Fifth Assembly of Armenians of Karabagh, convened on April 23, 1919”³ (Avakian, 2015: 9).

The incursion of the Ottoman troops in various villages located in the borderline of Karabagh forces the Armenian inhabitants of the region to seek external aid, which could not be directly given by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, as they lacked the needed means or power. The end of WWI, in which the Armenians fought hand to hand with the allies, and the Azerbaijanis on the Turkish side, made them expect help from the British⁴, which were occupying the territory at the time, but this did not happen (Libaridian, 1988: 6).

In June 1919, and due to the absence of external aid, the Sixth Assembly of Karabakh Armenians is forced to send a delegation to Baku “with the purpose of finding a peaceful solution to the Karabagh problem through negotiation with the Musavatist government of Azerbaijan” (Chorbajian, 2001: 98). The negotiations finish by the end of July, and on the 22nd of August, after the reunion of the Seventh Assembly which had taken place the 15th of August, they come to closure by signing a treaty with Azerbaijan which secures peace until a final resolution for the conflict is decided in the Paris Peace Conference⁵ (Libaridian, 1988: 6, Chorbajian, 2001: 63). The existence of this agreement “is evidence that Karabagh was considered a distinct legal entity” (Avakian, 2015: 10). Some of the key aspects contained in the document included the creation of political institutions with Armenian representation, such as a council, the reduction of displayed military garrisons, the respect of civilian human rights, and “Azerbaijani guarantees of cultural autonomy and freedoms of assembly, speech and press” (Chorbajian, 2001: 38).

Another agreement was signed the following 23rd of November by both the PM of the Republic of Armenia and the PM of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, in Tbilisi, Georgia, in which they declared their compromise to solve their problems by peaceful means. However, the Azeri side ended up using military power, which forced Karabagh to defend themselves and the Republic of Armenia to send military forces to the region in order to liberate them (Avakian,

² Annex III. Document 1: Protest Note of Karabagh Armenians to Allied Governments.

³ Annex III. Document 2: Resolution unanimously approved by the Fifth Assembly of Armenians of Karabagh on the issue of a provisional government.

⁴ Annex III. Document 3: Copy of letter from Avetis Aharonian, president of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia, addressed to the presidents of the delegations of Italy, France, England, and the U.S.

⁵ Annex III. Document 4: Agreement of the representatives of the Seventh Assembly of Karabagh Armenians with Governor-General Sultanov, accepting provisional Azerbaijani rule.

2015: 10). In March and April of 1920, the Azerbaijani troops attacked Armenians in Shushi, destroying the city and completely switching the ethnic composition of the city, which went from having 22.004 Armenian inhabitants out of a total of 42.130, or more than 50% of the population, to having only 289 out of 9223, only about 3% (Chorbajian, 2001: 25). Due to this non-compliance of the previously signed treaty, the Ninth Assembly of Armenians of Karabagh declared on April 23rd, 1920, that “The Provisional Agreement [...] is pronounced violated due to the continued aggression of the Azerbaijani troops against peaceful Armenian population and massacres of the population of Shushi and the Armenian villages” and that Nagorno Karabagh was “an inalienable part of the Republic of Armenia” (Avakian, 2015: 10).

The following 10th of August, the Soviet Union and the Republic of Armenia endorse an agreement in which they comply with the occupation of the regions of Karabagh, Zanghezour, and Nakhichevan by the Soviets. However, this did not imply that the territories belonged to them (Avakian, 2015: 12). On the 30th of November, the already sovietized Azerbaijani government officially adopted this declaration, corroborating that Nagorno Karabagh, Zanghezour, and Nakhichevan were part of Soviet Armenia. Moreover, on the 2nd of December, in the so-called “Declaration on the Establishment of the Soviet Power in Armenia”, they proclaimed the right to self-determination of NK. Stalin himself, in a telegram issued on the 4th of December, stated that “on the 1st of December Soviet Azerbaijan voluntary refused to have any claims on the disputed regions” (Avakian, 2015: 13).

After the incorporation of Armenia and Azerbaijan to the Soviet Union, the Bureau for the Caucasus in Moscow (also known as the Kavbiuro), decided on the 4th of July of 1921 that Nagorno-Karabakh “would be unified with Armenia and that a referendum would be organized” (Hille, 2010: 168). However, after previous deliberations with Stalin were carried on, on the next day Nagorno-Karabakh was incorporated as an “Autonomous Oblast” to the SSR of Azerbaijan, allowing them to make a determination on the autonomy of NK (Hille, 2010: 168). In order to render “the creation of autonomy unnecessary” and present “a solution to the ethnic conflict” the Azeri government implemented “draconian measures” in NK (Saparov, 2012: 313).

This decision can be linked to the policy that Stalin developed after his idea of “nation”, which was based on the principles of “divide et impera”: starting conflicts among the different ethnic groups of a certain territory, in order to control the “turbulent populations” (Ardillier-Carras, 2006: 410-412). However, the NK case can be considered an anomaly, as “as it was the only autonomous region ethnically akin to a neighboring republic and yet incorporated into a different republic” (Chorbajian, 2001: 64). Chorbajian also states the following:

“Stalin acted on the basis of political expediency and in defiance of history (there are documented Armenian settlements in the territory dating back over two millennia), demographics (the territory was over 90 per cent Armenian at the time it was assigned to Azerbaijan), and the wishes of the territory’s residents (it was their choice to be part of Armenia)” (Chorbajian, 2001: xi).

This decision was backed up by the official establishment of Nagorno Karabagh Autonomous Oblast only on the Armenian populated part of its territory on the 7th of July of 1923 by the Azerbaijan SSR’s Central Executive Revolutionary Committee, and the issue of the decision “On the Status of the Autonomous Region of Nagorno Karabagh” the 24th of November of 1924 (Avakian, 2015: 15), which “provided detailed descriptions of the central and local authorities in the autonomous region and outlined the territory of the autonomous region, which included 201 villages” (Saparov, 2012: 319).

The NKAO did little to preserve and develop the rights, culture, and identity of the Armenian minority in Azerbaijan. Due to the lack of investments, the region was lagged in its development, and it remained surviving on an agrarian economy. The limited labor opportunities and the discrimination against Armenians, also on the cultural aspects (Armenian history teaching was forbidden in schools, and they cut all the ties between Armenia and Artsakh) led to their emigration. Meanwhile, the Azerbaijan leaders encouraged their citizens to move to Nagorno-Karabakh (Starovoytova, 1999). As a result, from 1926 until 1979, the Armenian population went from 89% to 76% of the total, while the Azerbaijani population in the region increased from 10% to 23% (Table 2).

The dissatisfaction of the Armenian people starts to become more visible after Stalin’s death. In fact, in 1963, around 2.500 Armenians from Karabakh signed a petition in which they demanded “for Karabakh either to be put under Armenian control or to be transferred to Russia”. This uneasiness was also shown in the clashes that took place in the regional capital, Stepanakert, in the same year, and at the large demonstrations occurring in Yerevan in 1965 and 1977 (Zurcher, 2007: 154).

	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989
Armenians	111,694	132,800	110,053	121,068	123,076	145,450
Azeris	12,592	14,053	17,995	27,179	37,264	40,688
Others	1,014	3,984	2,358	2,066	1,841	2,947
Total	125,300	150,837	130,406	150,313	162,181	189,085

Table 2: Demographics of Nagorno-Karabakh during the Soviet Azerbaijan’s Rule.
Source: own elaboration based on the data provided by KarabakhFacts.com (2019).

	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989
Armenians	89%	88%	84%	81%	76%	77%
Azeris	10%	9%	14%	18%	23%	22%
Others	1%	3%	2%	1%	1%	2%

Table 3: Percentage of Armenian and Azeri population in Soviet Karabakh.
Source: own elaboration based on the data provided by KarabakhFacts.com (2019).

	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989
Population growth in Armenia	46%	37%	41%	22%	9%
Growth of Armenians in NKAO	19%	-17%	10%	2%	18%
Growth of Azeris in NKAO	12%	28%	51%	37%	9%
Population growth in Azerbaijan	41%	15%	38%	18%	17%

Table 4: Population growth of ethnic groups in Karabakh in comparison with Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Source: own elaboration based on the data provided by KarabakhFacts.com (2019).

In the context of the debate about the 1977’s USSR Constitution, the issues related to the NKAO were also discussed. On November 23rd, during the Session Protocol of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of November 23, the following argument was stated:

“As a result of a number of historic circumstances, Nagorno Karabagh was artificially annexed to Azerbaijan several decades ago. In this process, the historic past of the oblast [region], its ethnic composition, the will of its people and economic interests were not taken into consideration. Decades passed, and the Karabagh problem continues to raise concern and cause moments of

animosity between the two peoples, who are connected with ages old friendship. Nagorno Karabagh (Armenian name - Artsakh) should be made part of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. In this case everything will take its legal place” (Avakian, 2015: 15).

In the 80s, and with the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev as the General Secretary of the Communist Party, the Soviet Union tried to acquire a new direction by implementing a new policy: the Perestroika (in Russian, *перестройка* or reconstruction) aimed, on one hand, to achieve “a reduction in the role of central planning, the decentralization of decision-making, an expanded role for market mechanisms, and increased opportunities for private initiative in services and production”, and, on the other hand, to obtain a “greater openness and publicity in the media (known as *Glasnost*, in Russian *гласность* or openness), greater 'pluralism' of opinions in the political arena, competitive and secret elections for state (and perhaps even Party) bodies, and an enhanced political role for workers in state enterprises through 'self-management' and employee selection of managers and directors” (Mason, 1988: 431). During this period, the NK issue came under the spotlight again.

THE FIRST WAR OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH (1988-1994)

Armenians and Azerbaijanis dissent on the starting point of the conflict. From the Azeri point of view, “Armenian inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh AO started the conflict in February 1988 by unilaterally demanding the transfer of the oblast to the Armenian SSR”. From an Armenian perspective, the war was initiated with the assault of Armenians in Sumgait, a city in the SSA of Azerbaijan, located only 30 kilometers away from Baku. In order to excuse their actions, “the ideologists of the conflicting parties pushed the question of when the conflict was started decisively backward in time” (Zurcher, 2007: 155).

Despite the discrepancies about the exact origin of the First War of Nagorno-Karabakh, we can agree that, from a historical perspective, in January 1988, the Armenian people had already sent a petition to Moscow in which they requested a referendum on the status of NK. They aimed that this could happen under the context of *perestroika*. However, this request was rejected in “the Politburo of the CPSU at a special session”, as it was “contradictory to the interests of the working class in Armenia and Azerbaijan and would damage interethnic relations”. The decision led to multiple demonstrations in Yerevan, and “their protest was to be understood as a vote for system-internal reform” (Zurcher, 2007: 158). Considering the impact of the magnitude of the demonstrations, the regional Soviet of the NKAO “passed a resolution

at a special sitting, calling for the transfer of the region to Armenia” on the 20th of February (Zurcher, 2007: 158). The Azerbaijani people, seeing this as an offense or treason, carried on a slaughter of Armenians of Sumgait, in which between around 30 were tortured to death (the number varies from 27, 32, and more than 200 depending on the sources) and hundreds of inhabitants were harassed and seriously wounded, provoking the displacement of thousands of Armenians to both Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh (Balayan, 2005: 302; Vaserman & Ginat, 1994: 348). This event was described as a “pogrom” by the Soviet troops: “the organized persecution of a minority” (Chorbajian, 2001: 69).

The request for reunification with Armenia issued by the Communist Party of Nagorno-Karabakh in March 1988, was dismissed by the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan in June of that year. However, only two days later, the Supreme Soviet of Armenia compiled the petition (Chorbajian, 2001: 70; Zurcher, 2007: 162). In order not to generate a complicated situation with the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, the Soviet of Karabakh addressed them and demanded the temporary subordination of the region to Moscow (Zurcher, 2007: 162).

The demands were dismissed in the month of July, shielding themselves under article 78 of the Constitution, as multiple members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union understood it was “an anti-reform attempt to change the borders of the USSR” (Balayan, 2005: 303). Nevertheless, they gave to the Armenian Supreme Soviet the “right to intervene in decisions regarding the disputed region” (Vaserman & Ginat, 1994: 349).

The confrontation continued during the following months, and during the summer of 1988 soviet troops were sent to the region to regain their control and prevent the demonstrations to become more substantial (Chorbajian, 2001: 70). An unpredictable event changed the situation, as, on December 7, 1988, an earthquake struck northern Armenia. Although there were multiple proofs of solidarity coming both from the international context and the Soviet Union, the CPSU takes advantage of the opportunity and attempts to win back their influence on the NKAO. Thus, between December 1988 and January 1989, all the members of the Karabakh Committee were imprisoned under the pretext that “the nationalist politics of the committee hindered the efficient organization of aid work”, despite that the evidence shows that they were “extremely efficient both in raising humanitarian assistance and in the organization of aid on the ground” (Zurcher, 2007: 164). Lastly, on the 20th of January 1989, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast became under the direct control of the USSR Central Government (Chorbajian, 2001: 70).

As a protest to the cooperation of the newly established government with the Azeris, and, in order to stand up for the rights of the workers of the region, a strike was carried on from March

to August (Balayan, 2005: 305). The Azerbaijanis, on the other hand, conducted a railway blockade during the summer and autumn months, causing both energy and food shortages on the NKAO and the SSR of Armenia (Chorbajian, 2001: 70).

It was not until August of 1989 when the Congress of Authorized Representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh elected a National Council, composed of 78 members, which became the government of the NKAO (Balayan, 2005: 305; Avakian, 2015: 18; Zurcher, 2007: 165), and which adopted a declaration in which they stated that “the interference of Azerbaijanian Soviet Republic with the affairs of the Autonomous region would be considered as an act of aggression and would be adequately responded” (Balayan, 2005: 305). Immediately, the Armenian SSR’s Supreme Soviet declared that the institution was “the only legitimate representative body of Armenians in the NKAO” (Zurcher, 2007: 165).

As the violence quickly escalated and the soviets started to realize they were both losing control and support from both SSRs, on November 28th, 1989, Moscow decided to give back the control of Nagorno-Karabakh to the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan SSR. The government of Armenia SSR, however, decided to go against Gorbachev’s will and passed a conjoined declaration with the National Council of Karabakh that proclaimed that Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast was part of Armenia. This threat to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR forced them to display 6,000 units in Karabakh (Zurcher, 2007: 166).

The Azerbaijanis, seeing the weakness of the Soviet Union and the lack of authority that was shown when dealing with this issue, started to carry on mass protests in January 1990. However, once again, a massacre of Armenians living in the SSR of Azerbaijan, similar to the one in Sumgait, took place. We must highlight that this *progrom* led to “an attempt to overthrow the Azerbaijani communist leadership”, but the Supreme Soviet sent the Soviet Army, “crushed the protests and saved communist rule in Azerbaijan” (Saparov, 2015: 167). These events are referred as “Black January”:

Azerbaijan’s “Black January” of 1990 was ushered in with all the disturbing portents of mass violence already visible: a defenseless Armenian population, whom none of the security structures seemed ready to defend; a Popular Front, where radical elements had squeezed out the moderates; a local Party leadership losing power and looking for ways of hanging on to it; and the Soviet leadership in Moscow, which was prepared to take any steps it thought necessary to prevent Azerbaijan’s breaking away from the Union” (Waal, 2013: 90).

The Karabakh Armenians attempt to gain control over their land against both the Soviets and the Azerbaijanis that were occupying the region caused the so-called “Operation Koltso” (in Russian, Операция «Кольцо», or ring), by the beginning of May 1991, as an effort to disarm the Armenian militias, on one hand, and to punish and suppress “independence-minded Armenians” (Zurcher, 2007: 168). Although the Soviets and Azeris outnumbered them, the Armenian *fedayin* had higher morale, as well as the support of villagers and the Armenian government (Waal, 2013: 115).

The Operation Ring involved the use of “tanks, armored cars, and military helicopters”, and left behind more than 20 destroyed villages in the regions of Martakert and Hadroud, as well as over 700 Armenian prisoners that were tortured in Azerbaijani prisons, and a wave of refugees (Balayan, 2005: 308). The Armenians started to use an innovative weapon: the Alazan rocket. Although it had been designed for non-military purposes, it could cause a reasonable amount of destruction, and even kill a human if it was hit directly (Waal, 2013: 116).

On August the 30th, the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan SSR proclaimed its independence, returning to the pre soviet state. It was followed by the endorsement of the “Constitutional Act on State Independence”, on the 18th of October (Avakian, 2015: 20). The Armenians acted upon, establishing a referendum to decide over their independence in the same year (Saparov, 2015: 168). In November 1991, the Azerbaijani government passed on a declaration that abolished the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, which also included the renaming of certain cities, such as the capital, Stepanakert (Avakian, 2015: 18; Saparov, 2015: 168).

The implosion of the USSR not only left almost two independent countries facing each other, but the conflict acquired an international dimension when Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence in September 1991, a decision supported by the referendum carried on in December (Zurcher, 2007: 168; Balayan, 2005: 308). According to Müller (1991), and as established in article 72 of the USSR Constitution, “autonomous areas such as Nagorno-Karabakh are also allowed to decide on their own to remain with the USSR”. Two-thirds of the votes were required in order to acquire independence. The voting question, “Are you in favor of the proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic being an independent state that independently regulates its cooperation with other states and communities?”, which was formulated in both Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani, obtained a 99.98% of “Yes” votes (Table 5). In line with the results of the referendum, Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence on January 6th, 1992, but only Armenia recognized it (Chorbajian, 2001: 72; Müller, 1991).

Area	Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)	
Position	Part of the state (Azerbaijan) becomes an independent state	
Date	December 10, 1991	
Template	independence	
Question patterns	Decision question	
Voting type	Plebiscite → by parliament → ad hoc → level: self-determination	
Result	accepted	
Majorities	66.67% of the valid votes, 50% + 1 vote minimum participation	
Eligible voters	132,328	
Voting participation	108,736	82.17%
Voices out of consideration	95	
Valid (= decisive) votes	108,639	Based on the valid votes
Yes votes	108,615	99.98%
No votes	24	0.02%

Table 5: Results of the 1991 Referendum for the Independence of Nagorno-Karabakh.
Source: Müller (1991).

Violence quickly escalated at the beginning of 1992. The assault of unarmed civilians became more common, coming from both sides, as both the Azeris and the Armenians captured numerous villages and killed the inhabitants, which were trying to stay in their homes or trying to escape the zone. They burglarized the settlements, and in many cases, burned down the houses, which “essentially prevented them from returning to their villages” (Human Rights Watch, 1992: 19).

The main Azerbaijani tactic used till spring of 1992 was focused on shelling towns and villages, instead of carrying on ground attacks (Human Rights Watch, 1992: 19). The most relevant example of this strategy is the siege and shelling of Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, which lasted from November 1991 until 1992, when the Armenian troops regained control of the city of Sushu (and therefore, the whole area), and established a corridor between the former NKAO and the Armenian Republic through the city of Lachin (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1993: 125).

Another remarkable event was the capture of Khojali, a village populated mostly by ethnic Azerbaijani. The regional airport was located nearby, making it a strategic hub. On the night of January 25th of 1992, and in commemoration of the Sumgait pogrom, the Armenian troops and the 366th Regime of the Soviet Army, attacked the village. The mission ended up turning into a massacre in which 485 Azerbaijanis, most of them civilians, were murdered (Zurcher, 2007: 171-172; Waal, 2013: 183-184).

The Azeri forces launched a counterattack from the month of June, targeting the eastern borders, from Hadrut, in the northeast, to Shahoumyan, in the southeast. They captured this last district, as well as most of the district of Martakert and multiple locations of the Askeran district. This led to a new wave of Armenian refugees, that moved either to the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh or to Yerevan. Azerbaijan also reinforced the pressure exerted on the Lachin corridor (Balayan, 2005: 311). As a result of the new stream of aggressions, a State Defense Committee was created on August the 15th, 1992, which undertook all the executive powers. The head of the Committee was Robert Kocharian. The institution recruited a new army, composed of all the male population of the region of ages 18 to 45, and put all the business "at the service of the war effort" (Waal, 2013: 210).

It was also during this time when the peace bilateral negotiations started. Therefore, the United Nations decided that the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), which would later become the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), would oversee the mediation. On the 24th of March 1992, they agree on carrying on a negotiation forum in Minsk, in which not only Armenia and Azerbaijan would take part, but also ten other OSCE member countries, as well as representatives of the Karabakh Armenians and Karabagh Azeris. However, the Minsk conference never takes place, due to the beginning of the hostilities. At that moment, the conference became the Minsk Group. The attempts to solve the issue in Stockholm, the 14th of December 1992, failed too, as the Azerbaijani government refused to take part (Geukjian, 2006: 62). The period between the Azerbaijani attack of September and its final counter back by the Nagorno-Karabakh troops in February 1993, was characterized by multiple attempts to end the war, yet none of them succeeded until the spring of 1994 (Chorbajian, 2001: 72).

According to Geukjian (2006), the general failure of this process can be explained by three main reasons: 1) on one hand both sides involved in the conflict "were not tested on the battlefield", and as result, they hoped to win the dispute by the use of military means, and on the other side, their governments were not strong enough to rely on as they feared that the opposition would accuse them of betraying their people's interests; 2) the members of the

Minsk Group did not show enough interest on resolving the issue; and 3) there was not a determined strategy to follow after the ceasefire agreement was signed, creating doubts about the actual role of the OSCE in Nagorno-Karabakh and whether it will become an actor on “a future peacekeeping operation or monitoring force” (Geukjian, 2006: 64).

The winter of 1992 and 1993 was especially hard for the Armenians, as they were suffering a very strong economic blockade. They could not get much aid from Russia, due to the distance, and Georgia was suffering its own political crisis. Turkey, on the other hand, supported Azerbaijan and closed its borders with Armenia in 1993. It was only thanks to the help of Iran that they were able to make it through, but it was still a complicated process, due to the geographical difficulties they had to overcome. The living conditions resembled pre-contemporary ages, and they were only able to recover their previous lifestyle in 1996 when they decided to open again the Metsamor nuclear power plant, a decision that created great controversy. However, a positive consequence of this complicated situation was the increase of solidarity among the Armenians in the country, Karabakh, and the diaspora (Waal, 2013: 219).

In January, the Azeri offensive to Nagorno-Karabakh starts again, but it is not until March when the most outstanding event takes place: the Battle of Kelbadjar. The Armenian militias become capable of pushing the Azerbaijani troops towards the Lachin corridor and Kelbadjar, in Azerbaijan (Balayan, 2005: 312), gaining control of the city by the beginning of April. This operation left behind few military losses but a great wave of refugees, consisting of not only civilians but also of the Azerbaijani soldiers that were escaping the town (Waal, 2013: 224). The loss of their territory generates panic among the Azeris, and despite the attempts of their ally, Turkey, to make the UN declare the attack an aggression, they are left in a complicated situation, as the Russians decide to “took a rough stand and suspended Turkey” and multiple attacks were taking place on the south-eastern firing line (Balayan, 2005: 312).

On the international level, the UN Security Council approved the “Resolution 882”, on April of 1993, which 1) demanded the immediate cessation of all hostilities and hostile acts with a view to establishing a durable cease-fire”; 2) urged to proceed with the negotiations inside of the Minsk Group of the CSCE: 3) requested to both sides to guarantee access to the battlefield to the humanitarian aid units in order to help the civilians; 4) asks for a report that evaluated the situation; and 5) assures that they will remain active in the resolution process of the Nagorno-Karabakh war (United Nations Security Council, 1993). However, this Resolution also demands the withdrawal of the Armenian troops in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, especially of the Kelbadjar district, and therefore manifesting that the Armenian military forces

had acted outside of Nagorno-Karabakh and inside of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which turned the international community public opinion against them. Even neighboring Iran stood up against the Kelbadjar operation (Melkonian, 2008: 252). It was after these events when the Turkish government decided to completely shut down their borders, preventing supplies coming from the European Union from entering Armenia (Waal, 2013: 225, Chorbajian, 2001: 251).

The political crisis that was taking place inside of Azerbaijan was used as an advantage by Armenians, as it “which had left the Karabakh front almost undefended”. In June, they regained control of Martakert and the whole northern part of the region of Karabakh, followed by Aghdam, in July, and Fizuli and Jibrail the following month, and therefore, defining the course of the war from summer of 1993. However, a refugee crisis like the one that was taking place had not been seen since World War II. The Karabakh militias looted all the villages and captured all the people that had not had enough time to flee before their arrival (Waal, 2013: 227-228). This operation was possible, to a great extent, thanks to the weapons they had captured from the Azeri troops since 1992, making up “four-fifths of this weaponry” (Melkonian, 2008: 237).

Around 1500 Afghan veterans were reported to enter the conflict in September of 1993, fighting along with the Azerbaijani troops, playing a crucial role in the recovery of Goradiz, about 100 km to the south of the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh. The amount of Afghan militia would keep increasing, reaching 2500 before their dismantling due to the high rate of fatalities in 1994 (Cooley, 200: 180-181). A new stream of attacks started against these commandos on the 21st of October of 1993, in the Jibrayil province, that ended two days later with the conquest by the Karabakh Armenians of the borders of the Araks River, “the escape route to the rest of Azerbaijan” and gave them the possibility to occupy the Zangelan province (Human Rights Watch, 1994: 67). Having this opportunity, on the 28th of October, the Karabakh troops proceeded with the annexation of the region, forcing out its inhabitants. The occupation of Zangelan became the endpoint of the Armenian campaign of 1993, as they were already in control of more of the 20% of the Azeri territories (Human Rights Watch, 1994: 76). Subsequently, the UN Security Council also passed Resolution 853, in July 1993, and Resolution 874 e 884, in October and November of 1993 respectively, in which they not only condemned the actions of both countries but also “clarified the difference between the parties to the conflict by differentiating the Armenian forces of Nagorno-Karabakh from those of Armenia proper” (Chorbajian, 2001: 251).

Ter-Petrosian, the President of Armenia from 1991 until 1998, stated that “real war began on 17th December 1993 and lasted until 12 May 1994. That was a war when both sides had real armies.” During that period, the number of casualties highly increased, losses coming from both sides (Waal, 2010a: 123). When the Karabakh forces tried to advance further east in the region of Fizuli, they found great opposition, and for the first time, they did not have any other option than to back down (Human Rights Watch, 1994: 83). They were also struck by the Azerbaijani troops in the Martaket province, in the north-east, and in the Araxes River, located in the south-east, on January 6th of 1994. However, the bloodiest campaign of the whole war happened in the northwest, in an almost uninhabited area. The Azeri forces moved towards the Kelbajar region, and on the 24th of January, they reported to have annihilated a unit consisting of 240 Armenian soldiers. At the beginning of February, they had advanced to the proximities of the town of Kelbajar, but they faced an offensive of an army composed of the most skilled Armenian veterans on the 12th of February, forcing them to retreat to the Omar Pass. Despite their attempts to cross the canyon, as many as 1500 soldiers were killed in an attack carried on by Grad missiles (Waal, 2013: 248).

The course taken by the events, as well as the long extent of the war, was left with two weakened countries by the spring of 1994. Although there were some battles near Agdam and Mardakert during April, after which the Karabakh troops retrieved some territories (Human Rights Watch, 1994: 83), both sides were ready to find a peaceful resolution. In May of 1994, when the negotiations started, the Armenians controlled a region that was not only the former NKAO, but also around 16% of Azerbaijan (Zurcher, 2007: 171-172). On the 5th of May, the Bishkek Protocol, a provisional ceasefire agreement, was signed in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. Vladimir Kazimirov, a Russian diplomat that acted in the representation of the OSCE, was in charge of the negotiations. The agreement was implemented on the 12th of May (Waal, 2010a: 123-124). Some controversy surrounded the process, not only because they lacked resources, but also due to the fact that there was a constant relationship of antagonism between the Russians and the Western representatives that were part of the Minsk Group. Therefore, some consider that Kazimirov “increasingly acted on his own and mediated the ceasefire agreement of May 1994 almost single-handedly” (Waal, 2010a: 123-124). Although the Russians intended to enforce some extra requirements, such as “the deployment of a contingent of eighteen hundred Russian peacekeepers to the Karabakh front-line” they did not succeed, as the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan declined the offer (Waal, 2010a: 123-124).

The limited capacities of the OSCE made it impossible to display an international unit that could control the front line. However, they could reach a new agreement on July 26th of 1994,

in which the military leaders of the three involved sides of the conflict (the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the former KNAO) complied to cease fire indefinitely. It was the first time in which they signed “the same piece of paper” (Waal, 2013: 264).

Therefore, Nagorno-Karabakh acquired the status of a “Republic with a presidential governing system” after November 1994 (Avakian, 2015: 42). The acting president at the time, Robert Kocharyan, was officially elected on November 24th, 1996. However, it was not until 2017 when they adopted their current Constitution.

A FROZEN CONFLICT: FROM 1994 TO 2020

Although the Bishkek Protocol meant the suspension of the aggressions between Armenians and Azeris, the still existing tension put the international community in a dangerous area. Thus, the OSCE Minsk Group kept on mediating the situation, in order to prevent a new war to happen again. During the following decades, different measures were implemented, with also different levels of success.

The Prague Process

According to the OSCE (2002), a meeting between official representatives of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan was held by the Minsk Group in May 2002, in Prague. This reunion was possible after the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group visited the South-Caucasus area in March of 2002 and proposed both presidents to conduct an encounter that would allow the peace negotiations to continue, without replacing “the ongoing direct dialogue between the two Presidents, as well as the work and periodic visits to the region of the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen”. Both agreed on designating personal Commissioners to take part in the process (OSCE, 2002).

The Minsk Group agreed that the strategy they would follow would imply ‘no agenda, no commitment, no negotiation, but a free discussion, on any issue proposed by Armenia, Azerbaijan, or by the co-chairs’. This plan of action had positive results. Oskanyan, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia at the time, stated in a meeting carried on in 2004 in Bulgaria that his country’s government had true faith in the actions that were being developed. Aliyev, the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan, declared during an interview of the Azeri television aired in 2005 that he had hope on the “new stage” of the process and that they were

making great attempts to follow the direction the negotiations had acquired in order to accomplish their goals. (German, 2005: 4).

Despite both sides being comfortable with the proceeding, they disagreed on some crucial aspects. Prior to the start of the Prague meeting, Oskanyan declared the following: “The Nagorno-Karabakh problem can be resolved only by the self-determination of NK people. This can be achieved by the unification of Armenia and NK and by the recognition of the world community and Azerbaijan. There is no other way” (Mehtiyev, 2005: 4). However, the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister's point of view is quite different from his, as just at the same time, he stated that “Azerbaijan will not agree neither to the independent state status of NK or to NK being part of Armenia. New proposals of the OSCE Minsk group for the settlement of the conflict must be based on these principles. Aliyev, however, affirmed that they would be willing to guarantee the highest degree of autonomy to Nagorno-Karabakh. They also make sure that their Turkish allies would not open the borders “until the occupied territories are released” (Mehtiyev, 2005: 4).

The OSCE also tried to retain a certain control of the situation back in Nagorno-Karabakh. In February 2005 they sent some units to the region in order to determine if the Armenians were starting to displace settlements outside of the Karabakh borders, occupying the seven provinces that were historically part of Azerbaijan, giving privileges such as “tax and land benefits and exemption from military service” to those willing to move to that area (German, 2005: 4). Although this mission found Armenian communities in the territory, there was no clear evidence that proved that it was a consequence of a strategy carried out by the Armenian government. This operation, whatsoever, generated a negative effect on the Armenian public opinion, as they considered it had a “pro-Azeri stance” (German, 2005: 4) due to the lack of supervision of the Azerbaijani controlled regions, and showing that the OSCE “de facto recognises the sovereign right of Azerbaijan to carry out ethnic cleansing” (German, 2005: 5). Other European institutions, such as the Council of Europe, joined the Prague Process negotiations. Even though they are not directly involved in the discussion, they have carried on a supervision role, and they have encouraged the OSCE Minsk Group to keep working to find a peaceful solution to the conflict (German, 2005: 5).

T. de Waal stated that “the reasons why the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh remains unresolved despite the existence of a serious and well-tested negotiation process stem mainly from local dynamics and the calculations of local actors rather than the conduct of the international mediators and the format of the negotiations” (Waal, 2010b: 160). He claimed that six years after the start of the Prague Process, the negotiations are “clearly deadlocked”

and “desperately need reinvigorating”. This situation has led to a lack of trust of the OSCE Minsk Group and would likely “end in renewed violence rather than peace” (Waal, 2010b: 160).

The Madrid Principles

Despite the conflict not being a priority on the international agenda, in July 2009, after the L'Aquila Summit, which took place in Italy, the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group (the Presidents of the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the Republic of France) passed the “Joint Statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict”, in which they show their complete support for the Presidents of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan as they work on finishing the last version of the “Basic Principles for settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict”, following the established on the Madrid Principles of November 2007. The Co-Chairmen refer to them as “the Basic Principles reflect a reasonable compromise based on the Helsinki Final Act principles of Non-Use of Force, Territorial Integrity, and the Equal Rights and Self-Determination of Peoples”⁶, as they claim, among others, that the adjacent areas to NK should be returned to the Republic of Azerbaijan, and that the rights of its population would be protected under the principles of International Law and International Human Rights. In accordance with the members of the Minsk Group, the signing of this treaty would ensure a peaceful, stable, and prosperous new era for the inhabitants of the region (OSCE, 2009).

Both parties initially concurred with the Madrid Principles. In January 2010, it was decided that representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh should also take part in the peace negotiations, according to the goal of point four. However, this fourth statement, “future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will” can be understood in multiple ways, as it was seen in the differences among the interpretations made by the President of Armenia, Sargsyan, and the President of Azerbaijan, Aliiev. The first one “made it clear earlier that Karabakh could not return to Azerbaijan’s control” yet he did not make any final declarations on their plans regarding the occupied Azeri provinces. Aliiev, on the other hand, approved the principles, but he had made clear that he “assumes a final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan” (Companjen, 2010: 237).

⁶ As stated in the Madrid Principles: “The Basic Principles call for inter alia: 1. return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control; 2. an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance; 3. a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh; 4. future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will; 5. the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence; and 6. international security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation” (OSCE, 2009).

Following Companjen (2010), some issues still need to be addressed, being: 1) to implicate the Nagorno-Karabakh citizens in a public debate that would help to determine the future of the former NKAO; 2) to determine the most democratic approach of the election, and to determine if the displaced inhabitants should take part into it; 3) to fairly incorporate a representative of Nagorno-Karabakh in the negotiations; and 4) to make a decision regarding the status of the Lachin corridor (Companjen, 2010: 239)

In the Line of Contact: the 2016's escalation of the conflict

As a consequence of this lack of formal compromise towards the Madrid Principles, “the pace of militarisation has accelerated over the past few years and, consequently, the likelihood of skirmishes along the Line of Contact has increased” (Simão, 2016: 1). In fact, since 1994 the ceasefire agreement was broken multiple times, yet the pinnacle happened in April 2016, during the so-called “Four-Day War”. There are many possible causes to this new wave of attacks, but in accordance with Shirinyan (2016), three theoretical approaches are the most popular: 1) Azerbaijan decided to reactivate the conflict in order to conquer a broad amount of territories by using the *blitzkrieg* or “lightening war” strategy, as they were now armed with military equipment, bought by using the recently obtained oil money; 2) the Azeris intended to make the issue a focal point for the international community, and hence “get more favorable terms for itself at the negotiating table”; and 3) from a geopolitical point of view, we can state that Armenia was not in an advantageous position, as it lacked valuable allies in the Caucasus region, since the Eurasian countries considered more profitable and rewarding standing on the Azerbaijani side (Shirinyan, 2016:469-469). Some other argued reasons include that the Azeri government was trying to keep the country’s population satisfied, as the Nagorno-Karabakh issue did not seem to come to an end, and that it was meant to be a call to action to the OSCE Minsk Group, showing them that warfare could be initiated any time if they did not increase their efforts to find a solution (Askerov et al., 2020: 75).

The Four Days War lasted from the night of the 1st of April to the 2nd of April 2016 until the 5th of April, when, thanks to the Russian role in the mediation process, the pre-existent ceasefire status was restored. The first clashes took place on the north and the south of the Line of Contact (LoC), where the Azeris reportedly took control of Seysulan and Talish, located in the north of the LoC, and the Lele Tepe hills, located in the south. (Bayramov, 2016: 118). In order to retrieve the former Azerbaijani provinces which were now part of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, they defend that this breakthrough “was a response to Armenian shelling civilian sites in Azerbaijan” (Jarosiewicz & Falkowski, 2016).

The war was a massacre, as the military equipment was now more modern and lethal. Some of the military strategies used by both sides included attacks with tanks, artillery, aircraft, and bombing of civilians (Jarosiewicz & Falkowski, 2016). This increase of the power of the attacks is shown if we compare the Four Day War to prior breaches of the cease-fire agreement, especially the most violent ones, which happen in March of 2008 and August of 2014 respectively (Bayramov, 2016: 118).

As it has already been stated in this paper, the Republic of Azerbaijan was able to increase its warfare capacities by investing its oil money, yet this situation was not sustained on time, as their military budget “was being cut under pressure of falling oil revenues” (Waal, 2016). Despite having a much less impressive amount of funding that could be invested on warfare material, the Armenians had, on one hand, a geographical advantage (as it is easier to defend the higher territories), and, on the other hand, their membership of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, headed by the Russians, allowed them to buy armament at decreased rates (Waal, 2016). There is no official report of the number of victims, so different amounts are estimated. Both the Azeris and the Armenians confirmed more than 60 casualties, including both soldiers and civilians (Jarosiewicz & Falkowski, 2016), but other sources consider that the fatalities probably exceed 200 fatalities (Waal, 2016).

Another of the common characteristics among both sides of the conflict, besides that now their military equipment was more professional and destructive, is linked to the rise of the patriotic feeling. In Armenia, on the 3rd of April, thousands of civilians volunteered to fight on the LoC and defend the Nagorno-Karabakh region, including veterans from the previous war. The Armenian diaspora also offered to guarantee economic support to the families of the volunteers that were taking part in the war. In Azerbaijan, the mood of the population improved, as is proved by the celebration of many demonstrations in support of the military actions in different cities of the country. However, “the ceasefire of 5 April led to disappointment among those expecting the liberation of the territories” (Bayramov, 2016: 123-124). Although both parties knew that a new war would be highly detrimental for their own countries, they were still willing to fight for their beliefs and what they considered was their land (Waal, 2016).

One of the most obvious consequences of this war was that the Russian intentions towards the Caucasus reality became evident, as “this short war has clearly revealed the superior role and intention of Russia in keeping the status quo in the region unchanged” (Askerov et al., 2020: 75). Nevertheless, and despite many arguing “that Russia’s only interest in the conflict is in sustaining the status quo of no peace, no war” (Waal, 2016), we need to also understand that outbreak of another warfare situation would not be beneficial for them, as they would have

to choose a side to stand with. This decision would lead to a worsening of the relationship with the opponent, it would force them to financially support their ally, and it would jeopardize their attempts to “implement and [...] reopen North-South communications between Russia and Iran via Armenia and Azerbaijan” (Waal, 2016). Still, this new clash “strengthened its position as the *de facto* principal conciliator and guarantor of the ceasefire (while maintaining its declared support for the Minsk Group of the OSCE, of which it is a member)”, giving the Russians a political victory (Jarosiewicz & Falkowski, 2016).

In conclusion this new outbreak of violence served to, besides determining the role of the international actors, to determine the status of both of the main players involved. The Azeris, on one hand, were able to understand the international reality and to study the viability of launching another wave of attacks if the peace process remains frozen. The Armenians, on the other hand, were struck by reality, as they not only lost territories to the Azeri forces but also understood that they were in a disadvantageous position. The PM at the time, Sargsyan, even reached the point of threatening with declaring the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh if the continuous breaches of the ceasefire did not stop (Simão, 2016: 2). Finally, and even though this victory of the Republic of Azerbaijan had a mostly symbolic tone, the rise of patriotic sentiment opened the doors to the risk of a new war and showed that the OSCE’s Minsk Group should start to take a more active role in the solution of the issue (Jarosiewicz & Falkowski, 2016).

THE VELVET REVOLUTION

In this context, we must also understand the role of the Velvet Revolution, a peaceful revolutionary movement that took place in 2018 in the whole extent of the Republic of Armenia, which aimed to create a change in the political system of the country, going from a “deeply corrupt semi-authoritarian regime” to a more democratic one, in which free and fair elections were guaranteed (Lanskoy & Suthers, 2019: 85). At the head of these protests was Nikol Pashinyan, who despite using simplistic arguments, embodied the demands of Armenian society: to create a more modern society in which the citizens could elect their future by using democratic means, and to end the corruption and dominance of the elites and oligarchies that Sargasyan represented. He defined these events as a “velvet revolution of love and tolerance” (Markarov & Davtyan, 2018: 532). Pashinyan, who was a member of the *Civic Contract* party, was first elected on May the 7th 2018 as Prime Minister of Armenia. In December, in the early called parliamentary elections, the coalition *My Step Alliance*, led by Pashinyan, was voted by

70% of the population, and became in control of the National Assembly, holding 88 out of 132 seats (Lanskoy & Suthers, 2019: 86).

Regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, Pashinyan defended that in order to find a final resolution of the conflict, representatives of the region must be taking part in the peace process, stating that “it is absolutely necessary to get Nagorno-Karabakh involved in the negotiations, in a process that ultimately will determine the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and ensure the security guarantees for the people who live there” (Morgan, 2019). However, this point of view was not shared by Baku's counterpart (Terzyan, 2019: 37; Markarov & Davtyan, 2018: 537).

The role of Russia also changed after the Velvet Revolution. Although the country remained in a clear pro-Russian position, due to the direct dependency that the Republic of Armenia has on an economic level (they not only hold a great part of the Armenian diaspora but also control essential sectors such as energetic distribution), Putin's government was forced to take more discrete actions in order to maintain their levels of popularity in the country and avoid situations similar to the ones happening in Ukraine or Georgia. This might not be the wished situation, but “given the common pattern of backsliding in the years following a democratic breakthrough, Putin may deem it more expedient to wait, and to begin easing Russia's clients into key positions after the popularity of the democrats begins to wane” (Lanskoy & Suthers, 2019: 97). However, now the Russians face a competitor: the European Union. As Armenia's Velvet Revolution put them one step closer to reach the European values and standards that they strive to spread to their neighboring countries, “Russia would fiercely resist to the [their] Europeanization” (Terzyan, 2019: 25).

THE WAR OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH IN 2020

The outbreak of the conflict in the LoC in 2016 proved that a new war could be initiated anytime. This was also shown by the new breach of the ceasefire agreement in July 2020, when a new wave of attacks was started in the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, near the villages of Aghdam (located in Azeri territory) and the villages of Movses and Chinari (which belong to Armenia). The attacks would later lengthen to about 40 kilometers (between Berkaber and Chinari), although the greater part would happen in the area between Aghdam and Movses. During this offensive “small arms fire, mortars, artillery, armoured vehicles as well as loitering and reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicles” were used (Nagorno-Karabakh Observer, 2020). The exact causes that resulted in this new operation are not clear, as both sides claim

that their counterpart started the aggression, and they were acting for self-defense purposes (Associated Press, 2020). By the end of the incursion, the Azerbaijanis had reported 12 casualties (one of them being a general), while the Armenians had reported 5 (Nagorno-Karabakh Observer, 2020). The Co-Chairmen of the OSCE's Minsk Group released a statement in which they claimed to "condemn the recent ceasefire violations and call upon the sides to take all necessary measures to prevent any further escalation, including by use of the existing direct communication channels between them", and insisted on resuming the peace negotiations, as well as to restore their monitoring missions when the circumstances were favorable (OSCE, 2020).

However, the good intentions of the Minsk Group were not enough. According to Yavuz and Huseynov (2020), there are four main reasons behind this new activation of the conflict on the 27th of September of 2020. Firstly, the actions of the Minsk Group had been proved to be unhelpful once again, as they were not progressing on achieving a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Secondly, the declarations of the PM of Armenia since the 2018 Velvet Revolution, Nikol Pashinyan, stating that Nagorno-Karabakh was part of their country, raised more animosities within the Azeri community. Thirdly, the July attacks also raised hostility feelings. Lastly, the symbolic victory of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2016 increased the pressure exerted by their population towards the government to retrieve control of the region (Yavuz & Huseynov, 2020: 106).

The first attacks took place on the 27th of November 2020, as both the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan declared. The Armenian MoD officially stated that numerous attacks were initiated on different villages in NK, as well as the capital city of Stepanakert, but as it had happened on previous occasions, each side blamed the opposite and defended their actions under the principles of self-defense. They also claimed to have downed Azeri aircraft, which was neither confirmed nor denied by the MoD of Azerbaijan, which instead claimed to have conquered different settlements in NK. The Armenians did not make any confirmative statement regarding the annexations, but they did declare the state of martial law. The Nagorno-Karabakh representatives, however, did only call for mobilization of their citizens and announced a "state of war". Lastly, the Azerbaijani authorities only proclaimed the martial law state in some regions (European Asylum Support Office, 2020: 3).

Human Rights Watch (2020a) reported that during the bombing of Stepanakert by the Azerbaijanis, which lasted until the 28th of October, that cluster munition as well as Smerch and Grad Rockets, were used, leading to great destruction as they are not precise at defining

their targets. The Azeri troops did not only target military infrastructures or positions, but also the areas populated by civilians. Almost the whole population of the city left because of the attacks. The Armenians, however, also used these types of strategies while bombing the district and city of Tartar, in Azerbaijan, since September 28th (Human Rights Watch, 2020b). The Aras Valley campaign also started on the first day of the war, as the Azerbaijani troops attacked the Aras River area, in the south of Nagorno-Karabakh, and regained control of some villages in the districts of Fuzuli and Jabrail. They would later take control of the whole LoC where it borders Iran (Chiragov, 2020).

Only six days after the war had begun, and at the same time in which the Azeris shelled Stepanakert and tried to destroy all the infrastructures that connected Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh by the use of LORA missiles (imported from Israel) the Armenian troops started to use “BM-30 Smerch 300 mm multiple launch rocket systems” as well as “tactical missiles” to bomb both the Ganja airport and the city of Ganja, targeting residential areas (Kofman & Nersisyan, 2020). Another round of bombing would take place on the 8th of October, leaving no casualties behind. During this operation and its followings repetitions (Ganja was bombed on the 4th, 8th, 11th, and 17th of October), the Ganja’s Grand Bazar shopping mall and a school were bombed, causing wounded people and fatalities, as “these explosive weapons, which are inaccurate and have wide-area effects, are indiscriminate in populated areas” (Human Rights Watch, 2020b).

The town of Hadrut, with a population of only a little over 4.000 inhabitants, was one of the most punished by the warfare, as it was especially relevant for both sides for diverse reasons: 1) it was the first settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh that was occupied by the Azeri troops that had a majority of ethnic Armenian population; 2) its location is key to control the surrounding area and other former districts, such as Fizuli and Jebrail, and it would give free access to the roads that connect the border of Nagorno-Karabakh to its center (including the cities of Sushu and Stepanakert); and 3) although the conflict lasted from the 7th and the 15th of October on the urban area (and from the 15th until the 30th on the rural side), on the 9th of October the Azeri PM had already stated that they had regained control of the town of Hadrut (Avaliani, 2020). On October the 8th, the Azeri troops reached the city of Sushu, where they attacked the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral, an Armenian Apostolic Church in what Human Rights Watch (2020c) stated that appeared “to be a deliberate targeting in violation of the laws of war”. However, the PM of Azerbaijan would deny these accusations, blaming it on an error, despite the finding of numerous guided weapons in the area. During the bombing, civilians and journalists were wounded (Human Rights Watch, 2020c). The Azerbaijanis would regain control of the city for the first time since 1992.

After a long negotiation process with the PM of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Nikol Pashinyan and Ilham Aliyev, the Russian PM Vladimir Putin convinces them to sign a ceasefire agreement for the 9th of October, in order to “exchange prisoners and collect the bodies of dead soldiers” (Isachenkov, 2020). Although this initiative could have been seen as an opportunity to start a more intense peace process, it was not very fruitful. The Armenian Ministry of Defense, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, defended that their final goal was for “Nagorno-Karabakh to be recognised internationally as an independent state”, and that they would not settle for less. The Karabakh Armenian’s representatives also claimed that the only reason for the Azerbaijanis to be involved in the negotiations was “as cover to prepare fresh attacks”. The Azeri Ministry of Defense, Jeyhun Bayramov, tried to defend their actions by stating that future negotiations would not be possible, as the Armenian side was not being pressured enough, and they also expected to make further advances into the Karabakh territory as soon as the ceasefire had ended and all the corpses and prisoners had been exchanged (BBC News, 2020a).

The attacks started again as soon as the ceasefire was broken. Multiple clashes took place along the LoC. In the Hadrut area, the warfare was still being conducted on and even extending to new areas. The city of Ganja was also bombed by the Armenian forces, although they have denied their participation in the attacks on multiple occasions, as the brutality of the attack would turn the international public opinion against them (BBC News, 2020b). The MoD of the Republic of Armenia declared that “Azeri forces had launched an attack five minutes after the truce had been due to come into effect, with ethnic Armenian forces responding”. Meanwhile, the towns of Ganja and Stepanakert were being shelled. The Armenian PM also declared that in the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh this process was happening “with residents sheltering in basements and much of the city left without power” (BBC News, 2020a).

A second ceasefire agreement was signed on the 17th of October, once again with the mediation of Russia. The process was supported by the declarations made on the 1st of October by the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group, and the statements that led to the past ceasefire agreement (Reuters, 2020). However, once again, both counterparts started to make accusations to blame the other for breaking the treaty only a few minutes after it was supposed to be initiated (BBC News, 2020b; Roblin, 2020).

One of the other strategic positions was the Lachin corridor (known as Berdzor by the Armenians), one of the seven regions that belonged to Azerbaijan before the 90’s war but was

annexed to NK with the ceasefire agreement. If the Azeri troops could put it under its control, they could stop not only the supply flow to Stepanakert but also the flow of refugees coming into Armenia (Roblin, 2020). After the 23rd of October, the forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan started to advance toward the corridor. On the 27th of October, an Armenian MoD spokesperson reported to have stopped an operation in the region, but the advances continued during the following weeks (Mejlumyan, 2020).

On the 25th of October, the US mediated a humanitarian ceasefire agreement, after Mike Pompeo, the Secretary of State, had carried on individual meetings with the MoD of Armenia and Azerbaijan. During these reunions, the Co-Chairman of the Minks Group was also present, and a following meeting on the 29th of October was also agreed to take place (Bagirova & Pamuk, 2020). This ceasefire was soon broken, as in previous occasions: the Azerbaijani government stated that the Armenians were shelling Terter and other surrounding villages, and the Armenian MoD reported that the Azeris had started an attack with artillery in different points of the LoC (BBC News, 2020c).

The Armenian forces carried on the bombing of the city of Barda on the afternoon of the 28th of October. According to numerous sources, 21 civilians were killed and 70 were severely injured, becoming “the highest number of civilian fatalities caused by a single attack during the six-week war” (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2020b). Cluster ammunition was also used during this attack, as Amnesty International (2020) reported (Amnesty International, 2020).

The Battle of Shusha was the decisive turning point of the course of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. The Azeri troops were able to make great advances since their incursion in the Lachin corridor, causing the closure of various parts of the road between Lachin and Sushi for citizens on the 4th of November (OC Media, 2020). On the following day, the government of Nagorno-Karabakh reported the attack of both Lachin and Shushi, as well as other neighboring villages (BBC News Русская служба, 2020). They reached the city on the 6th of November when the battle finally started. The Armenians defended the city from the highs, gaining a military advantage. The Azeris, on the other hand, suffered great losses then were surrounded and trapped in ambushes as they were trying to reach the city of Shushi. Despite this tactical loss, they were still in a better position than the Armenians, who had been defeated numerous times in the last month and did not have enough resources to defend an area as extensive as the roads that connected the Republic of Armenia and the main cities of Karabakh. They had also to operate on the nearby forests, as the Azeri troops were advancing through them (Menduzza, 2020). The Battle of Shusha, therefore, ended only two days after. On November

8th, the Azeri government announced that they finally had retrieved control of the city, although Armenian sources claimed the combat had still to come to an end. However, representatives of the government of Nagorno-Karabakh also stated that they had lost the city, as the main supply lines had been broken (Konarzewska, 2020).

Understanding that their advances could even go further and reach the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert, and all the other districts that were under their control, the Armenian government concluded that they had lost the war (Konarzewska, 2020).

One of the aspects that differentiates this war from past confrontations is the context it took place in: in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to this difficult situation, the Armenian health system in general, and the Karabakh's in particular, was highly saturated, as it had not only to deal with the victims of the war but also the ones affected with coronavirus. Although before the war the Nagorno Karabakh's government was able to control the number of cases (keeping them at only 300 for a total of 150.000 inhabitants of the region) when the war started they faced two main issues: on one hand, they were not able to keep track of the statistics as they did before; on the other hand, "regular bombardments forced residents in the major cities within Karabakh to seek refuge in large groups in basements and bunkers within confined spaces, thus increasing the chance of further spread of the virus" (Kazaryan et al., 2021: e243). In fact, one of the reasons given by the leader of the Karabakh Armenians, Hraik Harutyunyan, to sign the ceasefire agreement of the 10th of November, was that "the Armenian military was weakened by disease and poor morale, and the alternative was even worse" (Waal, 2020).

THE END OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH WAR

The Nagorno-Karabakh war ended when the PM of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, the PM of the Republic of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, and the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, signed a ceasefire agreement on the 10th of November, in which they established, among others the following points: Russian peacemaking forces would be distributed along the LoC and the Lachin Corridor; the peacemaking forces would be set up as the Armenian troops were removed from the area, and they would stay there for a period of at least five years; the Kalbajar District and the Lachin District would have to be returned to Azerbaijan, yet the Lachin Corridor would be controlled by the Russian forces until another connection between the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh is built; and the connections in the area would be unobstructed, and the security of the transport and economic

communications should be safeguarded by both sides, as well as by the Russian troops (President of Russia, 2020)⁷ (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Map of the current situation in the Caucasus.
Source: Centanni, E., & Djukic. Political Geography Now (2020).

The Nagorno-Karabakh war ended when the PM of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, the PM of the Republic of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, and the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, signed a ceasefire agreement on the 10th of November, in which the clear winner of the conflict was the Republic of Azerbaijan, as they had not regained the legal control of the seven districts around Nagorno-Karabakh that were formerly occupied by

⁷ The points established were the following: 1) the agreement would be implemented on the 10th of November, and would set the end of the war, starting at 0.00 local time; 2) the Azerbaijanis would regain the control of the Agdam District before the 20th of November; 3) Russian peacemaking forces would be distributed along the LoC and the Lachin Corridor; 4) the peacemaking forces would be set up as the Armenian troops were removed from the area, and they would stay there for a period of at least five years; 5) a center for observation would be settled up, in order to supervise the enforcement of the peace treaty; 6) the Kalbajar District and the Lachin District would have to be returned to Azerbaijan by the 15th of November and the 1st of December respectively, yet the Lachin Corridor would be controlled by the Russian forces until another connection between the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh is built; 7) the UN High Commissioner for Refugees would supervise the return of the displaced population as their return to their homelands in Nagorno-Karabakh and other regions affected by the war; 8) the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia would exchange the remaining bodies of the victims of the conflict, as well as prisoners; and 9) the connections in the area would be unobstructed, and the security of the transport and economic communications should be safeguarded by both sides, as well as by the Russian troops (President of Russia, 2020).

the ethnic Armenians, but he had also retrieved the city of Shushi. However, some critical opinions defend that he should have not authorized the Russian peacemaking forces to be displayed in the area (Waal, 2020).

The Russian Federation was also benefited from the ceasefire agreement. They took a leading role in the mediation of the process and had proved “that the Caucasus is legitimately inside its backyard as a national interest” (Yavuz & Huseynov, 2020: 106). Before the war, they had allegedly been developing the so-called Lavrov Plan, an “interim peace deal” (Abushov, 2019: 85) whose existence has always been publicly denied. The Lavrov Plan consisted of a display of Russian peacekeeping forces into the Karabakh area in exchange for the retreat of the Armenian forces of the territories, guaranteeing that the situation remained safe and stable for the population (Waal, 2020). The plan would help to maintain relative popularity levels on both sides. The Armenians would still be their allies inside of the CSTO and they could still operate their military base inside of the country (Yavuz & Huseynov, 2020: 106), and the Azerbaijanis, despite not participating in their cooperation strategies, are a key force in order to maintain the stability on the Caucasus region, preventing the anti-Russian sentiment to rise as it had happened in both Georgia and Ukraine (Isachenko, 2020: 3).

The final agreement adopted does meet Russian’s goals. They prevented the ethnic conflict from extending to the Northern Caucasus, and it also maintained its dominant role on the international policy of the area, preventing other international agencies, such as NATO, from gaining more power in the Caucasus (Abushov, 2019: 75). The Russian Federation had “played a spectacular diplomatic move”, but they also face the consequences of being accused of being responsible if the peace process does not go as planned (Waal, 2020).

Likewise, the Republic of Turkey has acquired substantial advantages related to the ceasefire agreement, as it involves a corridor linking the country to Central Asia as a corridor is built through the Meghri district, in Armenia. This would improve the connections between Turkey, the Nakhichevan area, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Caspian Sea (Waal, 2020). The Turkish are also spreading their influence over the South Caucasus (Isachenko, 2020: 1). In addition, and despite of Turkey not being involved in the signing of the treaty, in January of 2021 a Joint Russian-Turkish Center for Monitoring the Ceasefire was established in Nagorno-Karabakh. This decision lacked consent from the Armenian government (Ràcz, 2021: 5).

The main justification of the inefficiency of the Minsk Group of the OSCE can be explained by the use of geopolitical arguments, as some authors argue that it is linked to the struggle for power between Russia and the United States. However, as Abushov (2019) indicates, this

rivalry is no longer relevant in the South Caucasus, as the Russian Federation became the only dominant state in 2008, and a consequential withdrawal of the US forces of the area after that year (Abushov, 2019: 76). In fact, during the Nagorno-Karabakh War, it was proved that Russia was “the only mediator with the power to force both sides to stop fighting and negotiate a truce” (Guliyev & Gawrich, 2021: 11).

It has also been argued that the Armenian diaspora or “Armenian lobby” exerted great pressure on both the United States and the European Union countries which are members of the Minsk Group, difficult in the resolution of the conflict (Semercioğlu, 2021: 57).

To sum up, the OSCE’s Minsk Group was not even mentioned in the ceasefire agreement of the 10th of November, showing that they had little or no influence on the course of the war and the resolution of the conflict (Ràcz, 2021: 2), despite the different explanations of this lack of decisive power.

Nagorno-Karabakh (also known as the Republic of Artsakh or the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic) has also been left in a precarious situation, as its legal status is not established on the final ceasefire agreement (Waal, 2020), due to the fact that its main goal was to end the armed conflict instead of determining a political resolution (Ràcz, 2021: 4). This could also be linked to the lack of representation of the people of Karabakh during the process of the signature of the ceasefire agreement, which also gave the perception that the region lacked independence and was not considered to have enough sovereignty over their own territory (Ruys & Rodríguez Silvestre, 2021: 671).

However, they can now appeal to the international community to acquire the status of an independent state, by being recognized by the United Nations. This process, nevertheless, can be complicated, as they would also need the concession of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which would have to cede parts of their current land (Yacoubain, 2021: 153).

Finally, the Republic of Armenia was the great loser of the war. The ceasefire agreement, in contrast to the Lavrov Plan, implied multiple concessions to Azerbaijan that had not been part of the previous proposal (Waal, 2020). The Azeris would keep the parts of Nagorno-Karabakh that had been conquered during the war, and the Armenians had to concede to abandon the surrounding regions (Yacoubain, 2021: 150). The Armenians of Karabakh would have to leave their motherland in order to escape from ethnic cleansings like the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The country became more likely to suffer future attacks, as it was proved that their power was

not enough to defeat the Azeris, that also counts with the Turkish support, and that “Azerbaijan has little incentive to permanently cede territory” (Yacoubain, 2021: 153).

This series of costs led to a change in public opinion in Armenia. Despite winning the democratic elections in 2018, Nikol Pashinyan now not only faces the discontent of the population, but also the political criticism coming from the opposition parties, that insisted on his resignation as a Prime Minister (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2021: 3). This situation would be analyzed in detail in Chapter III.

CONCLUSION

The status of the region known as Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), Artsakh, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), or the Republic of Artsakh, has been a source of conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis since the fall of the Russian Empire. Both sides try to justify their sovereignty over the territory by “referring to historical boundaries and purported cultural connections to the region” and by using “their own interpretations of history” in the process (Babayev et al., 2020: 282).

Since the dissolution of the USSR, there have been two major escalations of the armed conflict that led to a war (1998-1994 and 2020), with some other relevant clashes that have not been considered as a war (such as the 2016 attacks). The obvious loser of the war was the Republic of Armenia. However, the consequences for the NKR and the Minsk Group of the OSCE were also deeply harmful. On the other hand, the clear winner of war was the Republic of Azerbaijan, which regained control of the former lost territories. Both the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey obtained advantages from the ceasefire agreement, which allowed them to formalize their control and influence on the South Caucasus.

Once the historical background has been presented, we will proceed on examining the theoretical approach of the NK conflict.

CHAPTER II. THEORETICAL APPROACH

Chapter II includes the theoretical approach of this BDFP. By using two different analytical models, we will review in the first place the theory of the New Wars. Mary Kaldor (2012) presents an innovative categorization of conflicts in the current globalized society, based on four main principles, that will be explained in-depth in the following section. Secondly, we will analyze the Nagorno-Karabakh case by using Korostelina's (2007, 2009) 4-C Model of the Dynamic of Identity Conflicts, as well as the Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts. Finally, both theories will apply the different theoretical models regarding the context of conflict resolution.

THE THEORY OF NEW WARS

Mary Kaldor coined the term “new war” to define the new type of conflicts that emerge in the post-Cold War era, which appear in a new context, mainly characterized by globalization, understood as “the intensification of global interconnectedness – political, economic, military and cultural – and the changing character of political authority” (Kaldor, 2012: 4). She states the following:

“I use the term ‘new’ to distinguish such wars from prevailing perceptions of war drawn from an earlier era. [...] I use the term ‘war’ to emphasize the political nature of this new type of violence, even though, as will become clear in the following pages, the new wars involve a blurring of the distinctions between war (usually defined as violence between states or organized political groups for political motives), organized crime (violence undertaken by privately organized groups for private purposes, usually financial gain) and large-scale violations of human rights (violence undertaken by states or politically organized groups against individuals)” (Kaldor, 2012: 1-2).

The author argues that “the new wars are about identity politics in contrast to the geo-political or ideological goals of earlier wars” (Kaldor, 2012: 7). According to Kaldor, there are two main characteristics of the current identity politics: 1) they are “horizontal as well as vertical, transnational as well as national”, meaning that the role of the diaspora has increased greatly in the last decades, especially due to the improvement of communications related to the development of new technologies; and 2) also linked to the new technologies, but also due to the enhancement of education, which expanded the educated classes, “the capacity for political mobilization is greatly extended” (2012: 89-90). These identity politics are “about the claim to power on the basis of labels” and are usually linked to a romanticized idea of past times (Kaldor, 2012: 8).

The new wars present a “changed mode of warfare”, acquiring techniques more linked to the guerrilla and counter-insurgency warfare style, meaning they avoid battles and try to gain control of the population by political means and also by the use of destabilization techniques (to erase different identities and to install the rule of terror), in order to “to mobilize extremist politics based on fear and hatred”. This new warfare style, in which aggression is focused on the civilians, leads to a great number of refugees and displaced people (Kaldor, 2012: 9).

They also differ from “old wars” in structural terms: instead of “hierarchical units” we find a wide range of actors, which are more decentralized regarding its organization, and that “operate through a mixture of confrontation and cooperation even when on opposing sides”, and “make use of advanced technology” (Kaldor, 2012: 9-10).

Furthermore, new wars are characterized by the so-called “globalized” war economy, which besides being more decentralized, is also “heavily dependent on external resources”. This leads to lower rates of participation in the war, a rise in the unemployment levels, and a drastic decline of the domestic production and tax revenue, due to “global competition, physical destruction or interruptions to normal trade”. The lack of financial support to the troops leads to the search for alternative ways of financing (such as “plunder, hostage-taking, and the black market or through external assistance”, or posterior “remittances from the diaspora, ‘taxation’ of humanitarian assistance, support from neighboring governments, or illegal trade in arms, drugs or valuable commodities such as oil or diamonds or human trafficking”). In order to sustain their finances, they must obtain sustained violence “so that a war logic is built into the functioning of the economy” (Kaldor, 2012: 10).

As we have already stated, new wars differ from old wars in one of their key aspects: their goals are different. Instead of fighting for “geopolitical interests or for ideology”, they are now “fought in the name of identity”, to protect the interests of a specific group and empower them. This new approach is not only driven by the emergence of new technologies and migration processes but also established through war (Kaldor, 2013: 2). This characteristic, along with the history of the Armenian Genocide, can be used to acquire a better understanding of the case of the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh, as its main roots are linked to ethnic differences between the groups that are involved in it. However, neither the changed mode of warfare, the structural changes, nor the “globalized” war economy provides a suitable explanation for it.

In order to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between identity politics and the Armenian case, we must reflect on the Armenian Genocide⁸. 1915 was one of the darkest years of Armenian history, as Western Armenians, located under the control of the Ottoman Empire, became the victims of the Armenian Genocide. According to Adalian, there were five main reasons behind the massacre, all related to the fact that the Ottomans needed to resolve the so-called “Armenian Question”: 1) the decline of the Ottoman Empire generated a lack of resources for the non-Muslim communities, which led them to request internal measures that would guarantee their protection and the safeguard of their basic rights; 2) Western Armenians demanded the attention of the European powers to get a response to their issues, yet the Ottomans saw this as a betrayal and an opportunity for them to intercede for other Christian communities; 3) internal violence was used to contain internal rebellions, as a consequence of the weakening process that the Ottoman military forces were experiencing; 4) Western Armenians lacked trust in the Ottoman empire, due to the internal violence against their community, and the absence of relevant reformatory measures that would improve the life quality of minorities led to the increase of the national consciousness of Armenians; and 5) the progressive and more European-like beliefs of Armenians caused a feeling of animosity among the Muslim Ottomans, who saw them as traitors to their state and infidels (Adalian, 2013: 121-122). To sum up, the Armenians presented an ethno-religious anomaly”, as “they were an indigenous Christian people of the Middle East who, despite more than 14 centuries of Muslim domination, had avoided Islamification” (Adalian, 2013: 123). Although the Treaty of Sèvres, which aimed to divide the Ottoman Empire into differentiated European influence zones as well as to create an independent Armenian state in the eastern region, was not enforced it is still seen by Armenians as a “dream unfulfilled, the end of their vain hope that President Woodrow Wilson would use his considerable powers to create a large Armenian state in eastern Anatolia” (Suny, 2015: 340-341).

Regardless of seeking for support from the European and Christian powers, the petitions of Western Armenians were rejected (Winter, 2004: 14). More than 500,000 Armenians were expatriated to the area that is currently occupied by Iran, yet less than 100,000 were able to survive the extreme violence exerted against them by the Turks. Despite the attempts of an operation of the French Navy to rescue the Armenians that were being deported, which entailed around 4,000 people, the remaining 200,000 were forced to convert to Islam (Winter, 2004: 17). It is reported that between April of 1915 and September of 1922, 1,450,000 ethnic Armenians had been killed (Winter, 2004: 19). This massacre is considered by Winters “a war

⁸ Annex II. Figure 3: Map of the Armenian Genocide in 1915.

crime, which constituted a clear precedent for the Nazi extermination of the Jews” (Winter, 2004: 48).

The Genocide caused a great impact on Armenian society and their perception of their identity, of the effects being post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), that has been passed to the following generations (Hovannisian, 2003: 263-264). The only solution to this traumatic mental status would be reconciliation, “a mutual process involving both victims and perpetrators”, yet evidence shows that there are few possibilities for this to happen, especially if the Turkish do not recognize the execution of the crime (Hovannisian, 2003: 271). The process of recognition of the Genocide is not close to being completed. Although research shows that denial is “an extremely dangerous form of language, of thought and of propaganda” and that denials “in effect celebrate the violence that has taken place” while acting as proof of lack of empathy towards its victims (Charny & Fromer, 1998: 50) many countries contribute to this situation. Studies have proved how “memory laws in transitional democracies, as well as in post-Communist and post-fascist states, selectively define—and therefore include or exclude—victims and perpetrators”, such as in the Armenian case, in which both the word “genocide” and the nationality of the actors carrying on are widely omitted (Kebranian, 2020: 254).

Some examples of recognition of the Armenian Genocide are the Resolution on a Political Solution to the Armenian Question (1987) issued by the European Parliament; the European Parliament resolution on the opening of negotiations with Turkey (2005); the German Parliament motion for Commemorating the Expulsion and Massacre of Armenians in 1915 (2005); or the French Law n^o 2001-70, relative to the recognition of the 1915’s Armenian Genocide (2001) (Kebranian, 2020). More recently, on the Memorial Day of 2021, celebrated on the 24th of April, Canadian PM Justin Trudeau and the United States President Joe Biden both released statements recognizing the Armenian Genocide (Government of Canada, 2021; The White House, 2021).

As Armenians consider the Azeris and the Turkish to be part of the same ethnic group, the defense of their own identity as a persecuted and annihilated minority has been extrapolated to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Lastly, both the diaspora and the new technologies have played a crucial role during both wars. The Armenian diaspora “maintains radical positions regarding the conflict and politically supports the Armenian side through intense lobbying efforts in various countries”, and entails the greatest financial support to the NKR region (Babayev et al., 2020: 26) However, they also try to create new links between the Republic of Armenia and the countries in which they are

currently based, by developing “philanthropic and investment strategies” that would improve the situation of both Armenians and Karabakh Armenians. They also use the lobbying structures they have created to pressure the Western governments to recognize the perpetuation of the Armenian Genocide, with different levels of success (Tololyan, 2005: 45-46).

Thanks to the use of new mass media tools, the Armenian-American diaspora has been able to promote their ethnic claims to a wider level, as well as to raise more funds to help their compatriots back in both their homeland and NKR. Good examples of this phenomena are the Armenia Fund Telethon, first transmitted from Los Angeles in 1966, which aims to “appeal to make donations for infrastructure projects in Armenia and, especially, the unrecognised Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR)” (Adriaans, 2017: 1); and Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, which intends to “help those in need around the world in a project that will last until 2023”, and included the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity and the 100 LIVES Initiative among others (Machowska, 2020: 58).

However, in the case of both the First War of Nagorno-Karabakh and the War of 2020, the remaining characteristics are not as fully reflected. We must highlight that in the case of the First War of NK, Human Rights Watch (1992) reported that both the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan had used mercenaries on the battlefields, some of them being Russian soldiers (Human Rights Watch, 1992: 12). In 2020, on the other hand, the Azeris have allegedly displayed Syrian mercenaries on the most affected area: the southern flank. They were used as a shield, and not given enough equipment to protect themselves from the counterattacks. They were also denied healthcare, leading to the death of many by injuries that could have been treated. In total, around 500 Syrian mercenaries died during the conflict (Butler, 2020). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Working Group on the use of mercenaries, consisting of five independent experts, also reported the participation of Syrian mercenaries, according to the definition expressed in the *International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries*, and that was also signed by the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Workgroup has also declared that this process was carried on with the assistance of Turkey, which “promised financial compensation and Turkish nationality” to their relatives (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2020).

Although we can see that there are political techniques that are being used to retain and maintain the control of the situation, especially by the creation of an alliance with other powers, and civilians were displaced from their home territories the violence was not directed towards

them; nor battles were avoided (Kaldor, 2013: 3-4), so we cannot state that the warfare mode had completely changed or that these conflicts were “mixtures of war (organised violence for political ends), crime (organised violence for private ends) and human rights violations (violence against civilians)” (Kaldor, 2013: 6).

The alliances created still maintained a hierarchical structure and a high level of centralization. Despite the increased number of actors, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the former NKAO, known as the Artsakh Defence Army, were the main parts involved. As we have already argued, the Soviet Union (now the Russian Federation) also played a key role in the development of the conflict, as well as the Republic of Turkey, but just to defend their sovereignty over the Transcaucasus region. Both countries, in fact, were involved up to a certain extent in the physical part of the hostilities. The only notable external and less hierarchical actor that took part in the issue (only on a diplomatic and non-physically engaging level) was the OSCE’s Minsk Group, yet it was proved that their efforts were successful as it would have been expected.

Regarding the structure of new wars and the increase of the use of advanced technology, and although the Azeri arsenal was very modern (as they had the financial resources to create a greater investment) (Table 6 and Table 7), the Armenian weaponry was made up solely of Russian missiles and Russian rocket artillery (except for the Chinese WM-80 multiple-launch rocket system), some of them coming from the Soviet times (Shaikh & Rumbaugh, 2020). This difference in the improvements of their ammunition, in fact, allowed the Azerbaijanis to take “control of the skies” and had a clear strategic advantage that led them to the winning of the war.

Country	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Armenia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14,5%	14,7%	13,6%
Azerbaijan	8,0%	14,7%	11,4%	11,5%	13,4%	13,5%	12,4%	13,8%	9,7%	11,2%	10,9%	10,2%	13,5%	11,0%

Table 6: Military expenditure by country as percentage of Government Spending, 1994-2007.
Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2021.

Country	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Armenia	15,3%	14,6%	16,3%	15,4%	16,0%	16,8%	16,4%	16,1%	15,1%	14,8%	17,1%	19,2%	16,7%
Azerbaijan	10,5%	9,6%	8,7%	13,8%	12,7%	12,0%	12,5%	14,1%	10,4%	10,6%	10,7%	11,5%	12,7%

Table 7: Military expenditure by country as percentage of Government Spending, 2008-2020.
Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2021.

Finally, the so-called “globalized” war economy does not apply to this particular case. The Republic of Armenia is a developing post-Soviet nation that relies greatly on its diaspora since the collapse of the USSR; while the Republic of Azerbaijan has a great oil supply that is used not only to acquire warfare equipment but also to develop its infrastructures during the last decades. Therefore, we find a quite unbalanced situation, that is not caused, yet simply increased, by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict itself. However, the efforts of the European Commission to aid their “neighbors in the East” lead to an allocation of almost 7,000,000€ in humanitarian assistance for those affected by the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2021).

4-C MODEL OF THE DYNAMIC OF IDENTITY CONFLICTS.

Despite trying to use Kaldor’s new wars approach to understand the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, we have come to the realization that this theoretical model cannot be fully applied to this particular case. Therefore, we will proceed on identifying another theoretical approach that will help us fulfill our objectives by deepening down in all of its dimensions. Therefore, we will follow Korostelina’s (2007; 2009) 4-C Model of the Dynamic of Identity Conflicts (Figure 2), which focuses on four different axes: 1) comparison; 2) competition; 3) confrontation; and 4) counteraction.

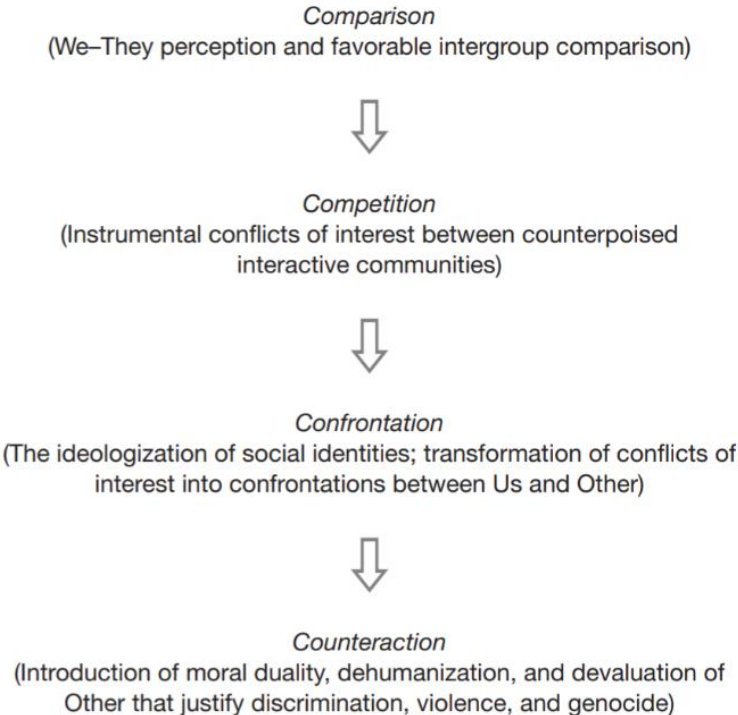


Figure 2: The 4-C Model of the Dynamic of Identity Conflicts.
Source: Korostelina (2009: 102).

Comparison

We understand comparison as “We-They perception and favorable intergroup comparison” (Korostelina, 2009: 102). In all societies in which human interaction takes place, we find the belief that outside groups are usually associated with a negative perception. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, ethnic Turks and ethnic Armenians see each other as their enemy. This can be explained by five main arguments.

First, following the theory of the “optimal distinctiveness”, developed by Brewers, “people have both the need for distinction from a group (intercategory contrast) and the need for inclusion in a group (intracategory assimilation)” (Korostelina, 2009: 101). Therefore, in societies lacking diversity, stronger subdivisions are created and are usually linked to “regional or ethnic identities by stressing minor differences” (Korostelina, 2009: 102). Secondly, “members of an ingroup tend to evaluate the outgroup negatively” (Korostelina, 2009: 102). In the third place, the negative perception of the outgroup leads to “the underestimation of the economic and social position of the ingroup and perception of relative deprivation, or disadvantage, and negative attitudes toward the outgroup”, even if they are in the same socio-economic situation (Korostelina, 2009: 102). This increases the feeling of discrimination of the most deprived groups. Fourthly, in societies in which there is an actual asymmetry between strata (as in the case of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Azerbaijan), the sense of belonging to their group is strengthened. Finally, in communities with a background of intergroup conflict, their rejection of the outside groups is incremented. (Korostelina, 2009: 102). Seeing that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict traces long back in time, we can state that this negative attitude between both sides is already pinned in the collective identity of Armenians and Azeris.

Yamskov (1992) explains the situation of the conflict for Nagorno-Karabakh in the following way:

“Inter-ethnic conflicts reflect the contradictory interests and aspirations of different ethnic groups and have been accompanied by the formation of national movements seeking to defend these interests. National movements are almost always heterogeneous: within their ranks or affiliated with them there may be extremist groups who consciously employ or provoke 'spontaneous' violent actions; however, most participants in the Transcaucasus ethnic movements have striven to employ legal methods” (Yamskov, 1992: 131).

Competition

Competition is defined as “instrumental conflicts of interest between counterpoised interactive communities” (Korostelina, 2009: 102). It tends to emerge “between two or more groups who share, or have intentions to share, resources or power” and “can involve issues of the use of or control over land, water, information, access to property or resources, sharing power, or political influence” (Korostelina, 2009: 103), as we observe in the fight for the domination of the area of Artsakh, as well as its natural resources.

Usually, competition is characterized by the existence of groups with opposing status (Korostelina, 2009: 103). In the case of our study, we see how the Armenians perceive themselves as more disadvantaged than the Azeris, especially due to the Armenian Genocide and their lack of external support coming from stronger allies, as well as the fact that it “is an Armenian region inside a foreign republic and subject to discrimination, Nagorno-Karabakh had nothing to gain by remaining under Azeri jurisdiction, but much to lose” (Chorbajian, 2001: 66). In the same way, evidence proves that “the outgroup threat increases as the perceived competition between groups for resources increases, and as the conflicting groups have more to gain from engaging in the conflict” (Korostelina, 2009: 103), and it helps to justify the pre-existent prejudice among groups. Therefore, both sides had reasons to take part in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, under the belief that they would be able to obtain a benefit from it: the sovereignty of the disputed territory. The proximity of the Republics also “increase, rather than decrease, intergroup hostility” (Korostelina, 2009: 103), and the antagonism created acts as an enhancer for the animosity (Korostelina, 2009: 103).

Confrontation

As stated by Korostelina (2009), confrontation can be described as “the ideologization of social identities; transformation of conflicts of interest into confrontations between Us and Other” (Korostelina, 2009: 102). Usually, political elites take advantage of the animosity in order to create a more compelling identity of their own group based on either the attributes of the rival communities (differing characteristics of the ingroup vs. outgroup), the definition adopted in pre-existent situations of confrontation, or the definition that would be more easily accepted and embraced by the population (Korostelina, 2009: 103). In this process of creation of collective identification, “leaders choose to employ collective traumas and glories to increase the salience of identity” (Korostelina, 2009: 103), usually in order not only to promote hostility but to justify the social and economic disadvantages existing inside their community. Since the first time that Armenia and Azerbaijan have been engaged in conflict, tracing to the pre-soviet times, the political discourse has been based on the defense of their identity and the need of

retrieving a land that historically belonged to them, ignoring other relevant issues, such as corruption or the need of democratization.

On an individual level, some members of the group will have more than one identity, and can “feel that their sense of security, identity, and moral authority has been disrupted by conflict, and look for one strong, single identity, which employs ideological myths to provide new security, certainty, and moral authority” (Korostelina, 2009: 104). Therefore, they tend to choose the characteristics of one group over the other and end up associating features that once felt were also their own with the enemy.

Counteraction

Finally, in this context counteraction is understood as the “introduction of moral duality, dehumanization, and devaluation of Other that justify discrimination, violence, and genocide” (Korostelina, 2009: 102). Once that hatred has been installed between two opposing groups, and they have come to a situation of hostility, confrontation can be justified in order to protect their identity and ethnic claims, as well as to protect themselves from external aggressions. This reinforcement of the “positive We–negative They” belief (Korostelina, 2009: 104) makes the group more inclined to execute violent actions against each other in order to ensure their survival. When we study the case of the Armenian Genocide, carried on by the Turkish, and the actual declaration made by both Turkish and Azeri representatives and citizens, we can observe that they stated that their actions were based on self-defense reasons. However, we find a contradictory situation concerning this fact, as it is officially denied by both states. The multiple massacres occurred during the different waves of physical confrontation of both states (such as the massacre of Armenians in Baku in 1918, the massacre of Armenians on Sushi in 1920, the massacre of Azeris in Sumgait in 1988, or the massacre of Azerbaijanis in Khojali in 1992) shows how violence was used as to “safeguard” the status quo of the ingroups.

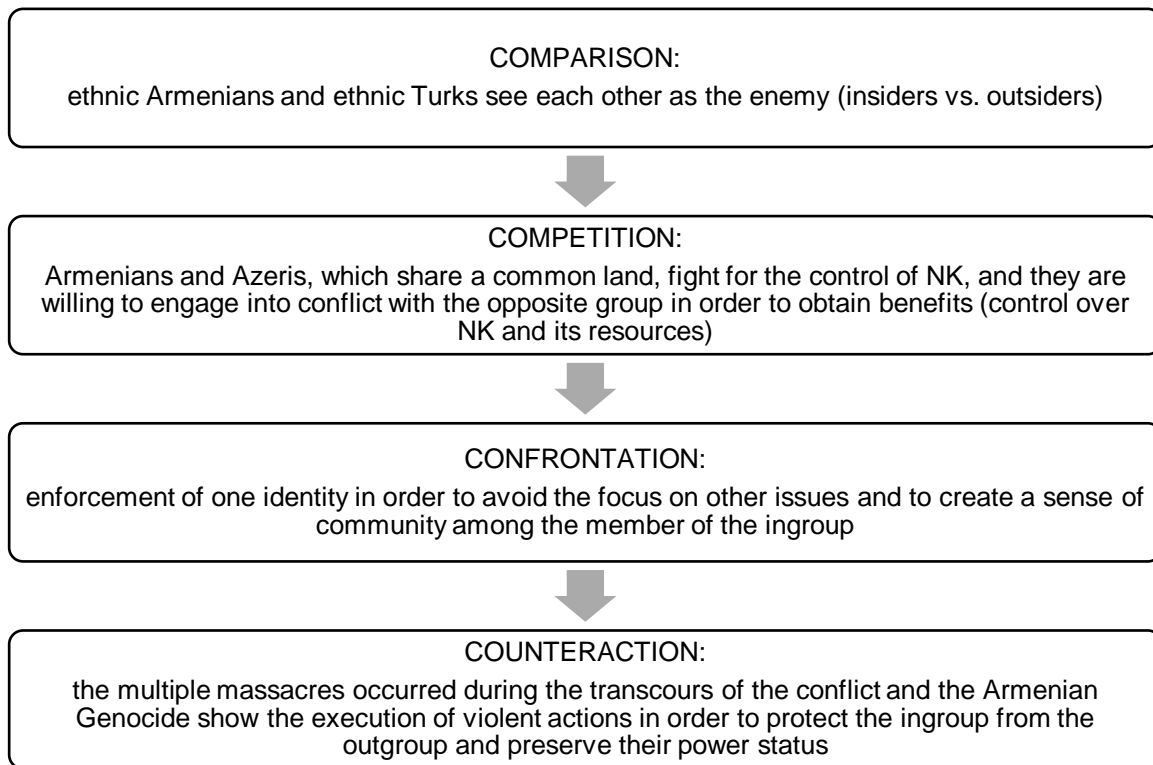


Figure 2: the 4-C Model of the Dynamic of Identity Conflicts in the case of the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Source: own elaboration, based on Korostelina's (2009: 102) model.

EARLY WARNING MODEL FOR IDENTITY CONFLICTS

According to Korostelina's (2007; 2009) Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts, there are five main indicators that can help us identify the prospectives of war taking place again: "1) identity characteristics (salience, ingroup primacy, locus of self-esteem, functions); 2) intergroup relations (prejudice, outgroup threat, ingroup support, relative deprivation, security dilemma); 3) forms and types of identity (modes of meaning, natures, types, forms, collective axiology); 4) types of culture (individualistic vs. collectivistic); and 5) nation and minorities (national identity formation, concept of national identity, ethnic domination and affinities, majority/ minority position and size)" (Korostelina., 2009: 106) (Figure 3). This design, therefore, will help us to analyze whether it is realistic to think that physical confrontations in the warfare will occur again between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan regarding the control of land in the Caucasus region.

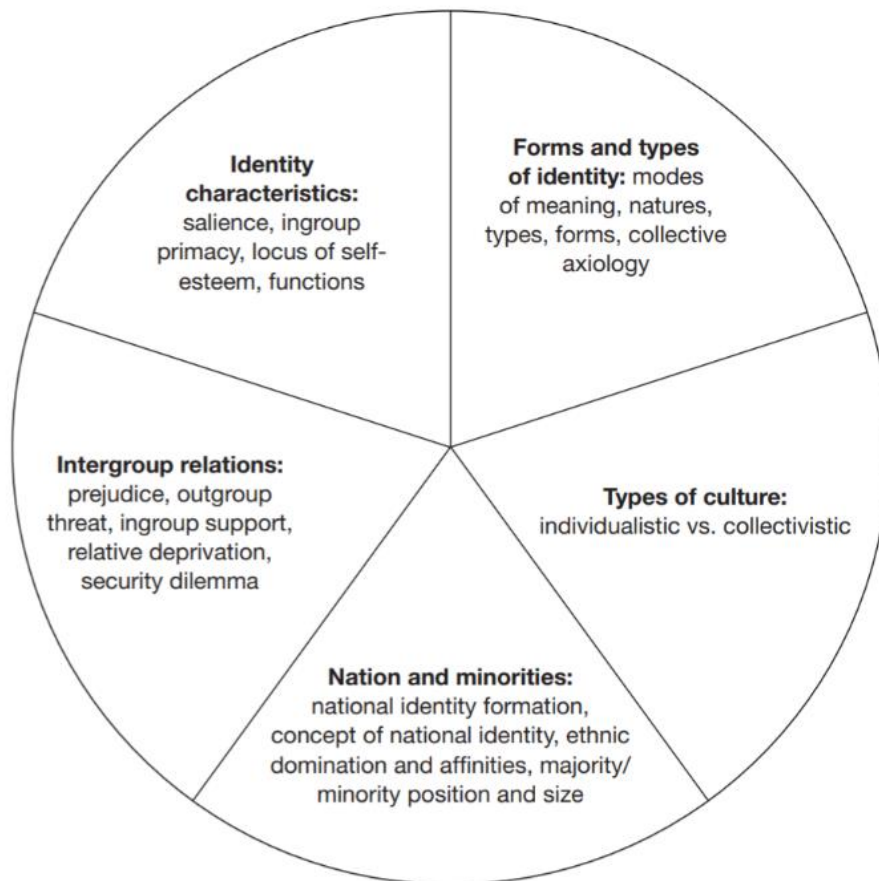


Figure 3: The Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts.

Source: Korostelina (2009: 106).

Identity characteristics

A *salient identity* is understood as “the most important identity for the individual” which can also “be influenced by such factors as permeable/impermeable group boundaries, positive or negative inter-group comparisons, identity distinctiveness issues, and the socialization processes” (Korostelina, 2006: 102). Therefore, individuals showing a highly salient identity are more likely to have a positive impression of the ingroup, with whom they feel notably identified (Korostelina, 2006: 102). This belief can lead to situations in which the members “consider obedience and social recognition as more important values than do people with non-salient ethnic identity” (Korostelina, 2006: 120). The strong levels of loyalty towards the principles, rules, and values of the group, as well as the idea that they will count on their unconditional support when needed (Korostelina, 2006: 120), contributes to their willingness to carry on violent or confrontational action toward the outgroups (Korostelina, 2009: 105), and showing “that people with salient identity find more in common with other members of their ingroup and do not want to leave the ingroup even in situations of threat” (Korostelina, 2006: 103). In this way, the fall of the Soviet Union led to the creation of multiple states in which the

perception of national identity has been determined by their land borders, as the change from a totalitarian regime to a plural one “is connected to the construction of a state and the reshaping of national identities” (Korostelina, 2003: 141).

Geukjian argues that “Soviet ethno-territorial federalism treated national identities as nations so as to stress the primordial relationship of a people with its homeland”, increasing the feelings of acceptance of other outgroup members as well as the own identification as part of it (Geukjian, 2012: 80). The attempts to conserve the ethnic characteristics of both Armenians and Azeris were encouraged by the imposition of a Soviet identity (Geukjian, 2012: 114).

Armenian identity is based on mostly two factors: 1) the 1915’s genocide and its denial, and 2) the remembrance of a pre-genocidal time in which the Armenian essence was fully developed and embraced (Avakian, 2010: 204-205), which creates the current idea of what it means to be Armenian.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, this process identity process formation was greatly enforced during the era in which the area was under the control of the Azeris, as the ethnic Armenian inhabitants of the region “tried to sustain their national identity and resist assimilation” (Geukjian, 2012: 113), since they considered that the policies established by the Azerbaijan SSR were prejudicial for their identity. Despite Armenia not being a strong power in the region during the last decades, “it is the lifeline to Armenia that keeps Nagorno-Karabakh ticking” (Kolstø, 2006: 733).

The *primacy of the ingroup*, meaning “the feeling of supremacy of ingroup goals and values over personal ones” (Korostelina, 2007: 154), is characterized by three main aspects: “(a) predominance of ingroup aims over individual aims, (b) the readiness to forget all internal ingroup conflicts in situations of threat to the ingroup, and (c) the readiness to unite against the outgroup” (Korostelina, 2009: 105). This indicator is directly linked with the salience of identities, as when a society’s social identity is not strong enough to make individuals feel comfortable engaging in problematic situations with the outgroups, the primacy of the group can increase their willingness to confront (Korostelina, 2007: 154), leaving aside their individual interests to protect the ingroup as a whole (Korostelina, 2009: 105).

The satisfaction of members regarding their position inside of the group, also known as the *internal locus of self-esteem*, is connected to their motivations towards engaging in conflict with an outgroup. Although they can negatively compare both groups, seeing the outgroup as more advantaged, if they are content with their inner status, they are less likely to challenge

their opponents (Korostelina, 2009: 106). This usually takes place in situations characterized by a balance among the groups, in which the ingroups tend to raise their confidence and self-respect by the use of “favorable comparisons” (Korostelina, 2007: 93), which also leads to the creation of stigma against the outgroup, usually by magnifying small differences among both communities.

However, if the contrast among them is more significant, and the ingroup is facing a serious situation disadvantage, and they feel a direct threat against their group or that they are not able to develop their national identity to the fullest, a non-positive *external locus of self-esteem* “usually creates a solid basis for conflict intentions, and a readiness to fight with outgroups” (Korostelina, 2009: 106), creating a bigger need for positive comparison (Korostelina, 2007: 93).

According to this approach, the *satisfaction with identity functions* can be used as an indicator of the possibilities of engaging in conflict. There are five main roles related to social identity: “(a) increasing self-esteem; (b) increasing social status; (c) personal safety; (d) group support and protection; and (e) recognition by the ingroup” (Korostelina, 2009: 106; Korostelina, 2007: 68). The degree to which an identity is able to fulfill this role is directly and positively related to the degree to which an identity is salient. Therefore, the more functions it is capable of meeting, the more salience we will find in a community (Korostelina, 2007: 69). In the same way, “if ingroup members attach important functions to a new identity, it develops into a salient identity and can replace other identities that previously provided the corresponding functions” (Korostelina, 2007: 69). Therefore, in cases in which the most important social function for a community is seen in a threatening situation by the ingroup members, their readiness to engage in conflict will increase (Korostelina, 2009: 106).

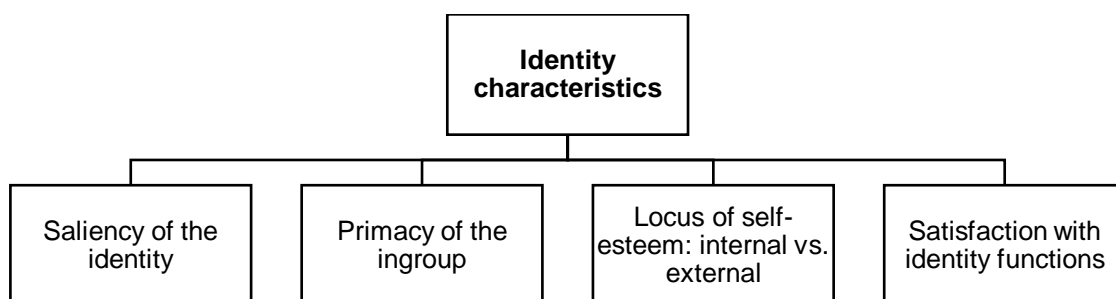


Figure 4: Summary of the Identity Characteristics’ indicators according to the Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts.

Source: own elaboration based on Korostelina (2007, 2009).

Intergroup relations

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, *prejudice* is “injury or damage resulting from some judgment or action of another in disregard of one's rights, *especially* detriment to one's legal rights or claims”, a “preconceived judgment or opinion” or “an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge”, and “an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics”. In this context, *intergroup prejudice* is defined by Allport as an “antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization” that “may be directed toward a group as a whole or toward an individual because he is a member of that group” (Allport 1954: 9). When the prejudice towards the outgroup increases, so does the potential conflict (Korostelina, 2009: 108).

Despite previous research demonstrating that “intergroup contact can promote reductions in intergroup prejudice, particularly when the contact situation is structured to enhance positive intergroup outcome” (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005: 951), the hatred between ethnic Armenians and the Azeris and their Turkish allies has not been decreased by any of the attempts of third parties to achieve peaceful coexistence. In fact, during the War of Nagorno-Karabakh of 2020, members of the Turkish ultra-nationalist organization Grey Wolves mutilated a monument in memorial to the Genocide in Lyon and physical clashes between Armenians and Azeris took place in Boston, among other relevant acts of vandalism in different key diaspora enclaves in which both groups cohabit (Baser & Féron, 2020).

The fear of an *outgroup threat* (meaning “something that is a source of danger and declares an intention of or a determination to inflict harm on others” (Korostelina, 2007: 138) and endangers the current situation of the ingroup), leads to the ingroup to react in a more unfriendly way, as well as to maintain their external prejudices towards them as a justification of the acts. Following Korostelina (2009), there are five main circumstances in which this occurs: “(a) unequal economic, cultural, or political positions of ethnic groups (Gellner 1994); (b) different citizenship of ethnic groups (Brubaker 1996); c) memories of former domination by the outgroup, and attribution of the desire for revival of such (Gurr and Harff 1994); (d) perceptions that ingroups have weaker or worse positions than the outgroups (Gurr 1993); (e) limitations of the ingroup's socioeconomic opportunities imposed by outgroups (Gellner 1994); (f) political extremism, violence, and nationalism of outgroups (Hagendoorn et al. 1996)” (Korostelina, 2009: 108-109).

The perception of external danger becomes more distinct when there are structural changes in the balance among the groups, such as variances on the demography, “economic

competition” or “new territorial claims of outgroups”, as well as “new barriers to upward mobility, economic competition, and the rise of outgroup educational levels and mobility” (Korostelina, 2007: 140), being the case reflected in Nagorno-Karabakh:

“Hagendoorn and colleagues (2000) describe the violent conflict between Azeris and Armenians in Nagorno Karabach in the former Soviet Union in the 1980s as having been aroused by the fear of Azeri population growth, economic competition between Armenians and Azeris, historical enmity between the two groups, and feelings of relative deprivation by the Armenians in Nagorno Karabach in comparison to Armenians in Armenia. The Armenians were afraid to lose their titular status in Nagorno Karabach and their autonomy within Azerbaijan” (Korostelina, 2007: 142).

The *ingroup support* is also a relevant factor inside of the intergroup relations, as it “reflects the expectation that all the ingroup’s members maintain the same goals and aspirations, a common perception of the outgroup, and similar intentions to change the current social situation” (Korostelina, 2009: 109). When the ingroup support remains high, the anxiety for being judged by the ingroup members decreases, increasing the cooperating rates and “the level of participation in decision-making processes and collective actions of ingroups” (Korostelina, 2007: 142). This feeling of approval and protection builds up the readiness of the members to engage in conflict (Korostelina, 2007: 142).

According to Saleh (2013), “*relative deprivation* is the discrepancies between what people want, their value expectations, and what they actually gain, their value accruing capabilities” (Saleh, 2013: 165). This concept can be applied to an individual context (egoistic relative deprivation) or a group setting (fraternal relative deprivation) (Pettigrew et al., 2008: 387). Therefore, when a member of an ingroup feels the ingroup is deprived or living under disadvantaging conditions compared to the outgroup, and they believe they can acquire a better life quality of life, they will be more likely to fight for it (Korostelina, 2009: 109), especially because they only compare the ingroup with the outgroup rather than doing an estimation of the actual situation of their community (Korostelina, 2007: 133).

The *security dilemma* can also be “a source for ethnic conflicts and the rise of nationalism” (Korostelina, 2009: 109). It emerges from the mistrust to the other group, and even when the outgroup has no negative intentions planned towards the ingroup, the feeling of insecurity makes the members more prone to engage in conflict, seeing it as a self-defense mechanism (Korostelina, 2007: 142), especially when it derives from historical events (Korostelina, 2007: 143).

The long-lasting conflict for Nagorno-Karabakh, as explained in Chapter I, created a feeling of insecurity in the Republic of Armenia that leads to the constant belief that they will be suffering new aggressions in the near future, as they assume that the Azeris will not stop until they conquer the whole country. This conception, along with the fact that “if offensive operations are more effective than defensive operations, states will choose the offensive if they wish to survive” (Posen, 1993: 28), can be a clear indicator of the possibility of a new war taking place soon, as the precarious situation lived in Armenia in the current post-War period could be seen as a “window of opportunity” for the Azeris and their allies, making them keener to attack “sooner rather than later” (Posen, 1993: 33).

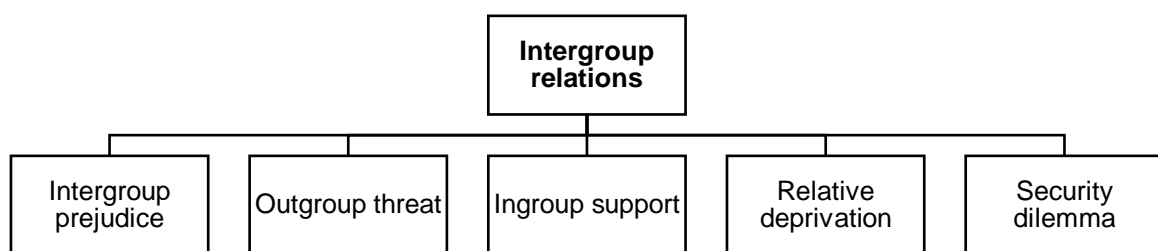


Figure 5: Summary of the Intergroup Relation’s indicators according to the Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts.

Source: own elaboration based on Korostelina (2007, 2009).

Forms and types of identity

The factors that define *social identity and its meaning*, and therefore the composition of an ingroup and the relations with the outgroups are 1) ingroup traditions and values, that is to say, culture; 2) ingroup language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) ingroup history; 5) ingroup Ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image (Korostelina, 2007:74- 75).

In the same way, different modes shape the meaning of identity and their willingness to engage in conflict, and the prevalence of one over the others will create a different understanding of the identity. On one hand, the depictive mode of the meaning of identity is not related to this readiness, while, on the other hand, the ideological, historical, and the relative mode can generate them based on ideological disagreements, a past record of confrontation, or the preconceptions and intolerance of the outgroup (Korostelina, 2007: 207; Korostelina, 2009: 107). The “We-They” perception, already explained in the comparison variable of the 4-C

Model of the Dynamic of Identity Conflicts, causes a positive view of the ingroup and a negative of the outgroup (Korostelina, 2007: 207).

In societies in which the ingroup is spread in different areas, like in the case of the Armenian diaspora, the identity can have different meanings (Korostelina, 2007: 75). In fact, Baser and Swain (2008) argue that the difference between the past realities that Eastern Armenians and the Armenian diaspora have lived led to a disparity of interests. While one of the main goals of the Armenians in the diaspora was to obtain the recognition of the 1915's Genocide, some authors consider that they have a greater focus on the past than on the actual policy changes that could take place on the country for the betterment of the nation. It is also argued that due to the pressure of the diaspora that Armenia is still in a great dependency situation with Russia (Baser & Swain, 2008: 58- 59).

Identities can adopt three different *forms*: 1) cultural, meaning that it is "based on characteristics of the everyday life of a group" (Korostelina, 2007: 85); 2) reflective, which includes "a reflective or advanced understanding of a group's past, present, and future" (Korostelina, 2007: 86); and 3) mobilized, characterized by "the perception of competition among groups and the incompatibility of goals" (Korostelina, 2007: 86). However, it is the mobilized form of identity the one that involves a higher willingness to engage in conflict, as their understanding of existing in a constant state of competition with the outgroup leads to a readiness to compete for resources, power, and survival (Korostelina, 2009: 107; Korostelina, 2007: 208).

We can divide the *types of social identity* into four categories (Figure 6): 1) position identities, 2) dyadic identities, 3) descriptive identities, and 4) collective identities. Position identities "reflects identification with a specific category of interpersonal relations" (Korostelina, 2009: 107), but, at the same time, doesn't identify fully with all the characteristics and norms of this status (Korostelina, 2009: 107; Korostelina, 2007: 83). Dyadic identities are linked to the identification of an individual to a certain group and proceeds with acquiring its means of social interaction, adopting its rules and values (Korostelina, 2009: 107; Korostelina, 2007: 84). Descriptive identities refer to the situations in which someone identifies with a certain group, portraying themselves as members, yet "they do not participate in group activities and do not share the beliefs, goals, and norms of a group" (Korostelina, 2009: 108; Korostelina, 2007: 84). Lastly, collective identities appear when an individual not only identifies with a group, but also with their beliefs, values, and rules, and therefore experiences a strong feeling of attachment (Korostelina, 2009: 108; Korostelina, 2007: 84). Collective identities are the most likely to end

up leading to confrontation, as they “influence the perceptions and evaluations of the world in terms of group categories and intergroup relations” (Korostelina, 2007: 208).

Table 4.1 Types of Social Identity

Level of Involvement in Group	Types of Personal Relationship	
	Interpersonal	Intergroup
Categorical group	Positioning identity	Descriptive identity
Group of membership	Dyadic identity	Collective identity

Figure 6: Types of Social Identity.

Source: Korostelina (2007: 84).

Collective axiology is defined as “is a system of value commitments that offers moral guidance to maintain relations with those within, and outside, a group” which “provides a sense of life and world, serves as a criterion for understanding actions and events, and regulates ingroup behaviors” (Korostelina, 2007: 88). Collective axiology not only creates an identification within the ingroup members but also a differentiation with the outgroups. It also shapes the relationship between the “We” and the “Other”. Three main constructs are included in the collective axiology: mythic narrative, sacred icons, and normative orders (Korostelina, 2007: 88).

The main attribute of collective axiology that is relevant to the early warning model is its balance: the collective generality, meaning “the ways in which ingroup members categorize the Other, how they simplify, or not, their defining (essential) character” (Rothbart and Korostelina, 2006: 45), and axiological balance, which is understood as “a kind of parallelism of virtues and vices attributes to groups” (Rothbart and Korostelina, 2006: 46).

While balanced axiology enables the ingroup to not only perceive the positive and negative characteristics of the outgroup, but it also enables to perceive both aspects of the ingroup reality; unbalanced axiology leads to the opposite situation: the Others are perceived as “evil and vicious”, only focusing on the unfavorable features, yet the We is perceived as “morally pure and superior” (Korostelina, 2007: 89). In communities in which we find high levels of collective generality but low levels of balance on the axiology, we can observe that the common discourse takes over the capacity of analysis, and therefore, disables the ingroup to make a

clear judgment of the outgroup. The situations in which we found this combination of factors are commonly related to “extreme forms of nationalism, fascism, racism, and sectarianism” (Korostelina, 2009: 108). Although none of this sort of political regimes and attributes can be applied to the Armenian government nor its society, it is true that after the Genocide and all the other altercations surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, there is a common discourse in which they see the Azeris as immoral, destructive, and malevolent, and themselves as the victims of their crimes.

The *nature of the identity*, whether it is ascribed or acquired, plays a crucial role in the conduct of an individual. Previous research shows that the possibility of choosing their group they wanted to be members of increases the levels of adherence and fidelity of the ingroup (Korostelina, 2007: 79; Korostelina, 2009: 108). The process of acquisition of a determined social identity is determined by four aspects: 1) the valence of group membership: the value and perception that a member has about the ingroup, and the perception of the set of members as a whole; 2) the identification with a prototype: the sense of belonging due to the resemblance to the other members; 3) the basic values: the basic premises of the ingroup members, such as daily life activities or fashion style; and 4) the differences with outgroups: the perception of the outgroup as strange, as it emphasizes the idea of security and affinity with the ingroup members (Korostelina, 2007: 80-81).

This factor is especially relevant in the case of the Armenian diaspora, as they have decided to acquire their identity despite living out of the territory that comprises their motherland. They perceive themselves as a united group that shares not only the same traumatic past but also their identity features, traditions, and religious beliefs, and see the ethnic Turkish as the evil Others, with whom they have nothing in common besides the interest on the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the prevalence of their people.

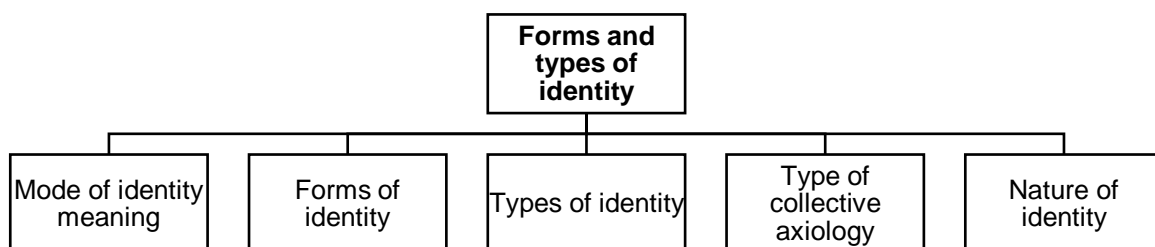


Figure 7: Summary of the Forms and Types of Identity’s indicators according to the Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts.

Source: own elaboration based on Korostelina (2007, 2009).

Types of culture

The *individualistic vs. collectivistic culture* axis, namely the prevalence of the interest of the individual vs. the prevalence of the group's interests also plays a key role in determining the willingness of an ingroup to fight an outgroup.

According to Korostelina, "collectivistic orientation characterizes societies where the group is perceived as primary and the person secondary" while "individualistic orientation puts the person at the center of the society" (Korostelina, 2007: 40). Therefore, the normative structure of both communities will be widely different. In the first case, there is a common belief that the power emerges from the ingroup and that it will be used to pursue its common interests and to ensure the group's survival. As a result, the loyalty levels will be elevated, as well as their aims of cooperation with other members. In the second case, the individual sees himself as accountable for their actions and interactions in a social context (Korostelina, 2007: 41) (Figure 8).

In societies in which the collective culture prevails, the likeliness of engaging in a conflict increases when the group is threatened, yet in cases where the dominant culture is based on individualistic principles, it will be the individual itself the one that will estimate a particular situation in order to determine their eagerness of starting a confrontation (Korostelina, 2009: 108).

Table 2.1 The Differences between Individualism and Collectivism

Differences	Individualism	Collectivism
Content of self	Individual differences	Social categories
Way for self-actualization	"Do what I want"	"I am not a burden for my group"
Values	Independence and individual achievement	Interdependence and group success
Norms	Self-expression, individual thinking, personal choice	Adherence to norms, respect for authority, group consensus
Regulation of behavior	Personal attitudes and estimation of cost-profit	Ingroup norms
Roles	Egalitarian relationships and flexibility in roles	Stable, hierarchical roles (dependent on gender, age)
Goals	Personal goals more important than group goals	Group goals more important than personal goals
Differences between groups	Not salient	Salient
Understanding the physical world	Knowable apart from its meaning for human life	Understanding in the context of its meaning for human life
Property	Private property, individual ownership	Shared property, group ownership
Type of relations	Horizontal	Vertical

Figure 8: The Differences between Individualism and Collectivism.

Source: Korostelina (2007: 41).

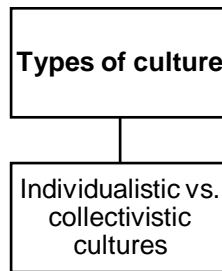


Figure 9: Summary of the Forms and Types of Culture’s indicators according to the Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts.

Source: own elaboration based on Korostelina (2007, 2009).

Nation and minorities’ positions

The *formation of national identity* usually takes place within a group that lives in the same area or territory, especially after the creation of the current state model, which strengthens itself by creating an only and homogeneous identity that is shared by the members of the ingroup, and weakens the other groups by spreading a feeling of animosity (Korostelina, 2009: 109). However, other factors influence national identity formation, such as: “(1) the adoption of the specific elements of the national identity, including shared beliefs, history, values, assumptions, and expectations; (2) the development of an orientation to the nation itself (Herman 1977); and (3) self-definition as members of the nation (Kelman 1997a)” (Korostelina, 2007: 183).

When national identity is imposed on a sector of the group that does not share a feeling of belonging nor acceptance conflict may arise, depending on three of the indicators used in this paper: the salience of national identity, the satisfaction with the completion of the functions of identity, and the adoption of national culture (Korostelina, 2009: 109). However, Korostelina (2004) also argues that “a new common identity changes people’s conceptions of the membership from different groups to a single, more inclusive group and makes individual’s attitudes toward former out-group members more positive, even if they had a long history of offences” (Korostelina, 2004: 216-217). In our case of study, when the Azeris started to take control of the region of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenians became a minority, the levels of hatred increased, as suddenly their previous identity was being threatened and started to be replaced by a new, more salient within their ingroup members, one.

The main complication regarding the *concept of national identity* is the statuses of the ethnic minorities within the borders of a certain state, as the changes in the relationship among the

groups can influence their readiness for the conflict, especially when the interaction between “majority and minority groups, between dominant and small minorities, and between natives and immigrants” is affected (Korostelina, 2009: 110). The situation of minorities, therefore, can lead to three types of national identity structures: 1) civic, in which the main concern of the population are the rights, obligations, and the rule of law, considering ethnicity pointless, and therefore decreasing their readiness for conflict (Korostelina, 2007: 186-187; Korostelina, 2009: 110); 2) ethnic, in which the community understands their identity as a core value and consider that minorities should adopt it as their own, which intensifies the willingness of those minorities to engage into confrontations (Korostelina, 2007: 186; Korostelina, 2009: 110); and 3) multicultural, in which the minority groups have the same rights as the majority one, as well a certain degree of self-autonomy and governance that allow them to maintain their identity, values, and heritage, also decreasing the possibilities of fighting (Korostelina, 2007: 186; Korostelina, 2009: 110).

The *majority vs. minority* situation, as well as the *size* of both groups will affect the possibilities of a new warfare or confrontation situation. During the creation of a new state, if a minority feels there is a threat towards the identity of their ingroup, they will be more likely to induce a confrontation (Korostelina, 2004: 216). This occurs because minority groups feel a greater identification towards their group, as well as a greater sense of insecurity, and a stronger belief in the “positive We- negative Other”’s perception (Korostelina, 2007: 134- 135). Research also shows that minorities have a higher potential for social mobility and social transformation and that the minority groups that are bigger in size are more prone to engage in conflict (Korostelina, 2009: 110).

However, Korostelina also defends that “in addition to a contribution to escalation and self-perpetuation of identity-based conflicts, national identity building in post-communist societies is, therefore, a process that may create superordinate peaceful identity and opportunities for the resolution of conflict” (Korostelina, 2004: 216).

Lastly, regarding nations and minorities, we must study the *experience of dominance* and the *transnational affinities*. On one hand, groups that have been in a situation of domination of the outgroups can engage in confrontation to restore their status of control; while groups that have been under a situation of domination are more willing to fight to vindicate their right and to prevent to be controlled by the outgroup again (Korostelina, 2009: 110). On the other hand, if the ingroup perceives a stronger connection and attributes more positive qualities to an outgroup that is not located within the state limits but in an adjacent state or in a neighboring

area, there is a high chance of them fighting to change the borders in order to become a part of the territory in which they feel a major identity identification (Korostelina, 2009: 110). This is the reason why the population of Nagorno-Karabakh, being historically in its greatest extent Armenian, are more likely to fight for its reunification with the Republic of Armenia rather than with the Republic of Azerbaijan, as it would “satisfy the primordial and instrumental needs of the population, as it would reunite the historically Armenian territories, would end foreign domination and would improve the material wellbeing of the people (Chorbajian, 2001: 66).

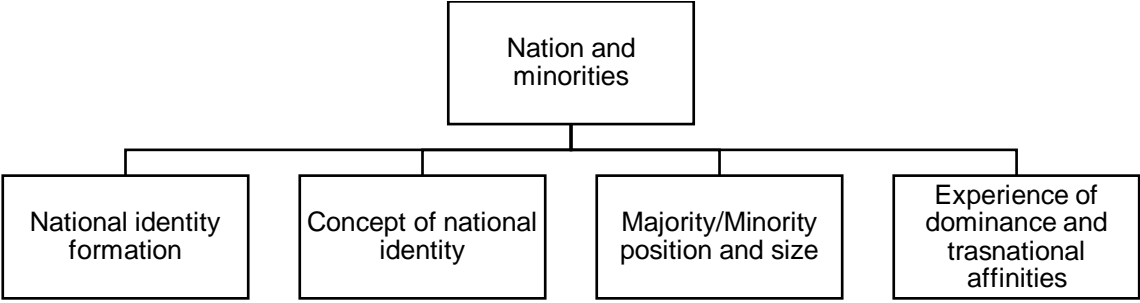


Figure 10: Summary of the Nation and Minorities’ indicators according to the Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts.

Source: own elaboration based on Korostelina (2007, 2009).

CONCLUSION: CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND THE CASE OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Once both theories and models have been presented, we conclude by discarding Kaldor’s approach of the “new wars”, as in the case studied in this paper we can only relate to the “identity politics” component. However, Kaldor identifies a possible resolution strategy related to this variable that is suitable for this conflict. She states that “there is no possible long-term solution within the framework of identity politics” (Kaldor, 2012: 11), as the only strategy would involve “the restoration of legitimacy, the reconstitution of the control of organized violence by public authorities, whether local, national or global” (Kaldor, 2012: 12). However, instead of focusing on a particularist or exclusivist resolution, by acquiring a more cosmopolitan point of view based on “an inclusive, democratic set of values” and by creating “an alliance between local defenders of civility and transnational institutions which would guide a strategy aimed at controlling violence” (Kaldor, 2012: 12) would make the peacemaking processes more successful. This needs to be understood in the frame of an international reality in which more actors besides the states have become significant, as we can see in the case of the OSCE or

the European Union. Following Uzer, “what distinguishes the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijanis and Armenians as well as the local Armenians in Karabakh, from other international disputes is that there is less interest on the part of the international community in the resolution of the conflict when compared with the other ongoing ethnic conflicts” (Uzer, 2012: 246). Without other actors playing a relevant role, the still stormy dispute for Nagorno-Karabakh will not be resolved.

In the instance of the 4-C Model of the Dynamic of Identity Conflicts (Korostelina, 2007, 2009), we determined that its four categories (comparison, competition; confrontation; and counteraction) are appropriate for our case of study. Likewise, and before carrying on the field research, we can already find evidence of the existence of the indicators presented in the Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts (Korostelina, 2007, 2009), that we will try to verify or dismiss once the interviews are conducted in the following chapter.

Regarding conflict resolution, according to Korostelina, the right procedure would revolve around the analysis of the relationship between social identity and conflict (Figure 11) (Korostelina, 2007: 203). Consequently, it would be necessary to implement the models that have been presented in this section. It is not only essential to study the different structures and qualities of the various identities, whether they are ethnic, religious, or national; but also the contexts where they appear and the processes that lead to their formation, and the subsequent conflicts (Korostelina, 2007: 204).

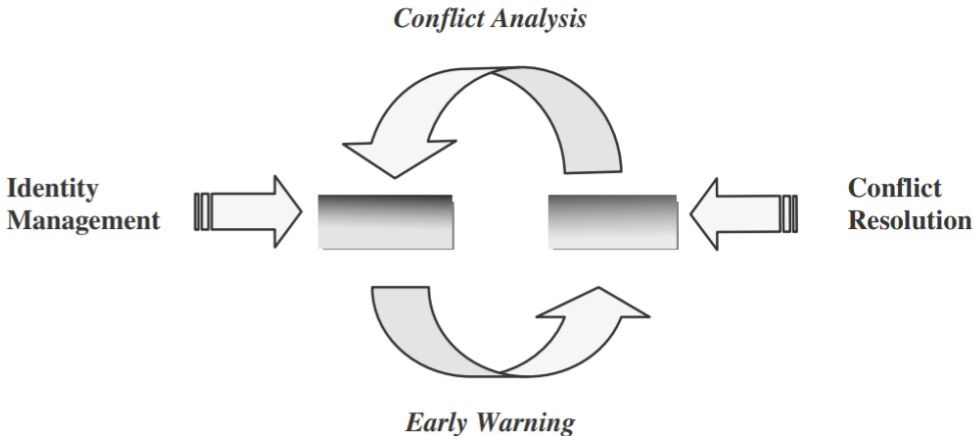


Figure 9.1 The model of analysis and resolution of identity-based conflicts.

Figure 11: The model of analysis and resolution of identity-based conflicts.
Source: Korostelina (2007: 204).

CHAPTER III. ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC OPINION IN ARMENIA

Once we have presented not only the history of the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh but also the theoretical approach that we will be using to analyze this particular case, we will conduct an analysis of the Armenian public opinion. The methodology that will be used is the personal interview, as it enables us to understand from a more profound approach which are the current thoughts of Armenians (and foreigners living in Armenia during the period following the signing of the ceasefire agreement) regarding the issues studied over the course of this paper.

METHODOLOGY

The research questions, which will be presented in the following section, will be divided into two blocks: Block 1 will focus on the influence of the ceasefire agreement, signed by PM Nikol Pashinyan on the 10th of November, 2020, on the Armenian public opinion (MO); and Block 2 will be used to measure the indicators of the Early Warning Model of Identity Conflicts, developed by Korostelina (2007, 2009) and analyzed in the previous chapter (O2). Both blocks, likewise, will be used to determine the relevance of Artsakh or Nagorno-Karabakh for the Armenian people (O1) (Table 8).

The approximate length of the interview will be 30 minutes.

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Objectives</i>		
	MO: to analyze the impact on Armenian’s public opinion of the NK war and the signing of the ceasefire agreement by Nikol Pashinyan.	O1: to understand the reasons why maintaining Artsakh sovereignty is so relevant for the Armenian people.	O2: to determine the readiness of the Armenian people to engage in conflict with Azerbaijan in the near future.
Block 1	X	X	
Block 2		X	X

Table 8: Relationship between the question blocks and the objectives.

Source: own elaboration.

We will also create two groups of subjects: 1) specialists in the field of Politics, International Law, International Relations, or other relevant disciplines (Table 9); and 2) civil society (Table 10). In both cases, we will incorporate Armenians that have always lived in the Republic of Armenia, diaspora Armenians, and foreigners living in the Republic of Armenia, in order to acquire the broadest point of view possible.

GROUP 1: specialists on the field.				
SUBJECT	AGE	GENDER	NATIONALITY	BACKGROUND
1	54	Female	Armenian	International Law Professor and Deputy Head of Law Department in Yerevan
2	23	Male	Armenian	Legal Expert at the Office of Representative before the European Court of Human Rights (Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia)
3	30	Female	Russian/Armenian	Student of the MA of Political Science & International Affairs at AUA (Yerevan)
4	24	Male	British	Research Fellow and Lecturer at Yerevan with a focus on judicial politics in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, based in Yerevan

Table 9: Summary of the subjects that constitute Group 1.

Source: own elaboration.

GROUP 2: civil society.				
SUBJECT	AGE	GENDER	NATIONALITY	BACKGROUND
5	23	Female	Armenian	Marketing graduate. Career Coordinator at a university in Yerevan
6	19	Female	American/Armenian	AS student at Pasadena City College (Los Angeles, CA) with a focus in Biochemistry. Currently teaching English in Yerevan
7	23	Female	Russian/Armenian	BA in Cultural Studies (Culture of European Countries) from the Russian State University for The Humanities graduate. Currently teaching English in Yerevan
8	26	Male	Iranian	International Marketing Specialist and General Manager at a private university in Yerevan

Table 10: Summary of the subjects that constitute Group 2.

Source: own elaboration.

However, due to how recently the last War of Nagorno-Karabakh has taken place, there is a lack of diversity in the sample, as it was quite hard to find individuals willing to talk about the issue. Another disadvantage is the language barrier: many older Armenian citizens (especially those who have not attended Superior Education facilities) only speak Armenian and Russian, hindering the process. These two factors must be taken into account.

The third and prospectively handicapping circumstance that might be faced is the interviewer itself, meaning, the author of this paper, as it must not only have certain knowledge and training to carry on an interview but must also create a situation that is comfortable enough for the interviewed to open up about the issue. Whether the interviewer is part of the ingroup or not (in this case, Armenian society) might also inhibit the fluency of the process (Vallés, 2002: 78).

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Block 1

The questions contained in Block 1 were designed following Merton and Kendall's (1946) model of the focused interviews. This type of format is based on four characteristics. First of all, "persons interviewed are known to have been involved in a particular concrete situation" (Merton & Kendall 46: 541). In our case of study, all the subjects have been based in Armenia during the following months of the signature of the ceasefire agreement. Secondly, "the hypothetically significant elements, patterns, and total structure of this situation have been previously analyzed by the investigator" (Merton & Kendall 46: 541). This involves the research conducted in the previous sections of this paper. In the third place, "the investigator has fashioned an interview guide, setting forth the major areas of inquiry and the hypotheses which locate the pertinence of data to be obtained in the interview" (Merton & Kendall 46: 541). This has also been part of the whole process of carrying on this BDFP. Finally, "the interview itself is focused on the subjective experiences of persons exposed to the preanalyzed situation". This last step of the procedure will be presented in the discussion of this chapter (Merton & Kendall 46: 541).

This first section also follows the criteria to be considered an "informal interview" Alonso (2003: 75), as instead of presenting a very fixed structure, it tries to give a more adequate and flexible approach to each interview that better suits the personality of the subject participating in it. Therefore, the interviewer should not only be an "empathetic listener" but also a "good conversationalist", as it is needed to carry on a dialogue that enables the interview to adapt to each context while obtaining the information needed for the research (Alonso, 2003: 75).

The questions included are the following:

1. Why is Artsakh so important for the Armenian people?
2. What does the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan mean to you?
3. What do you think about the agreement signed on November 10th of 2020 by PM Nikol Pashinyan?

4. What steps do you think should be followed next?
5. What is the role of other international actors, mainly Russia and Turkey, in this conflict?
6. Do you think that the transfer of Artsakh will lead to future hostilities?

Block 2: Early Warning Model indicators

Block 2 comprehends a series of 20 questions, based on the Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts indicators (Table 11), which will be answered with yes/no. However, a small clarification could be given if the interviewed subjects considered it to be needed. These explanations will not be included in the final analysis itself yet can be helpful to give a more insightful point of view of the public opinion in Armenia.

The questions included are the following:

1. Do you consider that your main identity is “Armenian”?
2. Would you be willing to engage in conflict for the common good of Armenians?
3. Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?
4. Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?
5. Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?
6. Do you feel threatened by the Azeris?
7. Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?
8. Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian’s lives?
9. Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?
10. Do you identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?
11. Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?
12. Do you identify with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?
13. Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?
14. Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?

15. Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic? (“Collectivistic orientation characterizes societies where the group is perceived as primary and the person secondary”).
16. Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?
17. Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?
18. Do you see Armenians/Artsakh Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?
19. Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?
20. Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

<i>INDICATOR</i>		<i>QUESTION</i>
Identity characteristics	Saliency of the identity	Do you consider that your main identity is “Armenian”?
	Primacy of the ingroup	Would you be willing to engage in conflict for the common good of Armenians?
	Locus of selfsteem: internal vs. external	Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?
	Satisfaction with identity functions	Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?
Intergroup relations	Intergroup prejudice	Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?
	Outgroup threat	Do you feel threatened by the Azeris?
	Ingroup support	Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?
	Relative deprivation	Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian’s lives?
	Security dilemma	Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?
Forms and types of identity	Mode of identity meaning	Do you identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5)

		ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?
	Forms of identity	Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?
	Types of identity	Do you identify with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?
	Type of collective axiology	Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?
	Nature of identity	Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?
Types of culture	Individualistic vs. collectivistic cultures	Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic?
Nation and minorities	National identity formation	Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?
	Concept of national identity	Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?
	Majority/Minority position and size	Do you see Armenians/Artshak Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?
	Experience of dominance	Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsask/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?
	Transnational affinities	Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

Table 11: Relationship between the questions from Block 2 and Korostelina’s Early Warning Model (2007) indicators.

Source: own elaboration.

When Question 1 (“Do you consider that your main identity is “Armenian”?”) is replied in a negative way, meaning that the interview subject does not identify as Armenian at all, some of the other questions will be reformulated in order to understand their opinion about Armenians themselves. These reformulated questions will be specified in Annex I.

DISCUSSION

Block 1

As seen by the replies to question 1, the importance of Artsakh comes from its historical background. Although the region is relevant regarding the safeguard of the current borders of the Republic of Armenia, we observe that most of the interviewed individuals appeal to this issue from a subjective point of view. As stated by Subject 4, “Artsakh represents the historical identity of Armenians as a persecuted people who have always fought to preserve their identity”. However, this enclave has not only a strategic location mainly for security purposes but also a greater historical heritage than other areas, as represented by the multiple churches and other architectural features. By any means, for Armenian people defending the integrity of their land and not losing any other areas is a key backbone of their daily life and discourse. It has also been emphasized that, although it is a critical issue for the whole population, it has a greater pertinence to the inhabitants of Yerevan and the Armenian diaspora, as they are usually more privileged and have the necessary physical and mental resources to engage in political activities.

The transfer of Artsakh, once again, meant for most of the Armenians a serious blow that “has jeopardized Armenia’s future as a republic and puts ethnic Armenians at further risk of colonization” (Subject 6). Once again, the interviewed based their discourse on argumentations of both a historic and ethnic nature, such as the percentage of the Armenian population that inhabited the region during Soviet and post-Soviet times. In general, most subjects have stated that they truly believe that this conflict could have been prevented in the past. Some argue that the conflict started because the pre-Revolution government had not made the right decisions. Therefore, according to their opinion, if the Madrid Principles had been put into practice (which include the “return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control” (OSCE, 2009)), the confrontation would not have escalated in 2020.

Overall, we can perceive the disagreement with the ceasefire agreement signed by PM Pashinyan on the 10th of November 2020. It has been argued that it goes against the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia and its values and that he did not have the right to make that decision without carrying on the previous consultations with the people. We can also affirm that for many of the Armenian citizens this was a shock, as the information about the course of the war they were getting did not match the reality nor the legitimate situation of the Armenian troops. Therefore, the compromise reached was certainly unexpected. Once again, the interviewed individual also remarked that a past preventive action would have been

desired. Regarding its content, subject 2 argued that “it is an imposed document that offered nothing beneficial for Armenia” and that “the only thing that has a positive effect is the termination of hostilities”. Following this argumentation, subject 3 stated that “all those points are really bad for Armenia, really good for Russia, and not that bad for Azerbaijan”. The role of Russia is questioned again, as this accord facilitated the restoration of its influence on the region. However, it was also agreed that from a humanitarian point of view it was a reasonable decision, as it avoided the loss of more lives.

Concerning the steps that should be followed next, there is a general agreement that better politicians and especially diplomats are needed. Although the Velvet Revolution meant a change for the overall political system and culture of the Armenian Republic, it is perceived that the current government is not strong enough to manage the diplomatic relations of the country. Therefore, some individuals advocate for a change in the government. The dissatisfaction with the Pashinyan regime, in fact, led to the call for early elections, which will be held on the 20th of June, 2021. The principal vision includes creating a stable political situation in which an internal political reform can be carried on, in order to reach the Armenian’s goals through democratic means. To make this possible, there should be a total consensus about the determination of the location of the country frontiers. On a group level, they also aim to maintain the general hope and a sense of community that would allow them to move on together. The words of subject 5 regarding her vision on the future prove this need for optimism in a time in which they are still grieving not only the loss of their land and heritage, but also their people’s: “My next step is to carry on: to carry on with my teaching, with my education, going to my homeland, and putting the flowers in my friends' graves because they did their best, and yes, we just really need to continue”.

The role of international actors has also been discussed: not only the Minsk group needs to improve their role, but negotiations with Turkey should also start in order to reach an agreement that would allow the borders to be open. In an ideal situation, the borders with Azerbaijan should also be opened, but this is a much harder and less likely process. Iran and France are mentioned as possible/current allies that could improve the situation of the country. Finally, the right of self-determination of NK is an issue that should be brought up to the table, following the principles of International Law.

As we have already mentioned, the role of international actors is not only relevant for Armenians shortly, but has also been vital during the course of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2020. As stated by Subject 8, the situation was characterized by having “two main players called enemies and then some other players which are behind the stage and doing their best

to protect their own interests and even to further the benefits that they can achieve as the result of war". Although Russia has been a crucial performer, the interviewed individuals agree that it is obvious that they took part in the conflict in order to retrieve control of the Caucasus area. On the other hand, Turkey is seen as an Azeri ally. In the most extreme cases, it was described as a "terrorist country in the 21st century" that "organized a proxy war"⁹ (Subject 1). However, some others argue that its involvement in the conflict is much more unclear. The role of the OSCE Minsk Group is also questioned, as their long-lasting presence in the region has not really shown any type of development or advantage that could lead to a full resolution of the issue. The Armenian diaspora intervention has been incorporated into the general discourse, as for Eastern Armenians, their participation in the war (not only by financing their troops but also by joining them) proved the salience of the Armenian identity and the ingroup primacy.

Although the questions related to the Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts indicators (which constitute Block 2) will be also used to determine the possibility of a new outbreak of hostilities, overall, the answer to Question 6 shows us that there are two main trends of thought in the Armenian society. On one hand, some individuals argue that there are high chances of Armenia and Azerbaijan engaging in warfare again, considering this "inescapable" (Subject 2) because the conflict "doesn't have a true solution" (Subject 7). On the other hand, it has been argued that this last situation is not likely to happen as: 1) the Armenians do not have the resources needed to survive through the process, and 2) the government of the Azeri PM, Ilham Aliiev, does not need to move the focus from the social situation of his country to another relevant issue that will help him to maintain his position, as the victory of the war has already served as a proof that his government is strong enough. However, regardless of some subjects not considering another wave of confrontation between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan likely to happen, they highlight the possibilities of Azerbaijan and Russia engaging in hostilities in five years, when the agreement indicates that the peacekeepers can either leave the region or prolongate their stay for another half a decade. The Russians will likely advocate for this last option in order to retain influence in the Caucasus, yet the willingness of the Azeris to wanting them to remain is yet to be observed.

Block 2: Early Warning Model indicators

In the case of the salience of identity, 62,50% of the individuals considered that their main identity was "Armenian". Two out of the three remaining subjects are foreigners that have been living in Armenia for different time periods, yet they have not adopted this identity as their

⁹ In this case, we understand proxy wars as "the indirect engagement in a conflict by third parties wishing to influence its strategic outcome" (Mumford, 2013: 1).

predominant one. Therefore, both subject 4 and subject 8 will be answering the reformulated questions (Annex I). The third subject, despite her Armenian roots, does not principally identify as it, although she does feel Armenian up to an extent, as she was raised in an American-Armenian household based in the United States.

Despite their identification as Armenians, 50% of the interviewed would not be willing to engage in conflict for the common good (nor think that Armenians would), as they understand that it is most favorable to remain in a peaceful state regardless of the disadvantages that losing NK was brought to them.

When studying the locus of self-esteem, we observe that one-third of the individuals perceive that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level. In the case of subject 1, it has been argued that this is because of the incorrect actions carried on by the government. However, holding the opposite view, subject 2 considers that “Armenians’ position in any sphere and on any level, is much more advantageous because it is based on real true facts and argumentations”.

Half of the interviewed individuals consider that Armenian identity fulfills the main roles of this concept, being “(a) increasing self-esteem; (b) increasing social status; (c) personal safety; (d) group support and protection; and (e) recognition by the ingroup” (Korostelina, 2009: 106; Korostelina, 2007: 68). However, after the war, it has also been stated that Armenians are “facing a nationwide crisis on self-esteem and personal and social safety” (Subject 2) which generates a lack of completion of the above-mentioned duties.

Only one person did not feel that there are no prejudices towards the Azerbaijanis in the current Armenian society. Overall, we can conclude that in fact there is a widespread sense of intolerance and broad biases against the opposite ethnic group. To the question “Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?”, subject 1 answered “Yes, and there should be”, showing that the animosity between both ethnicities is not seen as something negative.

The same results were shown regarding the outgroup threat, as 87,5% believe to be threatened by the Azeris or consider that Armenians share this belief. This feeling could have been motivated by the aggressions that took place during the end of May in the Armenian province of Syunik (Kucera, 2021; The Armenian Weekly, 2021), and which ended with the murder of an Armenian soldier by the enemy troops (BBC News, 2021).

More than 70% of the individuals agreed that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh, despite not having the same opinions towards the actions of the current government and the agreement signed by the PM. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a high perception of the existence of ingroup support.

Only two subjects agreed that engaging conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian's lives (although it has also been defended that it should be done through diplomatic means (subject 1)), meaning that the majority believes that is more worth remaining in the current situation than starting a new round of hostilities.

Regarding the Genocide question and the past wars, 62,5% of the total sample agreed that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict. This is connected to the fact that Armenian one of the basic principles of Armenian identity is the history of the Genocide and its current denial, as has been already mentioned in Chapter II.

All the individuals feel identified (or agree that the overall Armenian society feels identified) by Armenian culture, language; characteristics of ingroup members, history, ideology, interrelations with outgroups, reverberated identity, and outgroup image. Although the extent of this recognition varies between subjects, it proves that the mode of the Armenian identity meaning is certainly substantial.

Almost 90% of the answers indicate that there is an extensive perception of the existence of competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals since both republics are battling each other in order to control the Nagorno-Karabakh territory.

Although we have observed that most of the subjects feel identified with the Armenian mode of meaning, only 62,5% feel identified (or think that the overall Armenian society feels identified) with its type of identity (which comprehends its beliefs, values, and rules).

Half of the sample has indicated that they believe that Armenians are morally superior to the Azeris, as they consider to have had a more ethical performance during the course of the war as well as more significant reasons to claim Nagorno-Karabakh.

87,5% of the interviewed subjects consider that the Armenian identity has been acquired rather than imposed, increasing the chances of engaging in conflict. As it was already being presented in Chapter II, this is shown especially in the case of the diaspora, since although

they have been raised or lived for most of their lives outside of Eastern Armenia, they have still decided to feel a sense of identification with the Armenian identity.

Three out of four answers indicate their agreement with the fact that the Armenian society is collectivistic rather than individualistic, a characteristic that is linked to most of the so-called “developing countries”. Although all societies present features of both types of cultures, Armenian individuals “feel involved in the lives of other members of their group” (Greif, 1994: 913).

Only 25% of the subjects consider that in Artsakh there has been an imposition of the Azerbaijani identity over the Armenian, especially during the Soviet times (Subject 1). However, Subject 8 considers that this can change if the level of ethnic Azeri population of the region rises.

Despite not considering that the Azeri identity is not being imposed in Nagorno-Karabakh, almost 40% of the answers indicate the generalized feeling of the existence of lack of respect to the Karabakh Armenian identity by the Azeris. Historical facts prove that when the region was dominated by the Azeri SSR, the policies implemented left the region in a very precarious and disadvantageous situation. In fact, 62,5% of the subjects believe that there is a clear situation of conflict among a majority (the Azeris) and a minority (the Armenians, and in particular, the Karabakh Armenians), in which the larger group uses their higher amount of resources in order to threaten a smaller group.

Regarding the experience of dominance, almost 90% of the individuals believe that Armenian people would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh or to vindicate the past and more recent actions carried on by Azerbaijan.

Finally, every individual acknowledges a greater identification of the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh with the Armenian identity rather than with the Azeri identity. This factor is linked to the prevalence of a population made up of mostly ethnic Armenians, despite the changes in the statistical values in the last decades and the high rates of immigration.

		SUBJECT									
QUESTION NUMBER		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	% YES	
	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	62,50%
	2	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	50%	
	3	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	75%	
	4	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	50%	
	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	87,50%	
	6	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	87,50%	
	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	75%	
	8	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	25%	
	9	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	62,50%	
	10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%	
	11	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	87,50%	
	12	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	62,50%	
	13	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	50%	
	14	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	87,50%	
	15	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	75%	
	16	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	25%	
	17	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	37,50%	
	18	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	62,50%	
	19	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	87,50%	
20	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%		
TOTAL									67,5%		

Table 12: Summary of the answer to the questions from Block 2¹⁰.

Source: own elaboration.

Overall, we observe that 67,5% of the questions of Block 2 have been answered with “yes” (Table 12). Although the model Early Warning Model for Identity Conflicts is not a conclusive test, we can predict that the chances of new hostilities taking place in the near-future are quite elevated.

¹⁰ *Subject 4 and 8 have answered the recodified questions (Annex I).

CONCLUSION

Once the answers to the questions of both Block 1 and Block 2 have been analyzed, we come to the conclusion that: 1) for the ethnic Armenian population (and namely for those who identify as Armenians), the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh is rooted in ethnic arguments; and 2) following the presented model, there is a high risk of them willing to start a new round of aggression and armed warfare with the Republic of Azerbaijan due to the issue surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh or if they feel that there is a real threat to the integrity of their land, which sustains their identitarian values. Both of these conclusions will be explained in more detail in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSIONS

Once we have introduced the historical approach, the theoretical approach, and the analysis of the Armenian public opinion according to the results obtained through the interviews that have been carried on, we will conclude with a final assessment in which we will verify or refute the presented hypotheses, as well as the response to the research questions and objectives. The relevance of the Artsakh or Nagorno Karabakh region derives from ethnic reasons that the Armenians justify by the use of the history of their people. The fact that the Azeris and the Turkish are considered part of the same ethnic group, and by connecting this consideration with the perpetuation of the Armenian Genocide in 1915, causes the fight for the land that currently is (and was until recently) part of the Republic of Armenia to be quite exacerbated, and an important part of the reality of the country. The collective historical memory, hence, plays a key role in the defense of the areas whose population is mostly ethnic Armenian.

The transfer of these specific region involves, on one hand, the loss of historically meaningful land, but, on the other hand, and because NK was one of the enclaves that resisted through time in an “autonomous or independent” way without giving up their Armenian identity, it also represents “the loss of a big part of the Armenian identity” (Gamaghelyan, 2010: 38).

For these reasons, the signature of the ceasefire agreement that ended the 2020’s War of Nagorno Karabakh on the past 10th of November was understood by many Armenians as a betrayal from their Prime Minister. Although this dispute can be traced back to the last century, and despite a reasonable amount of the Armenian population agreeing that it would have been necessary to take action in previous moments and especially before the Velvet Revolution and Pashinyan’s ascent to power, his current political position is highly jeopardized. The early election that will be held on the next 20th of June will be critical to the democratic process of the Republic of Armenia, despite the existing political alternatives being far from the values and principles for which they fought for in the 2018 revolutionary process.

Likewise, some actors also consider that because Pashinyan acted in a more supportive and friendly attitude towards the United States, it led to a less favorable resolution of the conflict to Armenia, as Moscow considers some of the PM’s stances towards the Kremlin quite unrespectful (Zarrilli, 2021: 169). It has also been argued that the PM used the COVID-19 pandemic to increase the power of his government, causing dissatisfaction among the population. The opposition has also criticized the poor management of the epidemiological situation, which combined with the economic crisis that shakes the country, supported the voices of those asking for his resignation (Ferreira & Canário, 2021: 30).

This general discontent with the current government is also reflected when it comes to determining the next steps to be followed, as many consider him a bad diplomat who is not strong enough to control foreign affairs to the benefit of Armenia. Furthermore, and although maintaining peace seems to be the most favorable option for the country, it is also believed that the negotiations in order to retrieve NK should be continued. Even though the right of self-determination is not in the focus of the debate (as the main idea is to reintegrate the enclave into the Republic of Armenia), it is notable how this principle of International Law is used when aiming to justify their cause.

When referring to the international actors and moving beyond the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, it is impossible to exclude the role of Russia over the course of this conflict and during its resolution, as it was the main mediator regarding the signing of the ceasefire agreement. Despite trying to show an arbitrary position, it cannot be denied that the main reason that led them to take part in such an active way is the defense of their own interests: maintaining and reassuring their presence and influence in the Caucasus, while also improving the opinion of the international society. However, their authority might be threatened in five years, in case Azerbaijan decides not to renew the terms of the 2020's arrangement, meaning the withdrawal of the peacekeeping forces of the area.

If Russia's role cannot be denied, the participation of Turkey is still discussed among academics, as some authors argue that there is not enough evidence that proves it (Yavuz & Huseynov, 2020: 108). In contrast, most Armenians defend that Turkey has in fact taken part in the conflict, as they are historical allies of the Azeris. The idea of the Turks aiming for the creation of a Pan-Turkish country by either establishing a corridor to Azerbaijan or by fully conquering Armenia is deeply rooted in the society. In addition, the constant denial of the Armenian Genocide is understood as the permanence of the idea that their final goal is the domination and annihilation of their people. Despite these negative preconceptions, external research highlights the importance of bettering the relationship between both nations, and especially of opening the borders, as the current situation implies a "threat to national security and prevent the sustainable development of Armenia, impact on regional stability and on regional cooperation in general" (Aleksanyan, 2020: 39). Lastly, the OSCE Minsk Group has proved to only be a mere formality, as up to the day it has not managed to generate a real impact on the region. In fact, when asked about the role of international actors, most Armenians (particularly those who are not specialists in fields related to International Relations, Political Science, and similar) do not even mention them, showing the low consideration they have about their significance.

Finally, regarding the resumption of hostilities in the near future, we can conclude that it is not realistic to dismiss this possibility (although it is not clear whether they will take place between the Armenians and the Azeris or the Azeris and the Russians if the peacekeeping troops are dismissed in five years). However, we can assert that the current agreement does not make both of the main actors involved satisfied, making the maintenance of peace for a long time unlikely. In addition, the last incursions of the Azeri troops in the southern border of Armenia has simply increased the nationalist feeling of the Armenians, as well as the already existent prejudice to the ethnic Turks.

Once presented the answers to our research questions, we can state that our three hypotheses have been verified (Table 13), as 1) it has been proved the general disagreement of the Armenian society with the ceasefire agreement signed by PM Nikol Pashinyan on the 10th of November 2020; 2) the ethnic component that characterize this conflict increase the negative perception of the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh; and 3) if Armenians feel threatened by the Azeris, they will be willing to return to the hostilities.

OBJECTIVES	HYPOTHESIS	VERIFIED	REFUTED
MO: to analyze the impact on Armenian's public opinion of the NK war and the signing of the ceasefire agreement by Nikol Pashinyan.	H1: a great part of society has a negative perception of the conduct of the war and peace negotiations by PM Nikol Pashinyan.	X	
O1: to understand the reasons why maintaining Artsakh sovereignty is so relevant for the Armenian people.	H2: due to the ethnic component of the Artsakh conflict the decision to give up the territory has a particularly negative effect on public opinion.	X	
O2: to determine the readiness of the Armenian people to engage in conflict with Azerbaijan in the near future.	H3: Armenians are willing to engage in warfare with Azerbaijan if they feel that their identity or territory is being threatened.	X	

Table 13: Verification of the Objectives and Hypothesis.
Source: own elaboration.

Finally, and despite all the limitations found during the course of the investigation (specifically, regarding the language barrier and the sensibility of the issue due to its recently) we conclude that this research paper can bring a new approach to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as it explores a new perspective and demonstrates the thoughts that characterize the Armenian society in the post-war scenario.

FINAL REMARKS.

This paper was finished on the 16th of June, 2021.

However, during the investigation process, there had already been crashes in the Armenian province of Syunik (Kucera, 2021; The Armenian Weekly, 2021). One Armenian soldier was reported to be killed by the Azeri troops (BBC News, 2021).

In fact, on May 19th, 2021, the European Parliament passed a Joint Motion in which, among other issues, they treated the question of the war prisoners, and "demands the immediate and unconditional release of all Armenian prisoners, both military and civilian, detained during and after the conflict, and that Azerbaijan refrain from making arbitrary detentions in the future" (European Parliament, 2021). The Motion also stated that "on 12 May 2021, troops from Azerbaijan temporarily entered the territory of Armenia, which amounts to a violation of the territorial integrity of Armenia and of international law" (European Parliament, 2021).

These events prove that the conflict is still ongoing, and, therefore, new attacks could happen in the meantime that this paper is deposited and presented in front of a tribunal.

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ANNEX I: INTERVIEWS

REFORMULATION OF THE QUESTIONS

When Question 1 (*“Do you consider that your main identity is “Armenian”?”*) implies that the subject does not identify as at Armenian at all, the following questions will be modified:

Question 2: Would you be willing to engage in conflict for the common good of Armenians?

Question 2.a: Do you believe that Armenians would you willing to engage in conflict for the common good of their people?

Question 6: Do you feel threatened by the Azeris?

Question 6.a: Do you believe Armenians feel threatened by the Azeris?

Question 10: Do you identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

Question 10.a: Do you believe that Armenians identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

Question 12: Do you identify with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

Question 12.a: Do you think that there is a general identification among Armenians with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

Question 13: Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?

Question 13.a: Do you believe that Armenians think they are morally superior to Azeris?

INTERVIEW 1

Subject 1, who is part of the specialist groups, is a 54-year-old Armenian female. She was born in Vanadzor (Lori province) but she currently lives in Yerevan. She graduated with a BA in Law from Yerevan State University. Nowadays, she is not only the Head Center for International Relations and Research of one of Yerevan's international private universities but also the Deputy Head of the Law Department. Her fields of focus are Constitutional Law, European Law, and International Law.

Block 1

1. Why is Artsakh so important for the Armenian people?

It is a part of our motherland. My father was born in the Vanadzor, and I would like to say that Artsakh is not the only part of our motherland that used to be part of it, part of the historically Armenia (with historical evidence coming from before Christianity), which was taken away from us.

Some people say we need Artsakh for protection, but I think that is a wrong idea. Artsakh is part of Armenia. We now talk about the Armenian Republic, but it is not the whole motherland of Armenians, because our national land is bigger and we want to live in our land.

2. What does the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan mean to you?

The Azeris don't have the right to have it. This was our land from, and I want to emphasize it again, before Christianity: we created Armenian culture, we lived in these places for ages (we lived there 3000 years). Then some people came and they conquered the place and now they say "this is our state". But it is not theirs. We need to also understand that during the USSR it wasn't part of Azerbaijan, because it was an Autonomous Region.

At the beginning of the creation of the Soviet Union, 98% of the population was Armenian. At the moment when the USSR collapsed, after 70 years, it was 76% approximately. It means we lost some part of Armenians, and 78% [of the inhabitants of Artsakh], and the people of Armenia also, wanted to join together because we are one nation and this is our historical land. I think we are right and we need to be in our motherland.

We also know that International Law defends that each nation has the right to self-determination, and this is part of our nation. They [Karabakh Armenians] live in their historical land which belongs to them since before Christianity, and they have lived their whole lives until some artificial country came and said: "this is our land". However, the people that lived in that place wanted to [execute the right of] self-determination and we are right because International Law also protects us.

Sometimes, Azerbaijan says they need to protect their borders, but International Relations, International Law, have these principles. But, is this principle related to the Artsakh conflict? No, because this is our national territory and we have lived here 3000 years and now we want to [execute the right of] self-determination and join the other part [of Armenia]. Or maybe they will want to create their own country and we will have two Armenian states. I do not know what the people who live in Karabakh would really want to join us or to create their own country, but this is also their right. Anyway, I think International Law will protect us.

3. What do you think about the agreement signed on November 10th of 2020 by PM Nikol Pashinyan?

I hate it. I hate it because it was the will of one person and I think he did not have the right to sign that agreement.

I think we really need to protect our land and our people. He did not keep one of the principles of the Armenian Constitution: human [lives] have a high value in Armenia. I think our government changed the principles, the main principles, and that's why we had a problem. Our former power negotiated and talked about self-determination, but the new government changed its ideas and now we are out of the law. They changed their ideas and talked about the land and territory but not about human rights, self-determination, and that is why we lost our privileges and made us be out of law and that's why the war was possible.

4. What steps do you think should be followed next?

I was part of the Velvet Revolution, and I think we need changes. That was, indeed, a time of change but now I think one of the former leaders is a very strong person whom I don't know if can change something inside of Armenia, but he can decide the problems of the borders and give stability. Also, some of our enemies are afraid of him because he has a very strong personality and knows what to do next. Not the whole former government, but one of its members.

I think we need a new government, an Armenian government, a national government, who will think about its sovereignty, about its people, and who can protect us and will carry on the idea of self-determination. We need to renew our negotiations. The Minsk Group also has to change its priorities, but we need to continue our negotiations and discussions. We need to return to that question: should Artsakh be independent? The people of Artsakh need to implement [the right of] self-determination.

5. What is the role of other international actors, mainly Russia and Turkey, in this conflict?

I think Turkey was the country that organized a proxy war, and I think they want to conquer not only Armenia but also Azerbaijan. Turkey was a terrorist country in the 21st century and I think that they need to be punished, not only for this [the 2020 war] but also for the Genocide. Maybe you have heard about multiple discussions about the possibility of recognizing the Genocide, but to me, it is important because if you punish someone once, they understand what they did. We did not punish we Turkish government and that is the reason why they did many things with Kurds, with Syria, with Lebanon, with Armenia... and they will continue. They will do more bad things if we don't punish them. We will see a lot of aggression in the future if we don't punish the Turkish. I also think they will also have a big conflict with the EU.

Russia's role is very complicated because it has its own interests and it did everything for its own [interests]: not for Armenia, not for Turkey, not for Azerbaijan... They decided, in my opinion, to negotiate with Turkey and they took a part of Armenia (the one that is important for them) and gave it to Azerbaijan, without thinking about other territories. I cannot say I don't like Russia but I do not like their policy now. And even though I was raised very much in a Russian way, I am Armenian. I believe that when we think about future strategies and when we want to make decisions over this problem in the near future, we will need to cooperate with Russia.

Sometimes I think this was not our conflict, and that the international community used Armenia for their conflict with Russia.

You asked about Russia and Turkey, but the main actors to me were Great Britain and the US because I think it was their idea to start this war. They prepared everything during the lockdown. I think this was a conflict... I think it was an American proxy war through the Turkish hand and it was also a proxy war with Turkey against Armenians, but in reality, it was a proxy war of the US against Russian. So, three levels.

I also think that it is a good idea to have both Russia and the US become part of the Minks Group, because in one place we join the different parts of conflict in order to make a single decision, to generate a consensus. However, we had a problem when the Minks Group and other organizations tried to find a solution for the current situation because they do not understand that a problem cannot be solved without using the historical background. The Group needs to understand and explain that Azerbaijanis have the right to live in those places, but it is not their country.

6. Do you think that the transfer of Artsakh will lead to future hostilities?

Yes. Not only Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenian. Nakhijevan is Armenian. Part of Turkey is Armenia and part of Georgia is Armenia. If Armenians leave they will think about their land every time, and it means that other neighbors need to understand that they cannot conquer our land and leave happily.

Each family told their children about their land. When I was in Sochi (Russia), showed me the sunset and told me that it was our real home. Each year, when I was a child, we went to Sochi, and every day, every time I saw the sunset I thought about my motherland (where my mother comes from).

Azeris and Turkish are the same nation, and they will try to conquer our nation, but we remember. Unconsciously, on a DNA level, we know that our home is there, and no one can change it.

I am not a nationalist. I fight for human rights, and I try to protect human rights, but I do not like that someone likes to make a prohibition or something else and that is why we have our right to protect ourselves. I want to go home and enjoy my life. Our children know that this is Armenia, but not their home because part of their home is in Azerbaijan, part is in Turkey...

Block 2: Early Warning Model indicators

1. Do you consider that your main identity is “Armenian”?

Yes.

2. Would you be willing to engage in conflict for the common good of Armenians?

Yes, and I believe that as in the case of the last war, many diaspora Armenians who have never visited the Republic would come and fight too.

3. Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?

Yes, because the Armenian government has not done anything. If we had a new one we would be much stronger, but now we are out of the law and therefore we cannot have external support. If they [the current Armenian government] had emphasized their identity by remaining inside of the limits of law, we would have much more external support, especially basing us in the rights of self-determination and sovereignty. Also, the Geneva Convention could turn the public opinion against Azerbaijan due to the crimes against prisoners and the use of illegal weapons.

4. Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?

Yes, but we must understand that identity evolves and sometimes it gets harder to understand for the people.

5. Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?

Yes, and there should be.

6. Do you feel threatened by the Azeris?

Yes, but only because of the weakness of this government.

7. Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?

Yes, in general, but in this case there is also some people that would be willing to give it away.

8. Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian's lives?

Yes, but it would be better to do it through negotiations and diplomacy. However, they would do it.

9. Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?

Yes. Some of their representatives have even stated that they "dream to kill Armenians" and that "would only keep one Armenian in a Museum". [The source of this quotation was not given].

10. Do you identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

Yes.

11. Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?

Yes, but the competition is not coming from their side, as don't have evidence nor history [to claim that Artsakh is their territory].

12. Do you identify with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

Yes.

13. Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?

Yes.

14. Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?

Yes.

15. Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic? ("Collectivistic orientation characterizes societies where the group is perceived as primary and the person secondary").

No.

16. Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?

Yes, especially during the USSR.

17. Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?

Yes.

18. Do you see Armenians/Artsakh Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?

Yes.

19. Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?

Yes, but they will win not only Artsakh but the whole Nakhijevan and Karabakh regions.

20. Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

Yes. They are Armenians and want to be Armenians. They are even stronger than Armenians from the Republic, as they kept their identity during the USSR and they fight for their land, returning to it even if it is dangerous. They are very strong, and nobody can conquer them.

INTERVIEW 2

Subject 2 is a 23-year-old Armenian male. His family and himself are originally from Artsakh, although they had relocated to Yerevan, where he has lived since his birth. He pursued a BA degree in Law at Yerevan State University. He currently works as a Legal Expert at the Office of Representative before the European Court of Human Rights (Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia), where he focuses in the fields of International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law, and Conflict Studies.

Block 1

1. Why is Artsakh so important for the Armenian people?

This is a multilayer question. First of all, it has a moral significance for Armenian people as it is an integral part of our historical homeland. Besides, the territory of Artsakh has strategic importance for the whole Armenia for purpose of ensuring the countries' security and safety. Further, the location of Artsakh on the world map offers a wide range of economic opportunities as it is situated right on the crossroad of the east and west. Hence, it is hard to give a single reason for the importance of Artsakh for the Armenians. However, I would emphasize that first and foremost Artsakh is a part of our identity.

2. What does the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan mean to you?

It is the worst that could have happened to Artsakh and Armenian population. We have been naive trying to solve the conflict by negotiations for nearly thirty years, believing that it is possible to speak with an enemy in a civilized manner. We were wrong. The Azerbaijani authorities restored the solution to a war by implementing prohibited means and methods for their aims. And that worked: they occupied part of the territory of the Republic of Artsakh without being held accountable for any war crime committed. However, their success will not last long. The situation created on the ground after the end of hostilities is unbearable for Armenians. I am sure that this is just a temporary ceasefire, new war will follow.

3. What do you think about the agreement signed on November 10th of 2020 by PM Nikol Pashinyan?

Firstly, it is not an agreement, but just a joint statement of the three leaders. As regards its content, I would say that it is an imposed document, that offered nothing beneficial for Armenia. The only thing that has positive effect is the termination of hostilities. I even would not call it a ceasefire, because the current situation on the ground is highly unstable and could turn into clashes at every moment. The situation resulted after the statement only increased the

possibility of further armed conflicts. That's why, let's say that the joint statement has given only an opportunity to pause the war for a certain period of time.

4. What steps do you think should be followed next?

Firstly, we should stabilize the political situation in Armenia. In the current state of chaos, it is impossible to speak about future and development. Secondly, we should work hard with the society to ensure they do not lose their hope in future. Parallel to this, a massive reform in all fields of the state governance should be conducted. As a result of this and many other factors, a new era of the stabilization and development could start for the Armenian people. If the country's internal situation is steady, this will positively affect the country's foreign policy as well.

5. What is the role of other international actors, mainly Russia and Turkey, in this conflict?

The direct participation of Turkey in the war is more than evident. As it is known, this has been even established by the European Court of Human Rights, by its decision of 6 October 2020 calling to all States directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, including Turkey, to refrain from actions that contribute to breaches of the Convention rights of civilians, and to respect their obligations under the Convention. In addition, the Turkey's involvement has been proved by the leaders of many countries and international organizations in their official statements. Moreover, the president and the government of Turkey has numerously stated that they anyhow support Azerbaijan in the war.

As regards Russia's involvement, I would say, that it adhered its policy of acting as mediator and unlike Turkey, refrained from any direct participation in the hostilities.

6. Do you think that the transfer of Artsakh will lead to future hostilities?

Definitely yes, as I have mentioned above, the joint statement serves only as a temporary deal on ceasefire. Further hostilities and new wars are inescapable.

Block 2: Early Warning Model indicators

1. Do you consider that your main identity is "Armenian"?

Yes.

2. Would you be willing to engage in conflict for the common good of Armenians?

Yes.

3. Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?

Absolutely, no. Armenians' position in any sphere and on any level, is much more advantageous, because it is based on real true facts and argumentations.

4. Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?

Not after the war. Currently we are facing nationwide crisis on self-esteem and personal and social safety.

5. Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?

Yes, for sure. I suppose the same goes with Azerbaijani society as well.

6. Do you feel threatened by the Azeris?

No. You can hardly find anyone in Armenia who feels threatened by them.

7. Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?

Yes. In general, I do not think Armenians are supportive towards each other as a society, but when it comes to conflict or any other national threat, we become extra helpful and supportive. This is a national phenome hard to explain.

8. Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian's lives?

Yes. I think, that as far as there is a conflict in the country, it is hard to speak about high quality lives. Thus, engaging in a conflict with the purpose of final resolution of Artsakh is the only solution I can imagine for the improvement of the quality of our lives.

9. Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?

No. I will say it is not the Armenians who are likely to engage in conflict. Normally (and sometimes, unfortunately) we are the ones who become the victim of the aggression initiated from the Azeris/Turks' side just because we are living on this part of the world.

10. Do you identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

Yes, mostly.

11. Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?

Yes, probably.

12. Do you identify with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

Yes.

13. Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?

Yes, the behavior of both sides during the armed conflict proved that.

14. Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?

Yes, I suppose. It is hard to answer.

15. Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic? (“Collectivistic orientation characterizes societies where the group is perceived as primary and the person secondary”).

No, we are right the opposite.

16. Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?

Absolutely no. I have never noticed anything related to Azerbaijani identity in Artsakh at all.

17. Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?

No, I would say it is much more respected than in Armenia.

18. Do you see Armenians/Artsakh Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?

No, it can be assumed that there is such attitude among our society towards Artsakhian people, but it is not the reality. As I mentioned above, we are rather individual oriented nation, who like to distinct persons based on the regions (for example we distinct Gavartsis-people from Gavar city, Syunetsi- people from Syunik region, Gyumretsi-people from Gyumri city, etc.). Thus, I will say that it is more national character than a minority-threatening behavior.

19. Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?

Yes, for sure. We should fight for the liberation of our historical lands- the whole territory of the Republic of Artsakh and surrounding regions.

20. Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

Yes, totally. As I have already mentioned there is nothing about Azerbaijanis or Azerbaijani identity in Artsakh.

INTERVIEW 3

Subject 3 is a 30-year-old female. Although she was born and raised in the Lori Region (Armenia), she moved to Siberia (Russia) at age 15, where she lived until age 21, when she relocated to Thailand for a period of 5 years. After the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, she returned to Armenia, and she is currently pursuing a MA in Political Science & International Affairs from the American University of Armenia (Yerevan). During her first year of the Master's degree, she researched the concept of Nation-Army in Armenia, which was carried by former Armenia's Defense Minister. The participants of the research were Armenian former soldiers who were in the service during the 4-day war back in 2016 or soldiers who were not a part of the 4-day conflict but were doing their service from 2016 to 2018.

Block 1

1. Why is Artsakh so important for the Armenian people?

When we say Armenian people, I think it is mostly for Yerevan people. I am not saying it is not important for provinces, but it is specifically important for the Yerevan people. I am from the provinces, my family is from the provinces, and they think it is important, but they do not really go crazy about it. They don't come out and protest about it. Also, it is just like for any country, territorial integrity. When it is a part of your territory you feel worried about it.

I think that Yerevan people historically are very outgoing about protesting and historically they always find something out and go out and protest about the current government, which is good because it is always good to go out and ask for more and to be ambitious, but I believe it is a part of the Yerevan society, especially the elite. The high society is extremely worried about Artsakh, which I am worried about too, but in the provinces... Even [the people who are not part of] the elite of Yerevan, but the people who came from the provinces. have so many worries and so many problems with the places where they live that they don't really have much ambition to go out and fight for it.

I think that the elite, they just have better jobs, they have studied in better universities, so obviously they have more to worry about and actually go out and talk about. Meanwhile, people in these provinces [or coming from these provinces] worry about their daily food and bread and activities. For example, Artsakh is important but Lori is equally important in my opinion.

2. What does the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan mean to you?

To me, it is a lot, and I think that it should have been solved earlier. In my opinion, it was not solved by the previous government of Armenia in order to take people's minds away from their own daily activities and just worry that they have this thing going on. If they could give those seven territories back to Azerbaijan 10 years ago, what we had now wouldn't have it: we

wouldn't have war. We would be the good country who took care of their problems, who are not occupiers, who have what is not theirs back to them [to Azerbaijan]. So obviously, when there is a war, they had [to give away] a huge chunk of Artsakh. What is left is ridiculous.

I think it has to be this way because when a problem is not solved on time, it is going to end up very badly.

The solution is to solve it, and it was solved in a very bad way, but it is kind of solved at the moment and it is in the process of being [fully] solved. We can't just have it as a problem on our tails and live like this from generation to generation.

3. What do you think about the agreement signed on November 10th of 2020 by PM Nikol Pashinyan?

The agreement was not good. The agreement that was signed I also think it was a capitulation and it was very bad. The government had to save what was left, and if we continued the war we would not be happy; if they stopped the war we are not happy... So I think it is a totally horrible place to be right now. I think it's bad, but it is something. And I do not even know if it is an agreement... I know there are nine points if I am not mistaken and all those points are really bad for Armenia, really good for Russia, and not that bad for Azerbaijan. So, it is bad for us, but when you get to the point when something should be solved that quickly and without being thoughtful and without trying hard to make a plan, that is what you sign: to save whatever is left there.

I think it was something that had to be done at some point, and it is in a very bad time when there is COVID going on, when the world is so busy with everything... I think it is very bad but it is something. We can just say we lost it and learn from it, which I think we don't, and that's the worst.

4. What steps do you think should be followed next?

I think that in the future we need to also think about the internal stuff, what is going on inside of the country. We need to make sure where the border ends with Azerbaijan obviously, also. We are not sure where the border is right now, which is really bad. When the Azeris were talking about territorial integrity, Armenians could talk about territorial integrity too: the Republic of Armenia and what is happening, not in Artsakh anymore. I think if we had the right politicians and people who are good diplomats (we just don't have good diplomacy) they could work this out the other way around.

The next step is that the borders should be open. We should open the border with Turkey, that is my personal opinion because we cannot live in a landlocked country like this anymore. We need the borders to be open, we need to have the trains... Actually, in my ideal world, we need to share the pipeline. Armenia is the only country that is not part of that whole thing in the

Caucasus, and that is ridiculous. We need to work on that. There is a huge pipeline going right next to our country and we are not getting it. Something is wrong with us: we do not work hard. If we open Turkey Yerevan can have transportation of oil in the Caucasus and also the East of Turkey can be developed because it can be connected to this side as well because we know that the West of Turkey is very developed but the East not that much.

The future should be open borders for sure. With Azerbaijan, we need to work as well. When I see so much hate I don't know how we can do that but in my ideal world, I would just work with the pipeline, the transportation, the trains (like it was in the USSR, when, I think, a train rode from Baku to Yerevan)... I am not sure it is going to happen, I mean, it is not going to happen next month. But it is naturally happening.

5. What is the role of other international actors, mainly Russia and Turkey, in this conflict?

I think the Minsk Group (that is Russia, the US, and France), even though it has been here for a long time they really did not solve anything. This last year, 2020, the United States didn't participate, we can say. Even though the French president said big words and tried to support everything.... that doesn't work that way. Just because we treat different things doesn't actually help.

Russia is the only one who is carrying about the "near abroad politics" right now, I think, and they got what they wanted. Now have their troops: the Russian soldiers that are in Gyumri (Armenia), now they are in Artshak, they are in Azerbaijan... They are everywhere. They are also in South Ossetia (Georgia), so they got what they wanted.

Turkey's role was big, obviously, as they call themselves "one nation, two nationalities": the Turkish and the Azeris. They obviously helped Azerbaijan, but I think, again, we just need good diplomacy. We have zero diplomacy. Our diplomacy was only good at the very beginning of the Republic (the early 90's, when Levon Ter-Petrosyan was the President). After that, we basically did not worry about diplomacy. We think Russia can solve it for us.

6. Do you think that the transfer of Artsakh will lead to future hostilities?

I think it won't. First, I do not think Armenians have any power left. Second, I think hostilities might happen later between Azerbaijan and Russia. I think that something will happen later because the agreement that was signed on November 10th says that the Russian troops (or the peacekeepers, as the document refers to) will be in Artsakh for 5 years, and then, if both sides agree, for another 5 years, and I do not think that in 10 years the Russians will say "Okay, guys, it is all yours. We are leaving our peacekeeping job". I think there is going to be something between those two, and hopefully, if we work on that, we can get something out of it. Or we can't! So hostilities between us (Armenia and Azerbaijan) maybe not, but between

Russia and Azerbaijan for sure: the Russians are just not going to leave it. It is the Russian plan of expanding their power everywhere in the region (not everywhere, but in the Caucasus).

Block 2: Early Warning Model indicators

1. Do you consider that your main identity is “Armenian”?

Yes.

2. Would you be willing to engage in conflict for the common good of Armenians?

No.

3. Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?

Yes.

4. Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?

No.

5. Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?

Yes.

6. Do you feel threatened by the Azeris?

Yes.

7. Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?

No.

8. Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian’s lives?

No.

9. Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?

No.

10. Do you identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

Yes.

11. Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?

No.

12. Do you identify with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

Yes.

13. Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?

No.

14. Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?

Yes.

15. Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic? (“Collectivistic orientation characterizes societies where the group is perceived as primary and the person secondary”).

Yes.

16. Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?

No.

17. Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?

No.

18. Do you see Armenians/Artsakh Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?

No.

19. Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?

Yes.

20. Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

Yes.

INTERVIEW 4

Subject 4 is a 24 years-old British male who has been living in Yerevan (Armenia) since after the signature of the ceasefire agreement. He is currently a member of the faculty of a public Armenian university, as he is taking part in an fellowship program awarded by the German government (the country in which he graduated with a MA in Eastern European Studies). Besides lecturing on Political Sciences related issues, he also carries on research on judicial politics in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, as well as the legal approximation process to the EU system of these countries' legal structures.

Block 1

1. Why is Artsakh so important for the Armenian people?

Artsakh is not important in itself, but for what it represents symbolically. When the Soviets took over the Caucasus the Nakchievan exclave was of a similar size to Artsakh and had a large Armenian population. It also had ancient churches and Armenian historical sites. But Armenians today do not spend all their time talking about Nakchievan. Artsakh represents the historical identity of Armenians as a persecuted people who have always fought to preserve their identity. This message is repeated over and over by families, schools, the media and diaspora organizations.

For Armenians, the Artsakh conflict is a direct continuation of the Armenian Genocide and the battles for Armenian independence in the early 20th century. Since Armenia now has fixed national borders, this struggle is focused on the "grey zone" of Artsakh created by the heavy-handed nation building of the Soviet Union.

More symbolically, due to the war and its isolation, Artsakh and its people have become a symbol of certain "Armenian values". Its people are seen as tougher, stronger, more warlike and more willing to defend Armenia. They are also seen as more traditional due to isolation from the world, and therefore have preserved a more "true" Armenian culture. This symbolism has been reinforced by most Armenians taking "pilgrimages" to Artsakh during their youths, or through military service there.

2. What does the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan mean to you?

If we are talking about a total transfer - then this would be a humanitarian disaster. It would essentially mean the flight or expulsion of the entire Armenian population. Despite Azerbaijan's propaganda which claims it to be a multi-ethnic state, there is strong reason to fear for the safety of any Armenians who choose to remain. Azerbaijan treats the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh as occupiers not citizens, and given the repressive nature of the regime, we cannot expect much decency.

If we talk about the transfer of the 5 territories surrounding the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, then this is something which should have happened almost 30 years ago, but on different terms. Many Armenians recognize that these territories were not significantly occupied by Armenians when the Soviet Union fell. They were simply a strategic buffer zone in case of another war.

Some former Azeri villages seem to have been settled by Armenians after the first war. In any case, these regions are unlikely to be repopulated by either side given the demographic trends in the region, unless the Azeri government invests heavily in repopulation as a propaganda exercise. In short, these are not valuable regions to fight a serious war over.

The great tragedy is that there was a failure to reach a compromise where these lands would be returned in exchange for some kind of agreement concerning the "rump" of Nagorno-Karabakh where Armenians actually live.

3. What do you think about the agreement signed on November 10th of 2020 by PM Nikol Pashinyan?

The ceasefire signed by Pashinyan was the only realistic option at that moment. Continuing the war would have meant the loss of all of Artsakh plus many more casualties and mass displacement. Had Azerbaijani troops reached Stepanakert, we would have seen a humanitarian disaster. Russia was not prepared to intervene.

The question is why the war was allowed to continue for so long at such a cost, when Armenia was clearly militarily inferior to Azerbaijan. Pashinyan and his general staff must have known this, so it is hard to see what took them so long. Pride? The belief that 10 Armenians are stronger than 1000 Azeris (with drones)? Maybe we will never know.

The second question is why the current and all previous governments failed to come to a peace agreement and exchange the 5 regions for guarantees for Artsakh. Or why were they so complacent about preparing for war.

Kocharyan, Sargsyan and other members of the "Karabakh clan" have a lot of responsibility for this. They removed President Levon Ter-Petrosyan because he wanted peace with Azerbaijan (which meant some territorial concessions). Kocharyan & co. behaved like classic nationalist populist leaders and convinced people to reject peace and choose armed defense. They appealed to Armenian's historical memory of war and genocide to do this. They also relied on their reputation as military leaders in the war.

But then instead of seriously preparing to defend Artsakh, they relied totally on their relationship with Russia as a security guarantor. Despite the rhetoric of a "military state", the Republicans were corrupt and left the military underfunded.

Just like Aliiev "needs" Artsakh to exist to support his aggressive nationalist propaganda in Azerbaijan, so to did the Republican party "need" Artsakh to preserve their rule.

I firmly believe that if Ter-Petrosyan had been able to defeat Kocharyan's nationalism and conclude a peace agreement in the 90s, the current war could have been avoided. Azerbaijan was in a weak position, and would have been more willing to compromise than any other time.

4. What steps do you think should be followed next?

I think that Armenia should take the maximum steps to normalize relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. It should declare that it will open the borders and trade with Turkey without insisting on the recognition of the genocide in return. It should open railway links from Russia to Iran in partnership with Azerbaijan. It should allow transit from Azerbaijan to Nakhchevan (as stated in the agreement), but strategically in a way which encourages economic development. It should try to normalize the border situation as much as possible for the sake of people living in the new border zones. Open borders with Azerbaijan may be too unrealistic, but transit corridors could be possible.

Many Armenians cannot understand why they should try to have good relations with neighbors who want to wipe them out and who they just lost a war to. But in reality both Turkey and Azerbaijan benefit from having an isolated and belligerent Armenia as their neighbor. It helps their anti-Armenian propaganda and keeps Armenia isolated. If Armenia suddenly declared its desire to normalize relations, this would undermine the Turkish/Azeri narrative.

In any case, opening up Armenia is essential to its prosperity and for the lives of future generations. Armenia's forced isolation did not make it better prepared for war. If anything, Azerbaijan proved itself effective in using international military procurement while Armenia was left with outdated tech and poorly equipped soldiers.

The problem is that such an outcome is unlikely. None of the parties are explicitly offering such a solution in their campaigns. Maybe the winner will become pragmatic and try a policy of normalization later, but they will face fierce resistance from Kocharyan, the ARF and the diaspora.

5. What is the role of other international actors, mainly Russia and Turkey, in this conflict?

Russia is at the core of this conflict. The Soviet Union is responsible not only for the territorial division which created the dispute over Artsakh, but also for the rise of ethno-nationalist politics.

The Soviets took an extremely ethnically diverse region and divided it into ethno-republics, where a different ethnicity dominated each republic. This was bound to create favoritism and ethnic tension. It is no surprise that the fiercest leaders of all three Caucasus Republics were senior members of the Communist party in their republics (Shevardnadze, Aliyev and Ter-Petrosyan). The Soviet Republics created the framework for ethno-nationalist conflict.

Russia also gave the starting signal for the war in my view. After the Velvet Revolution in 2018, many asked whether Putin would allow the development of a democratic government in his backyard. We all saw what happened with Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. For a while there was silence, but eventually the cracks showed. When Armenia arrested the head of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, things got serious. Russian media started negatively reporting on Armenia, and Margarita Simonyan - the Head of Russia Today - famously called Armenia ungrateful and warned that it would be crushed without Russia.

It is no coincidence that the earlier skirmishes in July 2020 took place immediately after that statement. There is no doubt that Azerbaijan took this as a sign that Russia might not be willing to unconditionally support Armenia.

Russia is also the main winner of the conflict. By swooping in at the last moment to save the rump of Artsakh, Russia has once again inserted its troops and influence into the region and made Armenia almost entirely dependent.

I do not think Turkey plays as big a role in the conflict as many think. Of course, the evidence suggests that they supported Azerbaijan before and during the war militarily. Perhaps Aliiev would not have advanced with Turkish support. But I think that Erdogan's priorities lie much more in Syria, Kurdistan and his relations with the EU. Armenia is a useful enemy for his propagandists, and he no doubt enjoyed the popularity he gained from the war. New transport links will probably benefit the Turkish economy.

But I do not think he has grand strategic interests in the Caucasus. If he did, he probably would have pushed for more involvement in the ceasefire agreement and the peacekeeping mission. As it stands, only a few Turkish observers are sitting on the Azeri side of the border.

6. Do you think that the transfer of Artsakh will lead to future hostilities?

It is highly possible that in 5 years when the agreement finishes Azerbaijan will tell the Russian peacekeepers to leave. This will create a political crisis and possibly lead to some hostilities.

I do not believe that Azerbaijan will seize the rest of Karabakh. Aliiev needs a Karabakh as the core propaganda of his regime. His rule was looking already shaky at times in 2020. Without the Karabakh issue, people might ask more questions about massive poverty despite Azerbaijan's oil wealth and the luxurious lives of the elite. Aliiev used the war as an opportunity to force potential oppositionists into line. The opposition was forced to support the war (although many did so willingly), and anyone who criticized the war or called for peace were arrested. So I think that Aliiev provoke another crisis to win more concessions and propaganda victories, but not to seize the whole region.

Block 2: Early Warning Model indicators

1. Do you consider that your main identity is “Armenian”?

No.

2. a: Do you believe that Armenians would you willing to engage in conflict for the common good of their people?

Yes, in case they feel there is an outside threat. However, the society’s opinion is divided.

3. Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?

No.

4. Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?

Yes.

5. Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?

Yes.

6. a: Do you believe Armenians feel threatened by the Azeris?

Yes.

7. Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?

Yes.

8. Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian’s lives?

No.

9. Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?

Yes.

10. a. Do you believe that Armenians identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

Yes.

11. Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?

Yes.

12. a: Do you think that there is a general identification among Armenians with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

Yes.

13. a: Do you believe that Armenians think they are morally superior to Azeris?

Yes.

14. Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?

Yes.

15. Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic? (“Collectivistic orientation characterizes societies where the group is perceived as primary and the person secondary”).

Yes.

16. Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?

No.

17. Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?

Yes.

18. Do you see Armenians/Artsakh Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?

No, but I do think they feel that way.

19. Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?

Yes.

20. Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

Yes.

INTERVIEW 5

Subject 5 is a 23-year-old Armenian who graduated with a BA degree in Marketing from an Armenian university. Although she has always lived in Yerevan, her family's roots are from Artsakh, and therefore, she feels a strong connection to its history, cultural heritage, and cultural heritage. She currently works as a career coordinator at her *alma mater*, which she combines with other activities such as volunteering for the different associations from different fields (Youth Participation, European integration, and refugee aid among others).

Block 1

1. Why is Artsakh so important for the Armenian people?

For me, it is due to personal reasons. Half of my family is coming from Artsakh, and although I cannot speak their dialect, I was raised listening to it. My father was against being proud of being from Artsakh because it used to be a “stubborn population” (it's a stigma or stereotype here).

Secondly, for national reasons. We have all been Armenians since the 1918. We fought against the Soviet Regime and we had so many enemies, and we all together could overcome those challenges and, of course, with a very huge number of losses of the population we could continuing our living in our land (which was both Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh, by then called the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh).

I think there are many minuses and pluses to mention about Artsakh, because for Armenians, especially local Yerevan people, they can see that Artsakh people are very selfish and they can see that they are pro-Russian (and I actually I believe so, because we had no other option, just to be under the Soviet regime). When I go back to my roots, I can see that Artsakh people are more civilized rather than locals here. There are many differentiations, and if you are from Artsakh you say you are from Artsakh.

2. What does the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan mean to you?

During these years we did not pay enough attention to Artsakh history, and there are many lessons we learned only during the war. We learned that there were seven regions that did not belong to us (which I don't even believe that they never belonged to us because before 1918 there was no Azerbaijan territory and it was all Armenian so we have some facts that say it was ours and now Azerbaijanis even claim that Yerevan belongs to them). Now I believe that this manipulation has the same roots as capturing Artsakh, Stepanakert, or Shushi. I think that even if there is any mistake in history, I would be rude enough to say that the only mistake would be to have Azerbaijan or a state like that occupying us. I am not Azerbaijan-Phobic (in

fact I have many Azeri friends), but they are born only to blame Armenians for owing them some lands.

Now, after the war, I don't even think about recognizing Artsakh because I think there is no sense in that. Before I was very focused on that and I wanted to raise awareness about Artsakh, about cultural diversity, cultural heritage... But I see there is no sense. There is really no sense because no country would recognize it. I would never call it a disputed territory but it is a matter of lack of communication, negotiations, and diplomacy.

We already gave to Azerbaijan some parts of our land and after a hundred years I can see how history is being repeated. This is the third time we gave them a piece of our land and they still want more.

In general, [the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan] is very sad, because it is not only about cultural heritage: it is about justice. You feel incapable of doing anything. I can only claim the type of war crimes Azerbaijan did, but we can never ask to have those lands or lives back. The only thing we can do is to live with the situation but not to give up in order to sanction those countries, and not to give up our Armenian values.

I really want the war criminals to be punished and to be sanctioned because if we admit that they did not do any war crime it would mean that we agree on giving our lands, and that's it. Whatever we did, the 5000 souls we gave upon in war will never rest in peace. Some of them were my friends and I really feel the duty in front of them.

3. What do you think about the agreement signed on November 10th of 2020 by PM Nikol Pashinyan?

Unfortunately, I only remember the night of the 10th of November because something happened specifically in Yerevan. There were multiple riots that to me seemed worse than giving up the land. The lands should be given on the third day of the war in order not to lose those souls and the younger generation. We lost our identity and independence and democratic state. I feel lost that we had been dreaming since two years ago [The Velvet Revolution], in which we could have been building a stronger democratic state that we never had before.

I was rather thinking about that [the riots] than what we were giving or not because we could not believe that Karabakh would be given, Lanchin would be given, even Shushi would be given. By the time the agreement was signed we didn't even realize what would happen: we were only thinking about the democratic crisis and the so-called "corridor". It was a real threat to our independence and internationally recognized borders.

I see right now, after five or six months of the agreement, what we thought is really happening right now in the Armenian territories.

4. What steps do you think should be followed next?

The government was manipulating us and telling us we would win and “be the winners”, but they later started to change the slogan to “overcome the challenges”. But yes, of course we have to overcome everything because I saw so many injustices happening.

We need to go and give to people [the resources they need], to be with the people, to overcome these mental health issues (even for us, because we were so disappointed). I really think we need to work together and help each other, especially those affected by the war. Artsakh people are my high priority: to work with them and to help them.

We need to also educate our generations rather than thinking about who won or lost the war. I think there are many more other priorities to think about unless we want to have another 30 years of losing our identity. Then, we should continue like this (blaming the current government, having the old regime back, not giving money in order not to give a glance). We should also ask for help from the diaspora because during the war we actually felt united.

My next step is to carry on: to carry on with my teaching, with my education, going to my homeland, and putting the flowers in my friends' graves because they did their best, and yes, we just really need to continue.

5. What is the role of other international actors, mainly Russia and Turkey, in this conflict?

I think we are in this all together, with Russia and with Turkey. We cannot go to the EU, although it supports us the most and I am so hopeful that they will give us those opportunities rather than to Azerbaijan or Turkey. The only thing that I want, once again, is that those countries get punished, and I really hope that international organizations will provide this type of support to do what they need to do: they need to sanction and to focus on humans and violation of human rights in any country.

Regarding Russia, I did not live in a Soviet regime, but the older generation does want them back and I think they got what they wanted. If we continue going in this direction and keep on relying on Russia every single time, we are going back to a Soviet situation. What I suggest doing is to not only rely on Russia because I don't think this Eurasian Economic Union is good, because they are mostly the same and they are also mostly pro-Azerbaijan and we are going into a micro-Soviet situation in our Caucasus region. I do think that, and I feel we need more Iran coming to the play.

Iran is out of this Economic Union and I am happy about that because I think we should go on with everything. Of course, if we live the Union, Russia, and Turkey (which is an alliance that I would never imagine to come together) might ally again. We must find our own ways because Russia is not gonna save our lives ever. Of course, Putin is not so heartless, and he was sorry

about the human loss, but if he cared that much about Armenia he could have ended the conflict earlier.

Why do we rely on Russia when we have France or Iran, which, for example, suggested their support? I really wish we had some independence over Russia. If we had some nationalist in the power, maybe when I am 90, I will see an Armenia that is truly independent.

6. Do you think that the transfer of Artsakh will lead to future hostilities?

I do not think they will attack Stepanakert, the only main city that is left [in Nagorno-Karabakh], because I think they consider it already Azeri. They are more much focused on the Armenian side. What they wanted to get, they got it: Shushi. And they destroyed the whole Armenian heritage.

We gave Shushi and I think they will not talk about Artsakh for some time because they are mostly aiming to conquer this corridor through Armenia. And if we provide this corridor, they will find some chance to go back to Artsakh.

So, in conclusion, I think that they plan to come to Armenia (in which they are already), and I do not have the power to push them away. They are already here and unless we solve the issue of this corridor (the only chance they have to connect to Turkey and to have this pan-Turkish approach) we do not have any other opportunities to survive, as we will even be isolated from Iran when they cut Meghri out of Armenia (creating an Armenian exclave).

We are not prepared for war, even if Iran and France come. We are not prepared mentally nor physically, and it will be the end of our history pages. It will mean giving all of Armenia away (or having Artsakh back again and being called occupiers just because we defended ourselves).

Block 2: Early Warning Model indicators

1. Do you consider that your main identity is “Armenian”?

Yes.

2. Would you be willing to engage in conflict for the common good of Armenians?

No.

3. Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?

Yes.

4. Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?

Yes.

5. Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?

No.

6. Do you feel threatened by the Azeris?

Yes.

7. Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?

No.

8. Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian's lives?

No.

9. Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?

No.

10. Do you identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

Yes.

11. Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?

Yes.

12. Do you identify with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

No, average.

13. Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?

Yes, history says it as well.

14. Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?

Yes, and we are proud of it.

15. Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic? ("Collectivistic orientation characterizes societies where the group is perceived as primary and the person secondary").

Yes, that is the reason why we have stigmatic beliefs.

16. Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?

No, never.

17. Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?

No, despite it is not so much like that in a vice-versa situation.

18. Do you see Armenians/Artsakh Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?

Yes, especially in this Pan-Turkish game.

19. Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?

No, I do not want to lose any more lives.

20. Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

Yes. There cannot be no other choice, but maybe after Armenians there are Russians.

INTERVIEW 6

Subject 6 is a 19-years-old American-Armenian female. She was born and raised in the United States, the place where both of her Armenian parents had moved, and she is enrolled in an AS program at Pasadena City College (Los Angeles, CA) with a focus in Biochemistry. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she decided to move to Yerevan for a couple of months, where she is currently teaching English. She has always been in touch with both the American-Armenian community in the USA and the Republic of Armenia, as she would visit the country every year and most of her family still lives there.

Block 1

1. Why is Artsakh so important for the Armenian people?

Artsakh, or rather specifically the independence of Artsakh is important to Armenia because it represents a last stand against Turkish imperialism. Artsakh is 95% Armenian, to give up an important ethnic province would threaten Armenia's existence as a whole.

2. What does the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan mean to you?

Personally, I think it has jeopardized Armenia's future as a republic and puts ethnic Armenians at further risk of colonization.

3. What do you think about the agreement signed on November 10th of 2020 by PM Nikol Pashinyan?

I think that given the circumstance it was the best course of action at the time, however Pashinyan is partially at fault for the start of the conflict, and while Armenia doesn't have the military force to fight Azerbaijan, I believe that Pashinyan could have avoided the war in its entirety.

4. What steps do you think should be followed next?

I think the ultimate goal would be to maintain peace. While the loss of Artsakh was a tragedy, any attempts to regain the territory will end in unnecessary bloodshed.

5. What is the role of other international actors, mainly Russia and Turkey, in this conflict?

Turkey provided military aide to Azerbaijan putting Armenia at a drastic disadvantage in terms of warfare. I believe Turkey won Artsakh for Azerbaijan. The problem is that Russia was not involved and did not provide assistance as Armenia's closest ally.

6. Do you think that the transfer of Artsakh will lead to future hostilities?

While I think peace is the best option, it is inevitable that the conflict will continue to escalate given the climate in both Armenia and Artsakh and foreign interference on behalf of Azerbaijan.

Block 2: Early Warning Model indicators

1. Do you consider that your main identity is “Armenian”?

No, I consider myself Armenian, but it is not my main identity.

2. Would you be willing to engage in conflict for the common good of Armenians?

Yes.

3. Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?

Yes.

4. Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?

Yes.

5. Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?

Yes.

6. Do you feel threatened by the Azeris?

Yes.

7. Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?

Yes.

8. Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian’s lives?

No.

9. Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?

Yes.

10. Do you identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

Yes.

11. Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?

Yes.

12. Do you identify with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

No.

13. Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?

No.

14. Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?

Yes.

15. Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic? (“Collectivistic orientation characterizes societies where the group is perceived as primary and the person secondary”).

Yes.

16. Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?

Yes.

17. Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?

Yes.

18. Do you see Armenians/Artsakh Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?

Yes.

19. Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?

Yes.

20. Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

Yes.

INTERVIEW 7

Subject 7 is a Russian-Armenian 24-year-old female. She lived in the Lori region until she was 9 when her family moved to Siberia. At age 17, she emigrated to Thailand, where she taught English while pursuing an online BA in Cultural Studies (with a focus on the Culture of European Countries) from the Russian State University for The Humanities graduate. After the COVID-19 pandemic, we returned to Yerevan, where she is currently teaching English.

Block 1

1. Why is Artsakh so important for the Armenian people?

I guess it is because Armenian people fought for it one time already and lived there for ages. For my family, for example, so my parents (that live in Russia), they think about this situation as well but not as much as people in Yerevan or in other regions. We actually helped during the war: we sent some money to the foundation that helps the soldiers. So I think that they think about it and they care but not as much as the people that live in Yerevan, Armenia, or near Artsakh at least.

2. What does the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan mean to you?

To me it is not as big as for Artsakh people, but I feel like Armenia in general is getting smaller and smaller every day. It feels like it is slowly disappearing... For me, Artsakh is a place where some other Armenians live there. They are the same nation and I want them to be healthy, to be safe, and in peace. I would actually love to visit it someday and see how different is from the Armenian mainland.

3. What do you think about the agreement signed on November 10th of 2020 by PM Nikol Pashinyan?

The decision he made is very unclear to me and I do not fully understand the prerequisites of doing it. When he heard about his decisions we were in Russia, my family was in Russia, and one day we woke up and we were very surprised about it. We heard about it on the Russian news and we were super surprised because it was very sudden. I think every Armenian person was super surprised about the agreement because they were getting some information about the war the war was going on and suddenly it stopped.

4. What steps do you think should be followed next?

To find a good leader that might control the country and keep the social and political condition stable. I would like Armenian people to reunite, I would say. I mean, they are already reunited, but to think more wisely about the actions they carry on.

5. What is the role of other international actors, mainly Russia and Turkey, in this conflict?

Russia's role is to pretend it helps Armenia; Turkey's role is to help or sometimes also pretend it helps Azerbaijan...

I think Armenians all over the world tried to do everything they could, including financial processes, and they came to Armenia to help the people. I think that really shows how Armenians can care about each other in difficult situations. I actually think that the Armenian diaspora does more than the Armenian government.

6. Do you think that the transfer of Artsakh will lead to future hostilities?

Yes, I suppose it will. After a while this conflict will explode again, because it doesn't have a true solution.

Block 2: Early Warning Model indicators

1. Do you consider that your main identity is "Armenian"?

Yes, but only biologically.

2. Would you be willing to engage in conflict for the common good of Armenians?

No.

3. Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?

Yes.

4. Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?

No.

5. Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?

Yes.

6. Do you feel threatened by the Azeris?

Yes.

7. Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?

Yes, but not all the time.

8. Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian's lives?

No.

9. Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?

Yes.

10. Do you identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

Yes, but mostly with language and history.

11. Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?

Yes.

12. Do you identify with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

No.

13. Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?

No.

14. Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?

Yes.

15. Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic? (“Collectivistic orientation characterizes societies where the group is perceived as primary and the person secondary”).

Yes, but unhealthy collectivistic.

16. Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?

No.

17. Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?

No.

18. Do you see Armenians/Artsakh Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?

Yes.

19. Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?

Yes.

20. Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

Yes.

INTERVIEW 8

Subject 8 is a 26-year-old Iranian male who has been living in Yerevan since 2017. He has a background in Architecture studies, from both Iranian and Armenian Universities, yet he is currently working as an International Marketing Specialist and General Manager at a private university in Yerevan. He is greatly involved in the Armenian society issues, and besides volunteering for multiple organizations, he decided to founded his own NGO in 2019. This project is highly involved in multiple sectors, such as the integration of different communities in the local life of Yerevan and the aid of the displaced kids from the Artsakh war.

Block 1

1. Why is Artsakh so important for the Armenian people?

Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) is the land historically populated by majority Armenians, and alike any other nation Armenians are also entitled to protect what they believe is their ancestral land.

2. What does the transfer of Artsakh to Azerbaijan mean to you?

Although Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) had been always mainly belonging to the Armenian majority, I believe the conflicts between the ethnic groups of that region raised as the result of long term external influences. First, after the treaty of Gulistan which the Khanate of Karabakh was handed to Russian empire by Persian Empire and the division between the ethnic groups was happening by the help of both empires mainly by the winner of the war, secondly the collapse of Soviet Union which was a decayed system with the policy of creating division among different soviet republics and ruling them easier. I guess these two historical events helped today's events by creating a sense of nationalism on both sides.

To short my words, I have to say that the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and seven surrounding Azeri districts should have been taking place much earlier, and for the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), there would be the option of the right of self-determination by an independent referendum.

3. What do you think about the agreement signed on November 10th of 2020 by PM Nikol Pashinyan?

In my personal opinion and as a person who lived in Yerevan during and after the war, I would say it could happen much earlier the agreement with the knowledge that it was an unwanted war by the regional and world powers as well as the unbalanced military and economy strength of two engaged forces as Armenia and Azerbaijan. But having the agreement signed was a good move towards strengthening the peace process resulting directly in future peace treaties.

4. What steps do you think should be followed next?

I think both sides need time to process their national opinion and interest in the peace treaty, so when we will have a peace treaty hoping that it ends one of the longest conflicts in the world. We need more investments in various initiatives created with aim of peace-making in societies, for they are the best way to improve tolerance among the public which further in the future would have a direct impact on normalizing the relations between two neighboring states.

5. What is the role of other international actors, mainly Russia and Turkey, in this conflict?

Well, I would say like any other war zone, you have two main players called Enemies and then some other players which are behind the stage and doing their best to protect their own interests and even to further the benefits that they can achieve as the result of war.

I would not call it a proxy war the Artsakh war, although at some point we can see the players in this last war been too many, and them playing underneath which made me think more about the possibility of a proxy war.

But in general Russia and Turkey have been the main foreign powers in the latest Artsakh war which in my personal opinion if these two main players weren't involved in the conflict it could be continued and become a long-lasting military conflict.

6. Do you think that the transfer of Artsakh will lead to future hostilities?

It is actually depending on how much all the players in this conflict would invest in the public opinion regarding the peace process, however, I see no effort from any sides to calm down the public in both republics. In Azerbaijan, we have an authoritarian president who has interests in the continuation of conflict to hold the power and on the other, we have Armenia which is deep into a corrupted political system and the current gov. is blamed for the loss of the nation which is resulting on the public demand for revenge. So as a humanitarian I'm hoping that better work is done on both sides of conflict, so we have fewer hostilities between two neighboring nations.

Block 2

1. Do you consider that your main identity is "Armenian"?

No.

2. a: Do you believe that Armenians would you willing to engage in conflict for the common good of their people?

No.

3. Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?

Yes.

4. Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?

No.

5. Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?

Yes.

6. a: Do you believe Armenians feel threatened by the Azeris?

Yes, but it is mainly propaganda.

7. Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?

Yes, mainly.

8. Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian's lives?

No.

9. Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?

Yes. I already mentioned in the Block 1.

10. a: Do you believe that Armenians identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

Yes. In being Armenian they are all united but they distinguish themselves inside of the ingroup.

11. Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?

Yes.

12. a: Do you think that there is a general identification among Armenians with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

Yes, mainly. It depends on the region that they have been living for ages.

13. Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?/ Question 13.a: Do you believe that Armenians think they are morally superior to Azeris?

No.

14. Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?

No.

15. Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic? (“Collectivistic orientation characterizes societies where the group is perceived as primary and the person secondary”).

Yes.

16. Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?

No. Not yet, but if they become the majority they will try.

17. Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?

No.

18. Do you see Armenians/Artsakh Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?

Yes. Maybe not in the past, because Armenians were not this weak, but currently yes.

19. Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?

Yes.

20. Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

Yes. But still, they feel Armenians from Artsakh, so they have their own identity.

STATISTICS. TABLE OF FRECUENCIES

Q1. Do you consider that your main identity is “Armenian”?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	62,5	62,5	62,5
	No	3	37,5	37,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 1: Frequency of the answers to Question 1 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q2. Would you be willing to engage in conflict for the common good of Armenians?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	4	50,0	50,0	50,0
	No	4	50,0	50,0	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table : Frequency of the answers to Question 2 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q3. Do you feel that the Azerbaijanis are in a more advantageous position than Armenians, especially on the international level?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	6	75,0	75,0	75,0
	No	2	25,0	25,0	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 3: Frequency of the answers to Question 3 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q4. Do you think that Armenian identity fulfills the following functions: increasing self-esteem; increasing social status; personal safety; group support and protection; recognition by the ingroup?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	4	50,0	50,0	50,0
	No	4	50,0	50,0	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 4: Frequency of the answers to Question 4 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q5. Do you feel that in Armenian society there are prejudices towards Azerbaijanis?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	87,5	87,5	87,5
	No	1	12,5	12,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 5: Frequency of the answers to Question 5 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q6. Do you feel threatened by the Azeris?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	87,5	87,5	87,5
	No	1	12,5	12,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 6: Frequency of the answers to Question 6 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q7. Do you feel that Armenians support each other as a society and regarding the conflict of Artsakh?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	6	75,0	75,0	75,0
	No	2	25,0	25,0	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 7: Frequency of the answers to Question 7 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q8. Do you think that engaging in conflict for Artsakh will improve the quality of Armenian's lives?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	2	25,0	25,0	25,0
	No	6	75,0	75,0	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 8: Frequency of the answers to Question 8 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q9. Do you think that the past historical events that took place among ethnic Armenians and Azeris/Turks make Armenians more likely to engage in conflict?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	62,5	62,5	62,5
	No	3	37,5	37,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 9: Frequency of the answers to Question 9 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q10. Do you identify with Armenian 1) culture; 2) language; 3) characteristics of ingroup members; 4) history; 5) ideology; 6) interrelations with outgroups; 7) reverberated identity, and 8) outgroup image?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	8	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 10: Frequency of the answers to Question 10 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q11. Do you perceive that there is competition among Armenians and Azeris, as well as incompatible goals?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	87,5	87,5	87,5
	No	1	12,5	12,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 11: Frequency of the answers to Question 11 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q12. Do you identify with Armenian identity, as well as its beliefs, values, and rules?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	62,5	62,5	62,5
	No	3	37,5	37,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 12: Frequency of the answers to Question 12 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q13. Do you believe that Armenians are morally superior to Azeris?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	4	50,0	50,0	50,0
	No	4	50,0	50,0	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 13: Frequency of the answers to Question 13 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q14. Do you feel that Armenians have chosen to feel Armenians?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	87,5	87,5	87,5
	No	1	12,5	12,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 14: Frequency of the answers to Question 14 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q15. Do you believe that Armenian society is collectivistic?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	6	75,0	75,0	75,0
	No	2	25,0	25,0	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 15: Frequency of the answers to Question 15 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q16. Have you ever felt that in Artsakh the Azerbaijani identity is imposed over the Armenian identity?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	2	25,0	25,0	25,0
	No	6	75,0	75,0	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 16: Frequency of the answers to Question 16 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q17. Do you feel that in Artsakh Armenian identity is not respected?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	3	37,5	37,5	37,5
	No	5	62,5	62,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 17: Frequency of the answers to Question 17 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q18. Do you see Armenians/Artshak Armenians as a minority that is being threatened by a larger group?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	62,5	62,5	62,5
	No	3	37,5	37,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 18: Frequency of the answers to Question 18 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q19. Do you think Armenians would be willing to fight once again the Azeris in order to retrieve the control of Artsakh/ vindicate the actions taken by Azerbaijan?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	87,5	87,5	87,5
	No	1	12,5	12,5	100,0
	Total	8	100,0	100,0	

Table 19: Frequency of the answers to Question 19 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

Q20. Do you believe that the inhabitants of Artsakh feel a greater connection to Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	8	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 20: Frequency of the answers to Question 20 (Block 2).

Source: own elaboration.

ANNEX II: MAPS

MAP 3: ARMENIAN GENOCIDE (1915).

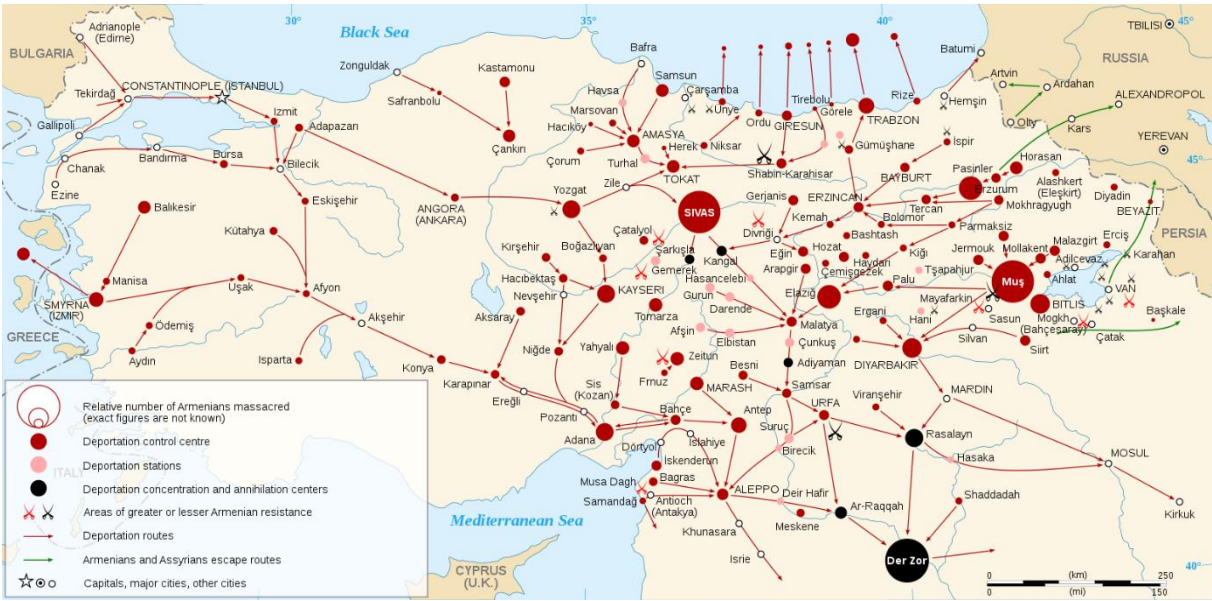


Figure 3: Map of the Armenian Genocide in 1915.

Source: Wikimedia Commons.

MAP 4: REGIONS OF ARMENIA (2021).



Figure 4: Regions of the Republic of Armenia in 2021.
Source: The Government of the Republic of Armenia.

ANNEX III: DOCUMENTATION

DOCUMENT 1: PROTEST NOTE OF KARABAGH ARMENIANS TO ALLIED GOVERNMENTS

Extracted from Libaridian, 1988: 11-12.

[20 February 1919]

Protest Note of Karabagh Armenians to Allied Governments.

Armenian National Council of Karabagh, 20th February 1919

The Armenian General Assembly of Karabagh in its fourth sitting on 19th February 1919, having examined the response of the government of Azerbaijan to the Armenian Government, protests energetically against the clearly expressed intention of the Azerbaijan government to consider Karabagh as a part of the territory of Azerbaijan.

The Armenian population of Karabagh, basing its attitude on the right of nationalities [to self-determination], as it has been acknowledged by the Peace Conference, appeals to the public opinion of the whole world and protests energetically against this attempt on the part of the Government of Azerbaijan to overlook this right as far as Armenian Karabagh is concerned. Karabagh never has acknowledged the authority of the government of Azerbaijan within its boundaries, and never will.

The General Assembly begs the Representatives of the Allied Governments in the Caucasus as well as the Peace Conference to defend their rightful claims.

This act of protest is being addressed to the Commander of the Allied Forces at Baku, General Thomson, to the Armenian Government and finally to the Armenian Delegation at the Peace Conference.

Signed:

President

Secretary

DOCUMENT 2: RESOLUTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY OF ARMENIANS OF KARABAGH ON THE ISSUE OF A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Extracted from Libaridian, 1988: 16-17.

[25 April 1919]

Resolution unanimously approved by the Fifth Assembly of Armenians of Karabagh on the issue of a provisional government.

The Fifth Congress of Armenians of Karabagh, having heard during its formal session of April 23, 1919, the presentation on administrative programs for the establishment of a provisional government in Karabagh as presented by General Shuttleworth, representative of the British Command, and having examined in depth this same program during its official session of April 29, resolves that:

1. The Fifth Assembly of Armenians of Karabagh aspires ardently toward the reestablishment of order and peace in Karabagh.
2. It accedes with all sincerity and all its heart to the requests formulated by the British Command for the reestablishment of friendly relations with our Tatar neighbors, a position that has been the policy adopted by the Armenian population throughout Karabagh.
3. We take note, as General Shuttleworth has stated himself, that all questions relating to territory and frontiers with regard to Karabagh will receive a definitive solution at the Peace Conference.

The Fifth Assembly of Armenians of Karabagh finds, however, that the program it has been presented does not correspond to the wishes and vital interests of the Armenian population of Karabagh as clearly defined in the directives and critical mandate that the Assembly has given to its representatives.

The Assembly therefore finds the administrative program creating jurisdictional links with the government of Azerbaijan unacceptable, and it believes that the realization by force of such a program would create grave and bloody conflict between the two races, for which the Congress would not wish to assume responsibility.

The original is signed by all the members of the Bureau, a total of 48 delegates.

Shushi, 25 April 1919

Fifth Assembly of Armenians of Karabagh

DOCUMENT 3: COPY OF LETTER FROM AVETIS AHARONIAN, PRESIDENT OF THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA, ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENTS OF THE DELEGATIONS OF ITALY, FRANCE, ENGLAND, AND THE U.S.

Extracted from Libaridian, 1988: 19-21.

[15 May 1919]

Copy of letter from Avetis Aharonian, president of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia, addressed to the presidents of the delegations of Italy, France, England, and the U.S.

Paris, 15 May 1919

Dear Mr. President,

Certain regions of Caucasian Armenia are also claimed by our neighbors, the Georgians and the Tatars [Azerbaijan]. While the government of the Republic of Armenia awaits with patience and confidence the decision of the Peace Conference, our neighbor, the Republic of Azerbaijan, is seeking to create a fait accompli. In conformity with the decision of the British High Command, the Armenian

government has, since the month of December, ceased all movements of its army. By contrast, the government of Azerbaijan has begun marching its troops toward Armenian Karabagh and has occupied regions which are, without question, part of our territory. In conjunction with this occupation, the government of Azerbaijan has, by an official act, proclaimed the annexation of these occupied regions and has sent to it a Governor-General, Mr. Sultanov.

The General Assembly of the Armenians of Karabagh, meeting in Shushi on February 19, has rejected with legitimate indignation all pretense of Azerbaijan with regard to Armenian Karabagh, which said Assembly has declared an integral part of Armenia in virtue of the principle of nationality itself, proclaimed so many times by the powers of the Entente.

We have noted with deep regret that the Allied High Command in the Caucasus has given consent to the nomination of this Governor-General while declaring that this is only a temporary arrangement and that the final determination of the frontiers depends entirely upon the decision of the Peace Conference.

It is infinitely painful for us to know that a territory which has always belonged to Armenia and which encompasses an absolute Armenian majority may be delivered, even temporarily, to an alien administration profoundly hostile to the Armenian element.

[...]

In fact, Armenian Karabagh, the mountainous districts of Elizavetpol, Kazakh, and Zangezur, have a total population of 494,000 inhabitants; of these numbers 358,000 are Armenians, 24,000 other Christians, and only 112,000 are Muslims, Tatars, Kurds, etc. In addition to these ethnographic considerations, it is to be noted that this strip of land constitutes an indivisible part of Armenia, being the immediate prolongation of the Armenian plateau, with the same physical and geological formation, the same culture and the same history, and forming, in addition, the naturally defensive ramparts of Armenia against Turanic invasions.

All these questions are minutely exposed in the attached memorandum which the Delegation of the Republic of Armenia has the honor to submit to your Excellency. This memorandum proves in concrete fashion that the province of Karabagh and the adjacent districts as well as the valley of the Arax to Zangezur can, under no circumstance, be incorporated in another state.

[...]

The Armenian people which, during the terrible years of the war and at the cost of major sacrifices, has resisted the direct and indirect attacks of Tatars, Turks, and Germans, and has fought on the side of the Great Allies for the cause of justice and for the defense of its native soil, continues today the same struggle under extremely difficult conditions with the firm conviction that the Peace Conference will do justice to its undeniable rights.

In the name of our much oppressed populations, we have the responsibility to warn respectfully the Peace Conference that all arbitrary solutions that would sacrifice the legitimate aspirations of Armenians are bound to become in the future the source of new and perpetual conflicts.

The Delegation of the Republic of Armenia requests to be heard before a decision is taken concerning the future destiny of the Armenian people and the frontiers of its territory.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurance of my highest regards.

Signed,

A. Aharonian. President of the Delegation of Republic of Armenia to the Peace Conference

DOCUMENT 4: AGREEMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SEVENTH ASSEMBLY OF KARABAGH ARMENIANS WITH GOVERNOR-GENERAL SULTANOV, ACCEPTING PROVISIONAL AZERBAIJANI RULE

Extracted from Libaridian, 1988: 21-24.

[15 August 1919]

Agreement of the representatives of the Seventh Assembly of Karabagh Armenians with Governor-General Sultanov, accepting provisional Azerbaijani rule.

Whereas the fate of Mountainous Karabagh shall be determined by the Peace Conference, whereas every hostile encounter is disastrous to the nationalities inhabiting Karabagh, and whereas in whatever way the question of Karabagh may be settled, Armenians and Muslims will continue to live together, the Seventh Assembly of Karabagh Armenians, in its morning session of August 15, 1919, resolved to uphold the following points constituting the temporary agreement with the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan:

1. The contracting parties accept this provisional agreement until the Peace Conference renders a decision, which both sides shall accept as equally binding.
2. The Armenian-populated mountainous sector of Karabagh (Dizak, Varanda, Khachen, Jraberd), in the counties [uezds] of Shushi, Jevanshir, Jebraïl, regards itself to be provisionally within the boundaries of the Azerbaijani republic.
3. The counties of Shushi, Jevanshir, and Jebraïl remain as a distinct administrative unit within the governor-generalship of Karabagh, and the internal structure of that unit shall be such that the administration of the mountainous Armenian sector is composed of Armenians, with the rights of minorities guaranteed.
4. In the mountainous portion of Karabagh (Dizak, Kllachen, Varanda, and Jraberd), administrative officials shall be named on the recommendation of the Armenian members of the council (see point 5).
5. A six-member council of three Armenians and three Muslims shall be created in the governor-generalship of Karabagh.
6. The Council's Armenian members are to be chosen by the assembly of the Armenian population of Mountainous Karabagh. The assembly has the right to reelection.
7. All fundamental questions of an interracial nature cannot be acted upon until they have first been considered by the council.

8. The council has the right of initiative in matters relating to the arrangements and the administration of the governor-generalship.
9. The council has the right to oversee and counterbalance the administration of the governor-generalship but without the right to interfere in the operations of the administration.
10. The post of governor-general's assistant in civil affairs shall be established, and an Armenian must be appointed to that post.
11. The Armenian assembly shall present to the government of Azerbaijan two candidates for the position of assistant in civil affairs, one of whom will be confirmed.
12. The Armenians of Karabagh shall enjoy the right of cultural autonomy.
13. The right of cultural autonomy is to be vested in the National Council of Karabagh Armenians, which will be elected by the periodically convened assemblies of Karabagh Armenians. The assembly is summoned by the National Council.
14. The government of the Azerbaijani republic shall regulate the activities of the Armenian National Council through Armenian intermediaries.
15. The [Azerbaijani] garrisons shall be stationed at Khankend and Shushi in peacetime strength.
16. Any and all movements of armed forces in the mountainous Armenian-inhabited sectors of the counties of Shushi, Jevanshir, and Jebrail shall require the consent of two-thirds of the council.
17. No person may be subjected to persecution, either by judicial or executive procedures, for his political convictions.
18. All Armenians who have been constrained to leave for political reasons shall have the right to return to their homes.
19. The disarming of the Armenian and Muslim population shall be suspended in Karabagh until the question of Karabagh is resolved by the [Paris) Peace Conference.
20. The government of the Azerbaijani republic is to give material and moral assistance to the population of Karabagh for the rapid restoration of the devastated Muslim and Armenian villages.
21. For the purpose of improving interracial relations, the council shall periodically sponsor general and local Armenian- Muslim congresses.
22. There will be absolute freedom of assembly, speech, and press. But because a state of martial law exists throughout Azerbaijan, meetings shall be authorized by the administration.
23. All crimes of private and official persons shall be prosecuted according to judicial procedure, except for the felonies and criminal acts excluded from the normal judicial order by

the binding decision of June 11, 1919 of the Committee for State Defense of the Azerbaijani republic.

24. No one shall be persecuted for having taken part in interracial clashes up to the present time.

25. This agreement comes into effect from the moment of its acceptance by the Seventh Assembly of Karabagh Armenians.

26. This agreement shall remain in effect in all circumstances, including siege, warfare, and so forth.

The delegates appointed by the Seventh Assembly of Karabagh are authorized to conclude with the Azerbaijani government the final provisional agreement, which has been approved by all members of the Assembly, to select the two candidates for the post of civil assistant to the provisional governor-general and the three members of the council named alongside the governor-general, and to settle all technical questions relating to the administration of Karabagh on the basis of the provisional agreement that has been accepted.