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ENDURING RIVALRY AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: THE CASE OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH

This study examines the nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and tries to identify a sustainable conflict resolution path drawing on the literature and the analytical framework provided by Enduring Rivalry (ER) theory and conflict transformation scholarship, thus adding the state-society dimension of the issue. Considering the attitudes of the conflicting societies, this study argues that, even in the unlikely scenario of the consensual agreement the result will be fiercely challenged by one or all publics, not only undermining the possibility of its implementation but also regime endurance. The study suggests to consider an approach based on conflict transformation and comes up with a recommendation entailing the management of the Sarsang reservoir.

Key words: enduring rivalry, conflict transformation, Nagorno-Karabakh, conflict management, neo-functionalism

Introduction

This research aims to examine the nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in order to identify a sustainable conflict resolution path drawing on the analytical framework of Enduring Rivalries (ER) and conflict transformation scholarship. With some adjustments, the article puts the conflict into the perspective of ER literature considering its duration and the fundamental, long-term incompatibility of objectives between the conflicting sides. The article puts a special emphasis on the constraints of public pressure on ruling elites and considers several dangerous scenarios regarding some factors that influence rivalry termination. The article touches upon the risks and opportunities of the conflict that derive from real and hypothetical regime changes in Armenia and Azerbaijan. As a result, it challenges the expect-

tations accounts of democratic peace optimists. Considering the mirroring and mutual perceptions of the societies and the overarching understanding of the conflict as a zero-sum game, this study argues that, even if leaders achieve a peace agreement, the conciliatory results of the deal will be challenged by the relevant publics, undermining the possibility of its implementation and threatening regime endurance. Revising the structural constraints on the path of settlement, this article suggests approaching resolution from a conflict transformation perspective. In this regard, it recommends starting from a joint management of the Sarsang reservoir by a technocratic enterprise. The success of the initiative can potentially alter mutual perceptions of the societies, open alternative channels of communication and contribute to de-radicalization.

Methods

Considering the research problem that the research aimed to address, I have chosen the concepts of Enduring Rivalry (ER), and Conflict transformation. These concepts offer frameworks and methods of analyses that reveal the essence of the issues at stake, allow simplified generalizations and structuralize the research design. They are also instrumental for positivist research and give space for recommendations which are given at the last section of the paper.

The Roots

After becoming part of Soviet Union, the Soviet Azerbaijani government ceded Karabakh, Nakhichevan and Zangezur (regions west of Karabakh) to the Soviet Republic of Armenia. (Zoryan Institute, 1988) In a matter of a couple of days, the Mountainous Karabakh region or Nagorno-Karabakh was reattached to the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and was given a status of an autonomous oblast that was predominantly populated by Armenians (Avetisyan, 1988; Zoryn Institute, 1988). During the Soviet period, Yerevan and Stepanakert made various appeals to Moscow regarding the transfer of the oblast to Armenia. The appeals intensified with the introduction of *glasnost* and *perestroika* that later grew into mixed struggles for independence, self-determination (Armenians) and territorial integrity (Azerbaijanis). On February 20, 1988, the Regional Soviet of Nagorno-Karabakh adopted a resolution to transfer the Autonomous Region from the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR. The national uprisings, accompanied by the dissolution of the USSR, grew steadily into an all-out war between Azerbaijan and Karabakh, heavily supported by Armenia and the Armenian diaspora. Hostilities concluded with a military advantage of the Armenian side and a ceasefire agreement. The war also resulted in the establishment of the de facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. The conflict has prompted thousands of military and civilian deaths and left almost one million fleeing their homes (UNHCR, 1996). Since the May 1994 ceasefire agreed among Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan there have been number of resolution initiatives brought to the table by the OSCE Minsk Group – a package plan, a step by step plan, a common state plan – none of which delivered tangible results. Nagorno-Karabakh has consolidated itself as a de facto functioning independent state (The Bishkek Protocol , 1994; Pokalova, 2015). The stalemate of the conflict was

shaken by the April, 2016 “four-day war” indicating the fragility of regional stability.

Conceptualization through Enduring Rivalry and Conflict Transformation

Putting into Perspective

In order to put the conflict into an analytical framework, I am inclined to choose the framework of Enduring Rivalry, largely sharing the reasons of choice put forward by Broers in addition to my assessments detailed in the following section (Broers, 2015). Our choice is based on the framework’s sensitivity to and awareness of the timing of the conflict, its focus on the militarized relationship of the sides instead of isolated cases of disputes, and the constructivist factors that it takes into consideration, as opposed to the overemphasis, with all due importance, on realism.¹ With some adjustments, it fits the context of the Karabakh conflict and enables the understanding of the limits and the opportunities in which resolutions, or to put in the terms of the framework – rivalry termination – can be achieved. Goertz and Diehl define enduring rivalry as a militarized interstate competition lasting for at least 20 years and involving at least six militarized disputes (Goertz & Diehl, 2000). The concept of enduring rivalry is indicative to a kind of interstate conflict marked by relative stability and longevity. Maoz and Mor find that in the last 200 years a small number of states fought disproportionately high number of wars against each other (Maoz & Mor, 2002). The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict meets the timing requirement of an enduring rivalry, since roughly 30 years have already passed since its inception. In addition to that, there is a widely shared perception among Armenians of Azerbaijanis as Turks, and of the Karabakh war as an intention to continue the genocide of Armenians that had begun in the Ottoman Empire, thus adding to the longevity on the level of popular perceptions (Hovannisian, 1994). Furthermore, if we trace the first substantial manifestations of the conflict to the 1905-06 Armenian-Tatar clashes and to the pre-Sovietization military confrontations, one can claim that the conflict has endured more than a century, while temporarily silenced by the totalitarian Soviet rule. However, we will limit the chronological scope of our research from the collapse of Soviet Union onwards. When it comes to the requirement of six militarized disputes within this timeframe, some clarification is needed. Gochman and Maoz (1984) define militarized disputes as “a set of interactions between or among states involving threats to use military force, displays of military force, or actual uses of military force” (p. 587). In this regard, periodic escalations on the line of contact (LoC), militarized rhetoric, drills and combat deaths that have become the *modus operandi* also qualify the conflict for this requirement. Diehl identifies these dangerous dyads as “career criminals” (Bleill, 2005-2006). Maoz and Mor defined ER as: “a persistent, fundamental and long-term incompatibility of goals between two states” (Broers, 2015, p. 561). A similar incompatibility can be identified in the Karabakh conflict, where the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is directly incompatible with the independence of the de facto Nagorno-Karabakh or Artsakh

¹ We might as well assign the framework to the neo-classical school of International Relations.

Republic² (or the unification with Armenia, desired initially during the Soviet rule, during the Karabakh movement, and periodically since the end of the war), while all the attempts to solve this contradiction have failed so far (Pokalova, 2015). Goertz and Diehl in their seminal work *War and Peace in International Rivalry* (2000) operationalize three dependent variables of rivalry formation, evolution and termination and do so within the punctuated equilibrium model derived from biology (Goertz & Diehl, 2000). According to the model, rivalries are born quickly, they last in a long stability and terminate as quickly they form. The punctuated equilibrium model allows the placing of various disputes during the rivalry within the long stasis instead of examining them as “rise-and-fall” events. Since the approach encompasses the entire process of rivalries, it allows the research to move the focus from an isolated dispute to the more holistic rivalry relations.

Rivalry Formation. ER considers environmental shocks as necessary but not sufficient precondition for rivalry formation (and termination). Even though rivalries predominantly prove to be robust in the face of surrounding changes, when they do transform it usually happens at the backdrop of a political shock endogenous to one or both of the rivals (e.g., regime change) or to the international environment as a whole (e.g., aftermath of a world war). After this initial phase, the two states quickly “locks-in” in a rivalry (Diehl, Goertz, & Saedi, 2005). In contrast to the equilibrium model, the evolutionary conception of rivalries argues that the level of severity and the satisfaction of the parties with the outcome of the confrontation determine the maturation of the enduring rivalry. A stalemate in the aftermath of a severe confrontation tends to engender future attempts by the unsatisfied side to revise the status quo, as opposed to the more sustainable perspectives offered by negotiated compromises. Both evolutionary and equilibrium models offer revealing insights when, with slight modifications, they are applied to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In its current configuration, the formation of the Karabakh conflict dates back to the dissolution of the USSR. This system-level change that transformed the hierarchy of the regional complex (the necessary shock) opened a window for the accumulated discontent of Armenians with the Azerbaijani SSR’s rule to burst (environmental conditions) and trigger a spiralling and rather quick “lock-in” of the dyad into a rivalry (Sukiasyan, 2019). From the perspective of the evolutionary model of enduring rivalries, one can argue that the decisive victory of the Armenian side indeed reduced the implications of the conflict in the immediate aftermath of the ceasefire. However, as it became clear with the passage of time, the ceasefire only turned out to be a political stalemate between the sides. The much-needed stability that followed the stalemate allowed the revisionist rival to bide its time, recover from losses and prepare for an escalation at an opportune moment. In this vein, calculating the country’s unpromising capabilities for a quick revanche, then-president Heydar Aliyev restrained his foreign and security adventurism for the sake of guaranteeing stability and reconstructing the country by attracting international cooperation (Mehdiyeva, 2011). Moreover, the domestic instability was considered by the Azerbaijani authorities as a crucial reason for their military losses (Musabayov, 2005, p. 62). Reinforcing that strategical thought, Azerbaijan has believed that time is on its side and its oil revenues will grant it an upper military hand and exhaust Armenia, leading it to ultimately accept Azerbaijan’s terms (Oskanian, 2005).

2 The constitutional name of former Nagorno Karabakh after 2017 constitutional reforms.

ER Stasis. After the lock-in of the dyad, the second phase of the punctuated equilibrium model predicts that the conflict will evolve in stasis around the “basic rivalry level” (BRL) – which is the range within which the relations of rivals go through periods of détente and escalation (Diehl et al., 2005). In contrast to the concept of “frozen conflicts”, the BRL is more explicit in explaining the nature of conflicts. The label of “frozen conflicts” seems to push the urgency of issues out of priority agendas with subsequent decrease of international efforts to mediate it. On the other hand, BRL avoids this phrasing, emphasising both the static character of the conflict, as well as the level of hazard omnipresent in the rivalry (Broers, 2015). The hazard of BRL to escalate is particularly high in territorial conflicts and in cases where several militarized confrontations have taken place in the dyad, which is the case in Karabakh conflict (Goertz & Diehl, 2000). The BRL of the Karabakh conflict is multifaceted. Publicly stated threats of military solution of the Karabakh conflict are commonplace, especially from the Azerbaijani side as an alternative settlement in case it finds political means incapable of achieving the country’s objectives (European Friends of Armenia, 2017). Both sides also periodically display force in military drills close to the border and the LoC between Karabakh and Azerbaijan, that, besides serving the declared technical objectives, also engender high tensions. Drills are also regarded as a mean of pressure before rounds of negotiations between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Until 2014, the average of combat deaths varied between 20 to 30 per year (Broers, 2016). The number of deaths not only rose in 2014-2015 period but also included number of incidents of civilian targeting and geographically extended from the LoC to the Armenian-Azerbaijani border accompanied by an increase in military expenditure. The highest post-war point came in April, 2016 with a surge of violence during the so-called “four-day war” resulting in estimated 350 deaths and minor territorial gains for Azerbaijan (Senior State Department Officials, 2016). In 2017, the combat losses seem to have gone back to the pre-2016 average and decreased further in 2018 with 7 and 10 combat losses on the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides respectively (Sanamyan, 2018; Safe Soldiers for Safe Armenia, 2018; Razm.info, 2019).

ER Termination and Conflict Transformation. Among the conditions conducive to rivalry termination, ER suggests such political dynamics as regime changes, the appearance of other distracting security threats, political shocks at the international system level, endogenous shocks, change of leadership, etc. (Diehl et al., 2005). In addition to the conflict termination factors proposed by the ER framework that are primarily less predictable, we contend that proactive conflict transformation efforts can simultaneously contribute to the creation of an environment for sustainable peace. When conflict resolution attempts fail, as in the case of enduring rivalries (for which they endure) then scholars of conflict transformation suggest dealing with the nature of the conflict rather than mounting the efforts for a settlement process that repeatedly proves itself futile. Lederach (1997) suggests that personal, structural, cultural and relational aspects of the conflict are the key dimensions where such peacebuilding efforts should be directed. The loci of change for Miall (2004) are interests, discourses and relationships that support the protraction of the conflict, even targeting the very constitution of the society. Vayrynen’s (1991) claim that issues, actors, and interest are not given realities but instead they change over time only support the conflict transfor-

mation frameworks proposed by the above-mentioned authors. Vayrynen also suggests four dimensions through which rivalry can be transformed: actor transformation, rules transformation, issue transformation and structural transformation. While we do not foresee substantial shifts and transformations in rules and issues around Karabakh conflict, there are certain aspects regarding the actors and the structure of the rivalry that bear fruitful analytical insights regarding possibilities of transformation. Both conflict transformation theories and the ER framework emphasize the interests of the ruling elites as central actors of rivalries when it comes to reaching a peace agreement. Both schools argue that the fear of ruling elites of the domestic backfire to their regime as a response to a conciliatory deal (in forms of coups or losses in future election cycles) is a major impediment to conflict resolution (Diehl et al, 2005; Ayunts, Zolyan, & Zakaryan, 2016). Unwilling to face these pressures, the elites then turn this liability into an asset for further consolidating their grip on power. This usually happens through the securitization of domestic politics at the expense of democratization, liberal political haggling, welfare spending, etc. (Hensel, 1999). The ruling elites often “legitimize their power, consolidate support, marginalize opponents, and neutralize democratizing pressures” (2016, p. 543) justifying these measures as necessary to achieve (revisionist Azerbaijan) or maintain (pro status-quo Armenia) certain national security objectives (Ayunts et al., pp. 543-559). The centrality of the conflict in domestic politics has spiralled up to a level that, using the terms of Diehl, Goertz and Saedi, it has become a “zero-sum test for each state’s legitimizing ideology” (Diehl et al., 2005, p. 35). With this backdrop, Ayunts et al. (2016) do not consider the possibility of actor transformation – as well as of rule and issue transformation – since the leaders were not likely to compromise their political capital that would be at stake. Nevertheless, one of the key actors of the process has changed since that writing, as in 2018 “Velvet Revolution” in Armenia briefly Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan from power and brought Nikol Pashinyan and his party to the leadership of the state. Some of the remarkable notions in Pashinyan’s Karabakh agenda have so far been the demand for the return of Karabakh to the negotiating table, the discourse of preparing the societies for peace and the stressed importance achieving an acceptable deal for Armenian, Karabakh and Azerbaijani societies (Kharatyan, 2019; Panorama.am, 2019). The demand for Karabakh’s participation, even though it might seem to be a novelty, has also been on the agenda of the outgoing elites, though with less emphasis (Abrahamyan, 2016). The biggest achievement in the settlement process after the revolution is the relative peace on the LoC, thanks to which the number of combat losses has decreased dramatically. The change of actors challenges some notions that had been taken for granted before the revolution. The first revision refers to the belief that the politicians from Karabakh, also known as “the Karabakh clan”, are spoilers due their distinctly hard-line stands regarding the settlement. It might have been erroneously expected that their removal from power would soften Armenia’s stances on territorial matters. Nevertheless, at least from what is publicly known, the new Armenian elites do not seem to be any less uncompromising in this regard. This change of actors also provides ground for novel questions to enter the analytical debate, such as on the implications of regime types on conflict resolution. While democratic change in one of the sides falls short for considerations on democratic peace theory, ER theorists offer conceptualizations for possible developments of this

conjuncture, if Azerbaijan were to democratize. Maoz's (1997) data findings indicate that the first year in which both states of the dyad democratize, dispute escalation is more probable than in any other time during the history of the rivalry. To localize this warning to our case, a perilous situation may arise if a popular movement in Azerbaijan would bring to power a warmongering nationalist leader who would cause drastic escalations on the front line in the euphoric wave of the uprising. There is also the overlooked side of popular rule, which can both push and constrain a democratic and maybe less pro-war leader to escalatory decisions. The closed nature and the narrow framework of negotiations involving only top officials on both sides exacerbates limitations that stem from the over dependence on and centrality of individual leaders, thus monopolizing any possible peace process and lacking sufficient legitimacy among the wider publics in controversial outcomes (Freizer, 2014). ER scholars stress the importance of learning from previous escalations in order to avoid future conflicts. But there also seems to be a consensus that enduring rivalries lack such learning, which is one of the reasons they endure (Maoz B. D., 1999). In the case of the dyad around the Karabakh conflict, the possible lack of learning also stems from monopolized political systems. In order to achieve sustainable stability, the decision-making "learners" should, instead of individuals, be the institutions who have the capacity to accumulate and advance the learned lessons regardless of any turbulences affecting the composition of the personnel. However, the conflicting sides can hardly be praised for having sophisticated institutions, instead much of the crucial decisions are made in small circles, based upon individual preferences, experience and knowledge (Cornell, 2011; Iskandaryan, Minasyan, & Mikaelian, 2016). In such systems, not only is the development of institutionalism hampered, but also there are very few people in limited circles who gain practical knowledge and skills on state governance, everyone outside remaining without competency and experience. In this regard, sudden political changes in the leadership can engender a dangerously unstable disarray of domestic and foreign policy, that may lead to the escalation of tensions as a result of incautious or poorly-calculated steps. It is for this kind of nuanced possibilities, that ER scholars regard environmental shocks as a necessary but not sufficient precondition for rivalry termination (Diehl, Goertz, & Saeedi, 2005). This monopolization allows the generation of a prevailing domestic discourse as the state has been acknowledged as the only legitimate authority to speak about the settlement process, deeming other voices incompetent, manipulative or treacherous (Ter-Gabrielyan, 2009). This position has also allowed the elites to construct different narratives for domestic and international audiences, which has further complicated the uncertainty in public expectations. When we place this mechanism in Lederach's pyramid of stakeholders of conflict resolution, we see that the process is strictly limited to the top of the pyramid – the official political elites – and somewhat to the middle tier – the civil society – while the base of the pyramid – the general population – is virtually deprived of a significant engagement (Lederach, 1997). Conversely, we have already observed that part of the obstacles for substantial progress come from reservations regarding the larger public. The public behaviour in enduring rivalries is to a considerable degree based upon collective memories. These, as understood by Miall (2004), are "part of each party's socially constructed understanding of the situation, shaped by culture and learning, and discourse and belief" (p. 77). The "prevalent" memory in both socie-

ties tends to bring to the central stage the misfortunes of the past interaction and de-humanize the other. In such cases the shadow of past grievances and pessimistic expectations of conflict resolution hamper any rivalry termination. In the long run, this consolidates mutual threat perception and exacerbates competition (Diehl, Goertz, & Saeedi, 2005). The above deconstruction of the possibilities of rivalry termination yields very pessimistic perspectives for sustainable peace, since memory is constructed (which means it is still negotiable) based on experience, and experience is difficult, if not impossible, to alter retrospectively. Not to neglect the pages of positive interaction between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, the introduction of positive memories into the public discourse, such as the publication of the book by Akram Aylisli³, ended up triggering a backlash and arguably brought more radicalization. In this way, the sides become engaged in a zero-sum game of mirroring reciprocal enemy imagery: “they adopt the worst insinuations or repeat the worst actions of the other side” (Ter-Gabrielyan, 2009, p. 93). Coupled with the regular tensions on the LoC, the negative experiences only reinforce the continuous process of memory formation. Considering the above, we argue that it is by the creation of new positive experiences that public attitudes and behaviour can be altered. To this end, the most promising and realistic endeavour appears to be the mutually beneficial realization of the economic potential of the Sarsang reservoir. We regard this perspective as having the potential to pave way for structural transformation.

Joint Management of the Sarsang Reservoir

The conflict transformation scholarship on Nagorno-Karabakh is rather limited both in scope and in range. Most accounts, such as de Waal, Ayunts et al., Gradlyan (2013) address the deficiencies and limits of the Minsk Group and examine the current Track II civil society efforts and possibilities. The largest share of the recommendations are also put forward along these lines. With all due respect to the efforts of all kinds of mediators we believe that, we believe that these efforts fall short of translating into substantial structural transformation on the societal level. Their scope is usually limited to several of dozen people from each side at each initiative, their participants often do not extend to the conservative segments of societies, instead they come from more or less active civic and progressive circles, notwithstanding the participation overlap across various initiatives. The need for mass outreach of conflict transformation efforts leads us to regard the potential of the Sarsang reservoir as an appropriate departure point. Taking into account all the constraints and the opportunities explained above, in this section we will try to spell out a measure that may have the potential to transform the structural outset of the conflict and truly enable the possibility of a constructive dialogue. The Sarsang reservoir is an artificial water basin built on the river Tartar in the northern part of Nagorno-Karabakh. The dam is also equipped with a hydro-power plant. Built in 1976, the reservoir had significant agricultural importance for the Azerbaijani SSR. On both sides of the LoC, agriculture is the main source of income, which is severely hampered by the lack of proper water provision. Because of the lack of any communication and coordination between Karabakh and Azerbaijani authorities, the population on the Azerbaijani side of the LoC is deprived of high-volume water provision, espe-

³ His book “Stone Dreams” tells the story of an Azerbaijani trying to save Armenians during anti-Armenian riots in Azerbaijan.

cially in summer when it is crucial for agricultural fieldwork. The Armenian authorities deposit water during summers and the openings of the floodgates are based on the reservoir's hydropower considerations (Shikhali & Safarova, 2016; Harutyunyan, 2016). In July 2013, an Azerbaijani representative at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Elkhan Suleymanov, initiated a working document sounding the alarm on a potential catastrophe in Sarsang and condemning the Armenian authorities for blockading water systems. Document 13270 became a motion for a resolution, meaning it was not discussed in the Assembly but committed its signatories – 45 people (PACE, 2013). A month later, Arthur Aghabekyan, the deputy PM of Nagorno-Karabakh, stated in a diplomatic response the intention of Karabakh authorities to open a dialogue with Azerbaijan for joint management of the reservoir's resources. If not reciprocated, according to Aghabekyan, Karabakh itself would have to attract investments and exploit the agricultural potential of the reservoir, but only for its own needs (Margaryan, 2013). In September 2013, a conference voicing Azerbaijani interests regarding Sarsang was held in the Tartar region of Azerbaijan organized by Elkhan Suleymanov. The technical deficiencies of the dam, lack of proper maintenance and deliberate water management damaging Azerbaijani farmers were listed among issues threatening Azerbaijani interests (Leylekian, 2015). Six months after the first PACE initiative, Azerbaijan returned with a more advanced proposal emphasizing the “deliberate” water deprivation of Azerbaijani border inhabitants (PACE, 2014). Based on a 2016 report⁴, which was prepared without even a visit to the site, PACE adopted a resolution warning of a “major disaster with great loss of human life” (PACE, 2016). As opposed to the less than constructive implications of PACE activities, the idea of joint management of the reservoir was picked up by the Minsk Group in the meantime, particularly by the US co-chairman James Warlick. On their visit to Karabakh the group representatives even visited the dam and expressed hope for the realization of a joint project (OSCE, 2014). Nevertheless, the initiative seemed to fade away with no or negative reaction from Baku. Arayik Harutyunyan, the former PM of Karabakh and president of the Free Motherland Party, has been active in entrepreneurial, technical and diplomatic initiatives regarding Sarsang⁵. Considering his high chances in the upcoming presidential elections of the de facto state, Harutyunyan's position on the issue is noteworthy. In a 2016 interview, Harutyunyan spelled out the acceptable quid pro quo as follows: joint management would be possible when Azerbaijan restores its canals, exploits the water resources for fields both in Karabakh and in Azerbaijan, and in return the Karabakh authorities would give up their energy interests and open the Sarsang floodgates also during the summer (Harutyunyan, 2016). Two years later, Harutyunyan explained the lack of any progress in this regard as a waiting period during which any sign of cooperation from Azerbaijan was absent (Harutyunyan, 2018). Consequentially, he announced the launch of an investment project that would make use of 20-25% of Sarsang's water for irrigation of the Martakert region and surrounding areas, as well as construct hydropower plants along the new system (Tert.am, 2018). The initiative was projected to cost more than 100 million dollars. It had reportedly already attracted international

4 The author of the report Milica Markovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) was later suspected of being involved in a corruption case. See for example (RFE/RL, 2018)

5 Harutyunyan authored dissertation entitled “Technical analysis and development measures safe operation of Sarsang chamber” (ETD-OA, 2013)

investors and was regarded by Harutyunyan as the most important project for the national economy (Harutyunyan, 2018). Echoing the pledge after the first formal meeting of Pashinyan and Aliyev in Vienna 2019 to develop humanitarian measures, Harutyunyan announced two proposals of such cooperation – opening Karabakh’s air space for international flights and the joint management of Sarsang’s water resources. Notwithstanding the alternative investment projects, Harutyunyan expressed willingness for humanitarian cooperation (Aysor.am, 2019). The joint statement after the ministerial meeting in Moscow making reference to the stabilization of the situation during agricultural activities and the May 2019 OSCE joint statement referring to humanitarian measures seem to be in this vein and leading to some kind of cooperation as discussed above (OSCE 2019a, 2019b). As initial steps of the joint management, Lylekian suggests setting up a technical commission that would work on the wording and framework of the future agreement and benefit from the lessons learned from similar complicated cases elsewhere (Lylekian, 2015). Freizer suggests concentrating the talks on concrete problems such as the issue of the upkeep of the dam’s wall, which reportedly may collapse, threatening lives of hundreds of thousands (2014). In our vision, the most appropriate joint management will entail a representative institutional arrangement, including third party members. These can come from international organizations, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, with which both countries have already dealt in environmental matters (Lylekian, 2015). A balanced power-sharing arrangement would also necessitate in an according financing of activities, such as exploitation, control and coordination of the reservoir. The joint management will bring together technical (technocrat) specialists – engineers, workers, relevant energy and agricultural specialists – from both sides to work on highly technical issues. This way, the interaction will disconnect technical issues from political ones, but the results of technical engagement will yield political gains in favour of regional stabilization. The joint project will not solve the conflict right away for obvious reasons, nor does it put such an objective. However, it will open channels of communication between the groups, play a confidence-building role both for the societies and for the leaders, instrumental in showing the possibility of coexistence and co-working. The successful course of the joint project has the potential to inject new positive experiences (“memories-to-be”) into the publics and influence their future behaviour. It could help to de-radicalize much larger segments of societies than might the outreach of civil society peacebuilding initiatives. The effect can be especially positive among the regions that will directly benefit from the joint management. The proposal fits the process-oriented course of the enduring rivalry framework. The above-mentioned results of the project’s implementation and the following widening, deepening and multiplication effects of a neo-functionalist nature can potentially ease the domestic pressures on the regimes and enable more constructive negotiations. This approach also provides a substitute to the dream-like democratic peace. Alternative to geopolitical peace, state-society peace (not democratizing the societies, but preparing them for peace), will allow even the authoritarian-oriented regimes to further the peace process (Broers, 2015). The results of such cooperation have the potential to play the role of a structural transformer and bring the sides out of the political impasse and practical impotency to come up with a comprehensive peace plan.

Conclusion

In sum, this article aimed to put the Karabakh conflict into a theoretical perspective by adapting the framework of enduring rivalries. The features of the conflict such as its protraction, chronology, stability and the fundamental incompatibility of the stakeholders' stands qualify it as an enduring rivalry. This theorization allows more cautious and phased examination of the conflict than does the misleading concept of "frozen conflicts" by keeping the militarized relations as the object of the study. This paper also identified some of the constraints that have derived from the monopolized political systems and zero-sum perception of the societies. With this backdrop, this article claims that even in an unlikely scenario of reaching a peace agreement, its legitimacy will be harshly challenged by the populations and undermine both its implementation and the ruling regimes. In light of the above, this article suggests that the structural transformation of the conflict is necessary to overcome these obstacles. The joint management of the water resources of the Sarsang reservoir is identified as a feasible and promising measure that can contribute to structural transformation by introducing new positive experiences that can shape future behaviours of the publics. The previous interaction of the sides regarding the reservoir demonstrates how politicization of seemingly technical issues for propaganda purposes may impede realization of mutually-beneficial projects. The recent promising voices from the Minsk Group's joint statements, if coupled with cautious wording and proactive public diplomacy, may lead to the realization of the economic potential of the Sarsang reservoir, which can yield promising political changes, contributing to the structural transformation of the conflict.

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Notes

1. We might as well assign the framework to the neo-classical school of International Relations.
2. The constitutional name of former Nagorno Karabakh after 2017 constitutional reforms.
3. His book “Stone Dreams” tells the story of an Azerbaijani trying to save Armenians during anti-Armenian riots in Azerbaijan.
4. The author of the report Milica Markovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) was later suspected of being involved in a corruption case. See for example (RFE/RL, 2018)
5. Harutyunyan authored dissertation entitled “Technical analysis and development measures safe operation of Sarsang chamber” (ETD-OA, 2013)

ՆԱՐԵԿ ՍՈՒՓԻԱՅԱՆ

Երևանի պետական համալսարանի մագիստրանտ

ԶԳԶԳՎՈՂ ՀԱԿԱՄԱՐՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ԵՎ ՀԱԿԱՄԱՐՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ՓՈԽԱԿԵՐՊՈՒՄ. ԼԵՌՆԱՅԻՆ ՂԱՐԱԲԱՂԻ ԴԵՊՐԵՏԻ ՇՈՒՐՁ

Հետազոտությունը քննում է Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի հակամարտության բնույթը և փորձում մատնանշել հակամարտության լուծման կայուն ուղի՝ հիմնվելով ձգձգվող հակամարտության (ՁՀ) տեսության և հակամարտությունների փոխակերպման գրականության և վերլուծական շրջանակների

վրա՝ այդպիսով առաջ բերելով խնդրի պետություն-հասարակություն հարթությունը: Հաշվի առնելով հակամարտող հասարակությունների վերաբերմունքը՝ այս ուսումնասիրությունը փաստարկում է, որ անգամ եթե անհավանական զարգացումների բերումով կողմերը հասնեն կոնսենսուալ համաձայնության, հասարակություններից մեկը կամ երկուսն էլ խստորեն վիճարկելու են դրա արդյունքը՝ ոչ միայն վնասելով դրա կիրարկումը այլ նաև ռեժիմների դիմացկունությունը: Այս հետազոտությունը առաջարկում է դիտարկել հակամարտությունների փոխակերպման վրա հիմնած մոտեցում և առաջ է քաշում Սարսանգի ջրամբարի կառավարումը ներառող առաջարկություն:

Հիմնաբառեր. ձգձգվող հակամարտություն, հակամարտությունների փոխակերպում, Լեռնային Ղարաբաղ, հակամարտության կառավարում, նեո-ֆունկցիոնալիզմ:

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ДЛИТЕЛЬНОЕ СОПЕРНИЧЕСТВО И ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ КОНФЛИКТА: СЛУЧАЙ НАГОРНОГО КАРАБАХА

Данное исследование изучает природу Нагорно-Карабахского конфликта и пытается определить устойчивый путь урегулирования конфликта, опираясь на литературу и аналитические рамки теории Длительного Соперничества (ДС) и исследования трансформации конфликтов. Таким образом выдвигая государственно-общественный аспект вопроса. Рассматривая позиции конфликтующих обществ, данное исследование утверждает, что даже при маловероятном сценарии консенсусного соглашения результат будет ожесточенно оспариваться одним или всеми обществами, подрывая не только возможность его реализации, но и выносливость режимов. В исследовании предлагается рассмотреть подход, основанный на трансформации конфликтов, и выработать рекомендацию, предусматривающую управление водохранилищем Сарсанг.

Ключевые слова: длительное соперничество, трансформация конфликтов, Нагорный Карабах, управление конфликтами, неофункционализм.

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