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Introduction: Some theoretical considerations

There is an approach to resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict, which I would call the "geopolitical paradigm". This pattern of thinking suggests that perspectives for the resolution of the conflict are dependent not so much on the actors in the region, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK, but rather on global and regional powers. According to this view, it is the relations between major powers, rather than within the societies of Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK, that will dictate the resolution of the conflict. According to this line of thinking, international consensus among global and regional powers about how the conflict should be handled is possible, and this consensus can be imposed upon the conflict parties. Ironically, it is representatives of local elites who often put forward this view, which diminishes the importance of local actors; they put their hopes in the pressure exerted by the international community (or USA, Russia, the EU, Turkey, etc.) on adversaries in order to force concessions.

I do not question the reality that geopolitical considerations and the positions of global and regional powers are important for developments in the region. However, the idea that the key to resolving the NK conflict lies with external powers seems problematic. Even if we put aside the problematic moral implications of this approach, it is not helpful from a purely pragmatic point of view. Though this kind of thinking usually comes draped in the rhetoric of Cold War-era *Realpolitik*, its underlying assumptions are far from reality. It is difficult to imagine that the main players in

the South Caucasus, i.e. the USA, Russia, Turkey, the EU and Iran, will arrive at a long-lasting consensus regarding a resolution of the NK conflict in the foreseeable future. Each of these actors has their interests in the region, often irreconcilable with the interests of the others. These actors also have enough resources to destabilize the region and sabotage any solution against their interests. Even if there is a consensus between major powers at a certain point in time it is unlikely that it will last long, and as soon as this consensus is shaken, the new situation can be used by the side unsatisfied by the results of the consensus.

Therefore, any solution imposed on the conflict parties by the major powers, is not only unsustainable but represents a potential time-bomb. Crucially, the "geopolitical paradigm" ignores developments within the local societies. A sustainable resolution of the conflict can be reached only when local societies are transformed, and the nature of the relationship between Armenians and Azerbaijanis changed. As numerous cases of reconciliation between former "eternal enemies" in different parts of Europe suggest, Armenian-Azeri reconciliation is not an idealistic dream. However, until such changes within societies start happening, any model of resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict can become a dangerous illusion.

The "geopolitical paradigm" leads to what can be termed the "top-down" approach, i.e. the idea that resolution can be worked out by representatives of the governing elites and then imposed on societies. Of course, it takes political will and courage from the leaders to be able to work out a compromise solution. However, compromise can be successful only if there is demand for it amongst the wider public. It is possible to imagine a situation in which supporters of compromise are widely represented at least among influential groups – political leaders, bureaucrats, businessmen, the expert community, NGOs, etc. Unfortunately, the current situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan is not even close to these conditions. On the contrary, voices for compromise are marginalized and stigmatized as "traitors" both by pro-government propaganda and public opinion.

Of course, it might be argued that since neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan are fully functioning democracies¹, public opinion is not as important as the position of the elites. This logic implies, however, that governments can be engaged in the deception of their own peoples, up to and including the violent crushing of dissent. In other words, this would

1 The Freedom House survey "Freedom in the World" for 2008 Azerbaijan in the category of "non-free" countries; Armenia is in the category of "partly free" countries, though it has experienced a decline in its rating for last year (A. Puddington. "The 2008 Freedom House Survey" in *Journal of Democracy*, April 2009, Volume 20, Number 2).

mean sacrificing democracy and human rights in the name of conflict resolution.

Even if we put aside the moral implications of such actions, the problem with this approach is that it will simply not be effective. In Armenia, the government has already found itself in an extremely unstable position after the disputed elections of 2008. Although so far the opposition has declared its support for a compromise on NK, there is a trend of radicalization within the opposition and in the society in general. The logic of the political process in Armenia suggests that the opposition will either have to counter possible concessions by the government or face the danger of losing a large part of its support base to more radical forces. Given the background of financial and economic crisis, the Armenian government will not be able to impose an agreement on society perceived as concessionary to Azerbaijan. On the contrary, such attempts might have dramatic consequences for the government itself (as in 1998). As for Azerbaijan, the current government's position seems to be much more stable and unchallenged. However, as Thomas de Waal points out, the belligerent rhetoric of the Azerbaijani authorities means it would be extremely difficult for them "to sell" compromise to society.²

There is another factor making the defence of compromise by Armenian and Azerbaijani governments unlikely. For years, the unsolved conflict has been a source of legitimacy for ruling political elites. The "no war – no peace" situation has served to legitimize the lack of democratic freedoms and necessity for authoritarian methods of government. The image of the other side as "the mortal enemy," reinforced by government propaganda, has been used to rally the population behind the ruling elite. Critics and adversaries of the government have been demonized as "traitors" and their actions portrayed as a threat to "unity". In the absence of a clear political ideology, this discourse has become the main tool for the legitimization of political elites both in Armenia and Azerbaijan. "Selling" compromise to their societies would require from the elites a rejection (or at least transformation) of the ideological basis of their own power, something they are very unlikely to allow.

The same methodological error that manifests itself in the "top-down" approach has led to the exclusion from the peace process of the representatives of NK itself. It is not our goal here to discuss whether inclusion of the representatives of Stepanakert in the peace process would be fair from a moral or legal point of view. What is important in my view is the reality that, although unrecognized, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) is an autonomous political unit effectively controlling the territory of NK and enjoying legitimacy in the eyes of the population currently living there. Therefore, leaving aside the moral

and legal aspects of the issue, from a purely pragmatic point of view the participation of NK's leadership in the peace process is crucial: any agreement which excludes the representatives of NK would be virtually impossible to implement. NK is currently an autonomous actor, with its own interests and its own tools of influencing the political process. While the Armenian government certainly has strong influence on decision-making in NK, there are certain limits to that influence, since, for reasons of internal politics, no Armenian government can afford an open confrontation with the leadership of NK. As the course of events in the late 1990s showed, lack of support from NK can be costly for the ruling elite in Armenia, especially against a background of political crisis and low legitimacy.

Another issue often raised in connection with the format of the peace process, is the issue of participation of the representatives of refugees. Engaging in a discussion about the format of representation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the framework of the peace process would lead us too far from the objectives of this paper. However, it would be desirable to envisage a certain mechanism, which would allow refugees from all sides to make their voice heard in the peace process. It is my strong conviction that the peace process will not be complete, unless it creates an opportunity for all refugees of all ethnicities to determine their future freely. However, when it comes to negotiations and decision making, it is important to distinguish between actors, that, whether internationally recognized or not, possess capabilities of a political unit (as in the case of the NKR), and those that do not have such capabilities.

Fifteen years of ceasefire

The NK conflict is similar in many ways to many other military conflicts. However it is exceptional in one sense: a ceasefire agreement, which has not been followed by any political settlement, has been kept for 15 years in spite of the absence of foreign peacekeepers and international security guarantees. This fact is often underestimated.

The NK case provides arguments to both supporters and critics of the usefulness of "freezing" of conflicts. The unresolved conflict hinders the development of Armenia and Azerbaijan in virtually all fields from the economy to human rights and democracy and turns the countries of South Caucasus into pawns in the geopolitical games of major powers. There is immense human suffering on both sides of the divide, whether among the refugees, who have been stripped of their homes and properties, or among the population of borderland areas, who live in constant fear of new bloodshed. The ceasefire violations cost the lives of dozens of Armenian and Azerbaijani young men every year. The "no war – no peace" situation breeds hate, fear, intolerance and aggression.

2 Thomas de Waal, *The Karabakh Trap: Dangers and Dilemmas of the Nagorny Karabakh Conflict*. Conciliation Resources, 2009; p.7. Available at <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/caucasus/documents/Nagorno-Karabakh-report-AW.pdf>

Though the parties are paying a high price for the current status quo, the costs of a new war would be much higher. Fortunately, the political elites of the region realize this, preventing the breakdown of the ceasefire. Though its stability has been tested by border incidents and there is ongoing propaganda warfare, the parties have managed to avoid a full-scale military confrontation, at a time when the Eurasian continent has been shaken by instability from the Balkans to the North Caucasus and Middle East. Against this background of volatility, the balance of power in and around NK established in the mid-1990s, has proved more stable than many could have imagined. Thus, on the one hand, the status quo is costly for all sides of the conflict. On the other hand, hasty and uncalculated steps in the conflict resolution process can break the delicate balance and lead to unforeseen developments for all parties involved.

Recent developments around Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia might potentially lead to certain changes in the situation. An important regional development is the attempt at normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations. Attitudes towards Armenia and Armenians within Turkish society have begun to change, and at the same time the position of Armenian elites vis-à-vis Turkey has become more pragmatic. Finally, the new trends in US policies towards Russia and Iran, if successful, can be crucial for stability in the South Caucasus and have a benign effect on the NK peace process. Furthermore, reassessment of US foreign policy might serve as a positive example for Armenian and Azerbaijani political elites, which have so far relied on "hard power" and emphasized military might, diplomatic pressure, and economic sanctions, rather than negotiations and dialogue.

Scenarios

An optimistic scenario

This is a highly optimistic scenario, in which all actors make responsible choices and the international and internal situation in the countries involved is favourable for a peaceful resolution. This might seem an almost "utopian" scenario, since the odds of all factors being positive at the same time are not very high. However, it is still useful to have a blueprint of how things could happen in a "perfect world".

I will not discuss here the details of the actual agreement, which is to be signed between the parties to the conflict, since this is not the task of this paper. Besides, the "Madrid principles" currently being discussed are not yet publicly available, so any further discussion will be based on speculation. Furthermore, despite remaining confidential the Madrid principles have already gained a bad reputation among many Armenians and Azerbaijanis because of

media leaks and speculation. In any case, there seems to be a consensus among many experts regarding what a realistic model of compromise could look like.³ Armenia and the NKR would never accept any model of solution, which subordinates NK to Azerbaijani authority, even if this rejection involves the risk of continuing stalemate or new escalation. Similarly, for Armenia and the NKR the issue of a land connection between the two states is vital. In its turn, Azerbaijan will do everything in its power to regain the territories surrounding NK. Whatever the compromise, it will have to take into account these realities. What is important is that the leadership of the NKR approve the agreement in addition to the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders.

Of course, as it has been often said, "the devil is in the details". Currently, in the eyes of elites in Armenia, NK and Azerbaijan the potential costs of conflict resolution are significantly higher than the potential benefits. It is true that they are not interested in a military escalation either: here too potential risks are quite high. Obviously, the "no war – no peace" situation and continuing negotiations without tangible results offers the best combination in terms of costs and benefits. In order to make progress possible, it is important to alter the cost-benefit calculations for the local elites. This can be achieved both through internal and external mechanisms of influencing the elites. Internally, it will become possible if there is a change of public opinion and a widespread demand for peace and compromise. That will put pressure on local elites, or at least create a situation in which internal risks associated with compromise are relatively low. In terms of external mechanisms, this implies active involvement of the international community through "carrot and stick" diplomacy. In practice this means restraining the local elites through unequivocal condemnation of belligerent rhetoric, propaganda warfare and restrictions on civil society contacts. It also means encouragement of the elites through economic incentives, aid programs, investments and participation in regional integration. It is important that the internal and external processes go hand-in-hand, or we might find ourselves in the trap of the "top-down" approach.

A shift in the negotiations would create a self-enforcing positive dynamic. Progress in the peace process ensures progress in economic and civil contacts, which in turn influence the peace process. Communications are opened, trade between Armenia and Azerbaijan, for years executed through third countries, is restored directly and develops further. The territory of Azerbaijan serves as a transit corridor for Armenia's communication with Russia, while Armenian territory provides transit for Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan and on to Turkey. Existing railroads start functioning, connecting Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran, giving an impetus to the further development of economic cooperation. The position of governments

3 As Wayne Merry writes in a recent paper: "The outlines of a settlement have been clear for fifteen years... Armenia will get Karabakh and a land corridor to Armenia, while Azerbaijan gets back the lowland surrounding territories. This is not about justice, nor right and wrong, but is the inescapable and necessary formula for peace." W. Merry. "Karabakh: Is War Inevitable?" 22 May 2009, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/russia/article/is-war-inevitable>.

regarding contacts between civil society groups changes; all parties encourage contacts and civic dialogue, leading to important shifts in the attitudes in the societies.

These developments take place against the background of a supportive international climate. The so-called "reset" policy in Russian-American relations proves to be successful, allowing cooperation between Russia and the West in the South Caucasus. The US also succeeds in establishing a productive dialogue with Iran, where moderates come to dominate the political scene. The South Caucasus, as a borderland between Europe and Iran, becomes an intermediary in the dialogue between Iran and the West.

An agreement around NK reduces the sharpness of competition between Russia and the West in the South Caucasus. Russia accepts Armenia's and Azerbaijan's full participation in the Eastern Partnership and further integration with EU, in exchange for guarantees that neither of these countries will join NATO in the near future. The European Union, enthusiastic about developments in the region, makes substantial investments in the economy, infrastructure, and civil society. Russia, which already has a strong economic stake in Armenia, uses the new situation in order to advance its economic interests both in Azerbaijan and Eastern Turkey. Competition between the West and Russia in the region becomes economic rather than political and military. This positive climate has a benign influence on the situation in Georgian-Russian relations. The South Caucasus enters 2014 as a region that is more stable and secure, with a vibrant economy, with balanced relations with all the major powers and an important global role as a bridge between the West, Russia and Iran.

A pessimistic scenario

Contrary to the previous scenario, this one is based on the principle that "everything that can go wrong does go wrong". We know that pessimistic projections of the future sometimes tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies. However, ignoring the prospects of possible deterioration is even more dangerous.

"Unfreezing" of the conflicts might lead either to a peaceful resolution, or, as the Georgian case showed, it could lead to a new escalation.⁴ Clearly, the situation in NK is very different from the situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Still, the tragic reality of the Russian-Georgian war is an important reminder of the reality that "unfreezing" a conflict might lead to a military escalation.

In the pessimistic scenario, a certain model of conflict resolution, possibly related to the Madrid Principles,

is forced upon the parties by the regional powers and international community. An agreement is signed by Armenia and Azerbaijan under pressure from Russia and USA, backed by EU and Turkey. The agreement contains dangerously vague points that can be interpreted differently by the sides, in particular "postponed self-determination", i.e. the suggestion that the status of NK will be decided in the future by a popular vote.⁵ Representatives of NK are excluded from the peace process, severely damaging its legitimacy in NK and in Armenia. The NK leadership refuses to accept the agreement. Eventually, faced with pressure from Yerevan it agrees to accept its main points, but as a result of the controversy between Yerevan and Stepanakert the internal standing of the Armenian government is seriously harmed. The Yerevan government, widely perceived as "treacherous" and "defeatist", loses support not only among the wider public, but also among influential circles in the military and security establishment. The opposition is split on whether to support or oppose the compromise. Eventually, the radical part of the opposition forms an unexpected coalition with previously marginal nationalist groups and the influential military establishment. The government collapses under pressure of radicals, who form a new government, which rejects the policy of "complementarity"⁶, distancing itself from the EU and the USA. The normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations stops indefinitely.

In Azerbaijan, the opposition, as well as some elements within the ruling regime, try to use the negative reactions of the public to the compromise agreement to challenge the government, but the authorities are able to crush dissent. The authoritarian regime is further strengthened, the remnants of democratic opposition are marginalized, and the media and civil society face new tough sanctions. The government's deteriorating human rights record leads to troubles in the relations with European institutions, and forces the elites to seek rapprochement with Russia, which is less demanding in terms of democratic liberties.

In the meantime, the implementation of agreements faces serious obstacles. Several provocations occur on the Line of Contact, during the deployment of peacekeeping forces from European countries. Armenians and Azerbaijanis blame each other for the incidents, while NATO blames Iranian special services. Refugee return creates tensions caused by old scores and disputes over property. Tensions escalate into violence, which the international peacekeeping forces are unable to put down. After a regiment of European peacekeepers is caught in an ambush, and several peacekeepers are killed in mysterious circumstances, European countries start pulling out their peacekeeping forces from the conflict zone. Armies of

4 M. Saldadze. "Razmorozhivanie konflikta v Tskhinvali - prodolzhenie ili proval revolyutsii Roz?" [Defrosting the conflict in Tskhinvali - continuation or failure of the Rose Revolution?], *Tsentral'naya Aziya i Kavkaz*, 5 (35), 2004.

5 Yerevan and Stepanakert interpret the voting as a referendum of independence to be carried out in NK, while Baku insists on its interpretation as a plebiscite on determining the level of autonomy of NK within Azerbaijan.

6 The essence of the policy of "complementarity" is keeping developing relations with the West, while maintaining military and political alliances with Russia.

the conflict parties fill the resulting vacuum. The conflict escalates into a full-scale war.

In another version of the pessimistic scenario the escalation may be the outcome of the vague definition of the "popular vote for determining the future of Karabakh". Authorities in NK hold a referendum on independence, which Azerbaijan refuses to recognize, based on its own interpretation of "the popular vote". Amid a new surge of radicalism on all sides provoked by this controversy, the conflict escalates, following a similar pattern.

The failure of western peacekeepers leaves Russia as the only actor in the region capable of influencing developments in the conflict. Russia mediates a ceasefire, which is to be kept by a Russian-dominated peacekeeping force. Armenia finds itself isolated and completely dependent on Russian military and political support. Azerbaijan, in turn, is forced to agree to a Russian military presence on its territory and drops out of new energy projects bypassing Russia. Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK enter 2014 devastated by war, with closed borders, with deepening authoritarian tendencies, and with a diminished degree of state sovereignty.

A 'status quo' scenario

Another scenario would be the failure of negotiations and a return to the situation of "frozen conflict". This has happened before in the course of the NK peace process, e.g. after the Key West meeting of 2001, and it can happen again. This can be an outcome of two main factors: changes in the wider geopolitical context and the reality that the societies of Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK are unprepared for genuine compromise and reconciliation.

Many political analysts agree that the involvement of major global and regional powers in resolving the NK conflict has made the success of the process dependent on relations between these major powers. It is also well known that these major powers often have conflicting interests both on the global scale and within the region. Although today there seems to be a certain consensus on the NK peace process between Russia, the West and Turkey, it cannot be considered sustainable. First of all, it excludes Iran, an important global and regional player, which has enough tools to block developments close to its border, if it perceives them as harmful to its interests. It is also easy to imagine how the Western-Russian consensus can evaporate when it comes to concrete details, such as the composition, quantity and mandate of the peace-keeping force. Besides, relations between Russia and the West remain strained in many other areas (e.g. the question of Georgia's and Ukraine's accession to NATO), and a new crisis in their relations could have an adverse effect on NK. It is highly questionable whether security guarantees issued jointly by competing powers can be a basis for a sustainable peace process.

However, even if an "ideal" model of agreement is worked out by the mediators and presented to the parties that

still might not be enough. There is another prerequisite for a successful peace process, which is absent today: the readiness of the societies to accept compromise. The absence of a functioning democracy and low level of public legitimacy of the governments in Armenia and Azerbaijan also undermine the potential for reconciliation between the societies.

The parties are unable to reach a compromise regarding general principles of resolution. Constant leaks in the press, which each side uses to present itself as the "winner" at the negotiating table, eventually undermine the trust between the negotiators. In the mean time, a new crisis in Georgia and a new "gas war" in Ukraine lead to deterioration of the relations between Russia and the West, damaging the potential for cooperation within the Minsk Group. The mediators, however, succeed in convincing the parties to sign a vague document resembling the Moscow Declaration: the document declares the willingness of the sides to continue the peace process within the framework of the OSCE. Although this document is void of concrete content and is perceived by many as simply a face-saving measure, it helps to salvage the format of the Minsk Group and prevent a new escalation around NK.

At this point the "status quo" scenario might evolve in two directions. If the "re-freezing" of the NK resolution process also produces a halt in the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations it might lead to a scenario partly converging with the previously discussed "nightmare" scenario. The failure of negotiations creates a strong nationalist backlash. The dominance of nationalist rhetoric and negative stereotypes remains unchallenged in both societies, while moderate voices are further marginalized and stigmatized. Azerbaijani elites return to aggressive rhetoric calling for a military solution, prompting a similar response from Armenia and NK. The number of incidents in the border area sharply increases, making fears of a new war more tangible. The closed border with Turkey and the aggressive rhetoric of Azerbaijan leaves Armenia with no other choice than to rely solely on Russia. Azerbaijani elites, disappointed by the West's inability to solve the conflict, try to reach their aims through negotiating a bargain with Russia. Hoping to achieve Russian support for concessions in NK in exchange for a pro-Russian stance on energy projects they drop out from the Nabucco project. Russia continues to play a skilful game of balancing between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in order to maximize its influence in both countries. Since Armenians and Azerbaijanis rely on military strength and military alliances as the only way of achieving security, therefore, the danger of war remains high. The South Caucasus enters 2014 as an even more dangerous place than it used to be in 2009.

In a second, more optimistic version of the "status quo" scenario, the failure to achieve a breakthrough on NK does not halt Armenian-Turkish normalization. In this case, developments partly converge with the optimistic scenario discussed earlier. In this scenario the Armenian and Turkish sides continue to normalize relations, while Azerbaijan does

not attempt to block them. Although Azerbaijani public opinion remains hostile to this process, Azerbaijani elites are convinced by the international mediators that in the long-term Armenian-Turkish reconciliation can be helpful for the NK peace process. Armenian public opinion begins to reassess its attitudes to Azerbaijan: Armenian-Turkish normalization helps Armenian society to get rid of the siege mentality, which had become common during the years of Turkish-Azerbaijani blockade. A similar process takes place in Azerbaijan, where the society begins to reassess some of its attitudes: many Azerbaijanis become more open to the idea of dialogue and compromise with Armenians as Armenian-Turkish reconciliation leads to questioning of negative attitudes towards Armenians.

The success of Armenian-Turkish dialogue creates an atmosphere in which contacts between Armenian and Azerbaijani societies continue. These lead to the breaking of taboos and stereotypes and encourage new ways of thinking about each other. The idea of compromise gains wider support within both societies, at least among the business sector, civil society and intellectual elites. Positive changes in the psychological climate around NK breathe new life into the Minsk process. The mediators present a new package, which mostly replicates elements that have been present in the preceding suggestions (Key West, Madrid, etc.). However unlike in previous years, the suggestions of the mediators are presented in a situation, where there is a growing demand for genuine compromise. By 2014 Armenian and Azerbaijani societies are engaged in a new phase of the peace process, which seems to be heading towards firm and sustainable peace.

Concluding remarks

Although the aim of this paper is not to offer concrete recommendations on what should be done in order to reach peaceful resolution, it may be useful to summarize certain considerations that have arisen in the course of this paper.

A realistic and sustainable solution has to be based on a pragmatic assessment of the realities on the ground, rather than on abstract concepts and idealistic visions of the future. Hasty and unconsidered steps that endanger the fragile balance in the region might lead to disastrous consequences.

It is important to deal with the unwillingness of the local political elites to engage in a productive peace process leading to a genuine compromise. Civil societies from the inside, and the international community from the outside, should work with the elites in order to change their perceptions of the costs and benefits associated with peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The conflict parties, the international community and the mediators should reject the "top-down" approach. Even if the elites are pressured or persuaded into signing a compromise agreement, it will be sustainable only provided

there is a demand for it within their societies. An attempt to impose on the societies a certain model of resolution, which they are not ready to accept, could result in serious destabilization of the region and escalation of the conflict.

The efforts of the international community should not be limited to attempts at finding an "ideal" model of solution to the conflict. The psychological atmosphere, the dominant stereotypes and attitudes need to change. Such changes can be facilitated through contacts on all levels, particularly civil dialogue, and other measures that would challenge the dominant xenophobic and aggressive discourse. This may require international pressure on the parties of conflict, urging them to refrain from belligerent rhetoric, and to encourage (or at least allow) civil contacts.

It is important to acknowledge that the NKR, albeit unrecognized by the international community, is an important political actor, which cannot be adequately represented by third parties. Failure to engage the leadership of NK can severely damage the effectiveness and sustainability of the peace process and jeopardize the implementation of agreements reached without its participation.

Armenian-Turkish normalization should not be made dependent on NK conflict resolution. On the contrary, the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations can be viewed as one of the prerequisites necessary for establishing a sustainable peace process in NK.