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"Endless Conflict or Ended Conflict. Prospects for Permanent Peace after Second Karabakh War"

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Abstract

The Nagorno Karabakh enclave has been a point of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan for decades. With the main parties being two conflicting sovereign states and the "de facto state" of Nagorno Karabakh, the conflict has grown into one of the world's most persistent and complex confrontations and has entered a new phase of reality following the second war. For this reason, it is critical to examine peace prospects and the likelihood of finding a solution for the state of NK. This thesis examines peace possibilities following the second Karabakh war and the practicality of three conflict management tools: power-sharing, division, and territorial autonomy, using a rationalist perspective as the main theory. The principal objective of this thesis has been to study the research findings and determine if they met my expectations and how well they fit into the framework I constructed in the beginning. This paper concisely addressed the core research question, ensuring that the reader comprehends the central point and contribution of my study. The preliminary results of my research indicate that the unwillingness of the Azerbaijani and Armenian sides to find a compromise acceptable to all sides stemming from a lack of trust and the Azerbaijani government's consolidated and hegemonic authoritarian attitudes complicate the bargaining process. However, any possible agreement considering the interests of all parties in the framework of new realities will lead to peace in the region, strengthen regional integration, and restore economic ties between the two countries.

1. Introduction

Various variables of grievance versus greed have been examined to ascertain the primary causal mechanism leading to conflicts. While one group of scholars supporting the grievance argument allege that conflicts predominantly have an ethnic, religious, linguistic, or political origin, another group of scholars endorsing the greed argument claim that conflicts stem from economic inequality among diverse groups in society, as well as from the concentration of natural resources and subsequent rents on a group of people. The specifics of ethnic conflicts are more clearly manifested in the contradictions associated with differences in culture, language, religion, and other socio-cultural characteristics of ethnic groups (Hashmi, 2018). Ethnic conflicts mainly stem from when people strive for rights over homelands and national territory (Berg and Ben-Porat, 2008). Ethnics or ethnos (derived from Greek word) is characterized as a built-up ensemble of individuals joined by intra-amass standards of conduct, the features of which are settled by moral, aesthetic, psychological, and different methods of culture. Inter-ethnic conflicts occur between individuals and social groups of different ethnic groups. Ethnos is driven by the need for self-preservation and the protection of their values and traditions. Being a case study in nature, this thesis attempts to investigate prospects for permanent peace after the second Karabakh war and the likelihood of a conflict resolution mechanism to achieve that peace considering the interest of all parties from rationalist perspectives. The research combines the working procedure of the indicated theory and investigating the practicality of three different remedies after the Second Karabakh War. Specifically, this case will help us understand the differences in tactics between minority and dominant groups with credible commitment issues. Power-sharing, partition, and territorial autonomy as my remedies to the peace and territorial ethnic conflict are thus crucial conceptual phenomena in my study. I will be analyzing research findings as a rationalist approach in conflicts between dominant and subordinate groups and how useful it would be to evaluate the process in the Karabakh situation following the Second Karabakh War. I plan to examine pre-and post-war perspectives on possible peace using expert views from all three parties to the conflict. My research topic will not be framed in terms that are exclusive to our case study but rather will be of relevance for the development of theory in future research bodies of work.

While aiming to investigate peace prospects after the second Karabakh war from the rationalist views, I will be making use of the theoretical concepts of power-sharing, partition, and territorial autonomy to answer my research question in the following: *What are the prospects for peace after the second Nagorno-Karabakh war in terms of rationalist perspectives?*

Based on my findings, the objective of this thesis is to determine the future possibility of peace and which of these three proposals is feasible in the case of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict based on a rationalist approach. To prove my expectations that either of these remedies can be a valuable and effective tool for preventing potential conflicts between dominant and minority groups, I will also need to go through counterarguments from literature and interviews from my data pool.

This thesis is structured in 6 chapters. It begins with the introduction chapter. The second part contains a conceptualization of the discussed peace settlement tools, which sets the groundwork for my analysis by giving research direction, assisting in interpreting findings, and generating broad generalizations. Simply, I will clarify and assess the significant theory, concepts, and models that my study is based on. The third chapter is supposed to give us a brief and detailed illustration of the historical background of the NK conflict. The fourth chapter will provide us with the research design and methodology part, highlighting the methods I used to perform my study, enabling the reader to judge its validity. This chapter contains the following sections: The general research design and type of study, data collection techniques, data analysis methods, and, most importantly, an explanation of any challenges I encountered and how I overcame them. The last fifth chapter is labeled as empirical framework and results/discussion sections where I investigate the significance and ramifications of my findings concerning the research issue. In this chapter, I interpret the results in-depth, examining whether they matched my expectations and how well they fit into the framework I created previously in the chapters. Finally, in the conclusion part, this study addresses the core research question succinctly, ensuring that the reader understands my core argument and underlining the contribution of the study.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

There are several bodies of work on this topic that I will be using as accumulated knowledge. To strengthen my analysis, I examined scholarly publications, including books, peer-reviewed journal papers, and media articles. While published articles supported the conceptual and theoretical comprehension of my study, reports generated by other local and international agencies provided instances and statistics that were comparable to or opposed my conclusions, which will be discussed in further parts of my paper. I also compared material gathered from official records with studies, policy briefs, and working papers released by civil society groups and national and international non-governmental organizations.

2.1 The notion of territorial autonomy

It is undoubtedly essential to define the main subjects of this investigation as precisely as possible. Territorial autonomy is an authorization for parts of the state's territory to govern themselves in terms of enacting laws and statutes but without considering to constitute their own state (Suso 2010, p. 11). To some scholars, this resolution has the capability to play an immediate and constructive role in managing conflicts since it will serve as "the sense of regional self-administration and identity with the strengthening of an interest within the autonomous entity in the success of the overall state" (Wolff and Weller 2005, p. 4). I could also give another example of a different but detailed definition offered by S. S. Akermark (2013). He notes that territorial autonomy as an institution entails more than dividing competencies between the center and the periphery; it involves developing complete structural solutions and procedures of representation, accountability, and decision-making.

The following conceptual framework of territorial autonomy developed in the literature targeting to investigate territorial autonomy with simple but detailed work is proposed by Svante E. Cornell (2009), who highlights in "Autonomy as a Source of Conflict: Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective" that the provision of institutionalized, territorial autonomy for an ethnic

minority may cause the opposite of its intended effect. It may augment rather than reduce the potential for conflict between a minority and a central government. As stated earlier, autonomy is neither a sufficient nor a necessary cause of conflict. It has a strong causal relationship with both a minority's willingness and its capacity to revolt. Svante Cornell discussed the reflection of the autonomy factors which appear during the studying ethnic minorities to the whole dispute. Thus, he argued that the lack of autonomy mitigated the separatist and secessionist sentiments between minority groups.

Ruth Lapidoth (1996) analyzes the concept of autonomy and assesses its usefulness in resolving ethnic conflicts in his book. Autonomy has been proposed as a means of safeguarding minority groups. Lapidoth explains that territorial political autonomy is an agreement that allows a group that varies from the majority of the people in the state but is the majority in a particular territory to express its own identity. In order to understand the political concept of autonomy, he differentiated regional independence, individual or social autonomy, and self-dependence.

Many minorities wish to rule over an area where they have a majority. If we read the news, we will almost certainly hear about the demands for territorial autonomy made by the Kurds in Turkey, the Oromo in Ethiopia, the Catalans in Spain, and the Tibetans in China. Territorial autonomy may only be justified when it is required to eliminate the barrier preventing group members from exercising the right granted (Nam and Fessha, 2018, p. 544). Minority groups' aspirations for self-government in the form of territorial autonomy are still resonating across the world. Minorities' political and cultural demands, on the other hand, are seen as attempts to undermine the state's territorial integrity, which remains a crucial basis of international law. This is also the case even when a minority group's arguments do not resemble secession. Territorial autonomy is given as an alternative to secession as a solution to address the concerns of a minority population while also respecting the state's territorial integrity. (Nam and Fessha, 2018). At the subnational level, territorial autonomy refers to permitting some populations to form a majority in a specific territorial entity. This might happen at the state or provincial level, as subnational units are termed in certain countries or municipal levels. Territorial autonomy enables regionally isolated groups to gain numerical and, as a result, political dominance in specific territorial units, allowing them to control political institutions and

use them to regulate their social, economic, and cultural affairs. Whenever territorial autonomy is combined with political and financial autonomy, it is considered to be effective. Controlling a territory without having any fiscal and political autonomy is a false practice in autonomy (Nam and Fessha, 2018, p. 533).

"Territorial Autonomy and Self-Determination Conflicts" by Roger Suso (2010) tries to approach my research topic from a different perspective. His research aims to solve the puzzle of territorial autonomy's effectiveness as a state solution to self-determination conflicts around the world. It refutes the conflict-inducing characteristics of autonomy, stating that territorial autonomy can reduce violent conflict by channeling discontent among groups into peaceful protests. As a result, the goal of this research is to develop a comprehensive theory that identifies the elements that cause a violent escalation of disputes based on self-determination demands. The findings of this study demonstrate that conflicts will only escalate if minorities with significant negotiation leverage in relation to the center are mobilized in the setting of high levels of economic inequality in the dyad and on demands for autonomy and secession.

Yonatan Fessha (2012) explains how the territorial autonomy solution provided by several African countries, specifically in Nigeria and how it, has helped to manage fault lines, thus, dealt with the anxieties of ethnic groups causing new majorities and new minorities to emerge at the subnational level. Besides these, most importantly, granting excluded groups regional/territorial autonomy can be beneficial as it promises group leaders to negotiate for peaceful change within the system (Cederman, Schadel, and Wucherpfennig 2015, p. 357). According to Rothchild and Hartzell, territorial autonomy taken in conjunction with other safety precautions could be used to reassure groups in highly polarized societies regarding their security and capacity to act with limited authority, and such arrangements could assist in building the groundwork for a steady, accommodative politics. There's no arguing that territorial autonomy to conflict resolution in societies has a spotty proven record. On the other hand, the TA mechanism has failed to prevent the break-up of multi-national countries in numerous situations. They have also struggled to maintain or sustain peace between warring parties in other following opponents of this method who have thoroughly documented experimentally and conceptually.

The value of granting territorial autonomy, particularly to minority communities, has traditionally been met with skepticism. Some scholars highlight that territorial autonomy is not helpful and may bring unexpected tension to parties of the conflict. For example, Cederman, Schadel, and Wucherpfennig (2015, p. 257) assert that as autonomy itself is a post-conflict setting, it is possible to be plagued by two sorts of issues. Namely, in the lack of safeguards, the central government may infringe on the regionally based group's jurisdiction, and the region, on the other hand, may fail to meet its commitments. The notion that granting minority groups territorial autonomy will jeopardize the state's geographical integrity has not vanished. It is stated that by enabling minorities to dominate a portion of its land, the state entrenches communal separation division, weakens common national identity, and diminishes a sense of belonging (Nam and Fessha, 2018, p. 533). They argue that the latter issue could lead to "ethnic capture" of regional institutions and, as a result, separatist tendencies. They also claim that governments often provide such accommodations in postcolonial settings to deter threatening groups from resorting to violence. It is therefore hardly surprising that academics have advocated both for and against territorial autonomy as a means of preventing and resolving conflict and state collapse. The concentration on simple territorial features of conflict resolution is one of the flaws in current theoretical debates as a tool for conflict management in pluralistic societies. The degree to which territorial arrangements enable genuinely separatist elites and their sympathizers and supply them with the means to pursue their cause even more forcefully is the focus of TA critics (Wolf, 2010, p. 16).

Territorial autonomy is becoming increasingly crucial in constitutions that accommodate minority communities. Territorial autonomy is frequently praised as a means of managing ethnicity and is increasingly recognized as an institutional solution by many countries' constitutions. The search for a legal basis for territorial autonomy begins with Article 27 of the ICCPR, then moves on to Article 25 of the ICCPR, common Article 1 of the ICCPR and ICESCR, and lastly, customary international law. According to the article, international law does not provide a legal basis for minorities to demand territorial autonomy. Nevertheless, it simultaneously does not rule out the possibility of the state granting territorial autonomy as a constructive measure to ensure that minority rights are protected. In international law, territorial autonomy is understood and employed as the institutional embodiment of the internal dimension

of self-determination, whether as a permanent or temporary solution (Åkermark, 2013). In general, arrangements to grant autonomy are frequently employed for several other reasons rather than for ethnic conflicts.

In several Western European countries, like Spain, Portugal, and Belgium, the granting of some form of territorial autonomy has aided in the peaceful handling of ethnic conflicts. Kenya and Ethiopia, albeit in significantly different ways, have put territorial autonomy at the heart of their constitutional designs to address ethnic problems. Regarding these examples, territorial autonomy can be based on geographical location (as in Portugal's Madeira and the Azores), political agreements (as in Greece's Mount Athos), or metropolitan status (capital cities of quite many countries have special status), and so on. Nonetheless, it is frequently associated with ethnicity in today's globe and is seen as a viable means of preventing, managing, and resolving ethnic conflicts (Wolff and Weller, 2005). Although territorial autonomies could be applied in a non-ethnic environment, as mentioned above, I choose to focus only on ethnic territorial autonomies in this thesis.

2.2 *The anatomy of power sharing*

Post-conflict societies have considerable and urgent needs for reconciliation. The sharing of power is a vital sign of a commitment in this direction. Insofar as conflicts can almost recurrently be analyzed as a competition for power, the transformation of the conflict requires the sharing of it. In Schneckener`s conception (2002, p. 203), **power-sharing**, shaped during the 1970s by Arend Lijphart, Gerhard Lehmbruch, and others, entails a structure that requires that ethnonational groups must control the common polity together and reach a consensus on decision-making. Without the permission of the other, no group is given permission to make crucial decisions. All groups have access to political power and other resources based on informal or formal norms. In this paper, the author uses *consociationalism* as the most renowned form of power-sharing, which is considered as the primary indicator differing power-sharing from territorial autonomy as the latter one doesn't include consociational procedures and instruments. The model of consociationalism from Lijphart attempted, by and large, to overcome

the tensions of plural societies through decision-making procedures and resource distribution that went beyond usual democracies' "winner-take-all" formula (Berg and Ben-Porat 2008: 33). The model, in particular, proposed a series of non-majoritarian mechanisms for disseminating and distributing power within a given region. In an ideal world, this paradigm would allow ethnic communities to preserve their identity while keeping them dedicated to the state's existence and performance. Lijphart's (1977) consociational democracy includes four definitional components:

1. A grand coalition
2. A system of mutual veto power
3. Proportional representation
4. Segmental autonomy, such as federalism

Together, these dimensions assist in easing the complaints of possible spoilers, assure the representation of a diverse range of social interests, and ensure that no group will be subjected to policies that are seen to be severely damaging to their own interests (Gates and Strom, 2007, p. 3).

The main alternative to consociationalism, sometimes also considered a form of power-sharing, is "integrationism" or "centripetalism," associated with Horowitz but developed and treated by Sisk. This type of mechanism draws on critiques of consociationalism that focus on institutionalizing the participation of conflicting (and patriarchal) identity groups. These mechanisms and policies include incentives to cooperate on an inter-ethnic basis ahead of elections – for example, electoral laws that effectively encourage the formation of pre-election coalitions through the pooling of votes – or innovative forms of distribution of power on the territorial level or by emphasizing, at the political level, cross-cutting issues and the equitable distribution of resources (Sisk, 1996). Ultimately, the power-sharing dimension of the system will depend on how it works and how everyone understands the logical use of the term "power-sharing."

Berg and Ben-Porat (2008) provide a formula for peace if territoriality and sovereignty are at the heart of a long-running conflict, which can be realized by an agreed-upon partition of the territory or power-sharing arrangements. According to their way of analysis, partitions are mainly a band-aid solution rather than transformative in which the boundaries are still contested,

bringing material and emotional harm to the displaced communities. However, in some cases, the partition may be considered as the only or most expedient option for resolving bloody ethnic conflicts. Power-sharing agreements, unlike partitions, are expected to bring a political restructure to existing entities and transform the conflict's zero-sum nature.

They are intended to strike a compromise between conflicting parties in cases of conflict between ethnically divided societies. "Territorial Power-sharing and Inclusion in Peace Processes" by Wise, L. (2018) examines whether and how peace accords provide for territorial power-sharing, as well as the consequences for larger social inclusion efforts. It is one of a series of publications on power-sharing in peace processes following the new PA-X Peace Agreement Database. Territorial power-sharing is frequently utilized in peace talks to satisfy conflict parties' competing territorial control objectives, such as rival claims to unitary statehood and secession. Based on this study, thus, it, like other types of power-sharing, can provide more participation in the form of self-government for groups fighting the state's marginalization.

More than two-thirds of all conflict settlements have included some sort of power-sharing (Johnson, 2021, p. 734). However, in practice, power-sharing agreements rarely correspond to the "pure" typologies established by political science researchers. Recent power-sharing regulations, as Weller and Wolff (2005, p. 3) refer to them, involve "complex power-sharing" that draws different elements offering a significant number of permutations in power-sharing mechanisms. For example, military power-sharing can also be associated with or be the central sphere of power-sharing. This composite picture is further complicated by the functional and temporal differences between power-sharing agreements, depending on the political objectives they pursue and their intended duration.

Consociationalism or power-sharing can take the form of an indefinite governance mechanism aimed at accommodating different groups with a view to achieving certain political equality. It can be used as a short-term, fixed-term mechanism to facilitate transition (as in South Africa). It can be used to manage a contested election, possibly in addition to a constitutional review process (case of Kenya). It can also be a tool for international actors to develop an interim constitutional structure to help with transitional governance and the development of a new

constitution (e.g., in Iraq and Afghanistan). Power-sharing at the territorial level can be used to establish a permanent model of autonomy and recognition of the claims of indigenous communities or a minority group (case of Canada) or associated with obtaining the endorsement of the central government (e.g., in Bosnia and Herzegovina). These complex power-sharing agreements, which often formally recognize the territorial integrity of the state, serve, in fact, to redraw the map of power within the state by providing for forms of self-governance frequently associated with modalities of power-sharing at the regional level. And most importantly, power-sharing as a regulation, unlike partitions, is centered on a political restructuring of existing organizations and an initiative to transform the conflict's zero-sum nature (Berg and Ben-Porat 2008: 33).

As there are several scientific hypotheses claiming the positive role of power-sharing, much attention has also been drawn to the risks and limitations of this conflict settlement tool by scholars. These are exemplified in the work undertaken by Timothy D. Sisk (1996). He writes that the paradox of advocating power-sharing early in an ethnic conflict's escalation is that parties may be hesitant to accept power-sharing techniques because they are not desperate enough or do not feel driven enough (Sisk, 1996). After a period of intense violence, antagonisms between parties may be too severe for them to share power for mutual gain. Assessing whether a dispute is "ripe" for a power-sharing settlement is a tough decision that necessitates an in-depth understanding of the issue, particularly the desire of parties to live together within a common or shared political framework (Sisk, 1996). In many fractious societies, power-sharing has lowered the occurrence of war. However, examples from countries like Lebanon, Cyprus, and Nigeria reveal that power-sharing doesn't often prevent conflict. Furthermore, power-sharing arrangements may result in significant governance expenses. Even in countries with effective power-sharing systems, there may be an inter-temporal trade-off between the avoidance of conflict and characteristics of "good governance," such as democratic accountability and the provision of essential public goods, in conflict-prone communities. While power-sharing may assist in averting conflict, it is feasible that some power-sharing arrangements damage democratic accountability and benefit politicians who represent small groups of people (Gates and Strom, 2007, p. 7).

All of these viewpoints acknowledge that consociationalism or power-sharing presents impediments to everyday politics and obstructs the formation of an integrated civic society. Consociational power-sharing is one strategy that is seen as an effective conflict-resolution mechanism for highly divided communities. Lijphart does a better job presenting this model than anybody else (Lijphart, 1969, p. 216). Another strategy is integrative power-sharing, linked to Horowitz (Berg and Ben-Porat 2008, p. 34). While the former emphasizes the development of incentives for inter-ethnic cooperation and inter-ethnic coalitions in multi-ethnic societies, the latter emphasizes a power-sharing model based on preserving the rights and representation of diverse ethnic groups within the state apparatus. Furthermore, notably, integrative power-sharing models offered by Sisk and Horowitz support cross-ethnic lines and claim that institutions and practices that promote intra-group rather than inter-group competition diminish violent ethnic conflict (Berg and Ben-Porat 2008, p. 34). In the following pages, I will present a thorough analysis of power-sharing and its feasibility, especially in the main case study of this paper – the Karabakh conflict.

2.3 Definition and Functionality of Partition

In the academic field, the issue of inter-ethnic conflict and partition as a possible solution has sparked a lively debate regarding the origin and nature of this type of regulation and the effectiveness of partition as a means of preventing the recurrence of the conflict. The objective of the present work is to know if the partition is the best solution for the settlement of the Karabakh conflict and the pacification of the area. Waterman (1987) defines the **partition** as a possible solution of 'last resort,' which can help to bring about a meeting point between the needs for self-determination and territorial expression (Berg and Ben-Porat, 2008). Instead of being transformational, they are far more often a band-aid solution in which the boundaries are still contested, bringing material and emotional harm to the displaced communities. However, in other cases, the partition may be the only or most expedient option for resolving brutal ethnic disputes (Berg and Ben-Porat 2008: 32).

Horowitz (1985, p. 588) argues that partition is, in many cases, the best solution for ethnic conflicts. To his way of thinking, if the groups cannot cohabit in a heterogeneous state, it may be preferable for them to function independently in many homogeneous states, even if this necessitates population transfers. The author indicates that in those areas where the groups are territorially concentrated, "the separation of the antagonists - the partition - is a highly recommended option" (Horowitz, 1985, p. 588). This author is part of what Nicholas Sambanis identifies as the first wave of theorists who advocate partition, along with Huntington, Dahl, and Lijphart (Sambanis, 2000, p. 437). Continuing with Sambanis's conceptualization, with the end of the Cold War and the dismemberment of the USSR and Yugoslavia, the new academics emerged who defended partition not only as an acceptable solution in some cases but as the only way to resolve these conflicts, for Sambanis, these authors "go further: all ethnic wars that cross a certain threshold of violence must be resolved with partition" (Sambanis, 2000, p. 1). One of them is Kaufmann (1996), in the article "Possible and impossible solutions to ethnic civil wars" which analyzes the theoretical debate of how ethnic wars end and proposes what strategies the international community should adopt to intervene. Ethnic wars can, for the author, be resolved in three ways: with the complete military victory of one side, the military occupation of a third party, or the self-government of the parties involved in separate communities (1996, p. 139-147). In the latter case, there may be de facto partitions (separation of populations without the construction of sovereign political units) or de jure (formation of new internationally recognized sovereign states after the partition); or other agreements that do not consist of a partition but that imply regional autonomy. From his empirical analysis, he concludes that the latter are the cases in which the conflict has been resolved with a lower level of violence (1996, p. 139-147). The central element in Kaufmann's analysis is that stable solutions to ethnic conflicts occur only when opposing groups are separated geographically into ethnically homogenous units. Based on the conception of the security dilemma in ethnic conflicts, he argues that the only way to mitigate violence and achieve peace is by separating the conflicting populations that are intermingled (Kaufmann, 1998, p. 125). When the populations in conflict coexist in the same territory, the security dilemma intensifies, and therefore it is necessary that there be a demographic separation of the rival groups. In this sense, sovereignty is not as critical a variable as demography: on the contrary, if partition gives rise to sovereign states, but in which the security dilemma has not been eliminated because the opposing populations continue to

intermingle, the problem will not be solved. At the same time, it clarifies that although it is not necessary that there should be complete ethnic homogeneity, it does matter how minorities are geographically distributed. At the same time, the author argues that foreign intervention is necessary in this type of conflict: for Kaufmann, the international community must assume that partition is the best solution in many cases (1998). The author debates with those who argue that the international community should strive to maintain the integrity of multi-ethnic states and avoid population transfers due to suffering and damage. To answer these arguments, Kaufmann (1998) analyzes four partitions that involved population transfers and in which there were high degrees of violence: Ireland, India, Palestine, and Cyprus. The author concludes that in those cases, the violence after the partition and the population transfer was not due to the partition itself but to the fact that the demographic separation of the opposing groups was incomplete (Kaufmann, 1998, p. 121). Apart from the demographic, Kaufmann raises another fundamental factor: the geographical military. Not only must there be a demographic separation of the opposing populations, but the new units must be "defensible enclaves" (Kaufmann, 1998): while sovereignty or high levels of autonomy are not essential to achieve peace. It is essential that the groups relocate to territories with borders that can be defended militarily. Otherwise, the partition will be unstable, the minorities that have remained in the rival territory will be exposed, and the violence will increase with high humanitarian costs.

Another academic in favor of partition is Alexander Downes, who argues that partitions are preferable for attempts to preserve multi-ethnic states through policies of shared power or separation of ethnic groups with autonomy (2001). In this sense, for Downes, unlike Kaufmann, sovereignty is indeed a fundamental variable to sustain the effectiveness of the partition. The author indicates that in order to be effective, the partition must separate ethnic groups into independent states with defensible borders, allowing them to carry out a balance of power among themselves (Downes, 2001, p. 438). Moreover, the partition's success is contingent on the new territories' demographic restructuring and the absence of militarily essential minorities in the new governments (2001, p. 441). Put this way, the partition can "significantly decrease the probability of a recurrence of war by removing two fundamental causes: fear for the safety of the ethnic group and an inability to trust the enemy" (Downes, 2001, p. 63).

In contrast to the arguments in favor of partition, there are authors such as Robert Schaeffer (1991), who, in his book, analyzes the origins of contemporary ethnic conflict and exposes the negative consequences of partitions. The author historically contextualizes the partitions as a contemporary and recent phenomenon, which emerged at the end of the 19th century, with the collapse of the colonial empires, and fundamentally after the end of the Second World War. Contemporary partitions arise when great empires devolve power to local actors in their colonies as a "peaceful way of devolving or transferring power to indigenous groups that had been subject to colonial domination or military occupation" instead of dividing up the occupied territories and redistributing them among existing states (Schaeffer, 1991, p. 6). In this way, he adds that the great powers generated new sovereign states that would be their allies, but the strategy of "simultaneous devolution and division of power" caused a series of devastating negative consequences for the new states. This explains why the post-partition conflicts affected the great powers and encouraged their intervention. In this sense, Schaeffer argues that while they are part of a historical process, there are generalities and patterns that encompass all cases of partition (1991, p. 6). According to the author, partitions entail "disruptive social and political consequences" (1991, 6). The solution is not durable since the new states are incapable of building citizenship and sovereignty. The population sees its rights restricted, and the States, weak in the medium term, are once again involved in conflicts. In particular, partitions imply huge population transfers that entail human rights violations and dismantle regional economies (1996). From his analysis, it follows that there are two fundamental actors that determine the terms of the partition: the leaders of the independence movements of the divided states and the leaders of the superpowers that intervene in the partitions.

Another author who opposes partition is Amitai Etzioni with questioning the argument of the self-determination of peoples. The author maintains that the true objective of the independence movements that arise in the context of colonial domination is not national self-determination but democratization and the construction of an efficient government that does not ignore its needs. In this sense, and based on the analysis of the partitions that emerged after the collapse of the USSR, the author warns that there is no evidence of greater democratization or responsible governments in the new post-partition states (Etzioni, 1992, p. 28). In this sense, the partition is not only a requirement for a more democratic government that responds to the different ethnic

groups; but also brings devastating economic consequences. The new states that emerge after separation are economically and militarily dependent on the great superpowers. He does not even hesitate to ask the meaning of self-determination when tiny countries are at the economic and military mercy of large states, in whose government they have no representation at all? (Etzioni, 1992, p. 28). Instead of advocating partition, Etzioni proposes aiming at the resolution of the differences of the ethnic groups within the framework of the existing state and the construction, by the latter, of stable pluralist democracies and federalisms that guarantee the local autonomy of the different groups.

J. Fearon (2004) argues against an ad hoc partition policy that treats each scenario separately. Because the impacts of a policy of major-power-imposed partitions extend across cases in many ways, the partition cannot be justified on an ad hoc, case-by-case basis. The author also claims that ad hoc partitioning policies would implicitly establish criteria for international intervention in support of redrawing borders or otherwise reconstituting states. If the implicit criterion is some level of violence and chaos, opposite incentives will arise. There are many reasons to believe that a responsible consideration of partition as a means of resolving ethnic conflicts would have to take this into account.

All in all, the arguments that discuss this solution are based, first of all, on the negative social and political consequences that population transfers entail and the human rights violations that these can entail in the disadvantageous situation in which minorities are immersed in the new states, and the weakness of their democratic institutions. We have discovered that there are two counterarguments to partition: 1) Drawing new borders with the aim of making partitioned entities ethnically more homogeneous may not succeed. Population transfers are considered a violation of human rights. 2) The idea of partition may legitimize ethnic cleansing. In addition, they argue that the new States that emerge post-partition are weak and dependent on the great powers. Others maintain that the solution in these cases must be constructing a multi-ethnic, democratic and pluralistic state, with guarantees from third parties

3. **Research design, Data, and Methods**

The form of research method is determined according to the type of studies to be carried out. Gunnarson (2002) claims that the advantage of using a qualitative technique in a study is that it considers the whole picture at a level that a quantitative method cannot. Following that, this research takes a qualitative approach tending to be more adaptable and inductive, enabling us to change strategy based on what we discover throughout our study due to the intricacy of the topic matter and the number of research issues it poses. It is based on a critical evaluation of current literature from a number of academic domains, such as peace and conflict studies, politics, international relations, security, etc. Aside from that, expert reviews, news accounts and media agencies are a fundamental part of my primary sources. Qualitative research is particularly relevant to my topic because there is a need to investigate and unpack the meanings, situations, and events in order to gain a deeper understanding of some aspects of social life.

In order to carry out the empirical work, a single case study will be used for theory testing and heuristic purposes. Many well-known studies in the field of conflict management research have employed the case study approach. However, the case study design has drawbacks; while utilizing this technique, the external validity is criticized because one or a few instances can hardly be generalized to a particular set of similar cases. Therefore, the goal of a case study is not to generalize the results to other cases or broader populations, but rather, it is to focus on the cases and their distinctive terms, as well as to provide a framework for further discussion of the topic. The paper will also allude to numerous theoretical features and concepts that will be employed in the case study at the same time.

My empirical research will be organized around a few tentative questions that will expectedly lead me to more rational and objective thinking:

1. What can territorial autonomy/power-sharing/partition actively demonstrate for Azerbaijani authorities in the case of Karabakh Armenians? How have these ideas developed in the course of time? Any differences between pre-and post-2020 war?
2. What are the views of the Azerbaijani experts, community (think tanks), and public (opinion polls) on the post-2020 war proposals?

3. What are the Armenians 'responses (leadership, expert communities, public) to the AZ post-2020 proposals?

4. What is Karabakh Armenians' view on this (de facto authorities and public opinion)

I advance in this research by exposing the justifications of my research design. Thereafter, I justify the operational framework of this thesis by clearly explaining the sampling, the method of selection of this sampling and the justification of the selected sites. Scientific research cannot be done without exposing the choice of the researcher in relation to his selection of data collection tools. Therefore, I discuss how the data is processed and analyzed. Obviously, contemporary research is subject to rigor linked to compliance with ethical rules. Following that, I approach the next section by defining the questions of validity and fidelity, as well as the dimension of respect for ethical rules. This chapter will be ended by highlighting the limitations I have encountered.

3.1 Empirical Data Sources and Methods

When utilizing a particular approach for data collection, the data collected might be either primary or secondary. (Ghauri,1995). Primary data, according to Bryman and Bell (2007), is material gathered by the researcher on his own, such as through tests, interviews, and questionnaires. Secondary data, on the other hand, involves data acquired by other academics and organizations, such as books, papers, and articles. Both primary and secondary data are gathered in this thesis. Secondary data is critically examined and gathered from books, scientific publications, official state reports, and online sources in order to have a better insight into the current state of conflict from all parties and to reinforce the thesis' theoretical and methodological parts. The main focus, in this case, is expected to be on expert interviews, public opinion polls and surveys, state documents, example case studies, and published articles that cover the topic in recent decades. I will employ an original public poll or survey set that has been recently disseminated among the Armenian and Azerbaijan community and the Armenian

minority of Karabakh to determine how receiving one of these resolutions might affect their attitude toward the dominant group from their point of view.

3.1.1 Interviewing Process

To acquire primary data, it was determined to conduct interviews. In many respects, the interviewer needs to control the flow of the process and interacts with the interviewee; there is a keen interest in the respondent's viewpoint; detailed and comprehensive responses are hoped; the interviewer is free to deviate from any schedule; new questions may arise as a result of the respondent's answers; and the order of questions may indeed be modified. Considering the scope of the research, it is necessary to collect as much relevant data as possible from interviewees in order to have a better knowledge of the case using a variety of diplomatic and rational visions by think tanks from all parties of the conflict.

Unstructured and semi-structured interviewing are two techniques of qualitative interviewing. In an unstructured interview, the researcher may begin with a question and then listen carefully to the respondent as he or she speaks freely, but in a semi-structured interview, the researcher follows a guideline of problems and questions that the researcher wishes to address throughout the session (Bryman and Bell, 2007). As a result, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the research technique in this thesis. I expect the semi-structured interview style primarily to allow participants to openly express their own perspectives using a rationalist approach on which form of conflict resolution mechanism is more likely to solve the conflict permanently considering the interests of all parties. I was able to keep focused on my study topics and objectives because of the questions. A total of 10 questions were devised for the interview derived from the literature findings and the researcher's existing knowledge and sent off to interviews before the interviewing date.

All interviews throughout this dissertation, as they all were conducted virtually, were recorded, and following transcription, the material was submitted back to the interviewers for

confirmation of the transcript content in order to improve the validity of the data and reduce the possibility of fabricating the authors own interpretation.

3.1.1.2 The sampling Method and Respondents

Interviewing the relevant individual who has got research interest in the topic is critical since it reduces the probability of misrepresentations caused by a lack of expertise and enhances the accuracy of the responses. Similarly, it was essential to record various information, observations, insights, perspectives, opinions, and lessons from interviewees, which aided in getting specific, uncommon, and focused information that would not have been obtained by other methodologies, such as literature study. The sample that has been involved in this study is considered as a non-probability approach which indicates that the sample was not picked using a random selection process. After making a list of potential interviews, I began reaching out to them to confirm their availability. The interviewees were largely from non-governmental organizations, non-profit research centers, universities, and Azerbaijan, Armenia, NK, and other countries to preserve an ethnic balance. It was critical to build a trusting relationship with the interviewees, specifically in my case, since I needed to find participants from NK and Armenia.

Between March and May 2022, the interviews were conducted over video calls using Zoom and Skype. The interview sessions lasted about 40 mins to 1 hour on average. Before starting to give questions, I notified respondents further about the research topic by discussing the goal and use of the study, as per the research ethical standards developed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I also clarified to the respondents that their participation was entirely optional. All interviewees were also guaranteed confidentiality and the data's objective and acceptable use for this research purpose. Verbal approval was acquired in advance for the video recording of the interview process. Later in the following empirical chapter of the paper, more details, including the questions being asked in the interview, will be discussed and analyzed.

To sum up, using a variety of research approaches in this paper allowed me to be able to double-check the quality of data in order to reinforce the study findings. I evaluated specific concerns or challenges that were unanticipated and/or distinctive while assessing data. In addition, I compared and contrasted my observations to previously published work of research bodies.

4. Historical Background

4.1 From the First War to the Unstable Peace

The Karabakh conflict is an ethnically flavored territorial conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh. The region is largely populated by ethnic Armenians and controlled by de facto authorities that have unilaterally proclaimed NKR on the territories that are de jure internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is characterized by a number of features that make a sustainable solution difficult. These include, for example, an ethnic dimension of the causes of the conflict, widespread experiences of violence in the population, limited everyday contact between the conflicting parties, and a long conflict duration (Babayev, Grusha, Rogova, 2014). The dispute dates back to the early twentieth century when newly independent states emerged in the South Caucasus. The collapse of the Russian empire triggered 'emergent anarchy,' as Snyder and Jervis (1999) phrase it, which in turn led to the conflict because of uncertainty and fear. However, the present conflict escalated in 1988 for territorial and ethnic reasons. The Karabakh Armenians claimed the region to be transferred from Soviet Azerbaijan to Soviet Armenia with subsequent voting by the parliament of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast in Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic to secede from Azerbaijan and unify the region with Armenia. This radical decision brought about physical violence between the nations, characterized by pogroms in various parts of both countries. The escalation of violence between the two nations ensued in guerilla warfare from 1988-to 1991. Similar to the collapse of the Russian empire mentioned above, the dissolution of the Soviet Union left the two neighbors head-to-head in a dire situation.

Thus, the conflict escalated further into a full-blown war – the First Nagorno-Karabakh War – from 1991-to 1994. By early 1993, in addition to the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, Armenian armed forces occupied seven surrounding districts inhabited mainly by Azerbaijanis.

During the war, international mediation efforts, most notably the OSCE Minsk Group, failed to resolve the conflict and establish peace in the region. In May 1994, Russia, as a regional power, attained to broker a provisional ceasefire between the two conflicting parties, which is known as the Bishkek Protocol. As a consequence of the first war, up to 800000 Azerbaijanis became internally displaced, and Armenia retained complete control over the mountainous region and surrounding occupied territories with a self-proclaimed breakaway government in the enclave. The period after the end of the first war until 2020 observed low-intensity conflict with occasional breaches of ceasefire and outbreaks of skirmishes. It is worth mentioning that the worst clashes since the 1994 ceasefire occurred in April 2016, known as the Four Day War. A significant departure from the previous skirmishes was the use of heavy artillery, including tanks, air forces, and cluster munitions. As a result of the April war, the Azerbaijani side regained strategically important heights along the line of contact established following the first war.

4.2 Second War – New Ceasefire

In the autumn of 2020, Azerbaijan launched a full-scale military offensive to retake the occupied territories after years of diplomatic deadlock. This rapid escalation into war underscored the fragility of unresolved territorial conflicts and created new realities in the South Caucasus with the final ceasefire agreement. The recent war in the region was essentially an Azerbaijani offensive with the primary objective to reclaim its internationally recognized territories from Armenian occupation. After repeated agreements on a ceasefire and a return to dialogue inside the OSCE were breached and hostilities continued, Russia single-handedly arranged a deal with Armenia and Azerbaijan. This eventually led to a cessation of hostilities on November 10, 2020, and the tentative end of the six-week war. On November 9, 2020, the Armenian government around Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was forced to sign the ceasefire agreement, which basically resembled a capitulation and led to spontaneous protests in Armenia's capital. According to the agreement, Armenia had to cede the Azerbaijani territories

held as security, as well as part of Nagorno-Karabakh. The nine-point "peace agreement" called for, among other things, the cessation of hostilities and the return of all districts around Nagorno-Karabakh previously controlled by Armenian troops to Azerbaijan. The Lachin Corridor, as a connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia and the demarcation line, was put under the control of a Russian peacekeeping mission, initially for five years, with the option of a further extension. The plan also provided for the return of refugees under the supervision of the UN refugee agency. The second war was different in the sense that drones were heavily deployed aimed at minimizing human loss, and information warfare in social media was 'fought' to a great extent. Even though the Armenian-majority region is still under the control of the breakaway government, Azerbaijan expected the agreement that the region would be integrated into Azerbaijan to ensure its territorial integrity inside the internationally recognized borders.   A truce ended the war for the time being. But the geopolitical balance of power in the background is shifting.

Separatism is also a sensitive issue for the central government as it has the capacity to set a precedent for other regions in multi-ethnic Azerbaijan. The second fitting explanation is the argument of the commitment problem, which appears in two scenarios: i) when the majority group is unable to commit not to exploit ethnic minorities; and ii) when ethnic minorities refuse to trust even if the majority commits not to exploit. It, therefore, occurs in states with the majority ethnic group being in power that is unable to commit not to exploit ethnic minorities following through on an agreement (Powell, 2006). This is precisely what happened in Nagorno-Karabakh after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Azerbaijani government failed to commit not to hurt ethnic Armenians living in the enclave and spread state propaganda against them, which in turn further diminished trust among Armenians towards the Azerbaijani state and increased hatred between the two nations.

In conclusion, ethnic and territorial arguments are more robust in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. Two explanations in the security studies literature could help unpack the reasons behind the rise of secessionism in the region: issue indivisibility and commitment problem. Issue indivisibility is related to a scenario when an ethnic minority demands sovereignty over the territory whilst the central state sees the territory as indivisible since territorial integrity represents the physical survival of the state. Territory is also indivisible for the ethnic minority as

it is considered a homeland and a crucial part of identity. Therefore, agreements are unlikely to be reached because ethnic groups regard their territorial interests as indivisible (Toft, 2003). Armenians view Nagorno Karabakh as an inseparable part of their ancient culture and irredentist campaign, while the Azerbaijani state intends to maintain its territorial integrity.
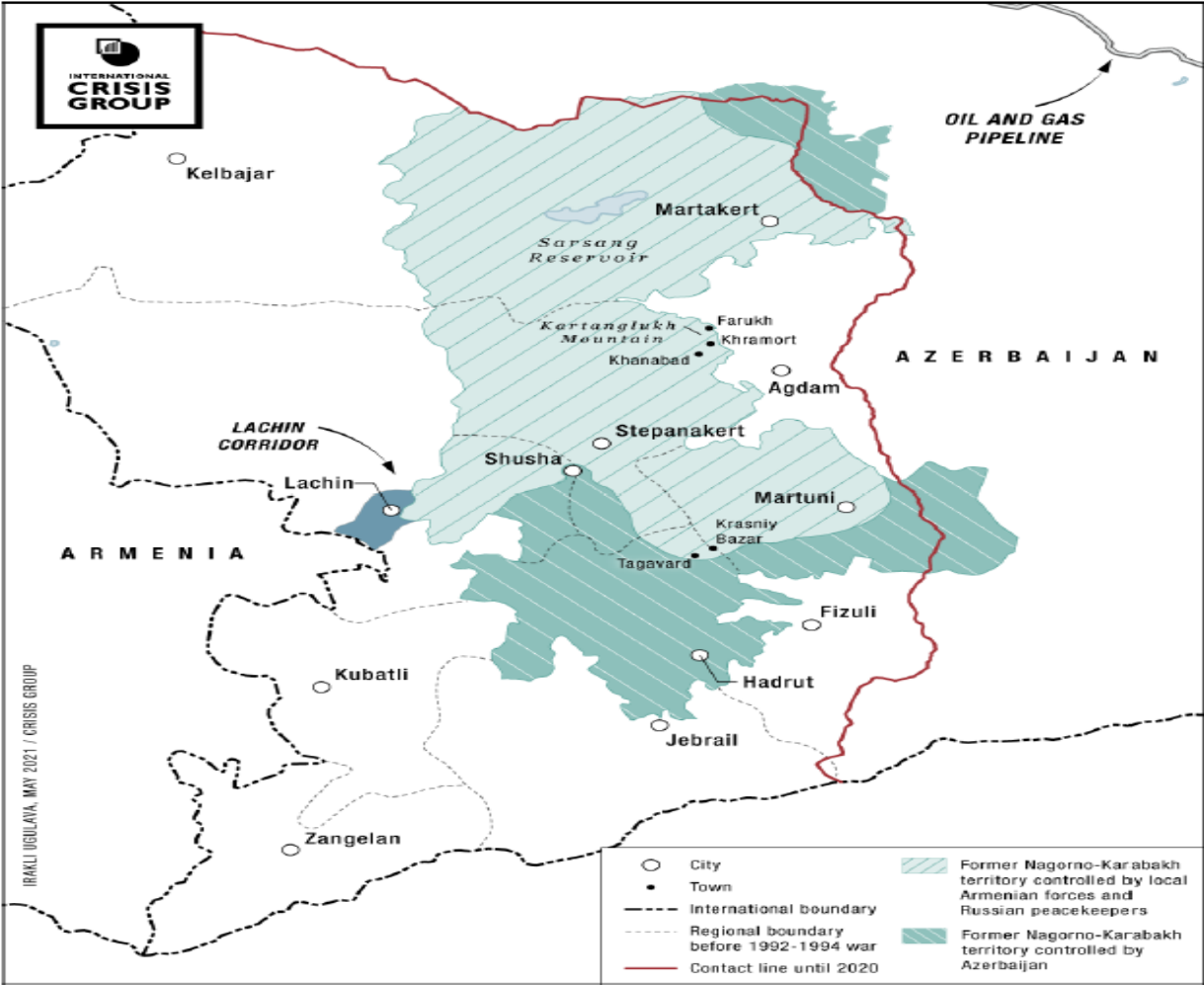

Figure 1: Map of the Conflict Zone, retrieved from: *Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°9, 22 April 2022*

5. Research Findings and Discussion

This study will be analyzed in two phases: (1) reviewing interviews from experts and (2) investigating and examining perspectives of nationals from all conflicting parties on the importance of peacebuilding initiatives.

5.1 New Winner, New "Rules" of the Peace

Azerbaijan picked the ideal opportunity to start a war (Iskandaryan, 2020, p. 9). The United States was engaged in landmark elections, while the European Union was dealing with post-Brexit issues and a general management crisis. NATO was attempting to resolve tense relations with Turkey, one of its members. Russia was coping with issues in Ukraine and Belarus, as well as the North Stream pipeline, Western sanctions, and generally deteriorating ties with the West. The COVID-19 epidemic put pressure on all of these actors, as well as the rest of the globe (Iskandaryan, 2020, p. 9). "Azerbaijan wants peace on its own terms" said Alexander Iskandaryan, the chairman of the Caucasus Institute (Iskandaryan, Alexander, Interview with the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, 2021). He asserts that Azerbaijan plans to document its triumph, which ultimately provides a passage to Nakhichevan via the Armenian Syunik and signing a so-called peace treaty that the Azerbaijani authorities can portray to their public as Armenia's recognizing of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. In his view, it will signify the end of Armenian claims to Karabakh and the end of the conflict for Baku. For Yerevan, this would imply the loss of Karabakh and an outflow of Armenians from the territory, which would be detrimental to Moscow's regional policies (Iskandaryan, Alexander, Interview with the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, 2021). After all, the deployment of peacekeepers in Karabakh is required to safeguard the people. Overall, he feels that settling the dispute is now impossible due to the Azerbaijani side's unwillingness to make compromises suitable to the Armenian side and vice versa.

The 9-10 November 2020 ceasefire deal brought the war to an end and saved lives. However, the opposing parties are still a long way from reaching a genuine peace accord in

which Armenia and Azerbaijan would restore their borders and create bilateral relations (De Waal, T, 2021, p. 10). With the deployment of the Russian peacekeeping operation in Karabakh for an initial five-year period, a medium-term window opened that promised to reduce the bloodshed. My study revealed that the scale of the autumn war of 2020 between Armenia and Azerbaijan is reminiscent of the Karabakh war from 1991 to 1994. However, two differences between the two wars are clear evident. 1) Azerbaijan emerged victorious this time, turning the status quo in their favor since 1994. 2) Turkey, as an external actor, intervened pro-actively in the conflict alongside Russia. The majority of participants in my interviews agreed with the statement that in addition to military superiority, the Turkish factor was crucial to Azerbaijan's success and, as a strategic partner, played the role of a game-changer, with Ankara proactively positioning itself on Baku's side. Surprisingly, only a minority of respondents weren`t hopeful for any peace in the short term while responding to my first question: "Through peaceful negotiation, how likely is it to solve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict within the next five years?".

Because I asked each of my interviewees, Kamal Makili-Aliyev, an associated researcher, reacted to this question from complete rational perspectives. As specified by the researcher, it may be possible in a short period only through cooperation. If not, then the small amount of time will not be relevant. He believed that willingness is the critical factor, and Azerbaijan needs to cooperate considering the case from neighborhood principles, not just international law. Otherwise, it will be impossible (Makili-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, 17 March 2022).

Reflecting on this question, another of the interviewees, specifically Nona Shahnazarian, a Karabakh-born associate researcher, claimed that normalization of cooperation with Turkey seems much more possible compared with Azerbaijan in the short term (Shahnazarian, Nona. Interview, 13 March 2022). Before 2020, Armenians would never speak about peace. As there has been no personal contact for decades among people from both countries, people are not ready for peace and not happy about the normalization of relations with both Azerbaijan and Turkey. Considering the high level of hostility grown during this war since the 1990s, trust-building will be complex. Simply put, no discourse for peace is feasible right now, stemming from a lack of trust.

In her discussion of a possible peace, Shahnazarian further alluded to the inhumane

nature of the second war, which wasn`t highlighted by any of my other respondents. To her way of thinking, too little time has passed since the war, and, importantly, the second war was extraordinary in different dimensions, such as using the extra extra-lethal violence and sharing the recording of such treatments on social networks by Azerbaijani troops. Although my interviewee acknowledged the victory of Azerbaijan and its superiority over the peace-making process, she found the cold-blooded and inhumane treatments as the leading dimension hindering the possible peace soon. On the other hand, she specified another factor that may extend the duration of peace negotiations. According to her perspective, Ilham Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan, has been using double discourse differently for an inner audience and an external audience. Under Ilham Aliyev`s control, because of his colossal authority, any type of peace considering the interests of all parties is almost impossible. Between ordinary people, it would be much easier to come to common points (Shahnazarian, Nona. Interview, 13 March 2022).

Thomas de Waal, a British journalist and writer on the Caucasus believes that resolving the dispute will be extremely difficult (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022. Namely, hundred years ago, when Azerbaijan and Armenia were attempting to build a new nation-state, they could not agree on who had to control the Nagorno-Karabakh populated by Armenians. Geographically and economically, it made sense to give this territory Shusha to Azerbaijan because it was inhabited by Azerbaijanis; yet, due to the demographic majority of Armenians outside of Shusha and the cultural relationship between these regions and Armenia, Armenians had a logical claim to this territory as well (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022. In his opinion, it was possible to resolve this issue during the Soviet era because they were all part of one state. As the Soviet Union collapsed, contradictions came to the surface. Simply said, resolving a century-old dispute will be challenging. Nevertheless, prospects are now brighter than they were previously since two specific difficulties have been resolved (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022. First, Azerbaijanis have been able to return to occupied territories that they were forced to flee. The second issue is what to do with the Armenians in NK seems easier to resolve. Since the end of the second conflict, peace is more likely to be achieved. De Waal determined that it would take longer than five years but that depending on the terms of peace, it may be found in five years or less.

Turning now to the experimental evidence on public opinion of the Armenian people, Figure 2 below illustrates the views of Armenians before the war about how likely it is to find a solution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict within the next five years through peaceful negotiation. In 2013, the same research institute conducted a survey in Azerbaijan on the same topic, as seen in Figure 3. Another visualized data of my findings, Figure 4, presents the summary statistics after the second war (The sample consisted of 1,512 permanent residents of Armenia older than the age of 18) for the importance of setting a resolution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict for the future of Armenia in the next ten years.

Figure 2: Caucasus Barometer, Armenia, 2013 (Caucasus Barometer is the annual household survey about social economic issues and political attitudes conducted by CRRC)

Figure 3: Caucasus Barometer, Azerbaijan, November 5, 2013, to December 14, 2013, (Caucasus Barometer is the annual household survey about social economic issues and political attitudes conducted by CRRC)
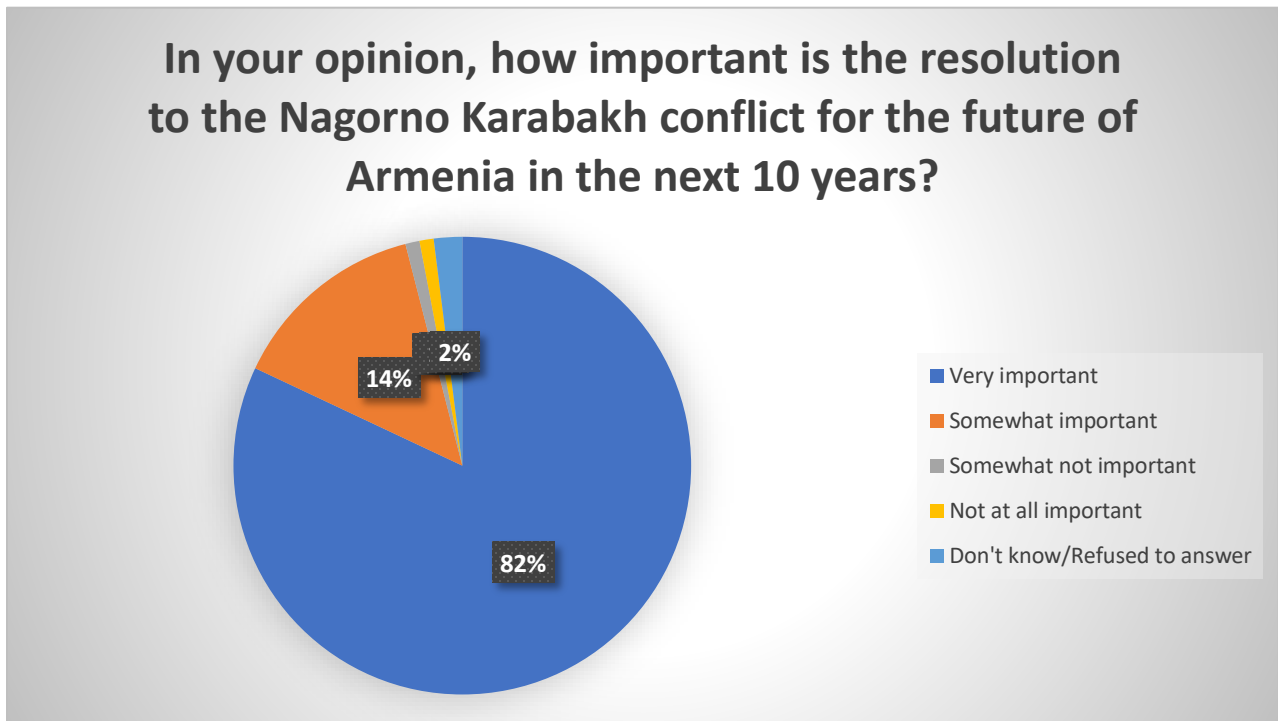

Figure 4: Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia, December 2021 (The survey was conducted on behalf of International Republican Institute's Center for Insights in Survey Research by Breavis (represented by IPSC LLC).)

When the two results of the polls in Armenia after and before the war are compared (Figures 1 and 3), it can be seen that before the war, Armenians did not have high expectations from conflicting parties to resolve the conflict through peaceful agreements because, as the victorious side of the first war, it was not in their best interests to consider Azerbaijan's conditions. Nonetheless, after the war, a considerable majority of respondents (82 %) saw a resolution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict as very important for Armenia's future in the next ten years after the country's defeat, which impacted all sectors of the country. On the contrary, Figure 2 gives us a perception of a peaceful solution to the conflict in Azerbaijan. As we see, 45 % percent of the participants in total saw peaceful negotiation rather/very likely as a solution to the conflict.

According to the analysis conducted before the war by Grigoryan, Jumayeva, Smbatyan, and Hasanova (2019), there was a distinct interpretation of the concept of "peaceful settlement" in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in Azerbaijan. Namely, it was regarded by Azerbaijani society as a "return of the whole Nagorno-Karabakh area that has been under Armenian control since the early 1990s to Azerbaijan," and this vision did not consider any condition of any portion of the Nagorno-Karabakh region being given to opposite side. This was an outcome of state policy in general. If the parties agree to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, it may be challenging to persuade populations to reconsider their current perceptions and rebuild faith in the other side. Before the war, many supporters of the war scenario were obviously unaware of the potential implications, which was due to a lack of knowledge about other possibilities as well as a misunderstanding of the notion of "peaceful resolution" of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In general, the public was pessimistic about resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through peaceful solutions since they did not expect the conflict would be resolved any time soon. This was almost certainly due to their mistrust of the government, Armenians, and other actors. Most respondents stated that even if the deal was accepted hypothetically by both parties of the dispute, it would never result in long-term peace. Instead, they believed that it would re-ignite the conflict. They said that establishing democracy in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as opening all borders and forming a "South Caucasus Union," may lead to peace.

To the results of the interviews done in Azerbaijan by them, the central issue would be peaceful coexistence with the Armenian minority in Nagorno-Karabakh. For example, the Khojaly massacre, a national catastrophe indelibly imprinted in Azerbaijani society's memory, might constitute a future barrier to the conflicting parties' reconciliation. Simultaneously, in Armenia, particularly in areas far from the border, before the war, people perceived the battle "as a movie," which caused to create an abstract mental category – patriotism in the society (Grigoryan, Jumayeva, Smbatyan and Hasanova, 2019, p. 128). In NK, the war has become a fundamental part of daily routine and life in general, effectively becoming a context. Simply stated, people are unable to plan the future of their education and career. As a result, the success of the optimum solution would be determined largely by both governments' willingness and strategy to prepare their populations for peace.

Another public poll conducted in Azerbaijan by the Social Research Center in 2020, a few months before the war, indicates that 30.5 percent of participants saw the start of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War as the elimination of the "defeated people" syndrome, while 21.1 percent believe it will strengthen their country's regional and global position. They seemed ready and prepared for any possible war, as 91.2% of respondents stated that they or their family members would go to fight in a potential war situation. Another poll done by the same organization (SRC) after the war in December 2020 presented the expectation of 1050 participants from next year, 2021. About half of the respondents believed that by 2021, the remaining territories of Azerbaijan (Khojaly, Khojavend, Khankendi) would be entirely under their control. It was noted that 96.4% of respondents assessed the liberation of the lands from occupation as the most successful result of the activities of the President of Azerbaijan in 2020.

Talking about the issue of how the Second Karabakh war and its consequences changed the negotiation process for both countries, K. M Aliyev stated that because Azerbaijan has got control over the areas in question and the balance of power has changed, there is no effective control by Armenia now (Makili-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, 17 March 2022). Therefore, considering the results of the second war, Azerbaijan will take the lead in the peace-making effort compared with its place in this process before the war. He finds it hopeful since Azerbaijan and Armenia are right now on the path to the normalization of relations after 30 years of enmity.

Zaur Shiriyev, Crisis Group's Analyst for South Caucasus, highlighted that the principles of the negotiation process have changed after the second war compared with the first war (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). We have new realities; thus, more parties to the conflict now. Azerbaijan has taken back more lands than it could accomplish in the negotiations until the last war. Since this war, in the last 25 years, negotiation philosophy had been based on the fact that Azerbaijan lost the first war. Before the 2020 war, they had seven adjacent lands as a bargaining chip to get the desired status for NK. However, right now, Armenia does not have anything to exchange in the negotiation process (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). Moreover, Azerbaijan is in full control of territories around NK and thus dictating resources to the region. In his view, it will surely be dependent on the abilities of the parties as there is no definitive answer to whether it is possible to reach peace in the short term or long term.

For the same question, I received nearly identical replies from my study's participants, albeit from different viewpoints. For example, Laurence Broers, a research associate, claimed that Baku might argue that the issue has been settled and no third party, like the OSCE, is required (Broers, Laurence. Interview, 4 March 2022). However, the current position is precisely what Baku and Yerevan hoped to avoid in the past, in which Russia could effectively control the mediation process. Thus, Russia seems to be in charge of resolving the issues arising from the second war. Even though Armenia's government was not pleased with Russian forces settled in the disputed region, as Broers stated, the results of an IRI poll (2021) reveal that 64 percent of respondents saw Russia as a significant foreign partner capable of assisting Armenia in security matters.

The greater problem is figuring out how to start working on reconciliation between two nations that are still at odds with one another and whose whole nation-building initiatives are based on rejecting the other's objectives (De Waal, 2021, p. 15). Following the confrontation in 2020, Azerbaijan's anti-Armenian rhetoric hardly altered on the official scale. The Armenians were publicly humiliated by President Aliyev. Besides these, for Armenians, the public demonstration confirms their prejudices against Azerbaijani as a state because of its regime that cannot be trusted to assume control of Nagorno-Karabakh (Klein, 2021, p. 48). In Baku, a bizarre 'trophy park' was opened, with caricatured Armenian characters and captured Armenian helmets

displayed triumphantly. Even among those who were less vengeful, there was little sympathy for Armenians. Meanwhile, the ongoing "Karabakh is Azerbaijan" campaign instills Karabakh Armenians` perceptions that they have no future in Azerbaijan (Klein, 2021, p. 48). On the other hand, the majority of ordinary Azerbaijanis were still full of fresh emotions after seeing the whole image of the damage done by Armenian occupying troops on the seven occupied regions during 25 years, with entire towns demolished and gravestones shattered. Having these deep wounds and the especially toxic rhetoric, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is arguably more vulnerable to 'conflict transformation than other conflicts in post-Soviet countries.

Since the late 1980s, the two societies have had almost little communication. Only a small number of social groupings, such as traders who conduct business in Georgia or students who meet the opposite side in foreign countries, could meet and hear members of the other ethnic group. Civil society dialogue efforts and confidence-building measures were challenging to execute until 2020, partly because Azerbaijanis were hesitant to engage in discourse that just 'normalized the existing status quo' without achieving genuine political reform (De Waal, 2021, p. 15). Baku and Yerevan set forth mutually conflicting opinions for negotiations in March: Azerbaijan wanted Armenia to officially recognize its authority in Nagorno-Karabakh and commit not to use force or make territorial claims against it (Azerbaijan State News Agency, 2022). Meanwhile, Armenia has insisted that discussions be resumed without preconditions and supervised by the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, whose role Azerbaijan refuses (Crisis Group interview, Armenian official, 2021). The sides' inability to talk about anything relating to the status of Nagorno-Karabakh has left a slight possibility for short-term progress on critical concerns (Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°93, 2022, p. 11). To sum up, following the recent battle, Azerbaijanis have become the more vocal proponents of discussion, while Armenians, traumatized by their losses, are likely to be more averse to engaging.

5.2 Background Actors of the War: Turkey and Russia

As a follow-up topic, let me now turn to the role of Russia and Turkey in the second Karabakh war and post-war negotiations. Even though the war was local, it drew in outsiders. For the first time in the post-Soviet region, Turkey and Russia, representing two separate

intergovernmental military alliances—NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), formalized their collaboration (Pashayeva, 2021, p. 54). At first, negotiations right after the war had to take place quickly on the status, protection guarantees for people, and the implementation of the individual points, including the participation of international organizations. However, a power struggle between Russia and Turkey could be observed. The role of Russia and Turkey in the 2020 conflict has been elevated compared to western actors like the OSCE (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). Russia was a significant player and security provider on the passage to Nakhchivan. Thus, Russia became the center of the process. Turkey had hoped for a more prominent political role but received merely a symbolic status in the monitoring center. However, Turkey's power in this region has undoubtedly grown due to its close cooperation with Azerbaijan. If Turkey can normalize relations with Armenia, it will play a political role as well (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). It is no doubt that Russia has always been restrained in this region by a plethora of interests as well as the necessity to maintain excellent bilateral relations with Baku and Yerevan, the two capitals that are in direct conflict. Russia's role was substantially expanded by the manner it brokered the November 2020 ceasefire deal and, for the first time, deployed a peacekeeping force to the region (De Waal, T, 2021, p. 10). As a result, Russia has surpassed all other foreign players in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. For the first time since 1993, Russia was able to reclaim a military presence in Azerbaijan thanks to the deal. It can also pursue a communication-route-opening program, restoring its overland connections to Turkey and Iran via Azerbaijan and Armenia. In Moscow, this is regarded as a political victory, owing to the agreement's marginalization of Western countries. Because Russia was the key mediator during the conflict, Raffi Doudaklian, World Vision Armenia Program Director, believes that Armenia and the Armenian community of NK have no choice but to deepen their collaboration with Russia (Doudaklian, Raffi, Interview with Parev-TV, 2022). They are also serving as peacekeepers in NK, ensuring the security of Armenians and giving humanitarian help to the government and the Armenian people.

As an ally of Azerbaijan, Turkey had officially and covertly contributed to its victory. Ter-Matevosyan claims that starting from 1991, Turkey had one fixed idea, and that was to get hold of the South Caucasus and to get its soldiers somewhere legally so that they could not be far away from the Caucasus and the Azerbaijani interests (Ter-Matevosyan, Interview with Parev-

TV, 2021). According to him, having this kind of presence in the south Caucasus was beyond their even wildest dreams. To have a joint operation with Russia, we all understand that this is more than an observation mission and more than what we see now since this is way too important both for Turkey and for Russia. Turkey has every reason to be delighted with the outcome of the war, even if its larger political objectives appear to have been foiled (De Waal, T, 2021, p. 11). The fight was hailed as a triumph for Turkish military technology. Turkish enterprises have been asked to join in the restoration of Azerbaijan. The prospect of a new transport route connecting western Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan via southern Armenia, perhaps most crucially, appears to offer a new gateway for Turkey to the Caspian Sea and Central Asia (De Waal, T, 2021, p. 11). Turkey had planned to establish an official military presence with peacekeeping troops. But the Russian leadership in the region made it clear that Turkey could only participate in a peace monitoring center. Considering this situation, many Azerbaijanis, for example, accused their president that Russian troops are now back in their country.

On the other hand, the unclear situation for the remaining Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and further uncertainties increased anger and bitterness in Armenia, which erupted in protests against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his intentions to normalize relations with Turkey. According to poll statistics in Armenia in 2022 by the US International Republican Institute (IRI), 29% of respondents reckon that Armenia should not normalize relations with Turkey without any preconditions. Besides this, 88% and 90% of respondents consider Turkey the biggest security and political threat, respectively, to Armenia.

Having Turkey as the new actor in this conflict seemingly did not satisfy Armenians. Talking about this factor, an interviewee, an associate researcher, Nona Shahnazarian, said: "We better talk by ourselves rather than mediators even if it takes 20 years. Neither Russia nor Turkey should be a part of the normalization of relations. Russia desires this conflict to never end because of the balance of power. And Turkey will never consider Armenian interests since Turkey has its own interests. Nobody got anything as a dead-end from this war, rationally speaking. A terrible mistake of Azerbaijan was to bring Russia into here, whereas for Armenians, it was to bring Turks here." (Shahnazarian, Nona. Interview, 13 March 2022).

Another respondent of this thesis, Gerard J. Libaridian, a distinguished Armenian historian and diplomat directly involved in the post-first Karabakh conflict discussions, spoke on this topic in light of the Armenian minority's principles in Nagorno Karabakh within ongoing peace negations. He started by stating that Russia`s decision not to recognize Nagorno Karabakh under any circumstance might most likely destroy the plans of the NK government and leaders. On the other hand, the NK government has officially been pursuing the goal of independence since the war, which no one would recognize. However, he thinks they will accept anything under Russia`s control and mediation, such as a peacekeeper or joining Russia (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, March 15, 2022). In addition, he added that the president of NK, Arayik Harutyunyan, recently stated that they would be seeking closer political and economic ties with Russia, and they are urging Armenia to do the same even though Armenia is not interested in further integrations with Russia (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, March 15, 2022). To his way of thinking, both Azerbaijan, Armenia, and NK leaderships were relying too much on others to find solutions as if we were guests in the region instead of saying that we could sit and talk to ourselves. Lastly, he mentioned that his personal view was that mediators could be helpful, but we have always needed to find solutions and explore various possibilities.

Russia`s role in this region has already been well known to everyone in the last 30 years (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, May 4, 2022). Shiriyev claims that Turkey`s role in the second war surprised everyone. However, Turkey had never been a key security actor in the NK dispute. Before the war, Turkey did not have a chance to influence the negotiation process. After the 2020 war, Turkey became one of the key security actors in the region, observing and monitoring the ceasefire regime together with Russia (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, May 4, 2022). When it comes to Russia, as he stated, it has always been the key mediator between conflicting parties. The 2020 war, in particular, has aided them in being involved in this conflict by allowing them to station forces in the conflicting area of NK. However, depending on the outcome of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, this might alter, as dynamics in this region are prone to quick shifts (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, May 4, 2022).

In his answer to this question I posed during the interview, Kamal Makili Aliyev shared his understanding of Turkey`s and Russia's roles after the war. He noted that their roles since the

war have been of security actors had competitive and cooperation goals. De-escalation for fighting and searching solutions for cooperation goals, and the competitive goals were to extend their influence in the region of Caucasus for both security purposes and towards each other, and the result was already on the map (Makili-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, March 17, 2022).

All in all, the findings of my study, which made use of replies to Question 4 from the majority of my study participants, show that there were winners and losers in the ceasefire. Azerbaijan is unquestionably in the first group. It sees its triumph as proof of its legitimate claim to land that has been in Armenian hands for so long. Thanks to the November 2020 victory, Aliyev is in a strong position which makes him believe that he no longer needs to negotiate with the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. The Russian presence, on the other hand, is perceived as a problem in Baku. Azerbaijan has always refused the deployment of Russian troops before the 2020 war. According to the agreement of November 10, Russian troops will have to leave after five years if there is no unanimity to wish them to be maintained. It seems clear that Baku will oppose their retention. However, it is hard to see Russia accepting to leave unless there are negotiations on other subjects. The agreement reaffirmed Russia's leadership role in the area and its ability to serve as a mediator. The third party to declare victory was Turkey, which backed Baku. Meanwhile, Armenia has lost land long claimed as historically and culturally Armenian, both within Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas. On the side of the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, it seems that Russia and the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh are making the self-proclaimed state a gray zone on the model of South Ossetia or Donbas, which is, of course, to the detriment of Baku. According to Gerard J. Libaridian, there are real fears that Azerbaijan and Turkey would attack Armenia and the rest of NK by using the fact that Russia is busy in Ukraine (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, March 15, 2022). As a result, when those fears are generalized, then the solution from their side is almost certainly, historically speaking, to get closer to Russia. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is therefore far from settled in the short term; it is just entering a new phase.

5.3 The Rational Actions to be Undertaken from Baku and Yerevan

The parties in conflict are reportedly expected to reach a peaceful conclusion if the agreement is implemented. However, it does not appear rational that after a military victory, Azerbaijan will be willing to accept the compromises that it refused before the conflict (Iskandaryan, 2020, p. 12). On April 6, 2022, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met in Brussels for talks mediated by EU Council President Charles Michel amid concerns of renewed conflict over the disputed region Nagorno-Karabakh. Despite their disagreements, both leaders sounded quite optimistic about the results of the meeting (Eurasinet, 2022).

The trilateral agreement agreed on November 10 by the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia is a ceasefire agreement, not a peace settlement. It makes no mention of Nagorno Karabakh`s status. Azerbaijan believes that today the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic has no legal existence. When the Russian peacekeepers leave, Baku thinks it can completely reclaim the territory it considers its own. Whereas previously, Ilham Aliyev wanted to integrate Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan by promising extensive autonomy, during the war, his statements were limited to cultural autonomy. After the war, any mention of possible autonomy disappeared. On the other hand, Armenia is unwilling to allow Azerbaijan to create a new corridor toward the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

Besides these, specific critical security concerns must be solved in order to achieve peace in the region. Armenia's unwillingness to give complete information on minefield sites is one of them. The freed Azerbaijani regions are one of the world's most mine-infested places, with countless anti-personnel, anti-tank, and unexploded ordnance mines (UXO) (Pashayeva, 2021, p. 60). Hundreds of thousands of landmines were laid by Armenian forces there during the occupation and the agreed-upon evacuation from these lands during the Second Karabakh War. On the other hand, President Ilham Aliyev referred to Zangazur — now the Syunik area of southern Armenia — as "our territories" in April 2021, referring to the territory's former Azerbaijani inhabitants. "Whether Armenia wants it or not, we are going to create the Zangazur corridor," he stated. "It will be simpler for us to implement if they do, but if not, we will enforce

it" (Eurasianet, 2021). This became a contentious subject in Armenia, with some seeing it as a threat to attack Armenian lands.

The parties' actions, according to Kamal Makili-Aliyev, indicate that they see the November ceasefire agreement as a normative deal (Makili-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, March 17, 2022). Some sections of the pact have already been implemented, while others have been delayed owing to a lack of trust and confidence. K. M. Aliyev reckons that in order to fasten the process, first of all, they need to begin by having bilateral relations and cooperation via transportation routes through air and land, which would enable both sides to have their first formal contact after many years (Makili-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, March 17, 2022). Besides these, it would be in both countries' interests to define demarcated borders to avoid possible hostile relations in the future. In addition, recognition of Azerbaijan territories by Armenia and granting security to the Armenian people of NK from Azerbaijan must be prominent parts of the peace agreement. In his view, it is preferable to begin with transportation routes, as this will facilitate future collaboration (Makili-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, March 17, 2022). According to L. Broers, they must deescalate in the short term and begin deciding on post-war ties (Broers, Laurence. Interview, March 4, 2022). Azerbaijan is undoubtedly the winner and has more options, but the rhetorical discourse from the Azerbaijani side must be completely changed. Turkey`s entry is a game-changer. In the short term, we can easily observe Russian control, but in terms of the long term, Turkey can use soft power to become a part of this process. On the other hand, Armenia's powerful revanchist movement must be changed without regard for ancient hatred principles (Broers, Laurence. Interview, March 4, 2022).

Shiriyev anticipates Azerbaijan to adopt a new strategy that considers the dispute with Armenia to be resolved and begins working towards peace. The emphasis should be shifted to economic prospects (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). There is a political truth that there is understandably no trust between parties. He believes that they need to build trust through the negotiation process. Firsts step should be the deradicalization of negotiation principles (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). Secondly, the de-escalation of the rhetoric should be based on peaceful conditions. None of the sides can use both military and peaceful rhetoric simultaneously. Thirdly, they should make this process very inclusive. It shouldn`t be only at the

state level, but this inclusivity should involve more people in this process, such as civil parties and key stakeholders.

The peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan must be restarted (Ergun and Valiyev, 2020, p. 8). It must, however, be organized in a more effective, significant, and healing manner. Such an attempt must unquestionably be result-oriented. The new positioning of a number of countries and organizations will be required for the region's future peace and stability (Ergun and Valiyev, 2020, p. 8). The OSCE Minsk Group's credibility and efficacy should be restored. Despite the fact that it should have been one of the most successful organizations, it has shown great hesitation in resolving the dispute during the previous two decades. This has caused dismay as well as mistrust in Azerbaijan, which sees the Minsk Group as applying double standards to Armenia and Azerbaijan. Because of France's outspoken backing for Armenia, as well as President Macron's assertion that "we won't tolerate Azerbaijani control in Nagorno-Karabakh" (Ergun and Valiyev, 2020, p. 8). Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, an assistant professor at the American University of Armenia, provides his thoughts on what to do after the conflict in an interview with Parev-TV. He points out that there are two pathways to consider. First and foremost, given that this region is a "broken" or "non-functional" zone as called by many scholars and analysts, it is vital at the very least to provide a platform for regional countries to have a sense of togetherness. In brief, regional identity should be sought if the countries are interested in investing in this project. In addition, this notion of regionnes is also an opportunity for regional nations to examine how they may collaborate in this region because the conflict in this area has shown that the crisis in this region is far from ended (Ter-Matevosyan, Interview with Parev-TV, 2021).

Rusif Huseynov, an Azerbaijani researcher and political expert, believes that in the current setting, two themes must be distinguished: the Karabakh conflict and Azerbaijan-Armenia relations (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). In the past, it was interrelated and intermingled since Armenia functioned as a guardian of the Armenian population in Karabakh. Nonetheless, it is presently split, and Armenia is no longer a part of the Karabakh process. Russia and the Armenian community of Karabakh are two more parties with whom Azerbaijan might engage in this process (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). Because Armenia is not a part of this process for the reasons stated above, both parties should begin with

mutual recognition of territorial integrity. The next step will have to be based on delimitation and demarcation of borders. Huseynov assumes that the ball is on the Armenian side. To begin the normalization process, they must accept these two requirements. Otherwise, it appears that finding common ground for discussion will take a lot of effort. We must first define borders before opening them (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). To begin economic and trade connections, we must establish checkpoints and customs controls, which are closely linked to border demarcation. Simply put, answering this question will be determined mainly by Yerevan's will.

The ceasefire declaration urges reinvigorated trade. It necessitates the construction of a new corridor connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan, its exclave on the Armenian side of the border with Turkey and Iran (ICG, 2020). The corridor would aid in the strengthening of links between Baku and Ankara. However, the statement also asks for "fully unblocked" transit and trade in the region in the same phrase. This phrase implies that Armenia will resume trading with both Azerbaijan and Turkey (ICG, 2020). Furthermore, international organizations may be able to assist in addressing issues over antiquities and religious site access. UNESCO's involvement in facilitating the preservation, research, and rebuilding of both Azerbaijani and Armenian cultural and religious objects, and access to them, might be acceptable to both parties and protect both communities' history (ICG, 2020). To examine these issues, representatives from Armenia and Azerbaijan are meeting with UNESCO.

In their paperwork, G.J. Libaridian, R. Aydabirian, and T. Papazian (2021) identify a variety of diplomatic initiatives as critical to Yerevan's long-term resolution of the NK conflict. They point out that Armenia must create and employ direct channels for bilateral conversations with all governments that have a stake in its interests, with a focus on Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Iran, and Russia, as well as individual CSTO states. Furthermore, the government should engage with the governments of Azerbaijan and Turkey to shift away from humiliating and subjugating rhetoric and toward peaceful cohabitation. The new Armenian leadership should state clearly to its population that the opening of communication lines and roads is a long-term tool for developing neighborly ties and building a route toward regional cooperation, even if on a limited scale initially.

What can be done to comfort the Armenian community in Karabakh with the help of possible peace? To do so, a multi-step procedure is required, which includes more than just trying to persuade Karabakh Armenians that they will have nothing at all to worry about but also ensuring they feel that their voices and needs are being heard and responded (Klein, 2021, p. 48). The message should emphasize that Karabakh Armenians will be able to retain some control over their lives, that they will be able to succeed economically, and that they will have political and civil rights. While it is natural to expect Azerbaijan to remain critical of Armenia's leadership, a difference must be made between the regime and the people (Klein, 2021, p. 48). Eliminating Armenophobic sentiments is an easy remedy, especially for leaders who are sensitive to Armenia's Turkophobia. Going even further, messaging that highlights Azerbaijan's multiculturalism and dedication to finding a place for Karabakh Armenians in Azerbaijani society would be beneficial (Klein, 2021, p. 48).

As a positive dynamic of current reality, they both have a chance to begin determining economic interests, precisely, opening borders to trade and transportation, which is well-known point nine of the 2020 agreement, which states that all transportation routes from Zangilan to Nakhchivan across Armenian territory will be unblocked (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). They will have to work together on transportation and trade, as well as the security of products and routes. De Waal believes that if there is collaboration on those matters and boundary delimitation as well, it will be smoother for both nations. For the time being, the only issue is that Aliyev's statements reveal a legacy of trauma, pain, and anger from both sides. He has not expressly talked about peace with Armenia but rather Armenia's acceptance of new realities in the war. If there is a shift in such rhetoric and language of officials from both sides, it can assist both sides in gradually gaining confidence (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022.

To conclude this section, as the literature and participants of the interview identified, rationally speaking, we can come up with possible immediate actions for both Baku and Yerevan. Namely, they will have to begin establishing delimitation and demarcation of state boundaries and then recognize each other's territorial integrity, including deciding the official

state of NK. In a word, any such verbal message of leadership that might cause an escalation in tensions should be avoided, and both parties should begin taking steps to reduce antagonistic relations between their citizens and the opposing country within the country itself because of a high level of hostility and trust issues. Moreover, continuing with renovating transport routes through air and land as it has to be in their best interest may be the most rational and plausible option in the short term for all parties of the conflict, which is expected to benefit regional partners as well such as Russia, Turkey, Georgia, and Iran. In a word, regional identity or idea of regional cooperation should be sought. In addition, as alleged by Broers, even though Baku has already killed this organization off, the OSCE as an organization might potentially play a part. Russia has urged the organization to support the cease-fire agreement. Not only may the organization support Russian efforts, but it could also send its own missions and diplomats to work with Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and anybody else involved ensuring that humanitarian aid is provided, and that human rights or other concerns are heard. Furthermore, parties will need to get civil parties and key stakeholders involved in this process as well. Most importantly, the Armenian side will officially reveal minefield sites to avoid further human casualties. Finally, as Libaridian and Shahnazarian have strongly stated, rather than relying on other nations, first of all, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the Armenian population of NK must find answers on their own, without the help of intermediaries.

5.4 The Benefits and Detriments of Possible Peace for All Conflicting Parties

Approaching this topic from a rational perspective, unsurprisingly, all respondents commented that there could be no significant detriment for any party to the conflict. K. M. Aliyev does not believe that peace would be detrimental to Azerbaijan and Armenia because a peaceful climate in the region is far more conducive to the future (Makili-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, 17 March 2022). Specifically, Armenia's surrounding states are prospering, and it will undoubtedly have an impact on Armenia as well and aid in its recovery from a deepening economic recession. He also stated that it would be risky for Armenia if Azerbaijan had any expansionist agenda, which was claimed by the Armenian agenda based on historical facts, especially after this war. In general, when it comes to Armenia, eliminating war rhetoric and the

possibility of a new war can be considered the main benefits of peace (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). Rationally speaking, no one gets anything from this conflict. On the contrary, any attempt at peace opens new ways for the states of this region. Aliyev believes that regardless of the NK`s Armenian community's anxieties, they will have no issue with pursuing peoplehood interests under international law or any natural vanishing of the population while integrating with the Azerbaijani community seems logical as long as the security is provided for these people (Makli-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, 17 March 2022). On the other hand, the conflict has always been meaningless for Azerbaijan since it was much more costly for Azerbaijan. In a nutshell, Armenia will have the ability to serve in transport between Caspian and Mediterranean seas. More crucially, as a landlocked nation, Armenia will have access to Turkey and energy through a variety of routes, including Azerbaijan and Asia. Azerbaijan will get access to Turkey. For the Armenian community of NK, as Shiriyev stated, only based on the peace treaty determining their fate we could claim whether this new possible peace would bring benefits or detriments to them (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). As a result, thinking through a rationalist approach, the possible peace will benefit all sides. According to a poll done by IPSC LLC (2021), some people are eager to have more close economic cooperation with Turkey and Azerbaijan on cross-border transportation lines. Namely, 35% of the participants believe that transportation lines with Turkey should be recreated, whereas 27% think the same for Azerbaijan.

L. Broers`s reflection on the question of my interview especially grabbed my attention. He said: "Armenia is liberated from occupation" (Broers, Laurence. Interview, 4 March 2022). To his way of thinking, Armenia no longer needs to dedicate its energy and other resources to the occupation of districts around NK. Another benefit could be to generate a paradigm of national identity that would hypothetically focus on state-building rather than nation-building. Armenia will reconnect with its neighbors, Azerbaijan and Turkey, by opening its borders, which is a very significant benefit. Implementation of opening borders with Turkey seems more logical and possible in the near future compared with having a border opened with Azerbaijan for Armenia (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). Due to restrictions imposed on Iran's governing regime, having borders with Iran does not provide as much as Armenia had hoped. Furthermore, due to Georgia's geopolitical crisis, the border with that country is in jeopardy. Simply expressed, with the help of opening borders with new states, peace will bring greater economic prosperity.

Coming to Azerbaijan, benefits of peace would be in terms of national-building and identity process following the resolution of this wound and trauma that they had been living with since 1990`s Broers, Laurence. Interview, 4 March 2022). More importantly, it will create an opportunity for hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons to return to their places of residence which will heal national reconciliation within Azerbaijan. When it comes to detriments, we could have a possible peace that does not provide security and governance guarantees for the Armenian community of NK. Therefore, as the worst-case scenario, they could face ethnic cleansing of the population – the loss of Armenian identity to NK even if it takes place over a long term. It is clear, and we also know from the history of the post-soviet South Caucasus, that victory may strengthen authoritarian regimes. Thus, for Azerbaijan, a potential disadvantage of the solution to conflict depending on the peace terms would be that regained territories became a personalized property and a part of a brand for a particular leadership and elite (Broers, Laurence. Interview, 4 March 2022).

In one of the findings from my literature (O'Casey, 2021), it is highlighted that as the new geographical status quo takes hold, and with the chances of any progress in peace negotiations dwindling, militia-style organizations in Armenia may turn to more insurgent-style tactics to resist. They may use homemade explosive devices or less sophisticated measures to disrupt or damage Azerbaijani infrastructure. IPSC - Institute for Political and Sociological Consulting conducted a public poll among the Armenian population of NK in March 2015 and July 2016 that might bolster these assertions. Specifically, 81.1 % of those polled believe that people in NK should resist with weapons if the regional and global powers impose a handover of territories to Azerbaijan. Such dangers have yet to materialize, and they are still a long way off, but they can be considered a detriment to any peace for Azerbaijan. However, despite the conclusion of the Second Karabakh War, very few ethnic Armenians consider friendship with Azerbaijanis or appear eager to conduct business with them in Nagorno-Karabakh (Klein, 2021, p.46). The ethnic Armenians' evacuation from territories retaken by Azerbaijan during the fighting or handed back to Azerbaijan through the cease-fire agreement demonstrates their lack of faith in the Azerbaijani administration. Armenians in Karabakh are plainly stuck in a security dilemma, scared of and opposed to a future in Azerbaijan because they can't imagine how such a future might function (Klein, 2021, p.46).

While asking this question during the interview, Huseynov provided a clear and thorough response. The researcher reckons that the peace in Karabakh can mean normalization with Azerbaijan, Turkey, for Armenia (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). As a result, it can help Armenia open their eastern and western borders and somehow reduce its overdependence on Russia. However, the new borders can cause psychological, political, and economic issues. There are fears from Armenian society that in case of an open border and open trade, Azerbaijani and Turkish businesses can infiltrate into their country and dominate the Armenian economy since they will be sandwiched between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Regarding Azerbaijan, if the Karabakh case is resolved and NK is fully reintegrated into Azerbaijan, we can finally get rid of the biggest burden in our recent independence history (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). The Karabakh discourse dominated our politics and economy, it swallowed billions of dollars from the budget for army preparation for any sudden war. With the possible peace, as Huseynov stated, Azerbaijan will finally be able to find a new model or story of ourselves to move on. As a detriment following the terms of the peace that mentions Russian troops` existence in Karabakh even after reintegrating process, it would be problematic for Azerbaijan.

Finally, getting out of the grey zone and uncertainty would be the most significant benefit for NK (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). Obviously, NK's future peace prospects are blurry, and they are reliant on other actors and factors. They haven't been subject to international systems; thus, their opinions haven't been heard, and international jurisdiction has lost its capability to operate there. Once the conflict is over, and the status is known, it could be the biggest benefit for people living there. Economic cooperation and integration in the region for Armenia and NK could be noteworthy incentives to be willing to find common ground with Azerbaijan (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). In terms of any detriment, their wounds are still fresh, they feel encircled and besieged by Azerbaijan from all sides, and they are living in fear at present, although Russian forces will move forward to protect their rights. Therefore, they seem not ready to accept the sovereignty of Azerbaijan in the short term (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). Furthermore, rationally speaking, since their independence ambitions will sensibly be out of topic during ongoing peace talks, losing the ability to pursue becoming a single entity is their main detriment (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022).

When asked about the benefits and detriments of peace, Libaridian responded that "we may have an agreement or settlement that is agreeable to everyone, and there is no doubt that everyone would profit," or that "we may have a deal that leaves out the state of the Armenian community in Karabakh." (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, 15 March, 2022). He believes that regional cooperation stemming from any possible peace would be much more essential than any other, especially for economic benefits (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, 15 March, 2022). Namely, after the collapse of the USSR, it would have been logical to see Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia cooperate. Instead, we went to war, which resulted in crises and battles. Georgia started looking to NATO for external security guarantees. In contrast, Azerbaijan looked to Turkey, and of course, Russia and Armenia aligned themselves with Russia and with an eye to the West. Simply put, there was no regional cooperation. As a result, it is critical for these three Republics to consolidate their independence, which will be feasible once the conflict has been settled. To cut a fairly long story short, with possible peace, we would have regional cooperation as the most crucial benefit. He concluded that there would be no detriment to the people if there was a peace agreement to which all parties agreed.

De Waal noted that any possible peace will primarily benefit Armenia. Namely, potential peace necessitates the opening of the border with Azerbaijan and Turkey (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). As a result, the de-isolation of Armenia, which has relied on Iran and Georgia for transit routes for many years, will begin together with peace. Another advantage is the opportunity to concentrate on domestic development. Furthermore, because there will be no conflict, Armenia will be less reliant on Russia, and less money will be spent on the military. To his way of thinking, we can discuss various negative consequences of peace depending on the type of peace. For example, the normalization of relations with Azerbaijan might be seen as a betrayal of Armenians in NK, leading to domestic political instability and opposition to the administration, as we are seeing now (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). Regarding Azerbaijan, the eventual peace settlement would provide significant advantages. Azerbaijan is expected to profit from additional transportation lines to Turkey and reduced military spending (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). He made two considerations to consider in the event of an agreement (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). First, removing the NK issue will eliminate a mobilizing force in Azerbaijani politics that the president has usually been

able to exploit to distract people from domestic issues by alleging Armenian aggression. That option will no longer be available. Second, depending on the terms of the peace, other internal minorities, such as the Talysh and Lezgins, may request similar autonomy which will bring domestic instability as a negative side effect of peace. When it comes to Armenian community of NK, he supposes that it relies largely on the type of peace that is reached (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022).. For them, the most critical concern is security. Both sides have a history of ethnic cleansing in this war, which dates back to the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Armenian community of Karabakh has reasonable concerns that their safety would be jeopardized, and they will be forced to evacuate their homeland. If international and security assurances are connected to the peace terms, Armenian population of NK will benefit as well (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022).

In summary, it has been shown from this section that all respondents agreed that, rationally speaking and analyzing the costs and benefits of the peace, all conflicting and third parties will get benefits from the peace agreement depending on its terms and principles as they prevail over possible detriments. Baku and Yerevan signing a peace deal will bring peace to the entire region, strengthen regional cooperation, and recreate economic ties between neighbors.

5.5 *The Resolutions for the Permanent Peace - Territorial Autonomy, Power-Sharing and Partition*

So far, this study has presented and examined the research findings as a basic summary of the possible peace from literature and respondents. I will now elucidate the paper's primary variables, which are expected to allow me to determine their practicality in the NK situation at the conclusion of this section. Before I begin this section, it is necessary to point out that the majority of respondents, as well as a number of research studies, considered territorial autonomy as the same notion as power-sharing. Respondents had a thorough knowledge of these factors once the key distinctions between them were highlighted.

5.5.1 Practicality of Territorial Autonomy in NK dispute

Territorial autonomy is one approach that is increasingly being proposed to fulfill minority groups' wishes for more self-rule while keeping the state's exterior borders intact. The international community is progressively emphasizing territorial autonomy as a key component of the institutional reforms that it frequently advises to post-conflict states (Nam and Fessha, 2018, p. 536). As mentioned in the theoretical part of this paper, while some researchers are critical of territorial approaches to conflict resolution, claiming that rather than preventing conflict, territorial methods cause it, others have offered actual evidence of the opposite. Recent historical experience demonstrates that, on balance, autonomous agreements can be an efficient method of controlling regional tensions (Wolf, 2010, p. 2). Makili-Aliyev clearly and comprehensively noted that as long as Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is respected, the Armenian population of NK can be given autonomy within Azerbaijan (Makili-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, 17 March 2022). He recommended that the Aland Islands settlement's three elements may be used as a starting basis for talks: 1) self-governance as an autonomous region within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan; 2) demilitarization and neutralization of the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh; 3) comprehensive protection of minority rights of the Armenian population living in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh as a majority. (Makili-Aliyev, 2020, p. 90) If we desire an autonomous solution, we must adhere to these three essential criteria as principles. This is an example of a model autonomy solution for territorial conflicts involving territorial integrity, minorities' rights, and self-determination. Therefore, the Aaland Island instance should be used as a model for a successful and sustainable solution (Makili-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, 17 March 2022).

Many of the critical concerns in both conflicts are comparable. Both of the example cases in question involve territorial, ethnic dispute conflict involving a minority community with a kin-state (Makili-Aliyev, 2020, p. 79). In both scenarios, the outcome is determined by the well-being of the minority. While the right of peoples to self-determination does not apply in a broad sense, internal self-determination centered on minority rights and protection for the state's territorial integrity can be a viable solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as the Aland Islands have shown (Makili-Aliyev, 2020, p. 79). The primary distinctions between these two

examples are the dimensions of state will and international organizations' views toward the settlement of both conflicts (Makili-Aliyev, 2020, p. 79). Makili-Aliyev, in his work (2020, p. 88), notes that high-ranking Swedish diplomats have also been active in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution process, drawing parallels with the example set by the Aland Islands. In an interview with the Aland Islands Peace Institute, former Swedish Foreign Minister Jan Eliasson, who served as Chairman of the OSCE Minsk Conference on Nagorno-Karabakh, offered some light on analogies drawn between the Aland Islands and Nagorno-Karabakh (2020, p. 88). Even before he became Chairman of the Minsk Conference, representatives from Armenia and Azerbaijan paid visits to the Aland Islands, according to Eliasson. While the parties were clearly interested in the Aland Islands as a model for conflict resolution, Eliasson believes that the parties were always concerned about giving up their policy objectives and that the Aland Islands experience was eventually tied to the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh's future status, with a focus on autonomy (2020, p. 88). Unfortunately, given the limitations of the diplomatic process, only one of its primary aspects – self-governance in the form of autonomy was focused on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh – rather than focusing on the situation as a whole. Fortunately, international legal analysis removes these restrictions. He states that to present a realistic evaluation of the problem, it is crucial to emphasize that the resolution of the conflict in the form of the fulfillment of these three elements can only be achieved if both parties to the dispute, third parties and international organizations involved in the resolution of the conflict acknowledge international law as the major basis for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (Makili-Aliyev, 2020, p. 85). This acceptance will channel states' will toward a positive, nonviolent solution based on restraint, compromise, and acceptance of international law's standards. Furthermore, as in the positive example of Finland, a strong commitment to the agreements achieved after the resolution is also crucial. The researcher believes that besides Armenia and Azerbaijan, the treaty should be multilateral and include at the very least co-chair nations of the Minsk Group and ideally other regional governments, such as Turkey, Iran, and Georgia. Those state parties to such a treaty will function as guarantors of the demilitarization and neutralization regime in Nagorno-Karabakh. Considering the elements from the Aland Islands' experience that such a demilitarization and neutralization regime should remain in place notwithstanding any changes in the regional status quo or under whose authority (sovereignty) Nagorno-Karabakh would be, will only boost the agreement's power (Makili-Aliyev, 2020, p. 92).

It was a solution expected to be offered until the 2020 conflict, with Aliyev himself claiming such resolution in NK to be the world's highest autonomy (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). Now Aliyev says it is off the table since they missed their chance. Because of small population of Armenians, the government does not want to create a precedent for other minorities. Thomas de Waal claims that any territorial autonomy granted to Armenia will face serious resistance in Azerbaijan. In the scenario of territorial autonomy, the Armenian side may not have a political interest in representing themselves in the Azerbaijani parliament as well (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). Later, he offered Puerto Rico as an example of autonomy tool, which is a not independent but constitutionally affiliated territory with the US. This maybe a model that all sides are interested in. Among other conflict resolution tools, he considered territorial autonomy the most feasible. De Waal, like Makili-Aliyev, suggested the Aaland Islands as a suitable example.

During the conversation with Laurence Broers, the practicality of territorial autonomy in the NK case was also discussed due to its different dimensions. He felt it was necessary to replace territorial autonomy with the formula of self-government arrangement because territorial autonomy as a concept is discredited (Broers, Laurence. Interview, 4 March 2022). According to him, local autonomy or self-government may theoretically alleviate a variety of problems. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has never raised what type of rights and duties it expects from a territorial autonomous community. Azerbaijan is concerned about the possibility of other minorities voicing similar concerns and demanding the same privileges. The fundamental problem for Armenians in NK would be a shift in their aspirations from de-facto statehood to territorial autonomy, notwithstanding the fact that this is a controversial topic. Simply said, the issue here is credible commitments between Azerbaijan and Armenians in NK. All these potential solutions, he said, will need a long period of de-escalation and confidence-building (Broers, Laurence. Interview, 4 March 2022).

Zaur Shiriyev believes that any territorially defined administrative status for NK is relatively minimal and unlikely. (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). However, there is still a chance following changes in geopolitical are where Russian troops have been deployed. Namely, those areas can be offered to NK Armenians with much more limited administrative

authority, which will not function be as they used to do during Soviet times and until the second war (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022).

Huseynov claimed that Azerbaijan's official discourse rejects any concept of territorial autonomy (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). Before the war, we offered this settlement to the Armenian side, but they refused to accept it. For the moment, as the victorious party, Azerbaijan is in the position of rejecting any territorial autonomy but instead offering only cultural autonomy in the best scenario. He said: "I do not know what the future holds. To boost reintegration and under the pressure of the international community, Azerbaijan may also consider a territorial autonomy scenario for the Armenian minority in NK. Given the bitter experiences of Soviet times when Armenian had an autonomous oblast within Azerbaijan. I do not know whether this model would be functioning since we might receive another conflict in the new future considering past experiences." (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022).

The results coming from my interviewees for this section will be concluded with remarks by G. J. Libaridian. Former Deputy Foreign Minister stated that this is technically what they had before this war but within Armenia (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, 15 March 2022). Moreover, Ilham Aliyev has already ruled out any of these solutions even though, in the past, he talked about the possible autonomy (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, 15 March 2022). However, as my respondent said, Aliyev may have a logic for not granting even this privilege to the Armenian minority in NK after the war. He may not be generous since he went to war and paid a high price for himself and the country. This might be one of the reasons why territorial autonomy seems quite tricky to obtain (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, 15 March 2022).

Crisis Group concludes in their research (2021), based on conversations with officials from both sides, that Baku will very certainly continue to resist any structure that includes anything approximating a formal role for de facto authorities, including documents needing their signatures, should this be interpreted as affording them political legitimacy. Stepanakert will not consent to anything that refers to Nagorno-Karabakh citizens as members of Azerbaijan's "Armenian community." Yerevan will be unwilling to agree to an arrangement that does not have the approval of Stepanakert (Crisis Group, 2021).

When asked what an acceptable solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict would be (IRI, 2021), 16% of the respondents supported an autonomous area within Armenia, while 11% indicated they would not oppose Nagorno-Karabakh`s position as a part of Russia. We can see that no question was asked regarding providing NK a right to autonomy within Azerbaijan. As likewise highlighted by Libaridian, the Armenian community of NK has lost confidence in Armenia and is ready to join Russia as their new guardian country. Thus, we may conclude using the findings of IRI surveys that the Armenians are firmly opposed to any autonomy agreement offered to NK in Azerbaijan. Another poll conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) in Azerbaijan before the war in 2013 found that, despite the fact that Azerbaijan had little influence on the decision-making for the status of Nagorno-Karabakh during that time, nearly all of the participants (96 percent) would not accept Nagorno-Karabakh as a formal part of Armenia. Based on these findings, we can assert that neither Azerbaijanis nor Armenians will knowingly disregard any resolution or peace treaty allowing NK autonomy within the opposite party. Apart from Azerbaijan, Armenia is also in favor of NK being a Russian-controlled autonomous oblast (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, 15 March, 2022).

To summarize this part of the thesis, it can be said that compromise with the help of a territorial autonomy solution will be difficult to achieve in the current context of considerable distrust. On the one hand, both Azerbaijan and Armenia appear adamant in their determination to protect their interests and oppose any choice to unify NK with the other side. Furthermore, since the war ended, the Armenian leadership of NK has been demanding autonomy that would give them the right to join Russia. On the other hand, the people of both countries are extremely disagreeing with NK being an autonomous area on the opposite side. However, it should be marked that the establishment of territorial autonomy is one of the ways in which the state can react to minority group demands for self-governance while maintaining territorial integrity. Following the interview results from all sides of the war, the only way to properly implement territorial autonomy as a settlement that answers the concerns of minority populations without risking the state's territorial integrity is to evaluate the current situation of the dispute. Allowing NK to remain within Azerbaijan would be rational and logical, given that Azerbaijan will most likely have the last word as the war's winner. Furthermore, given Russia's position in the

negotiating process, the security and state of the Armenian population in NK will have to be considered by all parties, despite Russia's official recognition of Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. Incorporating territorial autonomy into law could provide autonomous arrangements an extra layer of protection and durability, giving the minority more peace of mind. Furthermore, under international law, it would be expected to protect the territorial integrity of the states as well. Simply put, NK's Armenian community could be given the opportunity to enjoy self-governance as an autonomous region within Azerbaijan's territorial integrity with minority rights in the Nagorno-Karabakh region as a majority, based on the model of the Aland Islands proposed by Kamal Makili-Aliyev.

5.5.2 Power-Sharing for the Non-Shared Territory of Nagorno-Karabakh

Despite the conflicting sides' seemingly irreconcilable stances, a solution to the Karabakh dispute does not have to result in a win-lose situation. On the one hand, power-sharing agreements run the danger of falling short of independence aspirations, while on the other side, they have the potential to exacerbate these demands by emphasizing identities and territoriality. Integrative power-sharing solutions benefit from fostering conflict transformation rather than management, but they are challenging to put in place in war-torn communities (Berg and Ben-Porat, 2008). However, even in the parties' sine qua non-views, common ground can be discovered. As we discussed in the theoretical framework of this study, power-sharing is one of the methods of resolving conflicts in our case. There are several forms of power-sharing ranging from guaranteed governing coalitions between major or relevant contending parties to religious or ethnic minorities having constitutionally guaranteed government participation in granting minorities partial or complete sovereignty.

Regarding my responders' thoughts on this resolution technique, it is reasonable to start with N. Shahnazarian since she provided a succinct and definite analysis of the feasibility of power-sharing in the NK scenario. She believes and claims that power-sharing is impossible and acceptable to Armenians due to a lack of trust (Shahnazarian, Nona. Interview, 13 March, 2022). They were supposed to have some sort of institution with several powers in the 1990s, which

were humiliated afterward. There is no guarantee that this will not happen again. However, Shiriyev approaches this possibility from different angles. Shiriyev, on the other hand, takes a different approach to this option. In his opinion, the possibility of power-sharing is largely determined by whether Baku offers this choice or agrees to rights or competencies being given to Armenians in NK (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). Besides that, as an interim status, the Armenian population of NK could possess power-sharing until they integrated into Azerbaijani power structures. Among my three conflict management tools, he concluded that limited power-sharing is the most likely to be considered the interests of all parties. (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022).

L. Broers mentioned that power-sharing with NK being a part of Azerbaijan could potentially contribute to the resolution of the conflict (Broers, Laurence. Interview, 4 March, 2022). In theory, power-sharing, or some kind of divolved self-governance splitting between jurisdictional powers allocated to the center and the periphery in NK, could be designed to address grievances and concerns by all conflicting parties. Nevertheless, as he stated, it would ignore the governance model in Azerbaijan, which is ruled by a consolidated and hegemonic authoritarian regime with no precedence for power-sharing that exists in the post-Soviet Azerbaijani experience (Broers, Laurence. Interview, 4 March, 2022). Namely, Azerbaijan is ruled through an informal power vertical where the real actors and players are various informal factions or clans, which does not really fit with a formal institutionalized power-sharing arrangement. Any discussion of power-sharing would be contingent on a transformation in those kinds of attitudes. In a word, Broers does not see power-sharing as being very likely to solve this conflict.

Steven J. Klein (2021, p. 51) came up with a few proposals that can serve both the interests of the central government in Baku and the future residents of Nagorno-Karabakh. A more beneficial and rational arrangement among them would be to provide local governments additional rights than those granted by Chapter VIII, Article 144 of the Republic of Azerbaijan's Constitution. Judicial powers for exclusively local matters, administrative services, health care, education, and policing might be enhanced. In addition, returning ethnic Azerbaijanis would be represented proportionally (2021, p. 51). However, he believes that it will probably require a lot

of attempts to earn the trust of the local Armenians, and if not theirs, perhaps at least the Russians, so that they can sell the notion to the Karabakh Armenians convincingly (2021, p. 53).

R. Huseynov, like the other responders, views power-sharing as quite problematic. The researcher notes that back in the 1990s, three settlement packages were put forward to find common ground for the conflict (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). Namely, Karabakh had to become a part of Azerbaijan, and as a result, Azerbaijan became a confederation, allowing them power-sharing, which both parties eventually refused. He used the example of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which some describe as a dysfunctional state in which two subjects or entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, were intended to exist with both possessing veto powers. He claimed that it was also the plan of Vladimir Putin to federalize Ukraine (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). He wanted to reintegrate Donbas and Luhansk while providing them veto rights. Still, Ukraine did not accept it, considering it a bomb placed under the very foundation of their statehood. Following this experience, we may conclude that if Azerbaijan became a confederation state, it would have a dysfunctional structure since the Armenian population in NK would undoubtedly sabotage or impede nationwide choices and policies within that confederation, given all of the animosity between the two nations. This may be one of the rational justifications for eliminating power-sharing from our peace-making resolutions.

Applying the Bosnian example in the case of Karabakh, this would mean that the Karabakh Azeris would be able to return home, and their ties with the Karabakh Armenians would be based on power-sharing agreements. In this instance, power-sharing demands developing a similar power-sharing arrangement between the Armenian and Azeri communities of Karabakh, as well as the Armenian authorities in Karabakh and the Azerbaijani government. As a result, the Armenian and Azerbaijani parties' ambitions to obtain more power and influence in Nagorno-Karabakh would meet in the middle and cause a deadlock. Namely, retaining severe consociationalism on the edge of partition would involve retaliatory division of Azeri populated lands, which the Karabakh Armenians would not be interested in. Likewise, the Azerbaijani authorities would be uninterested in highly integrative measures bordering on majority control since this would jeopardize the Karabakh Azeri minority's status in Nagorno-Karabakh. A

balanced combination of consociational and integrative aspects of power-sharing would be the only way to properly apply this form of conflict resolution, which appears unreal due to tremendous mistrust and shifted balance of power between conflicting parties. In addition, because the Armenian population of NK is so small, and the Armenian side's leveraging power is so minimal, power-sharing may be unlikely (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022).

Another case scenario offered by G. J. Libaridian during the interview might allow us to explore a different type of power-sharing arrangement in the NK conflict. Cyprus had a Greek president and a Turkish vice-president prior to the Turkish invasion in 1974. Turkish and Greek Cypriots were given a certain number of seats in the parliament. As a result, in some areas, those communities had the authority to make their own decisions. If we apply this paradigm to the issue of NK, as he stated, we must determine what the Karabakh government can and cannot do, as well as the powers of the federal and local administrations (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, 15 March, 2022). This peace arrangement, however, collapsed after three years because of the Greek Cypriots` unwillingness to share the power with the minority Turkish Cypriots. Most Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, felt exposed and began to defend their constitutional rights. (Yakinthou, 2009). The lack of an 'overarching identity' in Cyprus, as claimed, was one of the critical constraints to preserving power-sharing when it became a problem in 1960. It is critical, however, not to replay the power-sharing failures of the Cyprus and Bosnia and Herzegovina scenarios. The fact that these power-sharing systems did not provide adequate incentives for warring ethnic groups to participate in shared governance institutions was a recurring criticism. The political elites were able to successfully separate themselves from common entities, whose skills and decision-making were relatively limited. Instead, they concentrated on decision-making in their own entities, where they had a significant degree of autonomy. As a result, these power-sharing mechanisms rapidly grew unsustainable and dysfunctional (Cox, 2001).

In conclusion, this section began by presenting the interview results and analyzing a bunch of research bodies on the practicality of power-sharing in the NK conflict after the war. All of the individuals from different think tanks all over the world during the interview process had the same way of approaching and responding to the question asked for this section. Only

Zaur Shiriyev, among others, specified limited power-sharing as a possible solution offered to NK Armenians. They did not think power-sharing would be a rational and sustainable arrangement to resolve the issue. Remembering their justifications, simply put, all of the enmity and the lack of trust between the two nations, consolidated and hegemonic authoritarian attitudes of the Azerbaijani government, small amount Armenians remaining in NK, and specifically studies of the power-sharing failures of Cyprus and Bosnia and Herzegovina scenarios have seemingly weakened the likelihood of power-sharing to resolve the conflict considering the interests of all parties.

5.5.3 Partition - a Blessing for NK and a Curse for Azerbaijan

When conflicting ethnicities strive to mobilize inside a single international boundary, and especially when violence erupts, the topic of partition emerges. Nevertheless, it is difficult to draw a new line to divide people if that line would leave a disgruntled and likely frightened minority on one or both sides. While proponents of partition theory say that demographic and territorial division resolve civil war, opponents contend that partitions only swap international for internal conflict and that ethnic conflict can still occur inside successor governments' borders (Licklider 1995; Byman 1997). To back up the criticisms, there appear to be multiple examples of conflicts after partitions: Following Yugoslavia's disintegration in 1991, Croatia fought a second war with Serbia. In 1992, Somaliland's split disintegrated due to a fresh round of conflict. Following their partition in 1947, India and Pakistan have fought three wars. After being successfully partitioned into militarily defensible, self-administered areas between 1963 and 1967, Cyprus was in conflict again in 1974. As we can see, there are several historical facts that suggest that a partition might result in a new conflict arising from rising tensions. On the other hand, as a proponent of using the partition, Kaufmann highlights that partitioning intermixed ethnic communities can reduce the severity of the security challenge (Kaufmann, 1996). He also contends that partition is frequently the only realistic solution to ethnic conflicts, arguing that the experience of severe violence during the war may strengthen ethnic identities and intensify hatred between communities to the point where coexistence in a single state becomes unsustainable (Kaufmann, 1996).

Drawing on rationalist insights, the likelihood of a partition bringing peace to the NK situation will be explored next. It was essentially what the West considered as an option in 2001, which Azerbaijan ultimately rejected due to possible territorial losses (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). If both sides had security equilibrium or 50/50 power relations, partition would be feasible. However, as De Waal highlighted, given Azerbaijan's dominance, it is unlikely to be enforced during the negotiations (De Waal, Thomas, Interview, 09 May 2022). According to Shahnazarian, partition would benefit Armenians and the Armenian community in NK, but this does not appear to be possible based on Ilham Aliyev's statements after the war (Shahnazarian, Nona. Interview, 13 March, 2022). Libaridian brought up a similar point of view. He alleged that after winning the war, Ilham Aliyev had become increasingly demanding (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, 15 March, 2022). He must decide whether Azerbaijan wants to create peace or behave like a conqueror. If Aliyev wants peace and a decent neighborhood, he cannot be both, as he mentioned previously. Furthermore, Aliyev must also consider the fundamental interests of the defeated side, which will not be humiliated every day. When it comes to the practicality of division, the historian and diplomat, Libaridian believes it is unlikely since it would be unacceptable to Azerbaijan, which has been waiting for 30 years. Furthermore, Ilham Aliyev is just discussing the prospect of an ethnoreligious minority within the framework of extraterritorial principles where Armenians can have their churches and schools anywhere, they choose within Azerbaijan (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, 15 March, 2022). This is the model that Aliyev is pursuing. Additionally, Furthermore, Russia, Iran, and the rest of the world will not acknowledge or recognize the NK as a distinct entity. For the time being, we can see a de facto partitioned enclave in Nagorno-Karabakh, with a few areas set aside for the Armenian community, whose existence is dependent on Russia. The Armenian leaders of NK, in his opinion, have always been naïve and unrealistic about establishing an independent state since no one would allow it to them (Jirair Libaridian, Gerard. Interview, 15 March, 2022). In summary, Libaridian does not believe that any type of partition or independence is a viable option for resolving the dispute.

Commenting on the practicality of partition, Makili-Aliyev asserted that this is not a viable option and does not create opportunities in the path of development for cooperation between conflicting sides (Makili-Aliyev, Kamal. Interview, 17 March 2022). NK is an enclave

entity, and therefore it is not easy to exist as a state inside Azerbaijan or for Armenia outside of Armenia. Most importantly, Azerbaijan`s internationally recognized territorial sovereignty will be ignored.

The majority of respondents from the poll conducted in Armenia feel that recognition of NK's independence (35%) or joining Armenia (34%), respectively, is the best solution to the Karabakh conflict (IRI, 2021). Yet, for partition to work, the fighting ethnic groups must be demographically separated. Because of the post-war ethnic security dilemma, leaving a sizable stay-behind minority will undoubtedly raise the danger of violence. For example, the results of the public poll in Azerbaijan show that 81 % of the participants would never accept Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent country (IRI, Armenia, 2021). This was done prior to the war, and if we consider Azerbaijan to be the winner after the second war, we might conclude that Azerbaijan would never accept partition as a right for NK. Regarding these public opinions from both countries, even if peace is accomplished by a negotiated partition, the lack of credible commitments will be a big concern.

While assessing the possibility of partition to bring the peace, Huseynov said: "Right now, we do not have effective control of our territories where Russian troops have been deployed. I do not know if it can be a workable model" (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). He further remarked that if the country is partitioned, NK will be given a tiny piece of territory surrounded by Azerbaijan. As a result, considering all the resources needed, such as heating gas, internet, and water, they will be dependent on Azerbaijan. However, psychologically and politically speaking, neither the government nor the big bulk of the population will accept it. Even if they both accepted this situation, that Armenian entity would still not be self-sustainable, questioning their survival as a small piece alone inside Azerbaijan (Huseynov, Rusif. Interview, 12 March 2022). Shiriyev likewise stated that partition plans were among the possibilities at the end of the 1990s. However, the partition is territorially and administratively out of the table regarding the post-war environment and realities (Shiriyev, Zaur. Interview, 4 May 2022). In brief, Huseynov and Shiriyev, like other specialists I spoke with during my interview, do not believe the likelihood of partition to resolve the conflict considering the interests of all parties.

The last interview finding covered in this study will be L. Broers's perspective on the partition for our case study. He claims that the Russian peacekeeping mission has already partitioned Karabakh today, which runs opposite the entire architecture of Azerbaijanis' arguments and concerns in this conflict (Broers, Laurence. Interview, 4 March, 2022). Broers believes that partition will always leave the aspiration and ambition for reunifying a single Karabakh as a political agenda under one political roof across the conflict divide. In the end, he added: "Over the long term, I do not see partition as being empirically and strategically viable in terms of the security setup. And it would leave this reunification agenda as a new access of conflict." (Broers, Laurence. Interview, 4 March, 2022).

These findings provide compelling evidence against partition theory. First of all, the internationally accepted territorial sovereignty of Azerbaijan will be disregarded. It will surely be unacceptable to Azerbaijan and the rest of the world, who refuse to recognize the NK as a separate country. Second, Azerbaijan's triumph in this conflict has given rise to another rationale to call off partition from our peace arrangement mechanisms. Ilham Aliyev, in particular, has had a strong and radical voice since the second conflict, which appears to oppose this form of my resolution. Simply put, I discovered that partition is not an effective and empirically feasible solution for sustainable peace in Karabakh and may potentially, in the long term, feed new hostilities.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, the research findings of this thesis, especially interview results, indicate that based on a rational perspective and analyzing the costs and benefits of peace, all conflicting and third parties will gain from the negotiated peace settlement. We can conclude that regional identity or regional ideas should be pursued. On the other hand, rather than relying on other countries, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the Armenian community of NK must solve their problems on their own, without the assistance of mediators. This claim was echoed by the majority of the interviewees. According to the findings of my research, when it comes to finding peace in the short term, it will undoubtedly be contingent on the parties' ability since there is no final answer as to whether peace can be achieved in the short term. Currently, no dialogue for peace is possible due to a lack of confidence. That is why it would take longer than five years, although it may be obtained in five years or less, depending on the conditions of peace and the parties' will.

Even though Baku and Yerevan start the process of reaching a consensus, this will take time. In the meantime, the best course of action may be to keep looking for common ground where it is most likely to be found on topics of mutual economic interest and then discuss the status of NK and other political concerns when opportunities arise. Both parties in the conflict should start by delimitating and demarcating state borders and then acknowledge each other's territorial integrity, which includes determining the official state of NK. This strategy might help clear the way for the parties to de-escalate tensions and move forward with economic engagement. Even if it negotiates with Yerevan, Baku should attempt to alleviate fears about its intentions in Nagorno-Karabakh by publicly outlining its vision for the future of Armenians there and making other efforts to develop confidence with that population. Ilham Aliyev should clarify his intentions and plans for guaranteeing ethnic Armenians' security, protection, and access to basic requirements. In other words, any such rhetoric from a leader that may escalate tensions should be avoided, and both sides should begin taking actions inside their own countries to lessen adversarial relations between their citizens and the opposing nation.

Regarding the feasibility of conflict management tools, the research findings of this thesis raise the possibility that it would be quite challenging to predict how well they would fit in the case of NK dispute following the new realities after the second war. Namely, the refusal of the Azerbaijani side to make sacrifices that are acceptable to the Armenian side and vice versa makes the negotiating process difficult. Especially, Ilham Aliyev`s extreme statements stemming from the victory of Azerbaijan in this dispute have given birth to yet another reason to reconsider the possibility of my peace arrangement mechanisms to solve the issue. Simply put, all of the antagonism, lack of trust between the two nations, the Azerbaijani government's consolidated and hegemonic authoritarian attitudes, the small number of Armenians remaining in NK, and historical studies of the power-sharing, partition, and territorial autonomy` failures in specific scenarios have appeared to weaken the likelihood of those peace-making strategies to resolve the conflict in the interests of all parties. In conclusion, the result of my thesis shows that none of the proposed conflict resolution models would satisfy the conflict parties in a situation of clear victory of one of them ("the winner takes all"). Furthermore, putting pressure on the loser side and hence enforcing concessions would establish peace that may be difficult to keep. All in all, from rationalist perspectives, signing a peace agreement between Baku and Yerevan will bring peace to the Caucasus, boost regional cooperation, and restore the economic relationship between neighbors.

Despite these encouraging results of my thesis, there is still plenty of room for further progress on this topic for future research bodies. In future research, it may be helpful to examine alternative case studies with similar aspects of the NK conflict to see how those governments were able to reach an agreement or at least reduce the degree of tension and animosity. Future research on the subject is thus encouraged.

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List of Appendices to the Thesis

The questions included in the interview:

1.   Through peaceful negotiation, how likely is it to solve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict within the next five years?

2.   What kind of actions should both countries undertake to fix Baku-Yerevan relations?

3.   How did the Second Karabakh war and its consequences change the negotiation process for both countries?

4.   What is the role of Russia and Turkey in the Caucasus, and how does it affect the recent conflict?

5.   What could be the benefits and detriments of possible peace in this conflict for Armenia?

6.   What could be the benefits and detriments of possible peace in this conflict for Azerbaijan?

7.   What could be the benefits and detriments of possible peace in this conflict for NK?

8.   What is the likelihood of power-sharing to resolve the conflict considering the interests of all parties: NK, Azerbaijan, and Armenia?

9.   What is the likelihood of partition to resolve the conflict considering the interests of all parties: NK, Azerbaijan, and Armenia?

10.   What is the likelihood of territorial autonomy to resolve the conflict considering the interests of all parties: NK, Azerbaijan, and Armenia?

Summary of the subjects included in the interview process are in the following:

Name & Surname	Background
Nona Shahnazarian	Associate Researcher at The National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, Armenia and Center for Independent Social Research, St. Petersburg, Russia
Kamal Makili-Aliyev	Scholar/Analyst and an independent expert in international law, conflicts, security and defense. Associate professor at Malmö University, Sweden and affiliated researcher at Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law.
Gerard Libaridian	Historian, Diplomat, Former Deputy Foreign Minister of Republic of Armenia, Senior Adviser to the former President of Armenia, Negotiator, Director of Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan
Laurence Broers	Caucasus programme director at London-based peacebuilding organization Conciliation Resources, Research Associate at the Centre of Contemporary Central Asia & the Caucasus, School of Oriental and African Studies
Rusif Huseynov	Researcher, Political expert, Co-founder and Director of the Topchubashov Research Center, as well as co-founder and editor-in-chief of The Politicon online political magazine
Zaur Shiriyev	Crisis Group's Analyst for South Caucasus, An Academy Associate at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in London, Leading research fellow at the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2009–14)
Thomas de Waal	A British journalist, A senior associate with Carnegie Europe, specializing in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region, The author of several books on the Caucasus, including "The Caucasus: An Introduction" and "Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War."