

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF TRACK TWO INITIATIVES ON THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH PEACE PROCESS

Despite the twenty-year-long OSCE Minsk Group's mediation efforts concerning the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, so far no tangible results have been achieved in the official negotiation process. Meanwhile, various local and international actors have also undertaken a number of non-official (Track Two) initiatives with regard to this conflict. This article explores these Track Two diplomacy initiatives and assesses their impact on the overall peace process. The analysis suggests that there may not be any progress towards a peaceful, negotiated solution unless the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies, divided by Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, have a clear vision of a common future. As a driving force, this vision will assist in building trust and bring the parties to more compatible positions through interaction in both official and non-official arenas.

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The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is the first and longest-running conflict in the territory of the former Soviet Union. It broke out in 1988, before the disintegration of USSR, as a result of the policies of “*glasnost*” and “*perestroika*”. Originally having sought unification with Armenia, the Armenians of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region started to demand the right of self-determination and secession from Azerbaijan after both Azerbaijan and Armenia gained independence in 1991.

As a result of the escalation of this armed conflict and undeclared war, Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts (Lachin, Kelbajar, Agdam, Jabrayil, Fizuly, Gubadly and Zangilan) were seized by Armenian armed forces. Both the entire population of these seven regions and Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh were expelled from their homes in 1992-93.

This ethno-territorial conflict led to a number of severe consequences including population exchange between Armenia and Azerbaijan, serious damage to material and cultural resources in the territory of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region and the seven adjacent occupied Azerbaijani districts, and an absence of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia, as well as between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The conflict remains a serious obstacle not only for the internal stability and external security of Azerbaijan, but also for peace and development of the entire Southern Caucasus region and for the region’s integration into the wider world.

Currently the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) is integrated into Armenia and relies heavily on financial and political support from both Yerevan and the Armenian diaspora. At the same time Armenia itself is dependent on NKR in many ways, reflected in the fact that the Armenian elite, including the latest two presidents, are from this region by origin. Victory against Azerbaijan is said to have given the leaders of Karabakh a prestigious position in Armenian society.¹ Unlike the first president of Armenia Levon Ter Petrosyan, who deemed it in Yerevan’s long-term interests to reach a compromise with Azerbaijan over Karabakh, Presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargisyan “seemed to determine the national interest of Armenia based on their understanding of the interests of Karabakh.”²

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group has taken the lead in mediating this conflict since March 1992 and the current cease-fire agreement was reached in May 1994. However, 18 years of official negotiations (Track One) have not yet produced any tangible results. At the same time, various

1 Amanda Akcakoca and Dennis Sammut, “Karabakh: The Quest for Peace,” *LINKS Briefing Paper* (December 2009), pp. 5-6.

2 Svante E. Cornell, *Azerbaijan since Independence* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), p. 138.

local and international actors have undertaken a number of non-official (Track Two) diplomacy efforts.

This analysis aims to evaluate the role of Track Two diplomacy initiatives and their impact on the overall Nagorno-Karabakh peace process. Relying on theory, the first part of this article explores the interplay of official (Track One) and unofficial (Track Two) diplomacy efforts. The second part provides

a brief overview of numerous Track Two diplomacy initiatives that have been undertaken to date, and assesses their impact on the overall Nagorno-Karabakh peace process.

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Two Track Diplomacy: From Theory to Practice

The term “Two Track diplomacy” was introduced for the first time by Joseph Montville, who distinguished two tracks in resolving conflicts.³ He explains Track One as encompassing “traditional policy statements by the president and secretary of state for example, or official visits and meetings.”⁴ In other words, this is the official government-to-government level of interaction. On the other hand, Track Two diplomacy is unofficial and non-structured, built on the assumption that “actual or potential conflict can be resolved or eased by appealing to common human capabilities to respond to good will and reasonableness.”⁵

Later, Louise Diamond coined the phrase “multi-track diplomacy,” recognizing that lumping all Track Two activities under one label did not capture the complexity or breadth of unofficial diplomacy.⁶ Thanks to the efforts of Ambassador John McDonald and Louise Diamond, the concept of multi-track diplomacy was further developed and a united system of interlinked, and non-independent tracks were introduced: government, professional conflict resolution, business, private citizen, research, training and education, activism, religion, funding, and media or public opinion.⁷

3 William D. Davidson and Joseph V. Montville, “Foreign Policy according to Freud,” *Foreign Policy*, No.45 (Winter 1981-82), pp. 145-157.

4 Davidson and Montville (1981-82), p. 154.

5 Davidson and Montville (1981-82), p. 155.

6 James Notter and Louise Diamond, “Building Peace and Transforming Conflict: Multi-Track Diplomacy in Practice,” *Occasional Papers*, No.7 (October 1996), p. 5.

7 Louise Diamond and John W. McDonald, *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace* (Kumarian Press, 1996).

Today, Track Two or citizen's diplomacy is used as a broadly defined term, uniting unofficial efforts of the actors of the above-mentioned eight tracks such as conflict resolution professionals, representatives of media and non-governmental organizations, private citizens, religious leaders, etc. These are considered a vital complement to the Track One diplomacy efforts, due to the fact that "a signed peace treaty does not create peace, it only creates a basis for peace, or a legal infrastructure to support peace. Without the corresponding societal infrastructure to support it, the peace will never hold."⁸

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However, in practice the relationship between the two tracks has never been easy. On the one hand, Track Two actors "do not want to feel pressured or unduly constrained because they are exploring a policy that Track One opposes."⁹ Track One actors, "on the other hand, like to remain informed of citizen action." Furthermore, "Track Two facilitators must recognize that if their initiative is successful, they will probably have to merge with Track One eventually,"¹⁰ because "governments are ultimately responsible for negotiating, signing, and

ratifying treaties and other formal documents that may be needed to seal a successful Track Two initiative."¹¹

Thus, if certain issues like negotiating a ceasefire, peace accords, or any other binding agreements can be achieved only through Track One diplomacy efforts, other issues such as improving communication channels, promoting a culture of peace, and building trust and reconciliation can be implemented through Track Two diplomacy efforts.

Track One and Track Two initiatives are usually implemented by the joint efforts of local and international actors. The latter usually act as third parties (or mediators) in both formal and informal mediation.

Generally those who mediate conflicts between officials of other states can be a government representative or a high level decision maker in an individual capacity (such

8 James Notter and Louise Diamond (October 1996), p. 5.

9 John McDonald, "Guidelines for Newcomers to Track Two diplomacy," *Occasional Papers*, No.2 (November 1993), p. 9.

10 McDonald (1993), p. 9.

11 McDonald (1993), p. 9.

as the case of Richard Holbrooke in Bosnia), or representatives of small and large states (e.g. Algeria, Switzerland, Austria, and the U.S.), or institutions and organizations (e.g. United Nations, OSCE etc.).¹²

The international actors who are involved in the Track Two mediation efforts “have a long-standing experience of, and a deep commitment to international conflict resolution (e.g. the Quakers).” Furthermore, they approach a conflict as private citizens in their personal capacities, utilizing “their academic competence, credibility and experience to facilitate communications, gain a better understanding of the conflict, and work toward its resolution.”¹³ They organize interactive problem-solving workshops, which use an “unofficial academically based third-party approach to the analysis and resolution of international and ethnic conflict anchored in social-psychological principles.”¹⁴ Bringing together “politically influential members of conflicting parties in a private, confidential setting for direct, and non-binding communication” in problem-solving workshops, aiming to “generate new ideas for mutually satisfactory solutions to their conflict.”¹⁵ At the same time, these meetings organized under the framework of Track Two initiatives are not intended either to simulate or to substitute for official negotiations, but if successful, they can introduce new ideas into official negotiations.

Thus, experience with Track Two initiatives shows that the impact of problem-solving workshops, which include “examining assumptions, establishing a working trust, building coalitions across conflict lines, and seeking solutions that meet the needs of the other community as well as one’s own” are useful both before negotiations begin and when they are proceeding.¹⁶

In this respect, the Dartmouth Conferences on peace process, another type of unofficial citizen’s interaction, are no exception. Starting at Dartmouth College in the U.S. in October 1960, these conferences functioned as one of the longest bilateral unofficial channel of communications between the American and Soviet governments. Bringing together leading political experts, researchers, intellectuals, etc. from the U.S. and the USSR in their strictly personal capacity, these conferences aimed at improving bilateral relations between the two superpowers, and were kept off the record to create a safe environment.

12 Jacob Bercovitch, “Mediation in International Conflict,” in William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen (eds.), *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods & Technique* (Washington D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), pp. 141-3.

13 Bercovitch (1997), p. 140.

14 Herbert C. Kelman, “The Interactive Problem-Solving Approach,” in Chester A. Crocker and Fen O. Hampson and Pamela Aall (eds.), *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* (Washington D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), p. 501.

15 Kelman (1997), p. 501.

16 Eileen F. Babbit and Tamra Pearson D’Estree, “An Israeli-Palestinian Women’s Workshop: Application of the Interactive Problem-Solving Approach,” in Crocker and Hampson and Aall (1997), p. 526.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the Dartmouth Conferences have taken place on a smaller scale. Members of the Regional Conflicts Task Force (RCTF), established in 1981, concentrated their work in three directions: i) conceptualizing the process of dialogue they had learned; ii) applying that process to one of the conflicts that had broken out in the territory of the former Soviet Union; and iii) focusing on the new Russia-U.S. relationship.¹⁷

Track Two Diplomacy Initiatives, a Brief Overview

Different international organizations, NGOs, and private foundations have implemented various Track Two initiatives in regard to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh since 1992. Some of these projects were sporadic and aimed at short-term results, while others were extended several times seeking long-term outcomes. Occasionally they included not only the parties involved in this particular conflict but also representatives of a broader regional context such as the South Caucasus or the Black Sea region.

Despite being a neutral and independent international organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is not directly involved in Track Two initiatives; however, it is working closely on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Its permanent delegations in Azerbaijan and Armenia and its mission in Nagorno-Karabakh have been operating since 1992. Aimed at providing assistance for and improving the protection of people directly affected by the conflict, the ICRC has for 20 years, facilitated the handover of several hundred prisoners of war (POWs), detainees held for conflict-related or security reasons, internees and mortal remains, as well as missing persons at the request of both the Azerbaijani and Armenian authorities. According to the Head of the ICRC delegation in Azerbaijan, “to date, ICRC has registered more than 4,600 persons gone missing in connection with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; 3,753 of them are for Azerbaijan.”¹⁸

ICRC delegations in Azerbaijan and Armenia have been implementing different projects together with representatives of government institutions and NGOs. The State Commissions on POWs, hostages, and missing persons of both countries, as well as The Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society, Armenian Red Cross Society, along with other Azerbaijani and Armenian NGOs are the main counterparts of the ICRC.

Upholding the principles of pluralism, peaceful coexistence, and civic participation, The Helsinki Citizens Assembly Network (HCA) was established in early the 1990s in

¹⁷ Gilmore and Dallas (2010), p. 40.

¹⁸ “Interview with the Head of the ICRC Delegation in Azerbaijan,” *APA*, 25 May 2012, <http://en.apa.az/news.php?id=172482>

Prague by some 1,000 representatives of NGOs, and has offices in the Balkans, Europe, and the Caucasus, all of which work together over a wide coordination network.¹⁹ Since 1992, offices of this network in Azerbaijan and Armenia have implemented a number of different Track Two activities. The foundation for this was laid by two remarkable women, Azerbaijani Arzu Abdullayeva and Armenian Anahit Bayandur, who visited each other's countries in 1992 at the height of the war and called for the end of combat operations.²⁰ Subsequently, they became in charge of the

Azerbaijani and Armenian National Committees of HCA, eventually being awarded the Olaf Palme International Peace Prize in 1993, in recognition of their efforts to break down enemy images and initiate peace dialogues.

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One of their first joint initiatives of the Azerbaijani and Armenian Committees of NCA after the ceasefire agreement was to hold two meetings on the border with the participation of NGO's that work on women's issues and members of youth groups in the Ijevan region of Armenia and Qazakh region of Azerbaijan in 1994. The Public Council for Peace Settlement of Karabakh Conflict, as well as the Independent Civil Minsk Process (ICMP) are among the latest initiatives developed by Azerbaijani Committee HCA as well as the South Caucasus network of the HCA, respectively. Several activities such as organizing study visits to other conflict regions, supporting peace-building and confidence building activities etc. have also been implemented within the Independent Civil Minsk Process (ICMP). For example, in June 2010, a study visit to the Åland Islands in Finland was organized by the HCA in partnership with the Åland Island Peace Institute and with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. Representatives of civil societies from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh visited the islands and familiarized themselves with the Åland experience.²¹

To date, the two National Committees of HCA have organized various activities such as exchange of prisoners of war, organization of meetings, conferences, trips, and

¹⁹ Helsinki Citizens Assembly website, <http://www.hydr.org.tr/?pid=180>

²⁰ Helsinki Citizens Assembly Azerbaijan National Committee's (HCA-ANC) website, http://hca-anc.org/en/?page_id=6, Arzu Abdullayeva, "Valedictory to Anahit Bayandur," 24 January 2011, <http://www.reseau-ipam.org/spip.php?article2281>

²¹ "Civil societies of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the conflict region of Nagorno-Karabakh met in Åland Islands," HCA-ANC, 9 June 2010, <http://hca-anc.org/en/?p=492>

“Advocating for the full participation of women in formal and informal peace processes around the world, The Women Waging Peace Network unites well over 1,000 women leaders from 40 conflict areas around the world.”

1,000 women leaders from 40 conflict areas around the world, ranging from Sudan to Sri Lanka, Colombia to Bosnia, and the Middle East to Azerbaijan and Armenia.²³ However, only 100 women leaders from ten conflict areas (Azerbaijan and Armenia, Boston’s urban neighborhoods, Colombia, Cyprus, India and Pakistan, Israeli and Palestine, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Sudan, and the post-Yugoslav region) participated in the official launch of this global initiative within the framework of the first two-week Women Waging Peace *colloquium* held at Harvard University in December 1999, with 11 women taking part from Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Transcaucasus Women’s Dialogue, established in 1994 under the aegis of the National Peace Foundation in Washington D.C., and a program entitled Working Together: Networking Women in the Caucasus (1997 – 2002), sponsored by the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe (IDEE), are other remarkable examples of women’s NGOs’ collaborative Track Two efforts in the South Caucasus.²⁴

It should be also underlined that three consecutive seminars were held in Bakuriani (Georgia), Tsaghkadzor (Armenia), and Baku (Azerbaijan) in February, May, and June 2000, respectively, sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and organized by the Academy for Educational Development (AED). Bringing together in each event a total of 60 women leaders from civil society organizations (around 20 women from each country), these seminars aimed at strengthening

²² HCA-ANC website, http://hca-anc.org/en/?page_id=6

²³ The Institute for Inclusive Security’s website, http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/82_women_waging_peace_network.cfm

²⁴ Avaz Hasanov and Armine Ishkanian, “Bridging Divides: Civil Society Peacebuilding Initiatives,” in Laurence Broers (ed.), *Accord: The Limits of Leadership, Elites and Societies in the Nagorny Karabakh Peace Process* (London: Conciliation Resources, 2005), <http://www.c-r.org/accord-article/bridging-divides-civil-society-peacebuilding-initiatives>

youth camps, while their members actively participate in various peace dialogues and networks. For example, Arzu Abdullayeva was chosen in May 1999 as a local partner of Women Waging Peace, a global initiative of the Women and Public Policy Program of Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, and Hunt Alternatives in Boston.²²

Advocating for the full participation of women in formal and informal peace processes around the world, The Women Waging Peace Network unites well over

relevant skills, improving networking, promoting information exchange, and facilitating regional cooperation among participants.

Furthermore, the role of women in peace-building was actively promoted by UNIFEM's Regional Project Women for Conflict Prevention and Peace-building in the Southern Caucasus, which is implemented for over almost six years (2001-06). Based in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, and targeting the three conflicts in the region, this project mainly focused on mobilizing the women's movement and youth in these countries about the concepts of peace and conflict resolution. National coalitions and networks in each country –the Peace Coalition in Armenia, Coalition 1325 and the National Network of IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) Women in Azerbaijan, and the Unity of Women for Peace Network in Georgia, as well as the Regional Coalition “Women for Peace”– were established by the support of UNIFEM.

Working through the “women for peace” networks and coalitions, UNIFEM has supported the joint creation –across conflict zones– of core knowledge products on gender, peace-building, and non-violent conflict resolution. Using a “people to people” strategy, these tools have been developed through regional cooperation by civil society. For example, in 2006, the Regional Coalition developed a training manual on “Gender and Peace Education” to be used by organizations who are working with youth in the three countries and beyond.

Numerous Track Two diplomacy initiatives targeting Armenian and Azerbaijani media representatives were organized by various international organizations and NGOs. For example, the Caucasus Media Support Project (CMSP),²⁵ implemented in 1997–2000 and funded by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, was designed “to facilitate travels to the other side of the conflict for journalists and provide media with a positive role, proving that exchange, contacts and dialogue were not only possible, but also a way by which to deal with different problems.”²⁶ Within the framework of this project, a group of Azerbaijani journalists visited Armenia in 1997 and Nagorno-Karabakh in 1998 for the first time since the conflict began. Subsequently, Armenian journalists visited Azerbaijan in 1999.

People to people diplomacy efforts were also realized with the participation of representatives of governments and civil societies from Armenia and Azerbaijan. The first such visit was organized on 28 July 2007, at the initiative of the Azerbaijani and Armenian ambassadors in Russia Polad Bülbüloğlu and Armen Smbatian, respectively. Azerbaijani intellectuals led by Polad Bülbüloğlu visited Nagorno-Karabakh and Yerevan, while Armenian intellectuals led by Armen Smbatian visited Nagorno-

²⁵ *Caucasus Media Support Project (CMSP) website*, <http://www.cimera.org/en/projects/cmsp.htm>

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Karabakh and Baku. During these visits both delegations met the President of Armenia Robert Kocharian, and the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. The next visit was held in July 2009. Before the visit to Baku, the participants from both countries visited Nagorno-Karabakh, Yerevan, and Baku where they were received by the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan and by the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.

Religious leaders from Armenia and Azerbaijan have also contributed to people-to-people diplomacy efforts. In April 2010, Garegin II, the *Catholicos* of All Armenians, visited Azerbaijan to attend a meeting of world religious leaders at the invitation of the Grand Mufti of the Caucasus, Sheikh-ul-Islam Haji Allahshükür Pashazade and the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill. During his trip he also met with President Ilham Aliyev and “prayed at what was once the central church and place of worship for Baku’s former Armenian community.”²⁷ In November 2011, Pashazade paid an official visit to Armenia to attend the meeting of the CIS Inter-Religious Council at the invitation of Garegin II. During this visit he also met with Serzh Sargsyan.

A number of initiatives, related to the creation of public peace processes as well as innovative dialogue programs aimed to engage in a constructive dialogue among representatives of different strata of Armenian and Azerbaijani societies, have also been implemented by different international and local NGOs, universities, and think tanks during these twenty years. However this paper is covering just some of them.

*The Armenia - Azerbaijan Initiative: The Ben Lomond Peace Process (1993-98)*²⁸

Four dialogues have been sponsored by the Foundation for Global Community in Palo Alto, California (Foundation) and the Stanford Center on Conflict and Negotiation at Stanford University (SCCN) in 1993-98. Lasting approximately a week, these dialogues were the first attempt to introduce problem-solving workshops on the basis of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Bringing conflicting parties together for such talks, which have been supported by the respective governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as the U.S. embassies in both countries, the organizers aimed at an initiation of the non-governmental public peace process. Due to the fact that the first two dialogues were convened at the foundation’s seminar site among the redwoods of Ben Lomond in California, this process is sometimes called “The Ben Lomond Peace Process.”

27 Laurence Broers, “Opening Borders, Preserving Walls: Opportunities to Support the Karabakh Peace Process,” *Journal of Conflict Transformation: Caucasus Edition* (June 2010), <http://caucasusedition.net/analysis/opening-borders-preserving-walls-opportunities-to-support-the-karabakh-peace-process/>

28 *Building a Common Future: The Armenia-Azerbaijan Initiative website*, <http://traubman.igc.org/aai.htm>

The first dialogue was held with eleven Azerbaijanis and Armenians in September 1993 by the Foundation and SCCN, with the support of the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia and International Alert in London. A year later, the second dialogue was convened with an expanded team of participants, including Azerbaijani IDPs from Nagorno-Karabakh. These two dialogues were facilitated by Dr. Harold Saunders, Director of International Programs at the Kettering Foundation and former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, who was also engaged in negotiating the Camp David accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

“One of the important preconditions of the resolution to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is creating an environment in which both societies will have a clear vision of a common future and be prepared to move forward to peaceful coexistence.”

The third and fourth dialogues were held in Tbilisi, Georgia in September 1996 and June 1998, facilitated by Craig Barnes and Samantha Schoenfeld of the Foundation for Global Community. At the end of these dialogues, several practical projects were developed. One of these projects was entitled as the Joint Women institute for Women’s leadership and Political Studies, later supported by Soros Foundation and the U.S. Embassy.²⁹ On the basis of this project, in 2000 the Women’s Problems Research Union was established in Azerbaijan as a women’s NGO.

*Partners in Conflict: Building Bridges to Peace in Transcaucasia
(August - December 1995)*

On 15 August 1995, the Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM) at the University of Maryland at College Park (U.S.) launched an interesting project entitled “Partners in Conflict: Building Bridges to Peace in Transcaucasia.” It aimed to bring together eight professionals from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to CIDCM for a period of four months to examine theories of regional conflict management. This was to be done by attending lectures, participating in problem-solving workshops, and meetings with members of NGOs, relevant government agencies, and decision-makers located in Washington D.C.

As one of the most important goals of this project was to assist in the preparation of *curricula*, supplemented with materials from the *plethora* of conflict resolution

²⁹ HCA-ANC website, http://hca-anc.org/en/?page_id=6

centers in the Washington D.C. area, each partner, upon their return from the U.S., committed to begin teaching courses in conflict resolution in their home institutions. Two Armenians, two Azerbaijanis, two Georgians, one Abkhaz, and one South Ossetian successfully completed this program and returned to their home countries. Three follow-up workshops were held in Jerusalem, Israel (May 1996), in Åland Islands, Finland (August 1997) and in Istanbul, Turkey (September 1999) by the CIDCM together with their partners in those countries.

“It is important to work on reducing the sense of victimhood of the parties and humanizing the image of the adversary.”

One of the successful outcomes of this program was its participants' creation of several NGOs working in the field of conflict resolution in the South Caucasus countries, some of which are still fairly active. At the same time a publication of collected papers on the topic *Ethno-political Conflicts in the Transcaucasus: Their Roots and Solution* was published in Russian by the CIDCM, University of Maryland at College Park in 1997.

The Dialogue on Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh within the Framework of the Dartmouth Conference (2001-07)

The dialogue on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh within the framework of the Dartmouth Conference covered a total of 12 meetings over a six-year period. It was led by co-chairs of the Dartmouth Conference Dr. Harold Saunders from the U.S. and Dr. Vitaly Naumkin from Russia. Representatives of civil society, the IDP community from Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh participated in these meetings. At the 11th meeting held on 18-20 June 2006, “The Framework Agreement on a Peace Process in the region Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh” was elaborated on by the participants. It was submitted by the co-chairs of the Dartmouth Conference to the OSCE Minsk Group’s U.S., Russian, and French co-chairs.

The Consortium Initiative (2003-09)

Funded by the British government, the Consortium Initiative has been led since 2003, by the coalition of four international non-governmental organizations (Catholic Relief Service - CRS in the U.S., Conciliation Resources, International Alert, and London Information Network on Conflicts and State building (LINKS) in the UK). Each of

these organizations was involved in a specific area; for example, civil society was covered by International Alert, CRS worked in the area of coordination with international development organizations, LINKS facilitated the parliamentary work, and Conciliation Resources ran media cooperation.

Over the course of six years (2003-09), these organizations and their local partners in the region carried out a number of Track Two initiatives. They brought together youth, women, NGO leaders, experts, parliamentarians, and policymakers across the conflict divide and gave them the opportunity to interact and share their views on different topics. To a certain extent, this contributed to raising public awareness, building confidence, and mutual understanding.

The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (2010-11)

In 2010 a new project titled The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK) was founded, building upon previous work by The Consortium Initiative, and described as “a European civil society initiative which seeks to work with local partners in the South Caucasus on a wide range of programs and projects to positively impact the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process.”³⁰ The partnership composed of five organizations –the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) in Finland, the *Kvinna till Kvinna* Foundation in Sweden, International Alert, Conciliation Resources, and the LINKS in the UK– was established.

Funded by European Union, the EPNK project focused on three specific areas: media, public policy, and conflict-affected groups. During the first stage of the EPNK project (2010-11), a wide range of activities targeting different stakeholders were implemented. These ranged “from film-making and media work, to international exchanges on successes in peace-building, training, research, political dialogue and improving women’s participation in peace processes – and to further encourage and work with the engagement of the EU in pushing for a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.”³¹

The Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation (Imagine Center) is one of the new organizations, which is closely working with youth, conflict transformation professionals, and other groups of societies.³² Thanks to this organization, an independent

30 “The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: Progress and Prospects,” *EPNK*, 2011, p. 3, <http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/european-partnership-peaceful-settlement-conflict-over-nagorno-karabakh>

31 “The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, Progress and prospects,” *International Alert*, 31 October 2011, <http://www.international-alert.org/news/european-partnership-peaceful-settlement-conflict-over-nagorno-karabakh>

32 *Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation’s website*, <http://imagedialogue.com/>

online publication called *Caucasus Edition: Journal of Conflict Transformation* was founded, bringing together scholars and policy analysts to discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Teqali process³³ is another new initiative bringing together people from the three South Caucasus countries.

Conclusion

Although there is lack of popular belief in the validity of Track Two efforts and peace-building is received with controversy in both societies, it is arguable that sufficient Track Two initiatives related to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh have been implemented. However, this process has been fitful.

In recent years, the number and scope of visits by representatives of conflicting parties to Armenia and Azerbaijan have been limited in comparison with those in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This decline has taken place “amid negative media coverage of such visits and harassment and other repercussions for those participating in them.”³⁴ Lack of tangible results in the official negotiation process, as well as certain underestimation and occasional reluctance of the acknowledgment of the impact of Track Two initiatives—especially before any peace agreement has been signed by the Track One actors—are possible reasons for such attitude.

Today, however, a reassessment of the roles of both official and non-official tracks as well as coordination of their synchronization in Azerbaijan and Armenia is needed. Furthermore, special attention should be paid to the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities that are or were located in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. As they are the people most affected by this conflict, they deserve to be included in the shaping of their future. Bringing former neighbors, women, youth, and other groups together and facilitating such meetings could be very useful for developing personal relationships, understanding the conflict from the perspectives of others, and planning joint strategies for a solution.

One of the important preconditions of the resolution to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is creating an environment in which both societies will have a clear vision of a common future and be prepared to move forward to peaceful coexistence. Unfortunately, this currently appears unrealistic. Incompatible positions render developing a mutually satisfactory solution very difficult.

However, there can be no progress towards a peaceful, negotiated solution unless a minimum degree of trust is attained. This usually requires a significant amount of time

33 Tegali: Peace-building, Freedom and Cooperation Zone, <http://www.southcaucasus.com/index.php?p=teqali>

34 Broers (2010).

and effort. It is also important to work on reducing the sense of victimhood of the parties and humanizing the image of the adversary. Moreover, a vision of a common future that is clear and understandable for all parties involved must be formulated. If kept alive, this can be a powerful driving force for peace. Building trust and bringing the parties to more compatible positions can only be achieved through interaction between Track One and Track Two efforts.