Sebastian Relitz (Ed.)

PERSPECTIVES ON PEACEBUILDING FROM THE CAUCASUS IN TIMES OF GREAT UNCERTAINTY

CORRIDORS PROCEEDINGS VOL. III

CORRIDORS

DIALOGUE THROUGH COOPERATION

Sebastian Relitz (Ed.)

PERSPECTIVES ON PEACEBUILDING FROM THE CAUCASUS IN TIMES OF GREAT UNCERTAINTY

CORRIDORS PROCEEDINGS VOL. III

IMPRINT

PERSPECTIVES ON PEACEBUILDING FROM THE CAUCASUS IN TIMES OF GREAT UNCERTAINTY
CORRIDORS PROCEEDINGS VOL. III

CORRIDORS – Dialogue through Cooperation gUG
Reuterstraße 32
D – 12047 Berlin
www.opencorridors.de

Editor: Sebastian Relitz

Layout: Karen Blume
www.karen-blume.de

First published in Berlin 2021.
ISBN: 978-3-00-072600-2

TABLE OF CONTENT

SEBASTIAN RELITZ – INTRODUCTION

PERSPECTIVES ON PEACEBUILDING FROM THE CAUCASUS IN TIMES OF GREAT UNCERTAINTY

Promoting peace and constructive approaches to transform the protracted conflicts in the Caucasus has been a challenging endeavour for the last three decades. During this period, regrettably the territorial conflicts around Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorny Karabakh have been solidified as a normality, and the polarized division between neighbours and within societies have been institutionalized. In addition to this cementing of the conflictual status quo, however, a second reverse dynamic can also be identified. The emergence of new uncertainties. The second Karabakh war in the fall of 2020 already shook up the regional security order and led to a new volatile and dynamic situation on the ground. At the beginning of 2022, however, these volatilities increased considerably. The Russian war against Ukraine also has far-reaching consequences for the Caucasus. Although the regional fall-out differs considerably, the spring of 2022 in the Caucasus is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty. The war and the united and strong response of Western states affect its societies and their unresolved conflicts differently. Of course, due to the dynamic situation in Ukraine and the uncertain path of the war, these effects are far from clear and definite. However, we can already identify trends that could significantly impact the security situation, socio-political development, and opportunities for conflict transformation in the region.

The security situation is characterized by a wide range of insecurities. Although these feelings differ significantly from one society to another, they are closely intertwined. In the Georgian society, the events in Ukraine have fuelled deep-rooted fears of Russia. Many Georgians worry that the Russian leadership also has Georgia in the crosshairs of its aggressive policy. It is widely believed that if Russia succeeds in Ukraine, Georgia could quickly become the next target of Russian aggression, and painful memories of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 intensify this fear. Moreover, developments in Ukraine reinforce the dominant Georgian narrative that the conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia are solely conflicts between Georgia and Russia. While the leadership in Tskhinval/i is now repeatedly seeking integration into Russia, the situation in Abkhazia is viewed differently. The aspiration for independence and international recognition still prevails, but the current dynamic creates additional uncertainty. The withdrawal of substantial Russian military equipment and personnel from Abkhazia to support the faltering invasion of Ukraine is fuelling fears in Abkhazia. Many people worry that a significant weakening of Russia could

motivate Georgia to escalate the conflict militarily. Although such ambitions are in no way stated by the Georgian government, calls for violence on social media are feeding historically rooted fears and traumas from the Georgian-Abkhazian war in 1992/3. Similarly, the redeployment of Russian troops from Nagorno-Karabakh weakens the position of the Armenians and does not contribute in the short term to stabilizing the already highly volatile situation in and around the region. Instead, it increases the pressure on the Armenian side to make further concessions to the Azerbaijani leadership. In the medium and long term, the announced talks on demarcating borders may be necessary steps toward settling the conflict. Still, they will fuel new tensions in the short time, including intra-Armenian ones. Finally, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the strong and so far unified reactions of Western states in the form of sanctions against Russia and arms deliveries and financial support to Ukraine clearly show the dramatic escalation of the East-West conflict. This level of conflict is thus becoming much more dominant and can have further destabilizing effects.

Likewise, the socio-political and economic development in the region is affected significantly by the effects of the war. Tens of thousands of Russians leave their homeland to escape political persecution, social pressure, or the threat of military conscription or because they want to avoid the short- and long-term economic and social consequences of sanctions and repression. Armenia and Georgia are some of their priority targets, which is not without tension. Rents in the central districts of Yerevan and Tbilisi are rising exorbitantly, leading to distribution conflicts over affordable housing between locals and arrivals, including also people from Ukraine and Belarus. In Georgia, Russian and Belarusian arrivals are often viewed with suspicion and aversion, creating new lines of social tension. This is accompanied by a very cautious policy of the Georgian government toward Russia, which stands in stark contrast to the big solidarity toward Ukraine in much of the population. The result is a deepening of the domestic political crisis and extreme polarization of the political field. In Armenia, the government tries to exercise a policy of neutrality. Given the considerable dependency on Russia as a security provider, the public criticism is limited. The picture is similar in Azerbaijan, where President Aliyev declared Baku's support for Ukraine's territorial integrity during a visit to Kyiv in January while signing a treaty of alliance with President Putin just two days before the invasion. Also, Azerbaijan is dependent on Russia's support or at least approval in the Karabakh question. The dependencies on Russia are even more significant in Abkhazia. Consequently, the political leadership in Sukhum/i supports both Russian recognition of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics and military action. On the other hand, the public reactions are much more reserved. The massive use of force is met with disbelief and resistance and the negative consequences for Abkhazia are realized. Shortly

after the start of the invasion, Russian officials demanded that the region became less dependent on Russian financial support and announced that budgetary support would be cut drastically. In general, the close economic ties and dependencies on Russia generate new uncertainties for the entire South Caucasus in the current situation.

The war in Ukraine also affects the framework for civil society conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the South Caucasus because the conflicts over Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno Karabakh are all multi-level conflicts in which Russia is significantly involved. The conditions for international engagement with Abkhazia have already deteriorated further. Both the leadership in Tbilisi and Sukhumi aim to control international actors' activities and implementation modes more closely and block unwanted activities by not issuing non-objection statements. A problem that does not only affect peacebuilding initiatives but also already humanitarian projects. In times of instability, the respective security actors set the framework conditions and do so far more restrictively than political actors. The situation is particularly difficult in Abkhazia, where the influence of Russian security actors is powerful. This increases the pressure on local and international NGOs and limits their room for maneuverer significantly. In 2022, the Abkhaz de facto foreign minister declared any meetings involving Georgians and Abkhaz banned. Therefore, the space for engagement is currently shrinking dramatically, and it remains to be seen how this dynamic will further develop. This tendency is highly regrettable and hampers the already delicate work in civil society conflict transformation and dialogue promotion. It further contributes to societies' collective alienation and (self-)isolation and to the restriction of knowledge exchange between the societies in conflict. Finally, it also contributes to silencing local civil society stakeholders who can challenge narrow and incomplete understandings of complex conflict structures and dynamics.

It is precisely against this trend that this publication takes a stand. The **CORRIDORS PROCEEDINGS VOL. III** is a contribution to promoting the voices of young civil society actors and researchers from all over the Caucasus. Especially in times of great uncertainty, it is often the same experts consulted and heard. However, this largely excludes the younger generation of peace researchers and civil society activists. But it is primarily the Caucasian youth affected by the negative consequences of their unresolved conflicts and the spill-over effects from the war in Ukraine. Their socialization is shaped by the conflict narratives, and their future opportunities are curtailed by militarization and isolation. Thus, enlarging the circle of people being heard beyond the usual subjects, including the younger generation more adequately, is imperative. We need to diversify conflict-related discourses and peacebuilding processes and strengthen the youth's voice and role. This publication aims to make a modest contribution to this end and make new voices heard.

This edited volume is the final product of our **ADVANCING YOUNG PEACEBUILDER CAREERS II** project, which CORRIDORS implemented together with our partners from Civik Idea (Tbilisi), Centre for Humanitarian Programes (Sukhum/i), and the Youth and Community Action Club (Samakhbyur). The project aims to build young peace actors' capacities and create new prospects for internationalization and professionalization. It forms a safe space for direct people-to-people exchange, dialogue, and practical cooperation over the divide. Moreover, the project aims to advance the understanding of protracted conflicts, facilitate research on related aspects, and strengthen local research capacities and networking in peace and conflict. For this purpose, we organized three workshops in 2021 with young scholars, activists, and experts from Abkhazia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Russia. In the framework of these workshops in Armenia and Georgia, various trainings on developing research designs, scientific writing skills, and civic awareness-raising were conducted by international and local experts and scholars. In addition, the focus was on the exchange between the participants. Unfortunately, it is still difficult to organize such regional exchanges in the Caucasus, and the current dynamics indicate that this will not become easier in the future. However, our project clearly showed how important and mutually enriching such exchanges can be. The intensive and respectful dialogue and the warm atmosphere in our workshops will remain in our and the participants' hearts for a long time. We would like to thank all the people involved for their openness and good spirit. Finally, the participants also focused on developing their own research articles or policy and opinion papers, applying the learned skills and knowledge. They were supported and mentored by experienced local and international scientists and peacebuilding practitioners. This publication can find the selected results of these research and writing processes.

The first two papers explore a critical obstacle for future conflict transformation in the struggle between Armenians and Azerbaijani – ethno-stereotypes and enemy-images in history textbooks. In her contribution, **Etery Asatryan** (Yerevan) analyses how the representation of ethno-stereotypes in Armenian history textbooks may contribute to the reproduction of the intractable conflicts. The paper reveals ethnic hetero-stereotypes of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, Turkey, and Iran in the history textbooks of primary schools in the Republic of Armenia, drawing from rich empirical data collected through quantitative and qualitative content analysis and expert interviews. The author argues that these findings are particularly relevant because the educational system plays a crucial role in forming social beliefs and building the collective memory in Armenian society. Such an institutionalized form of conflict socialization through educational textbooks contributes to the reproduction of conflict in the younger generation. Even more, when the historical memory of the above-mentioned nations in the studied textbooks is told in a fragmented and inconsistent manner. This is the starting point of the second article by an **anonymous author** (Baku). They explore how enemy images of Armenians are embedded in Azerbaijani history school textbooks. The article starts from the assumption that people's attitudes towards "the other" largely depend on how violent conflict histories are written and taught in school. The review on history textbook analysis for different age groups identifies the widespread presence of harmful words and hate speech that contribute to creating enemy images. The author argues that peace education can play a vital role in mitigating and preventing conflicts by instilling the necessary attitudes and promoting a culture of peace and nonviolence. Finally, the article will discuss ways to introduce peace education elements to Azerbaijan history textbooks.

The third article examines a crucial but understudied aspect of peacebuilding in protracted conflicts with significant violence histories – the importance of addressing trauma in peace policies. In his contribution, **Paata Alaverdashvili** (Tbilisi) explores how war-related psycho-emotional conditions in the Georgian population might influence the peacebuilding process on different levels. Experiencing violence in military conflicts can cause various trauma-related psychological, emotional, and somatic difficulties for individuals. These challenges can become symptomatic for the whole society in forms of social trauma if not adequately addressed. The paper analyses the official Georgian peace strategies to evaluate if they address social trauma and incorporate existing guidelines and models for providing sufficient psycho-social services. Based on this analysis, the author argues a strong need to acknowledge and address social traumas in different communities. Comprehensive psycho-social support for these communities can empower them to constructively deal with individual and social trauma, which contributes to peacebuilding on a broader scale.

The following two articles deal with the particular challenges of women in peacebuilding processes in the Caucasus. **Gulkhanim Mammadova** (Baku) dives into why women are underrepresented in the peace process around Nagorny Karabakh despite frequent calls for more meaningful participation. Her paper identifies and analyses the main obstacles to women's participation in this context based on primary data from an online questionnaire conducted among civil society representatives from Armenia and Azerbaijan. Thereby, the research contributes to the regional literature on women in peacebuilding. Moreover, the author identifies the potential for more meaningful women participation and develops recommendations to utilize this potential. The following paper from **Lyana Dzhankuleva** (Nalchik/Moscow) directs our focus to the North Caucasus, where we can also detect a substantial underrepresentation of women in peacebuilding processes and in the political process in general. The author argues that social, cultural, and religious values prevent women's

inclusion. As a result, the social order is becoming increasingly traditionalist and patriarchal in many parts of the North Caucasus. The paper concludes that it is imperative to address violations of women's fundamental human rights and strengthen their position to unluck their peacebuilding potential.

The final three papers are devoted to the role of youth and education in entities affected by protracted conflict. In her paper, **Valeriya Arshba** (Sukhum/i) highlights that young people are widely acknowledged as vital catalysts for societies' social and political development and future agents of change. However, she argues that youth cannot adequately realize its potential for positive change in Abkhazia. The article identifies structural, cultural, and societal obstacles to meaningful youth inclusion in socio-political processes in Abkhazia, like the unresolved conflict with Georgia, the dominance of ethnic identities, and the lack of a shared civic identity. Moreover, local authorities lack a distinct youth policy and do not pay sufficient attention to the needs of young people. On the one hand, this does not promote and utilize their potential, and on the other hand, it increases youth frustration with the ruling political class. Despite these challenges, the author argues that youth inclusion in Abkhazia is possible and outlines ways to further expand it in the future. **Naala Chachkhaliya** (Sukhum/i) focuses on one selected aspect of youth empowerment in Abkhazia in the following paper. According to her, the lack of internationalization is one of the central challenges for the higher education sector in Abkhazia, and limited student mobility is a particular consequence. The article describes how the lack of internationalization in various fields of higher education reflects negatively on Abkhazia's education system and, therefore, limits development opportunities for local youth. It analyses student mobility, reflects on experiences of Abkhaz youth, and discusses how those experiences impact their value orientation and carrier perspectives. Finally, the author aims to develop recommendations on strengthening the internationalization of higher education in Abkhazia. The concluding article of this edited volume by **Mane Torsoyan** (Yerevan) investigates the children's right to education during armed conflict. She argues that violent conflicts pose a significant threat to the full realization of children's fundamental right to education, particularly in territorial disputes like the one around Nagorny Karabakh. The article analyses the practical implications of conflict and war on the right to education in Karabakh applying the 4-As conceptual framework (availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability) in an illustrative case study. She provides crucial evidence on how violent conflicts restrict children's right to education. Based on a structured evaluation, the author offers recommendations for public authorities, civil society organizations, and international development agencies to contribute to policy, regulatory and procedural reforms toward better implementation of children's right to education.

The eight articles in this edited volume highlight essential aspects of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the Caucasus. Thanks to them the **CORRIDORS PROCEEDINGS VOL. III** can provide insights from Abkhazia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Russia. These young scholars, activists, and experts share their diverse views in one publication, which makes this edited volume special. Our respect goes to the authors and all the other participants of our project for their openness and commitments despite the challenging conditions for such initiatives. Finally, I would like to thank the German Federal Foreign Office for their generous funding of our project, **ADVANCING YOUNG PEACEBUILDER CAREERS II**, and this publication though its Civil Society Cooperation program. This publication is not only a product of practical cooperation between civil society stakeholders, it also seeks to facilitate an open exchange of knowledge and views. In this spirit, I wish the readers again a stimulating and informative read.

Sebastian Relitz
CORRIDORS
Director


AUTHORS
1 Etery Asatryan
Yerevan
2 Anonym
Baku
3 Paata Alaverdashvili
Tbilisi
4 Gulkhanim Mammadova
Baku
5 Lyana Dzhankulaeva
Nalchik / Moscow
6 Valeriya Arshba
Sukhum/i
7 Naala Chachkhaliya
Sukhum/i
8 Mane Torsoyan
Yerevan
BLACK SEA
CASPIAN SEA
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

ETERY ASATRYAN

REPRODUCTION OF INTRACTABLE CONFLICT BY REPRESENTATION OF ETHNO-STEREOTYPES THROUGH SCHOOL HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN ARMENIA

The aim of this paper is to reveal the stereotypes of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, Turkey, and Iran in the history textbooks of basic schools in the Republic of Armenia (RA). The topic is highly relevant in the context of the Second Karabakh War; with the war changing the territorial layout of the region once again, it has also brought to the agenda an imperative of re-reflecting the beliefs on the conflict side (Azerbaijan) and the regional actors (Georgia, Turkey, Iran, and Russia) in Armenia. Here, the educational system plays a crucial role as appearing in educational materials, the social beliefs of the collective memory are being shared by the school textbooks, and in turn, they are used as tools of socialization. This element of institutionalization is of special importance because the beliefs presented in the educational textbooks reach the younger generation. Quantitative and qualitative content analysis has been applied to reveal the ethnic hetero-stereotypes of the nations in the history textbooks. Expert interviews were conducted during the design process to specify the research question, objectives, and hypotheses. In the process of data analysis, more expert interviews were applied, now with historians and psychologists to triangulate the data obtained from the textbook study. The analysis of the uncovered hetero-stereotypes shows that the historical memory of the above-mentioned nations in the studied textbooks is told in a fragmented and inconsistent manner.

KEY WORDS: ***collective memory, historical memory, ethnic hetero-stereotypes, education, history textbooks, intractable conflict, Trans-Caucasus***

INTRODUCTION

Collective memory is one of the core elements of the sociopsychological infrastructure that develops in societies with intractable conflicts. This societal psychological (i.e., sociopsychological) infrastructure evolves during an intractable conflict and plays a determinative role in the development, continuation, and, later, in resolution and reconciliation of the conflict (Bar-Tal 2007: 4). According to Bar-Tal (2007), it consists of three elements: collective memories, the ethos of the conflict, and collective emotional orientation, which are bounded and in mutual interrelations. In this cognitive-affective repertoire, societal beliefs are the basic components of collective memories and an ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal 2007). In the current article, we discuss one aspect of this cognitive-affective repertoire – the stereotypes (social beliefs) of "official historical" collective memory.

Societal beliefs constitute the common reality for the members of society, and important here is that through communicated beliefs of collective memory, individuals recognize and reflect their group boundaries – form ideas of "us" and "them" – developing the stereotypes of "others" (Tajfel 1981). Eventually, these stereotypes – as an element of society's sociopsychological infrastructure – also play a crucial role in conflict development. Institutionally, schools- being one of the state's primary vehicles for the creation of citizens- play an essential role in this process because they provide an ideal incubator for developing a sense of common memory (Worden 2014: 273). One of the core actors in this process are history textbooks; besides being a materialization of memory, they function in the almost daily educational process and reach the younger generations. However, textbooks often are involved in the political process. While discussing textbooks, Apple (2000) describes them as an area of accords or compromises of official knowledge, showing how dominant groups try to create situations where the compromises that are formed after conflicts favor them.

Hereby, emphasizing the importance of stereotypes communicated via collective memory in school history textbooks for the process of conflict reconciliation, the current article addresses the following question:

- What stereotypes of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, Turkey, and Iran are communicated through "official historical memory" in the history textbooks of Republic of Armenia (RA) basic schools?

This topic is highly important and interesting especially in the context of the Second Karabakh War in 2020, which has brought forward a new imperative of redefining the relationships with the aforementioned nations; here, it is important to reflect on what has been taught in schools about the conflict side and other involved nations.

CONTEXT

The notion of the South Caucasus as a cohesive region with more or less clearly defined borders originated fairly recently, and as an isthmus connecting Russia to

the Near East and Central Asia to Europe, it has strategic significance because of its position at the intersection between South-eastern Europe and the larger Near East (Iskandaryan 2011). Indeed, the region is one of the most contradictory ones; the three nations of the region – Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan – while living side by side for decades, still have tension between them. A lot of what produces this tension is the "heritage" of imperialism; the borders of the region have been drawn and erased thousands of times, the cultures of these nations have been mixed, and as a result, the modern states of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan still cannot decide what belongs to whom. To understand this, it is important to look back at the genesis of this region.

For centuries, the Trans- or South-Caucasus has been the "quarrel apple" of the three regional powers: the Ottoman, Russian and Iranian Empires. Because of this, both the cultures and borders of the region have been tangled. Especially, from the nineteenth century, due to the annexation of the region's major part to the Russian Empire, a new identity – "Caucasians" – started to develop. A common educational system, use of Russian as the regional interethnic language, a road network connecting the region to the center of the Russian Empire, state borders on the south, and an emerging common market all made people living in Trans-Caucasia identify with the new region (Iskandaryan 2011: 10). Moreover, in 1922, an attempt was made to establish statehood in the region, called the Trans-Caucasian Federation, which soon collapsed, and the Soviet Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia were established, now, as a part of the Soviet Union. By the middle of the twentieth century, the Trans-Caucasus began to exist as a meta-ethnic, multicultural region; it was no longer just a geographical name, as people had identified it as before (Iskandaryan, 2011). Nevertheless, the tension of mixed cultures and borders has plagued the region since at least the nineteenth century. Thus, with the fall of the communist ideology and Gorbachove's announcement of "Glasnost," this compressed tension between regional nations has exploded.

The intractable Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, likewise, appears as a heritage of these "drawn and erased borders." Erupting in 1988, the dispute galvanized both Armenians and Azerbaijanis in a movement for decolonization from Moscow, and the Armenia–Azerbaijan quarrel of February 1988 was the first stone in the process of ethno-territorial disputes that swept away the Soviet empire (Devall 2003: 8). For now, the word "Nagorno-Karabakh" has become a kind of a shorthand of the continuous intractable conflict. This conflict, indeed, is one of the most worrying unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus region, especially because the three principal regional powers – Russia, Turkey, and Iran – all have a differing stance on the issue; this has always raised a fear that, if the renewal of fighting happens, it could rapidly become

internationalized, particularly with Russian military bases in Armenia and Turkish support for Azerbaijan (German, 2012). Thus, the conflict is far from being just between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but it has the potential to absorb the whole region. The nonresolution of the dispute has tied up the entire region between the Black and Caspian Seas, and communications between Turkey and Central Asia, Russia, and Iran have become tense, moreover, Armenia and Azerbaijan have built alliances and polarized international attitudes (Devall 2003: 4). The nightmare scenario of this conflict that has lasted for almost 30 years – until 2020 – has been a new escalation in which Armenia asks its military ally, Russia, for help, while the Azerbaijani army calls on its alliance with NATO member Turkey. It has been believed that if this happens, the "Pandora's box" will be unleashed, causing a serious threat to international peace stability.

In September 2020, a new large-scale escalation happened on the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh. This is now recognized as a full-scale war: the Second Karabakh War. The 44 days of the Second Karabakh War changed the "board layout"; the Trilateral Ceasefire Agreement was signed on November 9, 2020, for five years, which did not end the conflict but ended the military actions of the 44-day war. Nevertheless, the war changed not just the territorial layout, but a lot of what has been believed about the conflict itself and its actors. For example, even though the military conflict resumed in a full-scale way, the "Pandora's box" did not open, and a lot of what has been believed about Azerbaijan in Armenia and Russia's, Turkey's, Iran's, and Georgia's role in the region became necessary to be reflected on once more. Thus, following this, it is important to study what has been told to the younger generation in RA schools about Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, Turkey, and Iran and what social beliefs about these nations are being communicated through history textbooks. It is important to state that when it comes to reflecting ideologies, the educational system and history textbooks can play an essential role in the conflict development process because they reach all of the younger generations, creating a common sense of the conflict. Thus, it is also important to analyze the context of the educational system.

In Armenia, public education has a concentrated structure; tuition for 12-year public schools is free and fully funded by the state, which regulates the organizational and substantive issues of schools by state laws on education and other legislations. In all state public schools of Armenia, education is carried out by standardized curriculum and textbooks, which are written according to the "State Criteria" document (which is written according to the "Law on Education"). These curricula and textbooks are mandatory for all public schools ("RA Law on Education" 2009).

As for the school structure, Armenia has three levels: elementary, basic (middle), and high schools. History is not taught in elementary school, and in high schools, the basic schooling program of history is repeated. In the current research, we chose to study the history textbooks of the middle school, which includes grades 6–9. In the design process of the research, through the expert interviews, it became clear that at this age, approximately 12–16 years old, pupils are especially receptive to ideologies because critical thinking has yet to develop. According to the interviewed specialists, at this age, the individual perceives the provided information without questioning it; thus, the stereotypes constructed at this age should be a focus because they can be easily ingrained and last throughout one's entire life. For this reason, middle school textbooks have been chosen.

Regarding the curriculum, in Armenia, teaching history is divided into two different school subjects: "World History" and "History of Armenia." Each of these subjects is written according to the documents "State Standards of the Basic School for World History" and "State Standards of the Basic School for Armenian History," which will be analyzed at the beginning of the "Main Findings" section.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Speaking about societies in intractable conflicts, Bar-Tal (2007) suggests that these societies tend to develop a specific socio-psychological infrastructure that fulfills important functions on both the individual and collective levels. In effect, the socio-psychological infrastructure that emerges in times of conflict serves as a major factor for the continuation of the conflict and as a barrier for resolving it (Sandole 1999). Indeed, this socio-psychological infrastructure in some ways can help society members cope with the stress; meanwhile, it also becomes a prism through which society members construct their reality, collect and interpret new information and their experiences, and then make decisions about their course of action. That is to say, involvement in an intractable conflict tends to "close minds" and stimulate tunnel vision, which excludes incongruent information and alternative approaches to the conflict (Bar-Tal 2007: 20).

This socio-psychological infrastructure consists of three elements: collective memories, the ethos of conflict, and collective emotional orientation. In our research, the specific type of collective memory – the official historical memory of the Armenian socio-psychological infrastructure – was chosen as a research subject, highlighting its out-group societal beliefs. These include the hetero-stereotypes of Azerbaijan (as the main opponent of the conflict) and Turkey, Iran, Russia, and Georgia (as regional actors) – presented in history textbooks of RA basic schools.

Collective memory includes the memories of specific events that we share with all the members of the groups and/or communities with which we associate. Collective memories are not the memories of our personal past but the sum of the memories of all the members of the group (related to the past of the group and/or community) (Zerubavel 1996). Moreover, collective memories are not the simple sum of the individual memories of a community or group. When these memories are complete, they become more than just the memory of each member of the group around a particular event because they are combined with the memories of others (Halbwachs 2007). They became a specific reality, one that Durkheim describes as a "sui generis."

Furthermore, to be shared with generations, these memories have to be "frozen" in the "sites of memory" (Nora 1989). Memory drives or "sites of memory" are any tangible phenomena that materialize, fix, and allow us to share the collective memory with other generations, thus extending their existence (Assmann 2004). Regarding historical memory, this type of collective memory is in special need of materialization because it is collected, systematized, and fixed (materialized) in tangible "sites of memory" by history specialists.

Textbooks are one of the most massive sites of memory. Besides being a materialization of memory that helps us save our memories, they also participate in the daily educational processes of younger generations. Moreover, textbooks are often involved in the political process; indeed, history is often being rewritten following political or social transformations to reflect a new social order, and history textbooks are a tangible example of these new narratives and how officials choose to present the nation to the young generations (Worden 2014). Thus, history textbooks represent society's official historical narrative and the ideology of the state.

Stating that the historical memory and textbooks as a materialization of it reflect an ideology, it is important to look at the term "ideology". In our research, ideology is defined as a system of beliefs that constitute different types of cognitions (Wright 2002). The function of these ideological systems is to bring order to the social world; thus, they are used to name and classify, that is, to understand past, present, and future events and issues (Moscovici 1998). One issue defined by the social beliefs of collective memory is the beliefs of "us" and "others" – the so-called auto/hetero-stereotypes. It is important to highlight that through the communicated beliefs of collective memory, individuals recognize and reflect on their group boundaries – they form ideas of "us" and "them."

Stereotypes presuppose preliminary beliefs regarding the essence, typical behavior, and expectations from others and us. These assumptions state that all people in a given group have the same characteristics (Tajfel 1981). This can lead to false prejudices and, as a result, to misunderstandings, hostilities, abuse, and conflicts. According to Tejfel, social stereotypes are the perceptions shared by a large number of individuals belonging to the same social community. The main components of these stereotypes are as follows:

- Definitions and assessments about the essence of the group (what kind of group they are?)
- Beliefs on the normative behavior reproduced by "us" and "others," which contain the motives, means, and results of the behavior (how they usually behave)
- The expectations from the "other", which include hopes and beliefs on the side responsibilities (what do we expect from them?)

Ethnic stereotypes can become central in the context of collective memory and ethnic conflicts, such as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Here, we can differentiate between two types: "hetero-" stereotypes, which are about the out-group, and "auto-" stereotypes, which are about the in-group. In the context of intractable ethnic conflicts, hetero-stereotypes are important to study. By their very connotation, stereotypes can be positive, negative, or neutral; however, in an intractable conflict, these social beliefs that constitute an understanding of the opponent and every "other" involved in the conflict are often more negative (Tajfel 1981). They can justify the outbreak of the conflict and the course of its development by delegitimizing the opponent (Bar-Tal 1990; Frank 1967). From the point of view of the bearer and/or action subject, they involve the state (Russian government, Ottoman Empire, etc.), the nation (Russians, Turks, etc.), and the individual of the nation (Turk, Azeri, etc.).

Eventually, this socio-psychological infrastructure of the intractable conflict becomes hegemonic and dogmatic societal repertoire, underlined by epistemic motivation for specific content and resistance to change (Bar-Tal 2007). What is also important is that the narrative of the collective memories relating to an intractable conflict provides a black-and-white picture that enables a parsimonious, fast, unequivocal, and simple understanding of the history of the conflict (Bar-Tal 2007). However, the societal beliefs of collective memory may be functional for coping with the stress created by the conditions of the intractable conflict; successful stress-coping often involves making sense of and finding meaning in the stressful conditions within existing schemes and the existing worldview or integration between the events and existing worldview (Antonovsky 1987; Frankl 1963; Janoff-Bulman 1992; Taylor 1983). The societal beliefs of collective memory provide such meaning and allow "sense-making"; moreover, certain content, such as well-defined goals and seeing difficult conditions as a challenge to be overcome with patriotism and unity, are especially functional for coping with stress (Antonovsky 1987; Janoff-Bulman 1992; Taylor 1983). Therefore, the societal beliefs of the collective memory, if properly narrated, can be highly functional for coping with the stressful conditions of the intractable conflict.

METHODS AND SAMPLE

Quantitative and qualitative content analysis

To identify the hetero-stereotypes of the mentioned nations in the history textbooks of RA basic school, it is expedient to use content analysis – both its qualitative and quantitative forms. The semantic-pragmatic strategy of content analysis was chosen as the analytical strategy, which requires the answer to the following question; who, what communicates, to whom, and with what effects?

For the quantitative part, the coding scheme was developed based on the operational scheme and was integrated into an "MS Excel" file, which helped to conduct the quantitative measurement of the considered content. The number of each component for each ethnic group was counted in the studied textbooks, and for the comparative analysis, descriptive statistics techniques were applied. For the qualitative part of the textbook material, thematic analysis was applied.

Expert interviews

In total, nine interviews were conducted. During the design phase of the research, three expert interviews were conducted with experts in the field of formal education to clarify the research question, objectives, and hypotheses. The results of the research on the textbooks were discussed with three historians for the textbook materials' historiographical validation. Three expert interviews were held with practicing, academic, and educational psychologists to reveal what possible socio-psychological effects can have the revealed stereotypes. However, it is highly important to mention that the purpose of the research did not include revealing the actual effects of the revealed stereotypes; this would imply an experimental research design, which was not possible in the frame of this research. The purpose of the current research was to reveal the ideological aspects of official school history – the stereotypes of the mentioned nations. However, during the interpretation of the research findings, the need for triangulation with the specialists became relevant for

the best interpretation of the findings; the practicing, academic, and educational psychologists were the experts who could best interpret the psychological aspects of the revealed stereotypes. It is highly important to state that this part of the research does not have an empirical basis, and the use of the method was not intended to reveal the actual effects, but to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the findings of the textbooks. Furthermore, these results open space for discussion and outline new research questions.

Sample

Twelve textbooks were analyzed, that is all history textbooks currently used at Armenian state middle schools for teaching World and Armenian history (these can be found in "The list of the analyzed textbooks" section). Adjacent documents were also analyzed, such as the "Law on Education," "State criteria for teaching history," and so forth (see "The list of analyzed documents"). Regarding the experts' sampling, the selection of experts was carried out using the snowball method. In total, nine interviews were carried out, three for each expert type, that is, three with education experts, three with historians, and three with psychologists.

MAIN FINDINGS

As mentioned, in Armenia history teaching is divided into two different school subjects: "World History" and "History of Armenia". Each of these subjects is written according to the documents "State Standards of the Middle School for World History" (2012) and "State Standards of the Middle School for Armenian History" (2012). These documents include the concept of the subject, the purpose and study objectives, the compulsory content to be learned at the end of each year, and the tools to reach these objectives. Here, according to the state standards, teaching the "History of Armenia" has the goal of presenting the historical events from an Armenian-centered perspective, that is, highlighting the regional and world events that have had an impact on Armenia; meanwhile, the general orientation of the "World History" program has to fulfill the historical picture "left from the board" by Armenian-centered perspective of the "History of Armenia" subject.

In the "State Standards of the Middle School for Armenian History" document, there is a chapter that states a set of values that are supposed to emerge among students by the end of the course ("State Standards of the Middle School for Armenian History" 2012: 39). In the current article, we consider only those that are the most important for the main findings:

- To have a national self-consciousness
- To realize the importance of statehood and state institutions for the maintenance of the Armenian nation
- To be patriotic, ready to serve for the defense of the homeland
- To realize the unity of personal, public, and national interests, the need for harmonization of the personal, group, national, and state interests
- To realize the importance of his/her active participation in the establishment and development of a democratic civil society in Armenia
- To have a sense of justice, optimism, and responsibility

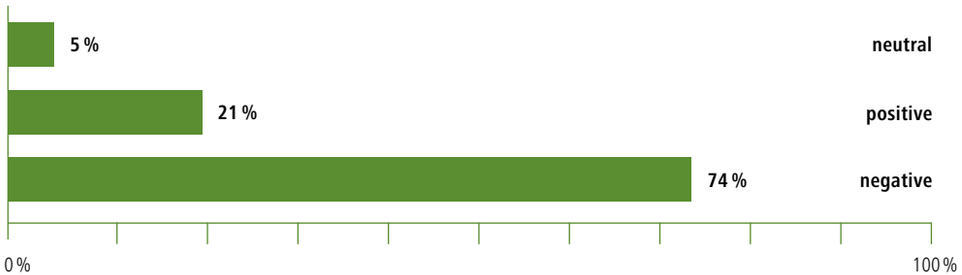
Unlike the "History of Armenia" standards document, in the "State Standards of the Middle School for World History" document, there is no such set of values; however, it is stated, *"that teaching history is not just a process of knowledge sharing, but also a process of worldview formation, which in turn tends to be rooted and life-long"* ("State Standards of the Middle School for World History" 2012: 3). Moreover, it is stated that the way of teaching history in schools has an impact on further international relations. In addition, it is important to mention that in the "State Standards of the Middle School for World History" document, it is mentioned that the teaching of history through two different subjects – "History of Armenia" and "World History" – must be based on one conceptual background, even though they are taught separately. Thus, these two subjects must fulfill each other to convey a complete historical narrative.

Textbook analysis and expert interviews

Analysis of the textbooks was implemented by dividing analyses based on the nation; however, the general overlap of the research findings is presented. Below, the main findings are represented, for each finding combining both the qualitative and quantitative analysis results.

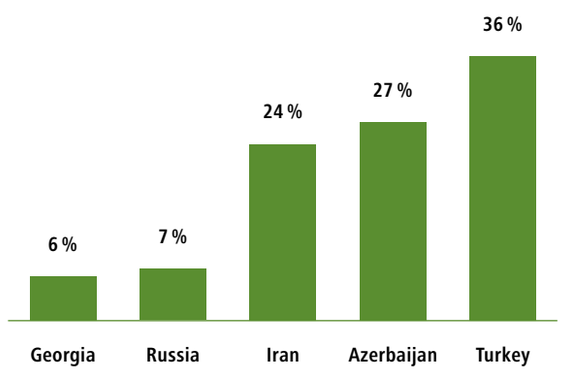
As it is described in the theoretical section of the article, in this research the study of stereotypes by connotation was divided into three types: positive, negative, and neutral connotations. The distribution of the descriptive and evaluating words used in all analyzed textbooks on the studied nations by connotation shows that negative descriptions and evaluations prevail (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
The distribution of the descriptive and evaluating words
used in all the analyzed textbooks on all the studied nations by the connotation



Moreover, the distribution of all used negative descriptive and evaluating words by studied nations in all analyzed textbooks shows that the most negatively stereotyped nation is the Turkish and then the Azeri and that the least negatively stereotyped figures are Russia and Georgia (see Figure 2). However, when the distribution of positive words is observed, Iran has the highest rate among other nations to which positive descriptions and evaluations are used.

Figure 2
The distribution of all used descriptive and evaluating words
used by studied nations in all analyzed textbooks

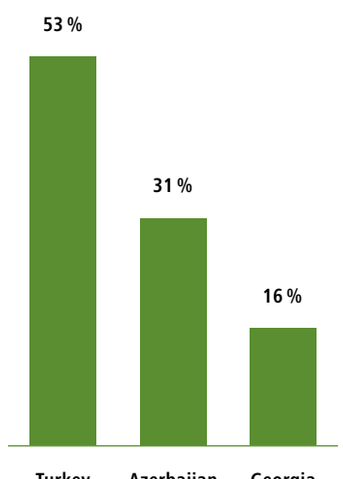


Thus, even though toward Russia and Georgia, textbooks are restrained in the sense of negative descriptions, this does not necessarily mean that these are the most positively stereotyped nations. It is also important to highlight that the rate of evaluative and descriptive words in the general number of words is statistically insignificant, which means that the scientific language style prevails.

Furthermore, as the distribution of the word "enemy" by the nations to which it has been applied in all studied textbooks shows (Figure 3), the main "enemy" is Turkey, even though one would assume Azerbaijan to be in this place because of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

It is interesting that when it comes to Georgia, the word "enemy" has also been used, even though with an insignificant rate; however, in this context, not everything is clear. Chronologically, the word "enemy" is used toward "Georgia" while representing the history of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century when the formation of Trans-Caucasus – as a cultural and political phenomenon – began. Especially in the context of the Trans-Caucasus Federation, the tension of Georgian-Armenian relationships is highlighted. At this time, the ruling group of the Trans-Caucasus Federation – with the highlight on Georgian privilege – is described as "hostile" and "enemy" toward Armenia. Besides this the favorable relationships between Armenia and Georgia are usually described.

Figure 3
The distribution of the word "enemy" by the nations
to which it has been used in all studied textbooks



Yet besides the word "enemy," more emotionally tense descriptions such as "terrific", "cruel", "perpetrator", and "relentless" also appear for the main enemy figures. It is important to mention that these words occur just a few times and have an insignificant rate. What is also important is that according to the interviewed experts, the use of these words has its functional role; to warn about the existence of the enemy. The "frozen conflict" of Nagorno-Karabakh has continuously raised the risk of a new war with Azerbaijan (which eventually happened in 2020), where Turkey – as an ally of Azerbaijan and historical enemy of Armenia – has also been considered a possible source of danger. Thus, according to the psychology experts, on the one hand, it is important to warn students about the existence of the enemy and to develop defensive psychological mechanisms; the above-mentioned connotations can be one of the methods for doing this. However, it is also noted that the misinterpretation of these emotionally tense words by the teachers and other involved actors (e.g., parents) has many possible risks from the point of view of personal development, including the formation of the "victim identity," possible risks of anxiety disorders, which behaviorally have the risks of manipulative behavior formation, anxiety disorders, and indifference to the actual danger.

> *"I think that the use of emotionally tense epithets that you mentioned, on the one hand has a function of warning the younger generations about the possible danger from Turkey and Azerbaijan. In the context of a conflict, whether it is a frozen or obvious one, it would be negligent to tell about these nations as if no tension exists in between. Although, on the other hand, the question is how should we communicate these epithets so they will not lose their functionality and turn into harmful sides. Emotional tension always has a risk of psychological disorders, for example, aggression can emerge which may harm youngsters even in their daily life. However, to know this for sure we first have to clarify two things; how these words are being interpreted in the classrooms, and after, only an experimental research can revile their actual influence on kids".*
>
> Expert (School Psychologist)

Furthermore, the qualitative analyses reveal an interesting picture according to the historical contextualization. We show this for the case of Turkey's representation; while writing on the repressions of ethnic, non-Turkish, and non-Muslim minorities in the Ottoman Empire and the massacres at the beginning of the twentieth century, in textbooks it is not always clear that repressions and massacres were carried out not only to the Armenians but also to other national minorities of the empire. There is a short reference to the repression of the Greeks, Assyrians, Arabs, and Balkans people in the "World History" textbook of the eighth grade ("World History; New centuries" 2018: 50), yet the "History of Armenia" textbook represents these events

in a fragmented and out-of-context way. That is to say, the complete historical context is unclear. This fragmentation is relevant not just in the case of the Turkey hetero-stereotype but, for instance, in the case of Safavid Iran as well as in the case of Turkey, while reading the textbooks, it is not always clear that when it came to Armenia, Iran was acting according to its regional aspirations but not exactly against the existence of Armenian statehood. That is to say, communicated hetero-stereotypes can be outside of the historical context. According to the interviewed psychology experts, the fragmented manner of history in textbooks, especially because of the age of the pupils, is also full of possible psychological risks because it communicates a semi-valid reality.

> *From a purely psychological point of view, a fragmented, that is, a partial representation of reality, whether it is a historical or other one, will lead to a fragmented perception of reality – a receptive disorder – which is full of the risk of egocentrism to rise. This brings a sense of the "world turning around you." That is, adequate perception of reality and your role in it can be discarded through the communication of a fragmented historical or any other type of reality.*
>
> Expert (Practicing Kids-Psychologist)

It has also been reviled that the textbooks have discrepancies in the presentation of the same historical subject. There is an interesting revelation among the behavioral representations of Russia; as the historiographical validation of the textbook material with historians through the expert interviews approved, in fact, Russia was politically acting like the two other regional powers – the Ottoman Empire and Iran. That is, for centuries, Russia has occupied Armenian territories against the will of Armenia, applied repression in the empire against the Armenian minority, and restricted the rights of Armenians; however, unlike the other two, in the studied textbooks, Russia is never described as an enemy, dictator, or invader. Moreover, the occupation of the Armenian territories by Russia is never defined as an occupation but as an "annexation to the Russian Empire." Thus, the representation of the same nation can be discrepant in the sense of connotation, and normative action and/or expectations from it. It is also important to mention that in textbooks Russia is presented as a potential liberator of Armenia from Ottoman Empire, with the a help of which Western Armenia could be leberated from the Ottoman rule. As the experts state, these virtual expectations can become one of the core instigators of the psychological indifference to the factual danger because they make the student believe that there is someone else who is responsible for his/her life and will rescue him/her in case of real danger.

> *Well, according to the incongruous manner of Russia's stereotype, it brings the same problem as in the case of fragmented representation; that is, it communicates a semi-valid reality. However, what I would like to highlight is the finding on the expectation from Russia; this is important. What we see is that in some sense, the responsibility of Armenia's liberation is being moved on Russia. When you expect someone else, when you rely on someone else for this much of an important issue, this can lead to the emergence of so-called indifference to the real danger.* Expert (Practicing Kids-Psychologist)

In the analyzed textbooks, the individual is dissolved at the collective level; in other words, the representation of history in the studied textbooks has a positivist manner. It is revealed that there is no reference to the individual of the nation (the political figures, i.e., kings, emperors, etc., are considered as a state representative but not an individual of the nation). Here, a question arises according to some of the values set up in the "History of Armenia" standards document: *"realizing the importance of individual active participation in the establishment and development of a democratic, civil society in Armenia"* and *"the importance of the personal, public, and national interests' unity; the need of harmonization of the personal, group, national, and state interests."* So to what extinct is it possible to make students realize the importance of individual actions and the unity of the personal, group, national, and state interests if the historical representation is fully absorbed by the national and political collectivism?

Furthermore, at the collective level, the state is more stereotyped than people (72% in the distribution of definitions and assessments applied to all studied nations according to the acting subject). Yet there is an interesting picture when it comes to Turkey; it is the only case where people, as an acting subject, is more active than the state (55% people, 45% state). Moreover, it is the only one to which more descriptions are applied to the people than to the state (64% of the total number of descriptions on Turkey used in all the studied textbooks). Meanwhile, Russia is the only one about which there is no reference to the people.

Moreover, during the triangulation of the textbook study findings, the interviewed history, and education experts highlighted that in the textbooks, there is just the political history presented. This was assessed as an issue by the experts because this does not allow for solving the above-mentioned study objective of "State Standards of the Basic School Armenian History" for "presenting the complete picture of the historical past."

Additionally, it is worthy to mention that according to the hetero-stereotype of Georgia, there are no surprising revelations. The general highlight is on the positive relationships between Armenia and Georgia, yet in particular historical periods, a tension is mentioned to be aroused in between.

CONCLUSION

The current research has shown that the historical past in the RA basic (middle) schools history textbooks for some of the studied nations is presented in a fragmented manner, and for the same nation (as for the presented case, Russia), the textbooks communicate both internally and between each other (between World and Armenian history textbooks) inconsistent hetero-stereotypes. According to the interviewed experts, in terms of personality development, this representation of the historical memory is full of possible psychological consequences, such as the emergence of irrational thinking, a "victim identity," emotionally disturbed disorders, and, pragmatically, "harmful neutrality." Furthermore, the issue of the emotionally tense epithets was highlighted by the experts; it was stated that the use of these words has functional importance to warn youngsters about the actual existence of the enemy, yet it was also mentioned by the experts that the possible miscommunication of these words has a number of risks from the psychological perspective.

Thus, the way history is told through studied textbooks may not help to cope with conflict stress but may bring harm in terms of the sociopsychological challenges of the intractable conflict. Indeed, because this statement is based merely on expert opinion and does not have an empirical basis, it is important to mention that the above-mentioned sociopsychological effects of the revealed hetero-stereotypes need to be empirically tested. Furthermore, the research revelations discussed in the current article open a new research avenue: to open up the factual sociopsychological effects of the revealed fragmentation and inconsistency of the revealed hetero-stereotypes.

REFERENCES

Apple, Michel. 2000, Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age, 2nd Edition, New York: Routledge.

Antonovsky, Aaron. 1987. Unraveling the mystery of health: How People Manage Stress and Stay Well. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Assmann, Jan and John Caplicka. 1995. Collective Memory and Cultural Identity New German Critique 65: 125-133.

Bar-Tal, David. 2007. "Sociopsychological Foundations of Intractable Conflicts". American Behavioral Scientist, no. 50 (11/2007): 1430-1453.

Bar-Tal, David. 1990. Causes and consequences of delegitimization: Models of conflict and ethnocentrism. Journal of Social Issues, 46 (1), 65-81.

De Waal, Thomas. 2003. Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through peace and war. New York and London: New York University Press.

Durkheim, Emile. 1995, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life", New York : The Free Press.

Frank, Jerome. 1967. Sanity and survival: Psychological aspects of war and peace. New York: Vintage.

German, Tracey. 2012. "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia: Security Issues in the Caucasus", Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Vol 32, no 32 (06.2012): 2016-229.

Iskandaryan, Alexander. 2011. "The South-Caucasus: Becoming a region or trying not to be one?". In Identities, Ideologies, and Institutions. A Decade of Insight Into The Caucasus: 2001-2011, edited by Alexander Iskandaryan, 9-15. Yerevan: Caucasus Institute.

Janoff-Bulman, Ronnie. 1992. Shattered assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of trauma. New York: The Free Press.

Moscovici, Serge., & Marková, Ivana. 1998, "Social representations in retrospect and prospect: A dialogue with Serge Moscovici", Culture and Psychology, 371–410.

Nora, Pierre. 1989."Between memory and history: Les Lieux de mémoire". Representations", No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989), pp. 7-24.

Sandole, Dennis, 1999. Capturing the complexity of conflict: Dealing with Violent Ethnic Conflicts of the Post-Cold War era. London: Pinter/Continuum.

Tajfel, Henri. 1981, "Social stereotypes and Social Groups- Intergroup behavior". Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Tajfel, Henri. 1982. Social Identity and Intergroup Relations. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press and Paris, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

Taylor, Shelley. 1983. Adjustment to Threatening Events: A theory of Cognitive Adaptation. American Psychologist, 38, 1161-1173.

Worden, Elizabeth, 2014, "Official Historical Narratives and Social Memory in the Classroom Case Study: Republic of Moldova". Two Decades of Development in the Post-Soviet States: Successes and Failures, edited by Sergiu Musteă, 269-288. Romania: Institutul European.

Zerubavel, Eviatar. 1996, "Social Memories: Steps to Sociology of the Past", Qualitative Sociology, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 283-299.

Halbwachs, Maurice. 1992. On Collective Memory. Edited, translated, and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser. Chicago, IL, and London, UK: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 46-53 and 84-119.

Wright, E.O.,2002, Class analysis of ideology. (March 20, 2002), Lecture, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

REFERENCES TO THE ANALYZED DOCUMENTS

Law on Education of the Republic of Armenia, 2009,
https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=71908

"State Standards and Curriculum of the Middle School for World History". 2012. Center of Educational Programs, Yerevan (RA).

"State Standards and Curriculum of the Middle School for Armenian History". 2012. Center of Educational Programs, Yerevan (RA).

"Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia on the Establishment of Instrumentation Standards and Textbooks for New Generation Textbooks and Supporting Literature", 2017.

Melkonyan A., Movsisyan A., Danielyan E. 2018. "History of Armenia: 6th grad". Yerevan: Zangak.

Stepanyan A., Avetisyan H. Qosyan A. 2018. "World Hisotry: 6th grad". Yerevan: Zangak.

Melqonyan A., Danielyan E., Harutyunyan G., Muradyan H. 2018. "History of Armenia: 7th grad", Part 1. Yerevan: Zangak.

Melqonyan A., Danielyan E., Harutyunyan G., Muradyan H. 2018. "History of Armenia 7th grad", Part 2. Yerevan: Zangak.

Harutyunyan G., Nazaryan A. 2019. "World History 7th grad: Middle Ages", Part 1. Yerevan: Zangak.

Harutyunyan G., Nazaryan A. 2019. "World History 7th grad: Middle Ages", Part 2. Yerevan: Zangak.

Melqonyan A. Simonyan A. Nazaryan A. Muradyan H. 2018. "History of Armenia: 8th grad". Yerevan: Zangak.

Stepanyan A., Safaryan R., Nazaryan A. 2018. "World History: 8th grad: New ages". Yerevan: Zangak.

Gevorgyan E., Khachatryan K., Virabyan A. 2019. "History of Armenia: 9th grad", Part 1. Yerevan: Zangak.

Gevorgyan E., Khachatryan K., Virabyan A. 2019. "History of Armenia: 9th grad", Part 2. Yerevan: Zangak.

Stepanyan A., Nazaryan A., Safaryan R. 2019. "World History: 9th grad: Newest Ages", Part 1. Yerevan: Zangak.

Stepanyan A., Nazaryan A., Safaryan R. 2019. "World History: 9th grad: Newest Ages", Part 2. Yerevan: Zangak.

ANONYM

INTEGRATING PEACE EDUCATION INTO AZERBAIJANI HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

Since the end of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan have stated their willingness to cooperate and achieve lasting peace in the region. Albeit a ceasefire agreement was signed, there are still many social challenges when it comes to the Azerbaijani and Armenian sides putting their past behind and living side by side as neighbors, as in the pre-conflict times. Since the start of the conflict, the societal attitudes of both sides have become negative toward each other, and this tends to be even stronger on the Azerbaijani side. Violent conflict histories naturally affect people's attitudes and might create distrust and even hatred. Most importantly, how those histories are written and taught plays a role in creating negative images of "the enemy." This article explores how enemy images of Armenians are embedded in Azerbaijani history textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education that are used in schools. The results reveal a widespread presence of harmful words that contribute to creating "the enemy" image in the textbooks for different age groups. The article argues that peace education can play a vital role in mitigating and preventing conflicts by instilling the necessary attitudes and promoting a culture of peace and nonviolence. It has been deliberately implemented in history educational since the end of World War II, evolving and growing into today's distinct field of research and practice. Finally, the article will discuss ways to introduce peace education elements to our history textbooks. This discussion is based on relevant literature on this topic, as well as on international and regional experiences with integrating peace education into history curricula.

KEY WORDS: ***peace education, history teaching, post-conflict, militarism, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, history teaching, reconciliation***

INTRODUCTION AND LOCAL CONTEXT

Our world is full of conflicts and wars, and the South Caucasus region, where Azerbaijan is located, has seen its fair share of them. The main conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia is the 30-year-old Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. At the end of the second Nagorno-Karabakh War (September 27, 2020 – November 10, 2020), President Aliyev

declared the conflict as being "left in the past" and "resolved by military-political means" (Lebedeva-Dementieva 2021). "Resolving" the conflict by military means has led to the increase of militarism in the society where it was already prevalent. Though the President Aliyev in his public speeches has mentioned a number of times his willingness to sign social and economic reconciliation agreements between the countries, there are still many social challenges when it comes to Azerbaijani and Armenian sides putting their past behind and living side by side as neighbors. One of those challenges would be the societal attitudes of both sides towards each other, which have gotten very negative since the beginning of the conflict and are found to be relatively stronger on the Azerbaijani side (Hakobyan 2016).

Hakobyan (2016) mentions that violent conflict histories naturally affect people's attitudes and can create distrust and even hatred, but most importantly, how those histories are written and taught plays a role in creating negative images of "the enemy." According to Wise (2020), in post-conflict situations, history education plays a critical role in creating shared memory and intergroup interactions. By concentrating on how the narratives of historical violence are triggered and formed in post-conflict educational settings, history education can overlap with peace education. The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) Resolution 1416 (2005) correctly warns that for Armenia and Azerbaijan, a lack of reconciliation, confidence, and mutual understanding restoration will prevent stability in the region and lead to new violence. The resolution indicates that emotions, historical and political memories, and myths contribute to violent conflicts and can exacerbate anxieties and negative attitudes between the sides. Collective memories that come from history books may either facilitate or obscure the reconciliation process. For instance, findings suggest that "single narrative" and "uncritical" textbooks impact the formation of negative collective images of others and are detrimental to achieving reconciliation. Thus, in post-conflict settings, even after peace accords are signed or direct violence has ended, conflicts may endure via the memories and identities of groups. However, history education may aid in reconciliation by assisting in the acceptance of harsh historical realities, as well as altering intergroup attitudes and thoughts about future prospects for collaboration with former foes. In post-conflict situations, these retrospective and future approaches create both the possibilities for and challenges to teaching history (Wise 2020).

According to Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev (2013), another related important issue is that in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the term "history" is usually interpreted positivistically as a precise science. The mission of history is viewed as one of discovering "facts" and establishing "truth." The events of today's history are frequently linked to those that occurred in the past. "History" has little to do with science and a lot to do

with telling a story and properly plotting it; *"An event must be more than a single occurrence to be considered historical: it must be described in terms of its contribution to the development of a plot."* (Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev 2013: 169). This is not, however, to suggest that history is not based on facts. The factual proof of "historical" occurrences might be solid. However, historians choose the evidence that best fits their story from a multiplicity of materials and competing interpretations, thereby "shutting down" other voices and sentencing them to be "forgotten" or understood from a specific perspective. Thus, cultivating a critical perspective on what "history" is and what it symbolizes becomes crucial for long-term conflict resolution in intragroup conflicts. For example, neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan outright denies the other's existence on specific conflict zones, yet they focus only on the demographic data that portrays them as indigenous to the area and the others as occupiers. As a result, only one part of the story is included in the history, while the other is ignored, forgotten, or explained away as unimportant. Historians on both sides conveniently avoid discussing periods when and where demographic changes favored "their" side, contributing to an uncritical perception of one's own group as a perpetual victim while portraying the "other" as a hostile and perpetually discriminatory group. When studying Armenian and Azerbaijani historical narratives in general – particularly in history textbooks – examples of selective methods and choosing events from history to fit a present-day national storyline can be frequently found. One distinct characteristic of Azerbaijan's society and political system shapes this national storyline is its strong militarization.

Widespread militarism is one of Azerbaijan's central characteristics. Even though, militarism is not an exact term because it involves varying ideological and cultural elements (Mirra, 2008), many scholars argue that militarism is a value system in which the military spirit pervades civil society. The culture of militarism is maintained through military toys, video games, movies, and ordinary things people interact with in their day-to-day lives that celebrate the military and violence. Militarism is often associated with nationalist governments and a negative image of humans. Of particular relevance to peace education is the observation by Bacevich (2005: 2) that militarism involves the use of power at the expense of alternative solutions; *"a tendency to see international problems as military problems and discount the likelihood of finding solutions except through military means."* In Azerbaijan, militarism is apparent when looking at the state's military spending and the acceptance of authoritarianism in the broader society. The various public advertisements and events in the country that glorify and celebrate the army, such as military parades and the laws concerning mandatory conscription for men are very visible effects. Moreover, the broader societal attitudes toward serving in the army and its perceptions of being a vital part of men's masculinity display how militarism is deeply rooted in the

local normative framework. Part of the reason for this prominent level of militarization in society, I argue, is attributed to the history textbooks, where the pupils learn about the wars and other violent events the Azerbaijani people went through, which give the impression that it is necessary to have a strong army to ensure the survival and protection of the motherland and how the strong and brave heroes of war have saved the country from being devastated by enemies. A recent example is Military Trophies Park, opened by the president himself, in the city center; it is decorated with the "spoils of war," such as captured Armenian tanks and military equipment and offensive mannequins depicting Armenian soldiers in various positions. These types of public exhibitions are extremely harmful to youth because they teach them that conflicts can effectively be solved by military means and that it is the only solution, which is not in line with what peace education tries to achieve (Cheterian 2021).

It is important to acknowledge that every education system has some agenda behind it that governments may use as a political tool. According to UNESCO, this was especially the case during both world wars and fostered extreme nationalism in children. In 1945, UNESCO promoted the idea of "education for world citizenship" to oppose this process, and although education on its own does not cause wars nor end them, every education system has the potential to either exacerbate or mitigate the conditions that contribute to violent conflicts. According to UNESCO, *"Wars begin in the minds of men,"* so *"it was in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed"* (Tinker 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to introduce peace education elements to history textbooks and reevaluate what information is being presented to young, impressionable minds. Thus, my research aims to identify if Azerbaijani history textbooks are in line with the peace education concept. If they are not, how can we incorporate elements of peace education into history teaching to support the reconciliation process?

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM: HATE-SPEECH AND ENEMY IMAGES IN AZERBAIJANI HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

The critical analysis of the characterization of Armenia and Armenians in Azerbaijani history books is an underdeveloped field of research. There are many reasons for this, the most important of which are the social polarization of the topic due to the recent history of the conflict and the militarization of Azerbaijani society and the autocratic form of rule. These factors considerably narrow the space for critical reflection, even in the academic sphere. Consequently, there are very few works dedicated to this topic. However, the consideration of peace education principles in history teaching does not mean the neglection of all the negative and violent episodes of the past. In fact, it only means that wars and armed conflicts should be taught in an

objective and fact-based way with neutral language that minimizes biases and manipulations, instead of avoiding them completely. Information presented in this way allows the reader to analyze the text for themselves and derive conclusions on their own; perhaps, seeing the devastations that wars cause would encourage people to avoid armed conflicts and seek peaceful resolutions more often. Therefore, when analyzing the Azerbaijani history textbooks, mentions of wars and other violent conflicts that are written in neutral language should not be removed.

A good content analysis of Azerbaijani history textbooks that takes this into consideration was conducted by Anahit Hakobyan, who divides the keywords that relate to Armenians into three groups: general words describing war scenes such as attacks, bombs, provocations, or military aggression; words that characterize the enemy with negative qualities such as brutal, cruel, violent, or vandalism; and words that dehumanize the enemy, such as ethnic cleansing, massacre, blood drinkers, showing no mercy, mutilating, and so forth. According to Anahit's analysis, a total of 22 phrases that can be included in the second group and 12 words that dehumanize Armenians were used in Azerbaijani history textbooks. From this, the author concludes that these textbooks, which are government approved, are used as a tool to dehumanize the enemy side and to raise new generations of patriotic people (Hakobyan, 2016).

This dehumanization of the other does not happen by chance, but is a deliberately deployed strategy that often follows influence and power seeking considerations. In his work "Stereotypes and the "Image of the Enemy" in Azerbaijan", Yunusov (2019) explains when and why the government started using history textbooks as a political tool to influence people's thinking. He explains that after the defeat in the first Karabakh conflict, the authorities needed to come up with a new national identity that would ensure the people's undivided loyalty to the government and to H. Aliyev. This was done through creating a historical memory portraying the Armenians as the sole enemies of the nation and reason for all of the present problems in the country, while President Aliyev was portrayed as an omnipotent leader who alone could save the nation and save the state, as well as bring back Karabakh. Thus, a new policy for creating and managing historical memory was required within the framework of the establishing new national ideology. As a result, speaking out against rulers' policies was interpreted as either a desire to fight one's own people or relinquish the prior glory of the nation. As a consequence of Heydar Aliyev's directives, Azerbaijan began to implement appropriate programs on the "patriotic education of citizens in the spirit of love for the nation and the necessity to battle against adversaries" in the second half of the 1990s (Yunusov 2019: 18). First and foremost, they began to revise history books and print new school history textbooks, all with the goal of "educating patriots who could distinguish" themselves "from" others "and were ready, if neces-

sary, to participate in another fight." (Yunusov 2019: 18). The deliberate and large-scale creation of the "image of the adversary" in the person of Armenians became a policy. Starting in the fifth grade, this picture of the Azerbaijani people's "historical adversary" has become the major emblem in school history textbooks. That is, the younger generation should know who the major adversary of the people is and should know this beginning in childhood. Furthermore, school textbooks refer to Armenians as "bandits," "aggressors," "killers," "insidious," "hypocritical," and other derogatory terms (Yunusov 2019).

To increase the impact of these hateful historical narratives on the socialization process of youth, textbooks for different age groups are used. According to the analysis results posted on Journal of Conflict Transformation (2012), Armenians are largely mentioned in history textbooks for students in grades 10 and 11, and both volumes include nine chapters dedicated to Armenians. These textbooks frequently utilize terms like Armenian terrorist, Armenian fascist, Armenian bandit, Armenian separatist, Armenian barbarism, and enemy and adjectives such as nasty and fascist to depict Armenians. The term Armenian appears in the headlines of three of the pieces, all of which have negative connotations. Armenians were referred to 10 times as foes, 11 times as robbers, twice as nasty, five times as criminals, three times as separatists, twice as terrorists, and once as fascists. In general, 33 discriminatory and pejorative phrases are used to address Armenians in both history textbooks. The course spends a lot of time presenting Armenia and Armenians as Azerbaijanis' greatest enemies. However, the text also mentions that it was not only Armenians, but also the Bolsheviks, who were involved in the killing of Azerbaijanis. Thus, the text mentions that the March genocide was committed by Bolshevik-Dasnhag jointly, nevertheless naming only the Armenians "bandits" (Caucasus Edition, 2012).

Moreover, my own exploratory content analysis of a small section from the 2020 version of the fifth-grade Azerbaijani history textbook titled "March genocide," showed similar patterns already in textbooks for much younger children. This section which consists of close to 800 words and includes negative words in relation to Armenians such as "traitors", "liars spreading misinformation", "vile", "rabid", "massacre", "show no mercy", "uproot", "depraved", "vandalism", and specific mentions of wicked acts that go against religious beliefs and human morals. These negative words are used throughout the textbooks in association with the Armenians, and they are extremely harmful, especially when taught as early as the fifth grade because they not only instill hatred toward the Armenians, but also outright dehumanizes them, eradicating any kind of sympathy that can be felt toward them and contributing to the negative perception of "the other." Furthermore, a small passage on tenth-grade book dedicated to the Erivan Khanate mentions that the Azerbaijanis comprised "the vast

majority of the population" while the Armenians were "only a small part of the population" of the capital Erevan. Creating and maintaining a shared memory is part of the aims of teaching history, and currently, it is being used to produce and sustain a negative memory for the younger generations who have not experienced the older conflicts that mostly their parents have, instead of generating a democratic memory that would be far more useful in facilitating cooperation and trust building between the nations that would benefit everyone, not just the government authorities.

WHAT IS PEACE EDUCATION AND HOW IS IT APPLYED IN HISTORY EDUCATION?

Peace education plays a vital role in mitigating and preventing conflicts by instilling the necessary attitudes and promoting a culture of peace and nonviolence (UNESCO 2008). It has been deliberately implemented in formal and informal educational settings since the end of World War II, evolving and growing into the distinct field of research and practice that it is today. Nowadays, majority of the peace education literature is focused on narrowing down the definition of the concept, viewing it as a potential solution to ongoing and ceased conflicts around the world as well as trying to measure its impact on doing so. The last one is particularly challenging, as measuring an impact of something specific on changing societal attitudes is practically impossible, even more so in the short run. UNICEF defines peace education as *"the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level"* (Tinker 2016: 29). Peace education helps convey the information, impart the values and behavioral skills needed to resolve conflicts peacefully, and build and sustain mutually beneficial and harmonious relationships. Conflict resolution, antinuclearism, environmental responsibility, communication skills, nonviolence, democracy and human rights awareness, tolerance for diversity, coexistence, and gender equality are all examples of peace education. By improving the competencies, views, attitudes, values, and behavioral patterns, it is possible to build and maintain peaceful cohabitation (Groff and Smoker 1996; Harris 1999; Johnson 1998; Swee-Hin 1997, as cited in Clarke-Habibi 2015: 3).

According to Tinker (2016), at the end of the twentieth century, education became one of the priorities in peacebuilding strategies because the international community started to realize that the contents of education, among other things, reinforced the social divisions that were the root causes of conflicts. This was the case in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Mozambique, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example,

where education was used as a political tool to fortify negative attitudes and feelings in society by manipulating history to fit the government's agenda. Acknowledging the negative ways education can be used, the international community started to think of the positive ways to use it, which is how most modern peace education programs came into existence. Education is now widely recognized as a key contributor to peace processes because it fosters an ethnically tolerant climate, reinstates the importance of coexistence, improves linguistic tolerance, cultivates a sense of equitable citizenship, aids in the demilitarization of history, and contributes to national reconciliation and peacebuilding (Tinker 2016).

The PACE recommendation 1880 (2009) reaffirms its recommendation 1283 (1996) that history also has a key political role to play in today's Europe and that it can contribute to greater understanding, tolerance, and confidence between individuals and between the peoples of Europe, or it can become a force for division, violence, and intolerance. Thus, history should be used as a tool to support peaceful resolution in post-conflict settings and promote respect, tolerance, and understanding. Orthodox history teaching focuses on a single interpretation of the absolute "truths," whereas it is now generally accepted that there can be many different valid realities and truths that are substantiated by facts and proofs. This kind of approach encourages students to respect diversity and cultural differences in this increasingly globalized world, instead of filling them with negative perceptions and reinforcing ideas of nationalism, as conventional history teaching does. PACE recommendation 1880 (2009) further mentions that apart from instilling positive attitudes and qualities this multiperspective approach to history also endows the students with analytical skills, which can be beneficial for post-conflict governments because critical minds can help drive economic development. Decisions on what to teach and how and when to teach it should be made, taking into consideration new political attitudes that work toward reconciliation of the differences and building cross-national and cross-cultural tolerance. As in the case of Northern Ireland, the focal point of education policies should be education for mutual understanding and cultural heritage (Parliamentary Assembly 2009).

Education is a fundamental human right. The core recognition of peace education lies in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stating that education shall be directed at heightening the respect for human rights and fundamental liberties. Education should promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship (Bajaj 2008: 75–83). Section II, Chapter III, Article 42 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, also mentions education as a fundamental right of every citizen of Azerbaijan. It is important for the governments to make sure that they fulfill their obligation of providing their citizens quality education that promotes understanding,

tolerance, and friendship and instills skills such as tolerance, respect, and empathy so that the people can put themselves in one another's shoes to understand where their pain comes from and also be open to the idea of coexisting together and getting to know the other side on a personal level, which helps in removing preconceptions and stereotypes. Najjuma (2011) argues that because countries' situations and societal demands are different, peace education approaches can change drastically; thus, a conceptual framework cannot be limited to just the abovementioned aspects. She further notes that despite the various conditions of differing conflicts, the approaches are not mutually exclusive; they are either education "for" peace or education "about" peace.

To examine the varying approaches for peace education depending on the social contexts, Najjuma (2011) brings in a myriad of examples from Australia, where education for peace is chiefly focused on ethnocentrism and cultural chauvinism, as well as cultural diversity; from Japan, where the focal points are nuclear disarmament, demilitarization, and the consequences for acts of violence; from South America, where the main focus is given to human rights, structural issues, and economic inequalities; from the US and the UK, where environmental issues, prejudice. and violence are addressed; from India, where the aim is to teach about gender equality, secularism, and democracy; from South Korea, where the focus is the "reunification education" model; and in the Middle East, where the discussion in on the "peace camps," mainly Palestine and Israel, where the transformation of religious and racial intolerance is stressed. In the Azerbaijani case, peace education should be directed at fixing deeply entrenched negative societal prejudices, addressing militarism, stressing the importance of human rights and multiculturalism, and instilling peaceful conflict resolution skills. A useful methodology for peace education is identified by Tribó Traveria (2013) as the socio-affective methodology, which assists in comprehending the lived experiences of individuals via sequences of instruction that utilize both conceptual and emotional aspects and that uses participatory or cooperative teaching, encouraging critical thinking. This methodology positively affects the students' core perceptions and attitudes because by reliving the history through the experiences of individuals, we not only give voice to the voiceless, but we also learn to put ourselves in their shoes and feel empathy for them while also being motivated to investigate further and gain direct insights and experiences on that topic. For example, when studying a chapter on a violent conflict, instead of focusing primarily on glorious war heroes or the political outcomes of the war, we could instead study them through the experiences of ordinary people and truly grasp the devastating effects of such conflicts on the general public: famine, anxiety, violence, IDPs, illness, malnutrition, the death of civilians, exile, repression, and so forth.

When it comes to the implementation of peace education to achieve set outcomes, a number of actions can be taken. According to Wise (2020), one of these practices is the revision of history textbooks in conflict and post-conflict societies to attain reconciliation. The Joint History Project in Southeast Europe, the Shared History Project in Israel-Palestine led by the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME), and the Tbilisi Initiative in the South Caucasus region, which we will talk about more broadly, are all examples of projects undertaken to compile joint histories through textbooks. Each of these efforts eventually generated instructional materials reflecting multiple historical accounts from various organizations, despite a slew of coordination hurdles and political roadblocks. In Western Europe, after World War II, for instance, a commission of historians was created to revise the contents of history and geography textbooks to remove the presence of militarism and eliminate negative perceptions of "the other." The committee achieved this by changing the phrasings of texts concerning border conflicts and trying to promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts between peoples (Tribó Traveria, 2013). Metro (2013) views history curriculum modification workshops as intergroup encounters, focusing on how the contact among educational stakeholders might provide a possibility for small-scale reconciliation, emphasizing this dialogic component. Six steps to intergroup reconciliation based on an ethnographic study of how multiethnic Burmese migrants and refugees in Thailand approached history curriculum revision are outlined by Metro, including the following: *"1. hearing other ethnic groups' historical narratives; 2. realizing that multiple perspectives on history exist; 3. 'stepping into the shoes' of others; 4. complicating master narratives about identity; 5. exposing intraethnic divisions to other ethnic groups; and 6. forming cross-ethnic relationships"* (Metro 2013: 4). Here, it is emphasized that this process is not linear and that impediments such as interethnic conflicts, language limitations, and fears of critical thinking still exist, despite the model's favorable outcomes.

Generally, these programs do not result in the creation of a new, common history to replace previous narratives; instead, they juxtapose different plotlines, here depending on "multiperspectivity," to improve mutual understanding and allow for the opportunity for established national identities to be questioned critically. As a result, these projects contribute to reconciliation in two ways: by creating teaching tools to reshape students' perceptions of intergroup relations over time and by creating fora for intergroup dialogues through committees and working groups that meet on a temporary basis to discuss shared histories. By this, they advanced historiographies and influenced how various European cultures taught conflict related history, which contributed to the French-German reconciliation, and, when the Cold War ended, German-Czech reconciliation, among other processes (Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev 2013). However, it is also worth mentioning that although the process of building

common histories opens the door to reconciliation, there is a scarcity of data on the long-term consequences of such efforts. More research is needed on how joint history textbooks are utilized in schools and how this affects students' views and behaviors toward reconciliation. Rohde's (2013: 187, as cited in Wise, 2020) findings from analyzing the Shared History Project led by the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME) in Israel-Palestine suggest that people who participated in the project found it challenging to convert "dialogic moments" with others outside of their interactions related to the intervention and into ordinary life. Furthermore, both Israeli and Palestinian students who utilized side-by-side textbooks in class had a range of emotions related to hearing the other's story, from outright rejection to openness (Rohde 2013: 187, as cited in Wise, 2020). As a result, it is uncertain if the reconciliation produced by cooperative textbook efforts has long-term, widespread, and good consequences.

One of the largest attempts at integrating peace education in the region was the Tbilisi Initiative, originally initiated by the Georgian Ministry of Education in 1997, a project aimed at adapting history teaching in the region to Recommendation (2001) 15 of the Committee of Ministers on History teaching in twenty-first-century Europe. The initiative produced significant results because of the favorable political climate in the region at the time, the support from the respective ministries of education, and the willingness of the participating governments to be involved in an initiative following the principles of equality, mutual respect, and transparency. The project brought together the ministries of education and historians from the participating countries, as well as drew experts from other European countries to oversee the project and advise during the implementation stage. Major accomplishments of the initiative were as follows: 1) It set new methodological approaches for regional collaboration in this domain, 2) promoted a new paradigm for history teaching based on the multiperspectivity approach, 3) endorsed a history teaching that presented the region as a melting pot of different cultures that share a common heritage, which brings people together instead of dividing them 4) promoted a positive image of the neighbors, 5) encouraged a curriculum that focused on skill development and 6) protected education from various political and ideological manipulations. This platform provided an understanding that collaboration in the regional context can be achieved only through dialogue in tandem with mutual respect, tolerance, and a willingness to compromise. The only major result that could not be achieved was the supplementary pedagogical material written by the historians of the participating countries, which was intended to supplement the history textbooks, not totally replace them (Council of Europe n.d.). Another such conference on a regional level would be immensely beneficial because it is more important than ever for the reconciliation process, and the recent changes make this absolutely

possible because the sides are hopefully more willing to cooperate this time. It is important to have an unbiased, fact-based, objective history that does not benefit just one side but that works for common goals for everyone and promotes peace and collaboration while encouraging critical and analytical thinking to come to these conclusions. Because the Tbilisi Initiative has already laid the path for such collaboration, I believe a second similar project would be fruitful and bear substantive results in aligning regional history teaching with peace education principles.

CONCLUSION

Examination of current Azerbaijani history textbooks showcases that the problem still persists, and the government has not made any efforts to eliminate the hateful speech in regard to Armenians from the books and continues to disseminate harmful images to the youth. Additionally, selective approaches to demographic data and presentation of the contradictory instances as irrelevant to favor the national historical plotline are still observed in the textbooks. History textbooks and their use within the education system play a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes and perceptions towards Armenians. These enemy images have a significant impact on how the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is viewed and addressed. Unfortunately, this neither contributes to long-term conflict resolution nor to reconciliation between the neighboring nations. To tackle this issue, we do not need to reinvent the wheel in the Caucasus today; we can benefit from the abundance of literature on the subject, as well as the experiences of European governments, in breaking the cycle of narrative replication that contributes to mutual dehumanization and violence.

Therefore, it is essential to look at the international experience with conflict resolution and trust-building processes through education, draw valuable lessons and make the necessary educational reforms guided by the peace education principles. As established, albeit being a chief part of it, peace education does not simply entail changing the phrasing of conflict-sensitive words in textbooks. Apart from revisiting the writings of the history textbooks under international expert guidance to free history teaching from the political agenda for constructing national identity, hate dissemination, and militarization, the government should attempt to instill a certain set of skills for peaceful conflict settlement, problem solving, and critical thinking in students. Furthermore, the government should not only focus on the students, but also make sure to equip teachers with the necessary know-how so that they can correctly nurture these skillsets in younger generations and present objective information that can and should be questioned, without injecting their personal biases into them. Various techniques for teaching these competences, such as creative teaching methods emphasizing empathy with the other group, can

be adopted from the experience of other countries and can be adapted to the local context. Moreover, regional workshops and joint cultural and educational exchange programs between Azerbaijani and Armenian youth can help to break down already established mutual enemy images. This could also include diverse schools bringing together students from both sides. Such activities that focus on personal relations and mutual encounter can be integrated into educational processes to facilitate the post-conflict peacebuilding process. Ultimately, only a stronger inclusion of peace education principles in history teaching can ensure that the hate-inspiring aspects are eradicated from the educational system. Of course, the obstacles to this are enormous, in light of the political and social forces of perseverance. Moreover, even if such a gradual change in the educational system would be possible, it is hard to assess the effectiveness of its outcomes, especially in the short run, as the educational reforms usually take decades before bearing visible results. Nevertheless, there is no alternative to such a process if f sustainable peace and reconciliation in the region is our goal.

REFERENCES

The Caucasus Edition. 01.04.2012. "Armenian image in history textbooks of Azerbaijan." Last accessed. 18.12.2021. https://caucasusedition.net/armenian-image-in-history-textbooks-of-azerbaijan/

Bacevich, Andrew. 2006. The new American militarism: how Americans are seduced by war. Oxford University Press.

Bajaj, Monisha. 2008. Encyclopedia of peace education. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub.

Cheterian, Vicken. 19.05.2021. "Post-War Messages from Azerbaijan: A Critical Reading". Baku Research Institute. Last accessed 10.12.2021. https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/en/post-war-messages-from-azerbaijan-a-critical-reading/

Clarke-Habibi, Sara. 2005. "Transforming Worldviews: The Case of Education for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Journal of Transformative Education 3, 33–56.

Council of Europe. N.d. "The Tbilisi Initiative". Last accessed 19.12.2021. https://www.coe.int/en/web/history-teaching/the-tbilisi-initiative

Gamaghelyan, Philip and Rumyantsev, Sergey. 2013. "Armenia and Azerbaijan: The Nagorny Karabakh Conflict and the Reinterpretation of Narratives in History Textbooks." In Myths and Conflict in the South Caucasus Vol. 1. Instrumentalisation of Historical Narratives, edited by Oksana Karpenko and Jana Javakhishvili, 166-173. London: International Alert.

Hakobyan, Anahit. 04.04.2016. "State Propaganda through Public Education: Armenia and Azerbaijan". Caucasus Edition. Last accessed 15.12.2021. https://caucasusedition.net/state-propaganda-through-public-education-armenia-and-azerbaijan/

Lebedeva-Dementieva, Viktoria. 15.10.2021 "Ilham Aliyev: Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been left in the past." Report News Agency. Last accessed 25.11.2021. https://report.az/en/foreign-politics/ilham-aliyev-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-has-been-left-in-the-past/

Metro, Rosalie. (2013). Postconflict History Curriculum Revision as an "Intergroup Encounter" Promoting Interethnic Reconciliation among Burmese Migrants and Refugees in Thailand. Comparative Education Review. 57. 145-168. 10.1086/667529.

Mirra, Carl. 2008. Countering Militarism through Peace Education. Encyclopedia of Peace Education. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University. https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.496.7820&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Najjuma, Rovincer. 2011. Peace Education in the Context of Post-Conflict Formal Schooling: The Effectiveness of the Revitalising Education Participation and Learning in Conflict Affected Areas-Peace Education Programme in Northern Uganda. Birmingham: School of Education, The University of Birmingham.

Parliamentary Assembly. 25.01.2005 "The conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference", Resolution 1416. Assembly. Last accessed 01.12.2021. https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17289&lang=en

Parliamentary Assembly. 26.06.2009 "History teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas", Recommendation 1880. Assembly. Last accessed 01.12.2021. https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17765&lang=en

Tinker, Vanessa. 2016. "Peace Education as a Post-conflict Peacebuilding Tool." All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace 5, no. 1: 27– 27. https://doi.org/10.20991/allazimuth.167339

Tribó Traveria, Gemma. 2013. History Teaching and Peace Education in a Time of Crisis. ISSN: 2014-2765 DL: B-21891-2013 Barcelona: International Catalan Institute for Peace.

UNESCO. 2008. "UNESCO's Work on Education for Peace and Non-violence: Building Peace through Education." https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000160787

Wise, Jamie. 2020. "History Education and Reconciliation in (Post)conflict Societies." Beyond Intractability. https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/history-education

Yunusov, Arif. 2019. "Stereotypes and the "image of the enemy" in Azerbaijan". In Topical Dialogues N8 2019: The "enemy's image" in Armenian and Azerbaijani societies, 13-24. The Netherlands: Institute for Peace and Democracy.

PAATA ALAVERDASHVILI

ADDRESSING TRAUMA IN GEORGIAN PEACE POLICY: GAPS, CHALLENGES, AND BEST PRACTICES

This paper explores the nature of psycho-emotional conditions that war experience causes in the population and how it might influence the peacebuilding process on different levels. We review war experiences of the last three decades in Georgia and take closer focus on the last Russo-Georgian war that happened in 2008. Experiencing military violence can cause diverse trauma related psychological, emotional and somatic difficulties, that has impact on different aspect of life of the individuals. Impact of those experiences often becomes symptomatic for the whole community and gets manifested in different field of its life in diverse maladaptive forms. We review various works that describe the importance of addressing trauma related psycho-emotional conditions of those population in order to proceed sustainable reconciliation and peace processes. The paper explores existing guidelines and models for providing community-based psycho-social services that can be incorporated in peacebuilding work to make it more participatory. We analyze the core elements of peacebuilding strategy of the State Ministry of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, where we discuss, that there is a strong need for acknowledging war-related traumatic experiences and guaranteeing psycho-social support community services for relevant groups of population in the country

KEY WORDS: ***trauma, mental health, peacebuilding, reconciliation, violent conflict, Georgia, Georgian Peace Policy***

INTRODUCTION

Georgia has experienced several violent inter-ethnic and interstate conflicts, such as civil war in Tbilisi and the Georgian-Abkhaz, Georgian-South Ossetian and Russo-Georgian wars, since 1991. These events occurred with economic and institutional collapse in the country, with movements of around 300,000 Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) between different regions, as well as poverty and insecurity. The Georgian community has been facing these and other traumatic events for a couple of decades, especially in the 1991–1995 period, with the most recent conflict, the Russo-Georgian war, occurring in 2008. Conflicts in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia remain unresolved.

The stress, pain, and shame that traumatic events cause for individuals and, ultimately, for society force the community to rebuild their identity against a new reality. In this process, the community might begin living with the chosen trauma, with it becoming an unconscious part of identity and a certain defense/survival mechanism against the remaining burden of the experienced trauma. That said, remaining attached to the chosen trauma can become an obstacle to clear reflection and to the process of meaningful conflict transformation. To avoid this, there must be space for and a process through which the pain, shame, and losses caused by conflict-related traumatic events can be sufficiently addressed and reconciled. We consider that this element makes peacebuilding practices more participatory, holistic, and rooted on a communal level, generating sustainable and long-lasting positive results.

This paper aims to demonstrate the importance of dealing with the conflict-related psycho-emotional injuries experienced by Georgians since 1991 and to address these injuries in the current peacebuilding process to make peace work more sustainably and integratively.

To do so, first, we review and present the most prominent and relevant authors working in this field for the purpose of developing a conceptual framework, including brief descriptions.

Second, we analyze the only project that has occurred in Georgia, which dealt with trauma-related bio-psycho-emotional aspects among IDPs after the war in 2008, and, to contribute to community cohesion, we seek to identify critical aspects and lessons learned from successful trauma healing interventions. Also, we will review the official peace policy document from the Ministry of Reconciliation of Georgia and identify the degree and extent to which the psycho-emotional needs of the community are reflected in this document.

Third, we will present recommendations on how to incorporate psycho-social services into war-affected communities in order to enhance peacebuilding processes in Georgia.

THE CONTEXT: DEFINING TRAUMA IN SOCIETIES AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICTS

Traumatic Events and Trauma

To begin, we need to differentiate trauma from traumatic events. Dr. Gabor Mate explains that trauma is not an event that happens outside (traumatic event) of oneself

but instead what happens inside the body. Trauma is an internal experience, one that overwhelms the bio-psycho-emotional system of human beings and cannot be processed and integrated by them (Mate 2004).

According to the International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision (ICD-11) from the World Health Organization (WHO), a traumatic event is considered to be an event that has been overwhelming for the person's neuropsychological apparatus to integrate, interiorize and accommodate into the existing systems. Such events can be damaging to the health, relationship, economic and environmental aspects of life (WHO 2018). After the experience of traumatic events, people might overcome the distress the events cause in a consistent manner or develop different traumatic reaction patterns. One of these patterns is widely known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When we talk about distress, we consider the type of stressful internal experience, one that is overwhelming psychologically, emotionally, and somatically. Most of the population has resilience against traumatic experiences and can overcome them within a period of 1–3 months. Some people, however, remain traumatized and as such require bio-psycho-social support (IASC 2007).

One of the main expressions of traumatization syndromes is PTSD, which can occur in cases in which one is exposed to an event or situation (either short- or long-lasting) of an extremely threatening or horrific nature. Such events include, but are not limited to, natural or human-made disasters, combat, serious accidents, torture, sexual violence, terrorism, assault, acute life-threatening illness (such as a heart attack), witnessing the potential or actual injury or death of others in a sudden, unexpected, or violent manner, and experiencing the sudden, unexpected, or violent death of a loved one (WHO 2018). The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC 2007) Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (2007) suggest that about 10–15% of people could suffer from PTSD following a disaster or after experiencing violent events.

Warren differentiates two types of trauma: Type 1 is individual trauma, which can be described as a wave in the psyche that breaks through one's defense mechanisms unexpectedly and with such destructive force that one cannot proceed properly. Type 2 is collective/social trauma, one which strikes a communal blow to the essential structures of social life and thereby disrupts the connections and relationships that hold people together, in addition to impairing the prevailing sense of community (Warren 2006). The current PTSD approach basically focuses on individuals, symptoms, pathologies, and standard evidence-based therapeutic processes that do not necessarily address the community (family, relatives, neighborhoods, etc.), i.e., the context of trauma (Wessells 2008). This is unfortunate, as the community element

of trauma is a very important aspect on which to reflect as, in the peacebuilding process, we must pay attention to Type 2 trauma, even though the two types are dynamically interconnected.

Community's Chosen Trauma

After a society experiences a traumatic event, the survivors seek to restore their identity on a personal as well as communal level because such events cause significant damage to self-perception of the community. Traumatic events can also cause shame, e.g., disbelief that such events could happen to the survivor, that also disrupts self-identity and community pride. Volkan introduces the concept of "chosen trauma," which can become one possible component of the newly emerged identity in traumatized communities. By chosen trauma, Volkan means *"the shared representation of a massive trauma that the group's ancestors suffered at the hand of an enemy"* . During this past event, the group may have suffered loss, pain and shame, humiliation and helplessness, and have been unable to mourn its losses and regain its land or prestige (Volkan 2001). This chosen trauma, as a part of group identity, is reactivated when a community regresses socially and/or economically, amid losses of general trust and safety.

Chosen trauma can be characterized by transgenerational transmission. When one generation cannot deal with trauma-related pain and shame, when the loss of people and/or land has not been properly mourned, chosen trauma is often "deposited" to the next generation through different sources. This can happen through history textbooks at schools, anniversary commemorations of traumatic events, and the creation of various historical narratives. The unconscious intention behind this is that the next generation receives chosen trauma in order to reverse the humiliation and/or mourn less (Volkan 2001).

Importance and Ways to Elaborate Conflict-induced Trauma

The Catastrophic Trauma Recovery (CTR) project from Common Bond Institute (CBI 2014) refers to psychological and emotional damage as the most long-lasting effects of war, yet historically the least addressed in terms of rebuilding a society and preventing future violence. The project contends that most supportive actions are concentrated on more tangible needs, such as food, shelter, and physical health, and underestimates the impact of deep psychological trauma on persons, families, and communities in general. Trauma becomes "integrated" as part of the psyche of a community, transmitting pain to future generations, where it becomes an unconscious reason or fuel for further violence (Volkan 2001).

It is important to empower national democratic institutions, develop public services, and enhance an atmosphere of reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict contexts. However, such objectives are not sufficient in themselves for reconstructing and building long-lasting peace. It is also crucial to pay proper attention to the emotional and psychological needs of survivors.

At present, globally, greater emphasis is being placed on emotional well-being in workplaces as well as in regular daily life, and people are increasingly caring more about emotional well-being. Emotional well-being acquires even greater importance when community members have experienced armed conflicts as traumatic events. As trauma survivors are those who live together after taking some steps to transform the conflict, addressing and processing trauma-related experiences and emotions is of crucial importance (Gitau 2018).

Dress notes the need to refocus classical conflict analysis and response methods. While traditional practices for peacebuilding and building international relations have considered the national state as a core actor or unit in the context of conflict, concerted efforts must be made to reorient the focus on individual- and community-based practices on a wider scale (Dress 2005). By doing so, peace work becomes more integrative and participatory, as such approaches create the space for pain, shame, anger, and other trauma-related emotions to be shared and the bitterness of survivors to be acknowledged (Gitau 2018). Sometimes, the acknowledgment of the pain, harm, and sorrow experienced by survivors of a traumatic event, especially those who remain in conflict with each other, can be invaluable for stimulating forgiveness and beginning to resolve conflict (Otake 2019).

As mentioned above, it is crucially important to acknowledge the incompleteness of peacebuilding when it is aimed merely at strengthening national institutions and to recognize the severe impacts of mass violence on the mental and social health of survivors. A shift in the character of analyses of and responses to experiences of conflict and mass violence should occur. Such a shift has notably already occurred in the growing field of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS).

In 2007, the IASC was established by the United Nations General Assembly to coordinate on, develop policies for, and make decisions about the work of key humanitarian agencies by formulating guidelines, as noted above, on "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Emergency Settings" for the purpose of enabling effective collaboration in the work of mental health practitioners and psychosocial support workers in the context of emergencies arising from armed conflicts and natural disasters (IASC 2007). These guidelines acknowledge the bio-psycho-social impacts of

violent armed conflicts on those affected, as discussed above, and the potential threat of these impacts on peace, human rights, and development.

The term "mental health and psychosocial support" implies an attempt to build an evidence base for MHPSS but has thus far focused on clinical MHPSS services (provided by mental health specialists and psychotherapists). Therefore, limited attention has been given to the effects of broad community-based psychosocial interventions on collective well-being and social connectedness. We believe that this is an important issue that needs to be addressed.

When people are traumatized in the sense of being enveloped by deep-seated pain, hurt, frustration, and disappointment to such an extreme extent that they become angry and rageful or withdraw from social and public life, no amount of peace talks or agreements can rebuild their community or revitalize their disrupted relationships (Fuertes 2004).

Fuertes argues that trauma healing should be systematically integrated in peacebuilding practices and highlights the importance of giving space in research to survivors' voices and views regarding their sense of reality and their coping strategies concerning war-induced trauma, or what he calls "war views," and how these views impact coping strategies in kind (Fuertes 2004).

Recognizing the impact of conflict on the mental and social health of survivors, Gallagher advocates for a stretching of the boundaries of the mental health field to include the areas of politics, justice, socio-economics and education, and envisions well-integrated, community-oriented interventions with psychological, social, economic, cultural, and environmental elements (Gallagher 2012).

In this process of opening larger spaces and giving greater attention to trauma and its various impacts on conflict-affected populations, we must remain aware of different risks as well. A potential risk associated with the trauma approach is that when not properly applied, it can reinforce or perpetuate a victim mentality. In a world in which trauma is inappropriately glorified and often used as a means to gain access to aid and other benefits, one might not want to surrender their victim status. This can in turn easily culminate in addiction and the creation of a cycle of dependency, perpetuating victimhood and victimization (Papadopoulos 2000). Therefore, when incorporating trauma elements in peacebuilding work, various considerations must be made to ensure that affected communities are not encouraged to embrace or become entrapped in a victim mentality.

Georgian Experience of Armed Conflicts, as Traumatic Events

In the aftermath of Georgian independence in 1990, the nationalist regime in Tbilisi sought to distance itself from its Soviet legacy by aspiring to a western-like political model. In doing so, state-building efforts quickly transformed Georgia into an over-centralized regime based on legislation that promoted nationalism and spurred dissatisfaction and protests by ethnic minorities. Separatist movements opposed to the newly implemented political model in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia engaged in active civil conflict in South Ossetia during 1991–1992, 2004, and 2008, and, in Abkhazia, from 1992 to 1993.

The abovementioned experiences have placed a substantial emotional burden on the Georgian community. Around 300,000 people were displaced from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and neither a crisis support infrastructure nor any related strategy existed during that period, beginning in the 1990s. International organizations alone provided IDPs with humanitarian aid, as a local NGO sector, one capable of lending psycho-social assistance, had not yet been sufficiently developed (although some projects were active, mainly aimed at providing medical assistance to war-affected populations) (Javakhishvili Darejan, Makhashvili Nino 2009). It was for this reason that mental health services and research were postponed to later years. Therefore, IDPs and other groups were not researched in that period and, accordingly, we do not have data concerning the prevalence of PTSD and other trauma-related conditions among communities of IDPs from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions from 1991–1993 (Javakhishvili Darejan, Makhashvili Nino 2009).

Previously, based on official data, approximately 10% of the Georgian population had been persecuted during the Soviet era. One study showed that signs of trauma were still present among family members, with some reporting anxiety attacks as a reaction to triggers of childhood trauma involving witnessing the arrest of their parent(s) (Javakhishvili 2014). Although we consider this phenomenon to be of relevance to the current paper, we chose to concentrate on the Russo-Georgian war, beginning in 2008, in particular.

Georgia's Chosen Trauma

Being forcefully integrated into the Russian empire and then into the Soviet Union was itself a traumatic experience for Georgian society. Among a multitude of other associated events, this integration included the repressive resettlement of 50,000 ethnic Abkhazians in Turkey in 1867–1877 by the Russian empire, the Russian annexation of the first Georgian Republic in 1921, the suppression of the rebellion

against Russian annexation in 1924, the shooting of young demonstrators protesting against the condemnation of Stalin's cult by N. Khrushchev in 1956, and the violent dispersal of a peaceful assembly demanding independence from Russia on April 9, 1989 (Javakhishvili 2014). Until the 1990s, mourning the loss and pain generated by these events was not possible because of the ruling regime, as such serving as the precondition for the construction of chosen trauma in Georgian society.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, momentum built in Georgian society (including ethnic Abkhaz, Georgians, Ossetians, etc.) to reflect upon and recover from the suppressed pain, losses, and shame of previous years and to rebuild a democratic republic (1918–1921), one that would be economically successful. Overcoming the trauma of overwhelming loss and pain required a mourning process, one which would permit the expression of buried emotions, explain and give meaning to all that had happened, facilitate a sufficient appreciation of all that had been lost, and integrate the psychic representations of the most valued lessons into the lives of all those in mourning (Javakhishvili 2014). Yet, we argue that instead of creating processes and spaces of mourning, and rather than processing all of the experienced loss and pain, Georgian society became locked in a pattern of chosen trauma by clinging to the identity of the victim/oppressed in that particular moment. According to Hopper, authentic mourning leads to more satisfactory social adjustment to the prevailing social, cultural and political conditions, allowing for attempts to change those conditions that are felt to be unacceptable, or in other words, to good citizenship (Javakhishvili 2014). Practical expressions of authentic mourning in the Georgian context would have entailed the establishment of a clear space for communication between different political and liberation movements, between the center (Tbilisi) and the periphery (Sukhumi, Tskhinvali), would have permitted the elaboration of fears and interpretations, assumptions and frustrations, that had been created and catalyzed in this chaotic moment of history, and would have allowed room for discussing how the state and life of ethnic minorities would now look, as well as how nascent power and governance would be organized. Instead, after gaining independence, the Georgian political powers from Abkhazian, South Ossetian, and Georgian communities became embroiled in violent conflict with each other, starting in 1991.

At that moment, we can observe how the different ethnic groups in Georgia started to (re)construct their identity after the realization of important changes. After the outsider enemy, Russia/Soviet Union, had been, at least temporarily, ousted, various groups, instead of addressing and healing all the years of accumulated pain, shame, and loss, took to identifying each other as "threats" and "enemies" (leading to civil war in Tbilisi) and, afterward, "others" (Ossetians and Abkhaz). In this way, we contend that chosen trauma served as one of the preconditions of the resulting conflicts

and hostile behaviors and became a formidable obstacle, one that blocked the momentum to build a new and successful state. We argue that, at present, we can detect elements in Georgian societal life that make us suspect that chosen trauma persists and is being transmitted through, e.g., history textbooks at school, which are teaching children as young as eleven years old how massive the Georgian state had once been, nearly ten centuries ago, and how much hate, aggression, and hostility had been exchanged between opposing political parties over so many years. When a majority fails in its attempt to establish or expand its influence or control, it often resorts to lionized or mythologized versions of its history and origin (Volkan 2001). If, currently, one spends enough time at a feasting table in Georgia, one will undoubtedly witness a toast to how, while separating lands for nations, God bestowed the best land to whichever group of Georgians is represented at the table.

DEALING WITH TRAUMA: KEY INTERVENTIONS AND CRITICAL ELEMENTS IN THE GEORGIAN CONTEXT

Armed Conflicts, Mental Health, and Trauma in Georgia

We have no data on the mental health conditions of communities following the armed conflicts in the Abkhazia region in 1992–1993. We do, however, have detailed research and structured data from 2008 that describe the mental health of communities after the war in the Tskhinvali region.

The Centre for Medical and Psycho-social Rehabilitation of the victims of torture (GCRT), in cooperation with a medical group (International Medical Corps), carried out a rapid assessment of the mental health and psycho-social welfare of war-affected people in 2008 (Javakhishvili Darejan, Makhashvili Nino 2009). Their chosen research method employed focus groups and individual interviews. For the interviews, they used the questionnaire developed by the National Center for PTSD in their Field Operations Guide. The investigation was conducted in August 2008. Two focus groups (with 7–8 participants in each) and seventy-two interviews were conducted. The focus groups were carried out in collective centers in the "Samshoblo" publishing house and in Tbilisi school N162, while the interviews were held in three collective centers: in the "Samshoblo" publishing house, Tbilisi school N162, and the Zahesi kindergarten. In all of these locations, groups of IDPs had been temporarily settled. The questionnaire results revealed that war-affected people were under substantial stress, which manifested in feelings of hopelessness and incapability. Aggression and increased alcohol consumption were observed among men; children expressed a variety of fears and regressive behavior. On the whole, the survey participants exhibited a pronounced level of anxiety, with approximately 80% suffering from sleeping disorders, and about 60% experiencing feelings of hopelessness (Javakhishvili Darejan, Makhashvili Nino 2009).

The Global Initiative on Psychiatry – Tbilisi (GIP – Tbilisi) and the Georgian Society of Psycho-trauma (GSP) studied 290 people (84% women and 16% men) at Tbilisi collective centers and also in the so-called buffer zone (e.g. Tserovani settlement) by means of adaptive screening instrument 23 (a self-report measure questionnaire of responses to traumatic events) a month after the military conflict. The research outcomes revealed a high index of post-traumatic symptoms – 67.85%; reduced interests – 48.8%; depressed mood – 51.2%; disturbing behavior (behavioral disturbances) – 24.5% (Javakhishvili Darejan, Makhashvili Nino 2009).

Nearly 800 IDPs were interviewed during screening exercises undertaken in mid-September 2008 (one month following the war) but also three months (December 2008) and seven months (April 2009) after the first screening. The analyzed data demonstrated the presence of post-traumatic symptoms (67.85%; 45% and 72%) among the monitored displaced population, as well as pervasive depressive symptoms and behavioral disturbances (including addictive behavior, such as gambling). Most alarming was the increased rate of post-traumatic symptoms and depression symptoms seven months following the emergency. These findings contradicted what would normally be expected: a "declining curve" of recovery, meaning that, shortly after a traumatic event, symptoms would be understandably intense, but would be expected to diminish over time, stabilizing 3–6 months after the event. This clearly did not occur among those being monitored (Javakhishvili Darejan, Makhashvili Nino 2009).

This study generated data that can contribute to the discussion above in that, after armed conflicts, long-term psycho-emotional damage and pain can occur, as happened in Georgian communities, and that a natural self-healing process does not always occur. As this study showed, trauma-related psycho-emotional symptoms actually intensified seven months following the war among IDP Georgian communities. It would have been useful to have had access to data from similar, parallel studies among members of the South Ossetian community, but we unfortunately could not find any such data at the time of our research.

Healing after War Trauma in Georgia

In 2011, large-scale research was performed on mental health conditions among members of IDP communities in Georgia by Ilia University, the Curatio Foundation, and the London School of Tropical Medicine. The study involved 3,600 adults from different settlements (Makhashvili 2018).

According to the results of this study, 23% of the research participants had symptoms similar to PTSD, 14% had symptoms similar to depression, and 10% had symptoms similar to anxiety disorder. Of the participants, 29% had at least one condition, whereas 5% had all three conditions.

The study also assessed the field of mental health services in Georgia. The data demonstrated a significant lack of community-based services, as well as a shortage of qualified and evidence-based services. Worse, existing services were geographically inaccessible.

Based on these data, the European Union has funded the project, "Center for Psychosocial Rehabilitation – 'Center Tserovani,'" which is aimed at providing services based on the bio-psycho-social approach to individuals, families, and communities affected by the war with the hope of helping them to overcome psycho-social problems, mobilize community resources, and improve their well-being and quality of life.

The center has been providing psychotherapeutic services for individuals and groups and has also deployed a mobile multidisciplinary team consisting of a psychiatrist, a nurse, a social worker, a psychologist, an occupational therapist, and a lawyer. The goal of the team is to holistically ensure that individuals and families from IDP communities are provided with necessary services directly connected to their mental well-being. Parallel to this mission, individual and group therapy is provided with the objective of helping affected individuals to identify their strengths, resources, and assets. Accordingly, the purpose of the project is to cultivate community support and stimulate the engagement of beneficiaries in the healing process, as well as to enhance community mobilization and participation by all relevant parties. Thus far, the project has assisted more than 100 families over two years, from 2014 to 2016. Additionally, 250 individuals have received psychosocial support. More than thirty community engagement activities have been planned and implemented in active collaboration with local community representatives (Makhashvili 2018).

As war, conflicts, and violence damage and disrupt the fabric and cohesion of communities, the center has made concerted efforts to restore this fabric via the above-mentioned activities. Project reports have demonstrated meaningful and productive outcomes with regard to helping affected individuals in the Tserovani community deal with trauma-related bio-psycho-social injuries after the war. Unfortunately, because no state funding or support is available for this program, it has not been continued in Tserovani nor has it been applied in other communities.

Peacebuilding Practices and Peace Policy in Georgia

After the armed conflicts, ceasefires were agreed upon but structural issues regarding the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have remained unresolved, resulting in an ongoing stalemate. After the 2008 war, the so-called Geneva International Discussion and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM 2) were established as international mediation processes in order to guarantee stability and security in the region.

Different grass-roots projects are being implemented with the purpose of connecting people from different sides of the conflict, such as various educational programs from Corridors, a History Dialogue project from the Berghof Foundation, the Fund Sukhumi, the Women's Information Centre – WIC, Consent IDP etc.. Analysis has shown that these efforts have enhanced cross-ethnic dialogue and that participants in these processes were regarded as peace activists rather than victims of conflict. Yet, there have been few opportunities to link such significant progress to official negotiations (Cárdenas 2019).

On the official webpage of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality we read official documents and statements on the minister's vision on transforming conflicts (SMR.GOV.GE 2021) where eight objectives can be discerned upon which the strategy is based :

1. The protection and provision of peace – an objective concerned with the government's efforts to maintain peace, neutralize security risks and possible provocations, and adhere to democratic values and principles of international law.
2. De-occupation and de-escalation – with regard to Russia – to demonstrate Georgia's attempts not just at de-occupation but also to remain principled in this direction concerning both the format of international negotiations with Russia (Geneva international discussions) and the ways in which international pressure and legal mechanisms are mobilized.
3. Direct dialogue, confidence-building, and reconciliation – with regard to the Abkhazian and Ossetian communities – to outline Georgia's efforts to communicate with communities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia for the purpose of building a common, peaceful future by eliminating conflict, promoting ongoing dialogue, and achieving reconciliation.
4. Cooperation based on mutual interests and status-neutral and humanitarian problem-solving formats – with the objective of the Georgian government clearly stating its will, together with the Abkhaz and Ossetian communities, to

prioritize humanitarian principles with the ultimate goal of improving the currently deteriorated circumstances and relations in the regions.

5. Taking care of conflict-affected people – an objective by which the Georgian government seeks to prioritize care efforts targeted at populations living adjacent to the dividing lines, residents of occupied territories, and IDPs.
6. Offering more services and opportunities in the Georgia state and easing access to such services and opportunities by residents of occupied territories – an objective outlining specific initiatives aimed at simplifying access by the population of the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions to various services provided by the Georgian state for their economic and social development.
7. Sharing new opportunities and benefits arising from cooperation and rapprochement with the EU and other partners – an objective intended to enable people living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia to access the benefits and new opportunities afforded by the process of Georgian integration with Europe.
8. Mobilization of international support and cooperation to achieve the objectives of peace-related policies via the effective deployment of international mechanisms – via this objective, the Georgian government is seeking to accomplish the abovementioned objectives with broad public involvement, through dialogue, joint participation, and international support.

As we have observed, in this complex peace strategy document from the Georgian government, various elements are mentioned that are crucial for successful peacebuilding. At the same time, however, there is no apparent objective related to the psycho-social rehabilitation of the war-affected people who have been engaged in conflicts.

As we have reviewed, the UN General Assembly has called for the involved actors to develop policies and make decisions based on "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Emergency Settings" guidelines. These guidelines contain recommendations and principles for how to explore and deal with war-induced psycho-emotional injuries and trauma-related conditions in the community. This document was based on long-term research and served as a significant recognition of the value of dedicating concerted efforts to psycho-emotional rehabilitation in the interest of meaningful peacebuilding. Additionally, we reviewed and offered insights from studies by different scholars who have described the relevance and importance of engaging in consistent efforts to address and heal trauma-related psycho-emotional conditions during the work of peacebuilding. Despite our findings and those of

others presented in this paper, our analysis revealed that this component is missing in the current peace policy promulgated by Georgia.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: POTENTIAL WAYS OF ADDRESSING COMMON TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES BETWEEN CONFLICT PARTIES IN GEORGIA

We have discussed both the importance of and the varied ways in which to manage trauma-related psycho-social conditions in the context of peacebuilding. We have also described a successful psycho-social rehabilitation project in an IDP community, which had to resettle after the war in 2008: "Centre Tserovani" from the Global Initiative in Psychiatry – Tbilisi. This paper also included a brief review of the main objectives of the official peace policy of the Georgian government.

Based on our research, we argue that, in Georgian official peace policy, there is a notable lack of acknowledgment of the need to address and deal with psycho-social rehabilitation of war-affected communities as a significant element of the peacebuilding process. Our claim is supported by the fact that in the research from Ilia State University, the Curatio Foundation, and the London School of Tropical Medicine, at least 29% of the IDP population who participated in the study had one trauma-related psycho-emotional condition (either PTSD, depression, or anxiety). We do not have data from a similar study on the war-affected community of South Ossetia, but we can assume that they are also grappling with difficult psycho-emotional experiences as a consequence of the severity of the war in 2008. The same can be said of those who were embroiled in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict in 1992–1993.

Therefore, we argue that if the Georgian government gives space and attention to the psycho-social rehabilitation component of peacebuilding via its peace policy, then the traumatic experiences of all sides of the conflict could be sufficiently addressed. First, doing so would cultivate a feeling of acknowledgment of experienced pain, which would, presumably, contribute to and enhance the other elements of the existing peace policy, such as trust and confidence-building processes between parties. Second, it would facilitate different psycho-rehabilitation projects to commence within and across IDP communities. More precisely, the Georgian government should provide state funding systems that give professional organizations the leverage and stable and consistent resources needed to provide psycho-social services at the individual as well as community levels, particularly to war-affected groups in Georgian society.

Other recommendations include scientific and educational elements. We argue that more resources should be devoted to diverse types of scientific research that will generate useful data about and insights into the current status of mental health conditions among war-affected groups in Georgian society as well as global communities at large. Doing so would help specialists provide more relevant, tailored, and effective psycho-social services.

We also contend that the Georgian state should identify and elaborate on ways through which to make psycho-emotional support more accessible to those living in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. As we know, successful efforts have already been made to provide medical support to these communities in territories controlled by the Georgian government. Adding psycho-emotional services to these support systems is both warranted and promising.

We argue that the abovementioned strategies will also contribute to preventing and/or dealing with the syndrome of operating with "chosen trauma," instead being more fully aware of the psycho-emotional burden passed down through many generations.

REFERENCES

Cárdenas, Magda Lorena. 2019. "Women-to-women Diplomacy in Georgia: A Peacebuilding Strategy in Frozen Conflict." Civil Wars (Taylor and Francis Group) 2-9.

CBI - Common Bond Institute. 2014. "Catastrophic Trauma Recovery (CTR) Model." www.cbiworld.org/ctr/

Dress, Tobi. 2005. "Designing a Peacebuilding Infrastructure: Taking a Systems Approach to the Prevention of Deadly Conflict." (The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service) 13-43.

Fuertes, Al Badilla. 2004. "In Their Own Words: Contextualizing the Discourse of (War) Trauma and Healing." Conflict Resolution Quarterly 21 (4): 491– 501.

Gallagher, Elizabeth. 2012. "Perspectives and Possibilities: Mental Health in Post-Agreement Northern Ireland." In Shared Space: A Research Journal on Peace, Conflict and Community Relations in Northern Ireland 13: 63– 78.

Gitau, Lydia Wanja. 2018. "Trauma-Sensitivity and Peacebuilding." The Anthropocene: Politik – Economics – Society – Science (Springer International Publishing) 12: 11-40.

IASC. 2007. "IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Setting." Inter-Agency Standing Committee. https://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/guidelines_iasc_mental_health_psychosocial_june_.pdf

Javakhishvili Darejan, Makhashvili Nino. 2009. Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs of War Affected Population in Georgia. Analytical Report, www.researchgate.net/publication/304782898., Tbilisi: Georgian Mental Health Coalition, 4-19.

Javakhishvili, Darejan. 2014. "The Soviet Legacy in Contemporary Georgia: A Psycho-Traumatological Perspective." Identity Studies in the Caucasus and the Black Sea Region (Ilia State University) 5: 20-40.

Makhashvili, Nino. 2018. Outcomes of Psycho-Social Reahabilitation Center Tserovani. Analytical Report, Tbilisi: Global Initiative in Psychiatry - Tbilisi, 3-19.

Mate, Gabor. 2004. When the Body Says No. Toronto: Vintage Canada.

Otake, Yuko. 2019. "Suffering of Silenced People in Northern Rwanda." Social Science & Medicine (Elsevier) (222): 171-179.

Papadopoulos, Renos. 2000. "A Matter of Shades: Trauma and Psychosocial Work in Kosovo." In Psychosocial and Trauma Response in War-Torn Societies: the Case of Kosovo. Psychosocial Notebook (International Organization of Migration) 1: 87-103.

SMR.GOV.GE, State Ministry of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality. 2021. Minister's Vision. Accessed December 10, 2021. https://smr.gov.ge/en/page/35/ministers-vision

Volkan, Vamik. 2001. "Transgenerational Transmission and Chosen Trauma: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity." Group Analysis (SAGE Publications) 87-89.

Warren, Palmer. 2006. From trauma to transformation. Carmarthen: Crown House.

Wessells, Mike. 2008. "Trauma, peacebuilding and development: an African region perspective." www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/research/projects/trauma/

WHO – World Health Organisation. 2018. "International Classification of Diseases, 11th Revision." http://id.who.int/icd/entity/2070699808

GULKHANIM MAMMADOVA

OBSTACLES TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESS: THE CASE OF KARABAKH *

Historically, women have had little representation in peace processes, and calls for greater and meaningful participation by women often go unanswered. Dealing specifically with the Karabakh conflict, this research contributes to the regional literature related to women in peacebuilding. In this context, the paper addresses the potential peculiar roles that can be played by women in peacebuilding, obstacles to women's participation in the peace processes of the Karabakh conflict, and recommendations for eliminating these obstacles. The primary data were gathered through an online questionnaire, which was conducted among the participants of nongovernmental organizations from Armenia and Azerbaijan. Further gathered data were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

KEY WORDS: ***gender equality, peace, peacebuilding, peace processes, negotiations, postconflict reconstruction***

INTRODUCTION

Although gender optics helps shed light on the aspects and consequences of social attitudes in conflict situations, international experience shows that women's participation increases the likelihood of concluding a peace agreement. Yet historically, women have had little or no representation in peace processes (Dowler 1998; Mungai 2012; Mzvondiwa 2007). Since the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, governments have started to call for greater and meaningful participation of women in peace processes and to implement this resolution (Cohn 2004). However, these calls have often gone unanswered (Stiehm 2001).

Even though studies have described women's challenges and roles and have tried to assess the connection between women's participation and the likelihood of reaching a peace agreement, little research has been done to understand what obstacles exist for women to participate in peace processes and how to eliminate them. Because women have some peculiar roles, which have been discarded, in contemporary politics and the history of international politics, scholars argue that women can fill new roles within all stages of conflict prevention and resolution and can improve the conditions for building a peaceful society (Porter 2003). Hence, the current research aims to find the obstacles that stand in the way of women's participation in peace processes, particularly in peacebuilding, and what some of the ways are of eliminating these obstacles.

* **DISCLAIMER:** This article was produced from Gulkhanim Mammadova's master's dissertation for the University of Social Sciences of Ankara.

The Karabakh conflict, which was used as a case study, shows that three decades after the eruption of the conflict, the number of women representatives and peacebuilders in both conflicting states has remained small. There are also only a few studies describing the role of women in the Armenian-Azerbaijani Karabakh conflict and the reasons for the low participation of women in the peace processes. Within these studies, the perceptions of the conflict and peace through a woman's view are not considered. It is important to note that in the year 2021, during the pandemic, which has introduced many barriers to research, although studies are examining and emphasizing the role of women in peacebuilding (Paffenholz 2021; Kim 2021; Garnett 2021), there is a few research related to women and the Karabakh peace process. Thus, the current study focuses specifically on the issues of the Karabakh conflict, contributing to the regional literature related to women in peacebuilding.

Some scholars claim that peacebuilding is a broader and complex process (Reychler and Langer 2020), here referring to a positive definition of peace (Pankhurst 2000). However, Lederach (1997) thinks that the term peacebuilding covers several of the processes necessary to prevent escalation, including establishing stable relations between conflict parties, providing basic needs and achieving social justice, and serving as a bridge between peacemaking and peacekeeping (Lederach 1995; Fisher 1993). Peacebuilding can also be defined as an approach that aims at sustainability through the prevention of any kind of security threat (Pugh 2000). Accordingly, peacebuilding can appear during all stages of conflict, such as prevention, reconciliation, peacemaking, or peacekeeping (Fritz 2020).

FEMINIST PEACE AND CONFLICT THEORY

Feminist peace and conflict theorists, first, criticize the absence of women in political processes; second, they have changed the definitions of the basic concepts such as peace and security; and third, their research is original, aimed at transforming power in crisis regions (Sharoni 2010). For instance, feminist peace and conflict studies indicate that peace consists not only of ending armed conflict, but also of establishing

an understanding of the postconflict everyday peace, which implies equal rights between women and men (Björkdahl and Selimovic 2016).

Feminist perspectives on conflict resolution begin with the liberal attitudes of the need for the inclusion and visibility of women and feminist perspectives in various processes of war and peace (Sharoni 1993) because women, as agents of peace, can contribute to understanding the broader meaning of peace (Björkdahl and Selimovic 2016). Thus, many feminist theories, such as equality feminism, essentialist feminism, and others, are united under the idea that the invisibility of gender issues and women in important areas of life requires an analysis of why women's contributions are not considered in the areas of decision making, peacebuilding, and so forth (Sylvester 1990). Consequently, feminist scholars have begun to consider various aspects of women's representation in conflict and peace decision making. Here, equality feminism asserts that women and men should be represented equally in the armed forces, first to dispel myths about masculinity (Stiehm 1988) and, second, so that women can have equal access to decision making if decisions are to be made only by those who have military positions (Tobias 1990). However, some, on the contrary, believe that the representation of women in the armed forces does not mean that there will be a decrease in militarization and masculinity (Chapkis 1981).

The feminist peace and conflict literature also describes the correlation between the level of gender equality in society and propensity of the state to participate in armed conflicts. The essence of these studies implies that increasing gender equality decreases violence rates in society, which, in turn, contributes to peace because it helps consider women's perspectives as well (Caprioli 2000). Studies also show that the lack of gender equality and existence of a patriarchy in society increases the possibility of a country's participation in armed conflicts; on the contrary, an increase in gender equality indicators reduces the state's propensity to participate in wars (Caprioli 2000; Hudson et al. 2009). Scholars also argue that increasing women in decision-making positions also appeases the behavior of the state itself because there is a correlation between gender equality and a low level of military action: indeed, states with gender equality have a high level of democracy and a low level of militarism in their foreign policy (Caprioli 2000). Therefore, scholars present the patriarchy and gender inequality as the cause of conflicts (Enloe 1993) because a patriarchy is based on the idea that violence and coercion can also be used for achieving goals (Melander 2005).

The literature also argues that if women do not participate in the negotiation processes, more than 50% of conflicts would arise again (Collier et al. 2003). In this regard, Klein (2012) writes that in general, women tend to be more generous than men

and expect and ask less in negotiations; thus, adding women to the group increases generosity, and this has a profound positive impact on the mediation of a peace settlement (Klein 2012). Also, scholars argue that women's participation increases the likelihood of reaching an agreement in the short term, leading to a more responsive postagreement peace (O'Reilly 2015). In addition, the high representation of women in legal positions contributes to the preservation of peace after a ceasefire (Gizelis 2009). In addition, a meta-analysis based on empirical research has shown that the accommodation type of conflict resolution is most often approved by women than men; in addition, men resort to coercion much more often and will use it in their jobs (Holt and DeVore 2005).

Research shows that although women are most often notably absent from negotiation tables, which can be proved by different historical cases, they are active in community peacebuilding (Porter 2003). Also, even though existing women's peacebuilding activities often remain unnoticed, the role of women's organizations in peacebuilding is highlighted because it is easier for them to break through and influence the processes of peacebuilding because women's peacebuilding activities are carried out mainly within the framework of various women's groups and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (De la Rey and McKay 2006).

The literature also provides many examples of how women have participated in peacebuilding both during conflicts and in postconflict phases at the national, international, regional, and community levels. One of the main examples of the role of women in peacebuilding is Rwanda, which in 1994 experienced genocide. After the genocide, the women in Rwanda took on many roles in the postconflict reconstruction. They began to provide emergency assistance to children and those in need, and they began to participate in all spheres from education to politics (Burnet 2008). Women also played a particular role during the Lebanese Civil War, creating bridges between various groups and developing peacebuilding plans to influence the government of Israel and eventually prevent clashes (McKay and Mazurana 2001). As another example, women in Ghana are working to reduce poverty after the ethnopolitical war of the 1990s and establish economic stability (McKay and Mazurana 2001).

Specifying the Research Gap

Although previous research has assessed the relationship between women's participation and the likelihood of reaching peace, little has been done to understand what barriers exist for women to enter the peacebuilding process and how to address them. The main obstacles to women's participation in peace processes identified by scholars are the patriarchal nature of society (Bitsure et al. 2011; Falch 2010), cultural

stereotypes (Porter 2003), men's reluctance regarding women's participation, low economic and social opportunities for women, lack of education among women (Falch 2010), the representation of women only in the image of the victim and the low status of women in society (Erzurum and Eren 2014).

To date, very few studies have examined the role of women in the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as the reasons for the low participation of women at the state level in peace processes. For instance, bringing together the women of Azerbaijan and Armenia and facilitating meetings between them could be very useful for understanding the conflict and planning joint strategies to resolve it (Pashayeva 2012). In addition, establishing an understanding that women should have a role at all levels and stages of the peace process, from planning to directly leading and observing the negotiation process can be also useful for conflict resolution (Pashayeva 2012).

One of the few studies that has been conducted in the region was carried out by "The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation," which supports the involvement of women's participation in this conflict. The results show that women's daily practices can provide opportunities to transform the narrative of peace because women support and sympathize with each other (Kvinna till Kvinna 2019). However, unfortunately, women's proposals for reconciliation have not been taken seriously in the political spheres of both states because of the patriarchal nature of the societies (Carlman 2012).

METHODOLOGY

Data Sources and Primary Data Collection

The primary data for the research were gathered through an online questionnaire with open-ended questions, which was conducted among the participants of non-governmental organizations from both conflicting states: Armenia and Azerbaijan. Fifty-four of the most active organizations in Azerbaijan and Armenia were contacted through email or Facebook accounts, inviting their members to participate in the online survey. However, only 30 online questionnaires with members of active non-governmental organizations in Armenia and Azerbaijan were received between January and February 2021. Twenty-five respondents were from Azerbaijan and five from Armenia. It is important to note that an important political and cultural barrier to running the current research was the fact that it was conducted within Azerbaijan, which, in turn, blocked the receipt of a larger number of responses from Armenia.

The members of NGOs were chosen as the unit of analysis because the participation of civil society in peacebuilding increases the legitimacy of peace processes because NGOs have different views, ideas, and perspectives on conflict resolution and have a connection with the different groups of the population being affected (Odendal 2010). In this regard, NGOs, which are the first place where women can be actively engaged in peace processes, were the most suitable option for sampling.

The online survey questionnaire included 19 questions examining the participants' attitudes toward women's role in peace processes, the obstacles to women's participation in peace processes, and the reasons and solutions for these obstacles.

The demographic characteristics of the web survey participants are as follows: 60% of the respondents were female and 40% were male, which allows for analyzing both women's and men's views on the problem of the low representation of women and, accordingly, maintain equality in the research by considering all opinions. Also, 80% of the survey participants were under the age of 50, and most of them were single (56.6%), which shows that more of the young generations are involved in peace processes at the NGO level. Most of the respondents were from Azerbaijan, making up 83.3% of the participants, which is one of the study limitations. In addition, 70% of the participants responded that they have at least a bachelor's degree, while 26.6% have a master's degree, and only one of the respondents holds a Ph.D. These statistics show that the respondents have an educational basis for participation in the survey, which was not compulsory. Also, half (50%) of the study participants were earning between 500 and 1,000 US dollars a month, which shows that most belong to the middle class.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

To analyze the collected data, the current study used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith et al. 1999). This method aims at understanding how a certain person understands a certain phenomenon in a certain context. Here, the original meanings of the collected data were not just reproduced, but also conceptualized within the framework of a thematic structure meeting the research intent. Thus, to analyze the collected data and work with textual data in a phenomenological study, the following stages were carried out: first, the answers received from the online surveys were read several times in their entirety, a general impression was created, and hypotheses were deduced; second, semantic units corresponding to the research topic and research question were identified; finally, the central topics for constructing the analysis were chosen.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Women's Roles in the Literature and Analyses of This Study

Analysis of the collected data from interviews and the literature revealed common and different roles, as indicated in Table 1. Some of the roles described in studies were also confirmed by the present study. These roles include the role of support to men, which women play during and after conflict; the role as trust builders, which primarily aims at building trust between conflicting sides or between peacekeepers and the local population; the role of negotiators, which women can play in peace negotiations; and different perspectives, which imply new ideas and views that can be brought by women.

Along with these roles, a new role that women played during the Karabakh conflict was also found: informants, who aimed to spread information of the events taking place in Karabakh during the 2020 war.

Table 1

Women's roles during and after the conflict

Women's roles in conflict found in the literature	• The role of support (Burnet 2008) • The role of trust builders (Olsson et al. 2004; Burnet 2008) • The role of negotiators (Porter 2003; Hunt and Posa 2001) • The role of educators (Ruecker 2000; Burnet 2008) • The role of activists (McKay and Mazurana, 2001) • The role of peacekeepers (military and police staff) (Kent 2007; Olsson et al. 2004; Helms 2003) • The role of politicians (Burnet 2008) • The role of social support for children and those in need (Burnet 2008; Ruecker 2000) • The role of a bridge between the local population and peacekeeping mission (Kent 2007; Olsson et al. 2004; Helms 2003) • The role of psychological help to the local population during the peacekeeping mission (Basini 2013)
Women's roles in conflict confirmed by the study	• The role of support • The role of trust builders • The role of negotiators • Different perspectives
New women's roles founded in the study	• The role of the informant

The Obstacles Militating Against Women's Involvement in the Peace Processes of the Karabakh Conflict

Patriarchy, gender discrimination, and sexism

The participants in the current study mentioned social obstacles, such as the incomplete cultural formation of civil relations in societies and the negative attitude of both communities toward the participation of women in the peace process. The respondents expressed that even though both republics recognize the full equality of men and women at the legislative level in practice, in both countries, as in most countries of the world, women remain behind closed doors in the sphere of politics, and influential actors are not willing to bring issues related to women and women participation in peacebuilding to the agenda. Even if some women manage to break into politics, they occupy secondary positions related to education, culture, or health. One of the participants thought that people continue to silence women culturally because they believe that women's opinions do not matter and that women are not capable of making political decisions; women tend to stay away from political or public affairs, and men continue to be drawn into the most important roles at the state level (Participant 18, age 40). Regarding women's tendency to stay away from politics, one of the respondents noted the following: *"War creates a kind of ground for corruption, and women most often do not want to be part of corruption networks, wanting to stay away from dirty politics. In this regard, women continue to be excluded from making important decisions related to peace and security"* (Participant 10, age 60).

War and warfare lead to women taking on tasks traditionally performed by men in society; however, after the beginning of the negotiations, the established distribution of roles again takes over. Peace negotiations are usually conducted exclusively by men, which is often justified by the statement that peace should be concluded by the belligerents. In this case, the understanding that the peace treaty is not only the end of the war, but also the beginning of the future, is lost sight of. Without the experience and knowledge of women, important aspects of the planning of a post-war society are lost. The subordinate position of women and their limited participation in power are particularly evident after an armed conflict. Even though women make up more than 50% of the population, their experience and competence are consistently downplayed in peace negotiations and in the work of restoring peace. Old patriarchal cultural patterns and a lack of understanding lead to the fact that affected societies lose the knowledge, strength, and competence accumulated by women.

Most of the participants felt that it was difficult for women to gain respect in an environment that was largely "dominated" by men, putting them in a disadvantageous position when negotiating. Some of the survey participants believed that female intermediaries, unlike men, would have to prove their worth more often and be judged more harshly. Some of the respondents (e.g., Participants 3 and 11) indicated that sometimes, women have to choose between their work and family.

Resources and power

However, according to the respondents, most international organizations do not realize that there is a correlation between the participation of women and the peaceful settlement of a conflict. Participant 23 stated, *"Everyone strives and talks about peacebuilding, but few people and organizations understand that it is impossible to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict without establishing gender equality."* In this regard, the participants also believed that international organizations simply ignore projects related to the inclusion of women in peace processes.

According to the respondents, another obstacle to women's participation in peace processes is the financial cushion and connections for women's participation in the political sphere. The respondents pointed out that in both countries, there are differences in access to resources and power and the level of influence on social and political processes; accordingly, women earn much less than men. In addition, women usually do not own property, and there are a large number of unemployed women in both conflicting countries. Accordingly, the electoral process itself is too expensive for women, and the lack of financial support and connections does not allow them to break through in politics (Participant 4).

In the 1990s, the governmental bodies for the peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict interacted with civil society much more actively than now. In turn, women had a strong position in civil society, so they had the opportunity to interact and meet with representatives of the OSCE Minsk Group regularly. However, in the late 1990s, various NGOs were isolated from the peace settlement process. Instead of NGOs, the government-organized nongovernmental organizations (GONGOs) organized by the state but that competed with traditional NGOs for funding – were among main topics. In turn, the position of women in these newly formed organizations was scant in both states, so women lost the opportunity to participate in the peaceful settlement and interact with the OSCE Minsk Group (till Kvinna 2012).

State barrier

In addition to the obstacles listed above, most of the survey participants mentioned the state barrier as an obstacle for women's participation in peace processes, particularly that state institutions grant authority and participation only to officials in peace processes, as mentioned before. The problem is not only about only officials being in the talks, it is also related to the fact that there are few women among officials. According to the data and participants, there are no women among negotiators and mediators. The reason behind zero representation of women in the peace negotiations on both sides is because the peace talks on the Karabakh conflict have always been closed; only officials from the conflict states and representatives of the OSCE Minsk Group can participate.

On the one hand, studies have shown that 24% of the time, women's participation in peace negotiations has a positive effect on the implementation of a treaty and the maintenance of peace, as well as the reduction of violence (Stone 2014). On the other hand, some of the participants (5, 10) pointed out that gender equality issues are not included in the policies of public authorities in Azerbaijan, in the work of parliaments, or in other decision-making bodies. Participant 15 also noted, *"There is not even a specialty in Azerbaijan, nor even lessons on gender equality in universities, which is currently one of the priorities in other countries and is especially important in patriarchal societies such as Azerbaijan and Armenia."* The argument of this respondent can be interpreted as the need for gender equality education, and the absence of such majors as gender and conflict studies is big obstacle.

Another important response was about the unwillingness of society and local governmental bodies to permit NGOs to organize different trainings for children on the topic of gender equality: *"When we try to organize various training on the topic of gender equality in regions where the situation is at a deplorable level, we experience various problems not only from the local population, but also from local government bodies"* (Participant 19). It can be seen that instead of encouraging organizations to organize and conduct training on this topic, they are exposed to various difficulties, such as obstacles from the population, who see a "threat" to their cultural values in topics of this kind, as well as from local governments, which must give permission to conduct various training.

For its part, according to Participant 17, the EU also does not take a better position than the OSCE in terms of gender balance – among its representatives involved in the peace process around Karabakh, there is not a single woman. Even though the European Union delegations to Azerbaijan and Armenia have identified

the importance of women's political participation, they do not have the time or resources to address this issue. In short, all the participants thought that there is very little representation of women and that they should be encouraged to participate in peace processes.

Recommendations

Government

According to the respondents, governments, international and regional organizations, and civil society should take measures to increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at the decision-making level. In addition, they should promote nonviolent forms of military conflict resolution, reduce the number of cases of human rights violations in situations of military conflict, and, most importantly, promote the contribution of women to the promotion of a culture of peace. Most of the respondents believed that international organizations could play an important role as a bridge between civil society and the structures engaged in the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The participants hoped for greater support from international organizations because they can help implement meetings with officials. In addition, Participant 5 stated, *"Both governments should be more active and create conditions for the participation of different social groups in peacekeeping processes."*

The respondents thought that it is important to carry out certain reforms in the parliaments because they play an important role in the field of security. Women parliamentarians should be included in all domestic and international defense issues. In addition to the inclusion of women, it is necessary to educate both women and men about gender equality. In addition, certain gender-related workgroups should be established. In the future, these groups need to hold various meetings with the representatives of civil society and organize seminars and training to promote women in peacebuilding and postconflict reconstruction.

In addition, almost all the respondents were against the introduction of compulsory military service for women; they believed that society is not yet ready for this change: *"That could be a nice way to break the constructs, but I think, it is better to start with education then start doing this"* (Participant 7, age 37). The participation of women in the army is not free from discrimination and does not allow them to expand their participation in peace processes. According to the survey participants, military service for women in Azerbaijan should not be mandatory but voluntary because society is still subject to – not free from – prejudice and traditional thinking, and this can lead to serious conflicts on social and religious grounds. However, there are many women in the Azerbaijani army, and they are mainly serving in medical units and communications. On the other hand, the participants believed that before the introduction of mandatory military service for women, the army itself should be changed, after that woman can be attracted to the army: *"A professional army is more effective and necessary for us today. If we have a professional army, then, of course, I will be in favor of women as well as men having the right to serve"* (Participant 2, age 22). By a professional army, a participant means an army in which service is the main profession for the personnel and is completed voluntarily (with contracts).

Women's organizations

The diverse and effective participation of women in peace processes is not only an issue of human and women's rights, but also an issue of accountability and justice, which are key to sustainable peace. The engagement and support of women's civil society organizations are essential to increase the community's interest in bottom-up and inclusive decision-making processes to change the dynamics and broaden the range of issues discussed. In this regard, the cooperation of women's communities and civil society organizations, the creation of links between them, their participants and between women who have previously signed agreements, and the consistent development of knowledge contribute to the development of subsequent peace agreements and the acceleration of the implementation of the provisions of these agreements (Krause et al. 2018). Accordingly, these links, social cohesion, and agreements help address the root causes of conflict and support women who have the tools to make political decisions. In turn, these actions lead to the development of a gender-sensitive infrastructure.

Thus, one of the main proposals of the survey participants was to support women's organizations. Women from crisis regions are united because usually, women meet to support each other and bring changes to society; they create or join organizations to recycle the trauma of war because then, they can share their painful experiences with other women. Discussing problems and possible solutions helps women better prepare for making proposals for changes in society. Here, this kind of organization can open access to women's participation in the policy-making processes and in peace processes.

There are many different female organizations. Some women's organizations focus on conflict resolution and truce work, among other things, by bringing together women from opposing groups or states. Regardless of the aim and purpose of their

activities, these organizations are of great importance in drawing attention to the shortcomings at various stages of the peacekeeping process. These may include fundamental issues to defend women and children's rights and help them influence patriarchal or political campaigns for women's representation in different bodies or a general change in patriarchal structures and institutions. In the first steps, the involvement of large funds is usually not required, but for the development and implementation of activities, organizations need financial support from outside. The international community needs to recognize these local organizations because they have knowledge and understanding of the local population's interests and needs.

Strengthening women's status in society

In addition to supporting women's organizations, the inclusion of women in the peace process, according to the respondents, also requires the provision of assistance and support to individual active women politicians, as well as those who want to engage in politics: *"The stronger women are in society and the more politicians in the government, the more women will be able to participate in peace processes"* (Participant 14, age 35). The main thing to achieve women's participation in peace processes is to involve them in training and seminars. Participant 1 stated, *"These seminars should be held both for women to attract and educate them, as well as for men to instill the idea that gender equality is necessary for a peaceful settlement of the conflict."* This statement can be interpreted as follows: various training sessions for women that are aimed at capacity building and related to the different soft and professional skills such as leadership abilities are important mechanisms for women's greater engagement in peace processes. The participant also noted the need for training for men, which should be aimed at instilling in a psychological way that gender equality is necessary to achieve sustainable and durable peace. In addition, another respondent explained the following:

> *The first step should be teaching gender equality and equal rights so that women who are eager to participate in state affairs would be keener to step in. And family matters should also be taught so that women should not think that caring for family is their only duty. So many women leave their jobs just because men said so or because they married. I am okay with the ones who want to stay home; everyone has a choice. But so many women want to participate or with proper education could be possible candidates, but they cannot break the social cycle or do not even want to.* (Participant 19, age 49)

Thus, because of the existing obstacles in the form of the patriarchy, which discriminates against women's experiences, female groups are required to regularly analyze and report on all forms of violence that they are subjected to.

CONCLUSION

The current study was conducted by using qualitative research methods, aiming to find the roles and obstacles to women's participation in peacebuilding. The findings have confirmed feminist claims about the role of women in conflict, peace, and peacebuilding. The claims that women are viewed not as actors, but rather as the victims of conflicts and, therefore, cannot take part in processes, along with the claims that traditional attitudes in society also hinder women's paths, were confirmed by the present study. Because various feminist studies show how women's participation positively affects the achievement and maintenance of peace, the current research tried to investigate the reasons for the little participation of women in the Karabakh conflict. Despite the signing of an agreement in 2020, this conflict is still at the stage of negative peace, which means absence of armed conflict, but presence of hatred (Galtung 1976). Accordingly, the current study aimed to find what prevents the inclusion of women in the peace processes of the Karabakh conflict and how to use women's unique roles to achieve peace.

The current study has confirmed some roles that women play during and after conflict. The confirmed roles are the role of support, trust builders, negotiators, and givers of different perspectives. The study has also revealed a new role that women played during the Karabakh conflict: the role of informant aimed at spreading information about the ongoing war. Likewise, this research has also identified the obstacles to women's participation in peace processes and specific recommendations for the elimination of these obstacles, which are presented in Table 2. As can be seen below, according to the analyses, the main obstacles to women's participation in peace processes are patriarchy, gender discrimination, and sexism; low access to resources and power; and state barriers.

Table 2.
The obstacles to women's participation in peace processes and recommendations for their elimination

Obstacles	Recommendations
Patriarchy, gender discrimination and sexism **Low access to resources and power** **State barriers**	**Government** Regular analysis and reports on all forms of violence toward women Women's involvement Conditions for views exchanges between women's organizations and officials Support of women's organizations and female activists **Women's organizations** Monitoring the situation Building relationships with other peacebuilding initiatives Organizations of public discussions **Strengthening women's status in society** Gender equality education Media as promoters of gender equality

It should be noted that the present study also has some limitations. First, because of the pandemic situation, the planned interviews, which are the primary source of data and were to conducted in an offline format, were changed into web surveys, which does not allow us to ask additional clarifying questions from the respondents and get detailed answers to certain questions. The second limitation is the small number of female respondents from Armenia. Because the current study was carried out in Azerbaijan, only five responses were received from Armenia. It was also impossible to find representatives of the Armenian community of Karabakh, which could have made the findings even more relevant. Another important limitation is the lack of a sufficient number of sources and statistical data on this topic, which influenced the collection of secondary data.

Despite these limitations, the study has helped to understand the reasons and obstacles that exist for women's participation in peace processes and how to eliminate them. It should be noted that although the results of the present study revealed certain obstacles to women's participation in peace processes, most of the recommendations proposed by the respondents to overcome them are normative and not very achievable. In turn, the significance and originality of the current study come

from the ongoing historical development of feminist peace and conflict theory; second, women's peculiar roles may be useful for achieving peace in Karabakh because today, there are few studies describing the role of women in this conflict, as well as the reasons for the low participation of women at the state level in peace processes. Hence, the current study is important both for the regional literature related to the study of women in peacebuilding in the Karabakh conflict and the feminist theory of conflict and peace.

REFERENCES

Basini, Helen Sa. 2013. "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDRR in Liberia." International Interactions 39, no. 4: 535-557.

Bitsure, Jeanne, Nyanzobe, Seconde, Nisabwe, Seraphine, Bangurambona, Joseph, and Ngendahimana, Christian. 2011. "Security Council Resolution 1325 Civil Society Monitoring Report: Burundi." Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, 1-17.

Björkdahl, Annika, and Johanna Mannergren Selimovic. 2016. "Gender: The Missing Piece in the Peace Puzzle." In The Palgrave Handbook of Disciplinary and Regional Approaches to Peace, Richmond, Oliver, Sandra Pogodda, and Jasmin Ramovic, 181-192. New York: Springer.

Burnet, Jennie. 2008. "Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-genocide Rwanda." African Affairs 107, no. 428: 361-386.

Caprioli, Mary. 2000. "Gendered Conflict." Journal of Peace Research 37, no. 1: 51-68.

Carlman, Asa. 2012. Equal Power – Lasting Peace. Obstacles for Women's Participation in Peace Processes. Johanneshov, Sweden: The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation.

Chapkis, Wendy, ed. 1981. Loaded Questions: Women in the Military. Washington, DC: Institute for Policy Studies.

Cohn, Carol. 2004. "Feminist Peacemaking." Women's Review of Books 21, no. 5: 8-9.

Collier, Paul, Elliot, Lisa, Hegre, Havard, Hoeffler, Anke, Reynal-Querol, Marta and Sambanis, Nicholas. 2003. "Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development." Oxford: Centre for the Study of African Economies, Department of Economics, Oxford University.

Declaration of the Coalition 1325, Azerbaijan. 2002. Last accessed 25.7.2021. UNIFEM_DecColaitionAzerbaijan_2002 (peacewomen.org).

De la Rey, Cheryl, and Susan McKay. 2006. "Peacebuilding as a Gendered Process." Journal of Social Issues 62, no. 1: 141-153.

Dowler, Lorraine. 1998. "And They Think I'm Just a Nice Old Lady Women and War in Belfast, Northern Ireland." Gender, Place, and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography 5, no. 2: 159-1.

Enloe, Cynthia. 1993. "The Morning after Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War." Oakland: University of California Press.

Erzurum, Kemal, and Berna Eren. 2014. "Women in Peacebuilding: A Criticism of Gendered Solutions in Post-conflict Situations." Journal of Applied Security Research 9, no. 2: 236-256. doi: 10.1080/19361610.2014.883297

Falch, Ashild. 2010. "Women's Political Participation and Influence in Post-conflict Burundi and Nepal." Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo Working Paper.

Fisher, Ronald J. 1993. "The Potential for Peacebuilding forging a Bridge from Peacekeeping to Peacemaking." Peace & Change 18, no. 3: 247-266.

Fritz, Jan Marie. 2020. "Increasing the Number of Women Mediators in Peacemaking Initiatives." International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy 9, no. 1: 68.

Galtung, Johan. (1976). Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding.

WarandDefeme: Essays in Peace Research I1 (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers): 292-304.

Garnett, Tanya Ansahta. 2021. "Women and Peacebuilding in the Postconflict African States." In The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies, Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, Toyin Falolo, 653-667. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gizelis, Theodora-Ismene. 2009. "Gender Empowerment and United Nations Peacebuilding." Journal of Peace Research 464: 505-523. doi: 10.1177/0022343309334576

Helms, Elissa. 2003. "Women as Agents of Ethnic Reconciliation? Women's NGOs and International Intervention in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina." In Women's Studies International Forum 26, no. 1: 15-33.

Holt, Jennifer L., and Cynthia James DeVore. 2005. "Culture, Gender, Organizational Role, and Styles of Conflict Resolution: A Meta-Analysis." International Journal of Intercultural Relations 29, no. 2: 165-196.

Hudson, Valerie, Caprioli, Mary Ballif-Spanvill, Bonnie McDermott, Rose, and Emmett, Chad. 2009. "The Heart of the Matter: The Security of Women and the Security of States." International Security 33, no. 3: 7-45.

Hunt, Swanee, and Cristina Posa. 2001. "Women Waging Peace." Foreign Policy, no. 124: 38. doi:10.2307/3183189

International IDEA. "Gender Quotas Database." Last accessed 25.7.2021. https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/48/35

Kent, Vanessa. 2007. "Protecting Civilians from UN Peacekeepers and Humanitarian Workers." In Unintended Consequences of Peacekeeping Operations, edited by C. Aoi, C. de Coning, and R. Thakur, 44-66. New York: United Nations University Press.

Kim, Dong-Jin. 2021. "Reciprocal Empowerment for Civil Society Peacebuilding: Sharing Lessons between the Korean and Northern Ireland Peace Processes." Globalizations: 1-15.

Klein, Renate. 2012. "Responding to Intimate Violence Against Women: The Role of Informal Networks." Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Krause, Jana, Werner Krause, and Piia Bränfors. 2018. "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace." International Interactions 44, no. 6: 985-1016. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386

Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation. 2019. Listen To Her - Gendered Effects of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and Women's Priorities for Peace. Stockholm: Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation.

Lederach, John Paul. 1995. Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Lederach, John Paul, and Washington United States Institute of Peace. 1997. Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

McKay, Susan, and Dyan E. Mazurana. (2001). "Raising Women's Voices for Peacebuilding: Vision, Impact, and Limitations of Media Technologies." London: International Alert.

Melander, Erik. 2005. "Gender Equality and Intrastate Armed Conflict." International Studies Quarterly 49, no. 4: 695-714..

Mungai, Alister N. 2012. "The Role of Women in Post-conflict Reconstruction in Africa: A Case Study of Liberia." (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi, Kenya).

Mzvondiwa, Cecilia Ntombizodwa. 2007. "The Role of Women in the Reconstruction and Building of Peace in Rwanda: Peace Prospects for the Great Lakes Region." African Security Studies 16, no. 1: 99-106.

2019-2021 National Action Plan of the Republic of Armenia on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and Timetable for its Implementation. Last accessed 25.7.2021. Microsoft Word - Armenia_NAP1.docx (peacewomen.org).

Olsson, Louise, Skjelsbaek, Inger, Barth, Edwin, and Hostens, Kristian. 2004. Gender Aspects of Conflict Interventions: Intended and Unintended Consequences. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).

Paffenholz, Thania. 2021. "Perpetual Peacebuilding: A New Paradigm to Move Beyond the Linearity of Liberal Peacebuilding." Journal of Intervention and State-building: 1-19.

Pankhurst, Donna T. 2000. Women, Gender and Peacebuilding. Bradford: Centre for Conflict Resolution, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford. CCR Working Papers: No. 5.

Pashayeva, Gulshan. 2012. "Assessing the Impact of Track Two Initiatives on the Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Process." Turkish Policy Quarterly 11, no. 3: 105-119.

Porter, Elisabeth. 2003. "Women, Political Decision-making, and Peace-building." Global Change, Peace & Security 15, no. 3: 245-262.

Porter, Elisabeth. 2013. "Rethinking Women's Empowerment." Journal of Peacebuilding & Development 8, no. 1: 1-14.

Pugh, Michael. 2000. "Introduction: The Ownership of Regeneration and Peacebuilding." In Regeneration of War-torn Societies, Pugh, Michael, 1-12. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Reychler, Luc, and Thania Paffenholz. 2001. Peacebuilding: A Field Guide. London: Lynne Riennner.

Reychler, Luc, and Arnim Langer. 2020. "Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding." In A Pioneer in Sustainable Peacebuilding Architecture, edited by Luc Reychler, 271-299. Cham: Springer.

Ruecker, Kristen. 2000. Engendering Peacebuilding: Case Studies from Cambodia, Rwanda, and Guatemala. Ottawa, Canada: Peacebuilding and Human Security Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Sharoni, Simona. 1993. "Conflict Resolution through Feminist Lenses: Theorizing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict from the Perspectives of Women Peace Activists in Israel." (Doctoral dissertation, George Mason University).

Sharoni, Simona. 2010. "Conflict Resolution: Feminist Perspectives." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies.

Smith, Jonathan A., Maria Jarman, and Mike Osborn. 1999. "Doing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis." In Qualitative Health Psychology: Theories and Methods, Murray, Michael, and Kerry Chamberlain, 218-240. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Stiehm, Judith Hicks. 1988. "The Effect of Myths about Military Women on the Waging of War." In Women and the Military System, edited by Eva Isaksson, 94-105. New York; London: Harvester.

Stiehm, Judith Hicks. 2001. "Women, Peacekeeping, and Peacemaking: Gender Balance and Mainstreaming." International Peacekeeping 8, no. 2: 39-48. doi: 10.1080/13533310108413894.

Stone, Laurel. 2014. "Women Transforming Conflict: A Quantitative Analysis of Female Peacemaking." Available at SSRN 2485242.

Sylvester, Christine. 1987. "I. Some Dangers in Merging Feminist and Peace Projects." Alternatives 12, no. 4: 493-509.

UN News Centre. 17.3.2007. "UN Police Workshop in Italy Is Latest Effort to Attract More Female Officers into the Force." Last accessed 30.7.2021 www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID1/421905& Cr1/4police&Cr1

World Bank. "The Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (%)." Last accessed 25.7.2021. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS

LYANA DZHANKULAEVA

WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDING

The relevance of this research lies in the fact that social tension between representatives of different peoples of the Caucasus continues to grow due to unresolved conflicts, and their resolution requires the involvement of all population groups, including women. It is impossible to halt these struggles and as tensions builds the likelihood of entering armed conflicts increases. Compromises are needed while the disagreements can still be settled peacefully. This article examines obstacles to the full participation of women in political processes evaluated using statistics on women holding positions in government structures. The object of the research is also the influence of customs and religion on mentality. The Caucasian peoples are characterized by a traditional patriarchal way of life. Besides, the situation is aggravated by the arabization and islamization of the region. In these conditions, the position of women is only getting worse every year, and women are becoming more silent and powerless. The article also discusses the importance of women's participation in peacebuilding processes, what challenges faced by women-peacebuilders. In order to solve existing problems it is necessary to establish their causes. Therefore, the article explores the existing interethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus, their causes and consequences. Two main reasons for disagreement can be identified, these are territorial claims and disputes over the cultural heritage. At the end of the article it is considered how these conflicts can be resolved with the participation of women. It is worth noting that a quick solution to problems should not be expected. Before exploring the participation of women in political and peacebuilding processes, it is necessary to address violations of women's basic human rights. For this purpose, it is obligatory to educate the general population on the need to respect women's rights as well as the importance of the realization of women in the professional sphere.

KEY WORDS: ***woman and peacebuilding, woman inclusion, woman participation, North Caucasus, unresolved conflicts***

INTRODUCTION / THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

That women are singled out as a separate subject in peacebuilding indicates problems. Gender issues remain relevant in many areas of life. Investigating the overall influence of women on public processes, policies and decisions of authorities provides insight into the relationship between women and peacebuilding in Russia.

Utopia magazine analyzed the number of women in power in the regions of Russia. The average number of women in government agencies in the country is 20.5% [1]. In the World Economic Forum ranking of gender equality in the political sphere, Russia ranks 122nd out of 152, located between Sierra Leone and Morocco [2]. The representation of women in the Parliaments of the North Caucasian republics is extremely low: 7.7% in Dagestan, 0% in Chechnya, 12.5% in Ingushetia, 11.4% in North Ossetia, 18.6% in Kabardino-Balkaria, 16% in Karachay-Cherkessia, 14.3% in Adygea (as well as 11.8% in Krasnodar Krai, 8% in Stavropol Krai). Also, the available data does not allow us to analyze whether these females actually participate in the activities of their respective parliament, or whether they hold these positions on the basis of kinships with influential men whose views they must support.

There is another problem. Generally in Russia, particularly in the North Caucasus, a deeply rooted culture of violence is widespread. Once you begin to understand this issue, the low level of humanism in society as a whole quickly becomes clear, and how deeply the culture of violence is rooted in the mentality. According research from Levada Center in 2021, fifty seven percent of Russians believe the death penalty should be restored to its previous level with some suggesting an expansion of its use [3]. The General attitude towards the death penalty is one of the indicators of the humanity of a society and how far it has gone from the principles of the "laws of Hammurabi". For the period from January to September 2019, according to the Rissian Ministry of Internal Affairs, 15,381 crimes were committed against women in the area of family and domestic relations [4]. Every year in Russia, between twelve and fourteen thousand women die from family and domestic violence. For a numerical comparison, consider that the losses of Soviet troops for 10 years of the war in Afghanistan amounted to 13,835 people. A study by Novaya Gazeta and Mediazona showed that seventy nine percent of Russian women convicted of premeditated murder between 2016 and 2018 defended themselves against domestic violence and ninety one percent of women who were convicted of murder in 2011 – 2018 for exceeding the limits of necessary defense, were defending themselves from partners and male relatives [5]. Sixty one percent of Russian citizens, according to a study by the Mikhailov & Partners agency, consider it acceptable to beat their children for educational purposes [6].

INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMS AND RELIGION ON MENTALITY

The North Caucasus region is inhabited mainly by patriarchal traditional peoples, and this has a direct impact on the position of women in society. This region is mostly inhabited by ethnic Muslims (with the exception of North Ossetia) which affects the mentality of the people. According to the 2002 Census, 94% of the inhabitants of Dagestan, 96% of Chechnya, 98% of Ingushetia, 70% of Kabardino-Balkaria and 55% of Karachay-Cherkessia are Muslims. Over the past nineteen years, the influence of Islam has increased. This is important as increasing numbers of people in the North Caucasus are drawn to Islam and try to comply with its prescriptions. At the same time, many study religion only through social networks and the speeches of mullahs who often preach problematic ideologies, including sexist or misogynistic ideas. For example, the hadith of Tirmizi allegedly says: *"Men will disappear if they obey women; A nation that has entrusted its affairs to a woman can never be successful; If your rulers are the best of you, your rich are the generous of you, and your affairs [will be decided] in council among themselves, then the top of the earth is better for you than its bottom. But if your rulers are the worst of you, your rich men are the greedy of you, and your women will manage your affairs, then the bottom of the earth is better for you than its top."* Important note: I do not conduct research on the reliability of these hadiths, we are only talking about the fact that they are distributed in this society.

In most families of the Caucasus region, girls are taught from childhood that their main goal is to become a good wife and mother, that a woman can only be realized and receive social recognition in this way, and even if given a good education the family should still be a woman's priority. Unfortunately, I have not found any sociological research on this topic, but I can corroborate these ideas based on experiential knowledge. I grew up in this social environment and I have been engaged in activities related to the gendered problems of Caucasian females for several years where I communicated with many women who shared the following experiences:

- the prohibition on education or forced education (an obligation to study the profession chosen by the parents);
- forced marriages, early marriages and bride kidnapping;
- female circumcision;
- lack of sexual freedom and the "cult of virginity";
- restriction of freedom of movement;
- the obligation to follow traditional and religious norms;
- persecution of those with an alternative view of life (manhunt), and
- so called Honor killings.

These common problems unite Caucasian women from many ethnic groups. A considerable number of girls flee the region to protect their basic human rights. Preoccupation with personal safety and other basic human rights prevent participation in political processes.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACEBUILDING PROCESSES AND VITAL CHALLENGES

The need for women's participation in peacebuilding has been noted by the United Nations (UN). In one of his speeches, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres noted:

> *"Women are critically important peacebuilders and I am strongly committed to their inclusion in all peacebuilding processes. The United Nations' 7-point Action Plan on women's participation in peacebuilding sets out measures to increase financing for gender-responsive peacebuilding, to expand women's access to decision-making and to improve gender-sensitive analysis and planning. Gender-related issues must remain at the forefront of this debate. And our commitment to parity is very much in line with it"* [7].

Guterres surmised that in some fundamental ways, our world is moving backward. We see horrific violations of human rights and rising nationalism, racism and xenophobia, inequalities are increasing; and whole regions, countries and communities can find themselves isolated from progress and left behind by growth. Women and girls face discrimination of all kinds. These trends can be seen in the Caucasus region as well.

However, in research by Mary O'Reilly, Andrea O'Suilleabhain and Thania Paffenholz (2015), they concluded that peacebuilding and reconciliation processes are more successful and are likely to last longer when women are actively involved in them [8]. Despite the rules established by international treaties, women around the world, as a rule, do not participate in negotiations or peacebuilding strategies globally. The representation of women in various fields yields higher results than with the representation of only men. So, American researchers Rajesh Aggarwal and Nicole Boyson from the Northeastern University of Business, with reference to the Thomson Reuters database, analyzed the results of more than nine thousand hedge funds owned by sixty two investment companies, where the gender of portfolio managers was known, in the period from 1994 to 2013. Experts found that all companies led by women showed higher returns than those led by men [9]. However, these indicators should not be a decisive factor in the admission of

women to traditionally male occupations. Females should have the same access to business or political processes as males, on the basis that they are full members of society.

Marina Simonyan and Irina Grigoryan participated in an interview for Community of Democracies, a global intergovernmental coalition composed of the Governing Council Member States that support adherence to common democratic values and standards outlined in the Warsaw Declaration. They expressed the following opinion [10]. Irina Grigoryan heads a local organization that deals with peace negotiations between Armenian NGOs and representatives of civil society in Azerbaijan. Marina Simonyan is from the Republic of Artsakh, a lawyer by profession. She claims that she has lived almost her entire life in conflict and peacemaking is her way of life: *"Many women were members of our organizations, as well as partner organizations, and we had the opportunity to work only with women within the League of Caucasian Women. This organization was supported by the Heinrich Bell Foundation, and our task was to strengthen the role of women in the regions of the South Caucasus,"* the interview says. However, then everything slowed down, and the negotiations held under the auspices of the Minsk Group reached an impasse. *"We faced a heavy disappointment in 2015, when the Azerbaijani government launched a political investigation of the participants of the meetings within the framework of the dialogue. Because of this problem, all our projects and contacts were completely canceled,"* Grigoryan says. In addition, Grigoryan also notes problems with financing – the implementation of such projects requires certain resources, and without them further activities are difficult, or even impossible.

Research by D. J. Christie, R. V. Wagner and D. A. Winter notes that gendering peace psychology means that peace psychology has not, in the past, been sufficiently conscious of gender biases, due to a predominance of men's thinking and perspectives [11]. Therefore, the discipline has patriarchal, or male-biased, assumptions and perspectives that need to be challenged through incorporation of feminist perspectives and thinking. Gender injustice is noted in the following question. Who is injured and dies more during wars? Most people, men and women, following patriarchal thought, will answer that these are combat soldiers, who are mostly men. In fact, the predominant victims of today's wars, estimated at up to ninety-five percent, are civilians, who are mainly women and children. This demonstrates society's decision to ignore the problems and suffering of women, focusing all attention on men. Similarly, the role of male peacebuilders is more noticeable, while women remain in the shadows. For example, Hanan Ashwari of Palestine who has been a leading spokeswoman for brokering peace in the Middle East, or Monica McWilliams of Northern Ireland who founded the Northern Ireland Women's Coali-

tion (NIWC) and other females. The research notes that the real work of peacebuilding requires that local people seek solutions in their communities, regions, and nations rather than outsiders imposing their approaches. Grassroots women's peace groups tend to center peacebuilding actions on nonviolence; recognition of, and respect for, human rights; promotion of intercultural tolerance and understanding; and women's empowerment in economic, social, cultural and political spheres. Women's full participation is stressed in all of these processes. For many grassroots women's groups, peacebuilding means securing food for the family and a future for children. The rationale for grassroot women's organizing is often based on beliefs that women are by nature – often because they are mothers – more caring, peaceful, and nonviolent. Women often criticize patriarchal behavior encouraged by religion, such as the dominance of women by men in the church hierarchy. During the war in Chechnya in the late XX–early XXI century, the organization "Committee of Soldiers' Mothers" challenged the practice of forced conscription. They resisted the forced conscription of their sons in Chechenya. They also pressured the Russian government for a nonviolent solution to the conflict, challenged the military authority of the State, and demanded radical reform of the Russian Army [12].

Of interest to my research is an analytical table by Susan McKay, presented below [13].

Table 1
Distinction between direct and structural violence against woman by Susan McKay (2004).

	Direct Violence	**Structural Violence (indirect)**
Unorganized: violence occurs from individual acts at the micro-level	**Cell 1** Violence from rape, partner battering, verbal/emotional abuse by partner and family members, "honor" killings. Exposure to sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, during and after armed conflicts from partners or individual acts of rape. Harassment, injury, and murder of women and girls in post-war societies.	**Cell 2** Fewer household resources compared with boys and men, compromised health because of poor-quality water, food, and housing. Environmental damage that affects quality of life and life span. Lack of personal and political freedom of choice. Forced marriage. Difficulty marrying post-war due to stigma, shame, and psychological trauma resulting from forced maternity. Lack of economic opportunities. Prostitution for economic survival and to feed children. Pressure to wear garments to cover the head and body despite personal choices.
Organized: at institutional / societal (macro) levels	**Cell 3** Violence from military or other organized groups including murder, beatings, abductions, systematic rape with high risk for sexually-transmitted diseases, forced abortions, gender-specific torture, abductions into a fighting force, sex slavery, physical and psychological assaults. Gendered effects of land mines planted as a military maneuver. Sex trafficking. Female genital excision.	**Cell 4** Neglect during formal disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes. Exclusion or marginalization within peace negotiations and post-conflict peace accords. Lack of decision-making authority within political and economic systems. Inability to participate in elections and public life. Lack of gender justice. Religious-based oppression. Lack of access to skills training, schooling, primary health care, and reproductive health services.

I was surprised at the congruence between the phenomena listed here and those I listed at the beginning of the article. Many of the features listed here are characteristic of the peoples of the Caucasus to one degree or another. Usually, in regions where there is a war, the situation with women's rights is extremely sad. Until the issue of women's security is resolved, there can be no question of their participation in policies and peace-building processes. The problems of armed conflicts are not relevant for the North Caucasus region at this moment as there are none, but the contradictions and tensions that exist now can lead to armed conflicts in the future.

INTERETHNIC CONFLICTS IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS. CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

In recent months, people in Russia are increasingly talking about interethnic conflicts. From January to August 2021, an increase in interethnic and religious conflicts have been recorded, although in previous years there was a clear trend towards their decline, said member of the Human Rights Court (HRC) Alexander Brod, presenting a report on manifestations of aggressive xenophobia and radical nationalism in Russia in 2021 [14]. Vladimir Putin expressed Thoughts that interethnic conflicts are provoked from abroad and urged to prevent the transfer of interethnic conflicts to Russia from there. *"Despite the fact that economic and political reasons lie at the heart of most of the hot conflicts abroad, they are additionally fueled by interethnic and religious intolerance,"* the head of state stated, speaking at a meeting of the Presidential Council on Interethnic Relations [15]. *"We see how attempts are made in various regions to disrupt the stability of interethnic and interreligious relations. Serious grants are allocated for these purposes"*, – stressed the deputy head of the Public Chamber's commission for the harmonization of interethnic and interreligious relations, Mufti Albir Krganov. In his opinion, President Putin acts as a guarantor that ethnic conflicts will not break out like they did in the early 1990s. *"The President constantly draws the attention of the responsible structures to the need to preserve the unity of the country, to prevent discord on ethnic and religious grounds"*, – the mufti stressed.

I agree there is an increase in interethnic conflicts, but it is hardly possible to agree they are somehow resolved. According to the latest amendments to the Constitution, Russians are a "state-forming people". However, the so-called state-forming people do not tolerate other people living in Russia. Moreover, the Russian population is intolerant of itself. For example, city dwellers (especially in Moscow and St. Petersburg) treat rural dwellers with contempt and residents of larger cities treat visitors from more distant regions with contempt (even if they are Russians). Everyone is different, but these trends are hard to miss. What then can be a tolerant attitude towards people of other nations? Very often in advertisements for rental housing one can see the condition "only for the Slavs". In December 2021, one of the main sites for placing ads for rental housing "Cian" banned this proviso, which caused a storm of indignation with users leaving angry comments and its rating in the App Store and in Google Market dropping significantly in a few days [16]. Notably, not even minority people in Russia are tolerant. Often, every small ethnicity treats others with contempt, especially those living in the same neighborhood. For some, this is manifested to a greater extent, for others to a lesser extent. In crime reports, it is often found among representatives of some peoples of the North Caucasus: Chechens and Dagestanis. In November 2021, Chechnya introduced a bill banning the discussion of the nationality of criminals. Amendments to the State Duma were made

by the Chechen Parliament. The head of the republic Ramzan Kadyrov said earlier that the media deliberately focus on incidents involving Caucasians [17]. Repeated mentioning of the Caucasian peoples in the media in a negative light forms a generally negative attitude towards members of the group. This is unethical, especially when the nationality of only Caucasian criminals is mentioned. In absolute terms, ethnic Russians commit most of the crimes since, according to the 2010 Census, 77% of the population of Russia are Russians but their ethnicity is omitted in crime reports.

Next, I will turn to the coverage of interethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus. I will immediately make a reservation that I am relying on my own observations and experiences, and the experiences of my contacts, since there is almost no relevant sociological and political science research on the topic, and the problems in existing research are not fully disclosed. The North Caucasus can be conditionally divided into two parts, not so much geographically as mentally: the eastern (the Republic of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia) and the western (the republics of North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and Adygea, as well as the Stavropol and Krasnodar Krai).

There are two main reasons for interethnic conflicts: 1) claims to the territory, 2) claims to cultural and historical heritage. In the historical context, it should be borne in mind that in the 18^{th}–19^{th} centuries the Russian Empire waged a war with some Caucasian peoples to seize their territory. They used various political methods to instigate quarrels among the neighboring peoples who had previously lived in a relatively peaceful state. The Soviet Union planted many territorial "time bombs" during the administrative-territorial division of lands in the period after the Great Revolution of 1917. At that time, no one imagined the Soviet Union was not eternal or that it would not be possible to bring communism to all the peoples of the world. As for the claims to cultural heritage, the mistake of the Soviet authorities was that instead of establishing truth and objectivity, it was customary to "hush up" problems, instead of solving them. In the end, this led to the accumulation of tensions. Consider the following example: people N and people K have competing claims to the national costume. How could the state stop the further development of the conflict? Scientific ethnographic research could be conducted to find sources that previously mentioned the costumes of these peoples such as works of art (e.g., paintings, engravings, or sculptures). The state either ignores the conflict altogether (perhaps because this confrontation is beneficial to it), or it declares: "Let's live together! Let this suit simply be called Caucasian!" This does not solve the problem. One nation concluded for itself, that anyone can appropriate their culture in this way, and they cannot defend against this in any way. Another people concluded for themselves,

that they can steal whatever they want, and they will get everything, so long as there is no conflict. Of course, not all representatives of the people who "stole the culture" realize that this is, in fact, not their culture. A particular person or group of people creates these false ideas, and everyone else picks up these lies and spreads them. And in the end, everyone is sure that this has always been their cultural element. To many peoples, this may seem ridiculous, when someone arrange conflicts over some things, animals, clothes, plates, daggers, etc.

There is an explanation for this phenomenon. Minority peoples understand that they can disappear from the face of the earth if they do not protect their language and culture, and if they do not protect their original culture, their uniqueness and identity can be erased. One Caucasian peoples have lost so much in battles, wars and revolutions (while others not have taken part in the war at all), so today they are trying to preserve what little remains. For example, as a result of the war of 1763 – 1864, the Circassians (official sources indicate other dates, however, the Circassians themselves date the war to these years) lost a significant part of the population, and most of those who remained alive were deported to other countries, thus, today ninety percent of the Circassian population lives in diasporas outside the historical homeland. Seven hundred and sixteen thousand Circassians live in Russia, in Turkey, according to various sources, from two to three million [18], in Jordan two hundred forty thousand, in Syria fifty five thousand, as well as about one hundred forty thousand scattered in twelve other countries. Along with large human losses, there were also significant losses of cultural heritage. Nowadays Circassians are trying in every possible way to restore, preserve and develop their culture. In the "golden age" of Circassian culture, when this people were not yet exhausted by war, no one disputed its ideological hegemony. Many neighboring peoples imitated them; some languages have preserved expressions confirming this. The culture of the Circassians is also praised by famous Russian poets. Many historical sources also record the relative wealth of their culture, their free fighting spirit. Of course, it is also not useful to embellish the history of this or that nation. At all times there were dishonest people, as well as some customs that were previously considered normal, today we deem to be wild. However, it is worth looking at the situation from the other side. Every representative of a small group wants to believe that he is a descendant of great ancestors. Not every person understands that it is not enough to boast of the past, it is necessary to achieve success today. When the history and culture of your people is not so rich and interesting, you want to appropriate some achievements for yourself, and there is nothing left but to declare that your neighbors stole it from you. From the outside, all this may seem extremely strange and an ignorant person may not immediately understand who stole what from whom.

Well, since we have already mentioned the Circassians, we will begin to analyze interethnic conflicts with them. Other peoples call them "Circassians", and they call themselves "Adyghe". The Adygs live in three republics: Adygea, Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria (Adyghe, Circassians and Kabardians are essentially one people). To this day, many are dissatisfied with the division of one people into three republics. The Circassians have the most disputes with the Karachais and Balkars. The latter consider themselves a single people because of the common Turkic language, but it should be noted that the tendency towards their unity has existed only in the last decade. It should also be noted that, according to some historians, their unity is questionable, since the sources indicate their different ethnogenesis (these two peoples did not historically intersect), and this is also evidenced by the absence of their single self-name. The unity of the Circassians is also questioned due to the presence of 12 sub-ethnic groups (some of them have already disappeared due to war and deportation), but this is explained by the location in a large territory of the western part of the North Caucasus, from the Black Sea coast to the present Mozdok near the Terek River, and the large population in pre-war times. First existing problem is territorial claims.

The Karachais and Balkars claim that they are the autochthonous people of the Caucasus but simultaneously they recognize themselves as a Turkic people. They do not recognize the sources where it is written that the Karachais arrived in the Caucasus in the 16th century from the vicinity of the Crimea. The Circassians believe that they were allowed to live in these territories; they did not conquer any territories in order to consider them their own and in the sources it is not recorded that they were at war with anyone. Later, after the war with the Russian Empire, they were given the territories conquered from the Circassians. There are sources that say that the Karachais were a peaceful pastoralist people who did not have the resources to conduct any conquests, however, the Karachais do not agree with this. In recent years, the idea that they are the descendants of the Alans, a war-like people who once lived in the Caucasus, has been actively promoted. However, on this basis, the Karachais and Balkars had a conflict with the Ossetians, since they consider themselves the descendants of the Alans. Even the official name of their republic is "North Ossetia - Alania". The Ingush, who belong to the Vainakh group, also claim the title of descendants of the Alans, while the Chechens, who also belong to the Vainakh group, do not claim the title of descendants of the Alans. At the same time, there are sources that say the Alans were Christians and fought with Muslims (note: Karachais and Balkars are Muslims, and Ossetians adhere to the original religion or Christianity). If this information is confirmed, it is likely that the Ossetians are their descendants.

One of the main reasons for conflict between Karachais and Circassians is horse breeding. The Circassians believe that they have been breeding horses from time immemorial. Today there is a Kabardian horse breed the Circassians call it in their own language "Adyghesh", that is, the Adyghe horse. However, before the war there were many breeds: tram, shaulakh, bechkan, kudenet, krymshokal, zheshti, abuk, hagundoko, shejaroko, achatyr, and shagdi – by the names of princes who had herds. The horses that have survived to this day are called uniformly "Kabardian", since it was in Kabarda that horse breeding was most developed. In addition to horses, leather craft was actively developed; the Circassians also developed a unique Circassian saddle making, which was as convenient as possible for a warrior rider. Both horse breeding and saddle are mentioned in many sources, both artistic and ethnographic, as well as pictures of Circassian horsemen and their horses. For a people who were forced to always be at war, a horse as a comrade is a necessity. With the advent of Soviet power, tribal books of Kabardian horse breeding began to be kept. The Karachais believe that this breeding, in fact, belongs to them, and that these horses were "rewritten" to the Kabardians during the Second World War, when the Karachais were forcibly deported to Kazakhstan. However, the registration of the Kabardian horse was carried out even before the beginning of the Second World War, so this statement is easily refuted. In earlier times, the Karachais did not need to have a hardy fighting horse capable of traveling 100 kilometers a day. The position of the Circassians is as follows: after the First World War, where Kabardian horses were actively involved, the state considered it necessary to open two stud farms for breeding the Kabardian breed: the Malkinsky stud farm in Kabardino-Balkaria and the Malokarachaevsky stud farm in Karachay-Cherkessia. The Malokarachaevsky stud farm became a bone of contention, since it was there that the Kabardian horse breed became "Karachaevsky". They also managed to lobby their interests and register the Karachai breed in one of the agricultural academies in the 1990s. It is to this registration that the Karachais appeal, proving their position, but this academy did not have the authority to register the breed. The above is only a brief essence of the conflict, more detailed information on horse breeds and selection in agriculture can be found in specialized sources.

The national costume serves as the basis for the following conflicts. In the North Caucasus, the costume of almost all peoples looks similar (the exception is the Dagestan peoples). However, the men's suit both in the South and in the North Caucasus is called "cherkeska", which indicates the borrowing of this element from the Circassians. It would be logical to assume the Circassian women's costume was borrowed. Most of the North Caucasus adopted the Circassian women's and men's costumes. However, Karachais, Balkars, Ossetians, Chechens, Ingush all consider the women's national costume they wear as their own. Especially from of the Karachais and Balkars, it sounds strange, since they consider themselves to be a Turkic people, but the costumes of other Turkic peoples are different. There are some differences (e.g., in sleeves, hats, fasteners of women's suits), but there are has some constant characteristics.

The next reason for disagreement is the Nart epic. A limited number of peoples of the world have an epic, so this is another factor of uniqueness and national identity. Several peoples at once claim the "authorship" of the Nart epic: Circassians, Ossetians, and Karachais. All three versions of the epic are very similar in the plot and the names of the heroes. It is obvious that, initially, the epic belonged to one particular people.

Another bone of contention: national music and dance. The dances and music of the peoples of the North Caucasus look and sound similar, so the ignorant do not understand their varieties and call all Caucasian dances "lezginka". However, this dance originated from the name of one of the Dagestan peoples – Lezgins. The most choreographically rich peoples in the Caucasus are Georgians in the South Caucasus and Circassians in the North Caucasus (each has more than ten types of dances). National dishes are another reason for conflict. Who came up with which dish before, and who adopted and modified it? These disputes seem strange, because the dishes "something in the dough / on the dough / under the dough / etc." (khychins, dalyan, khachapuri, khinkali, gutab, fytchin, galnash, Ossetian pies, chudu, kutaby, etc.) exist among peoples around the world. It is especially strange to argue about dishes stuffed with potatoes, because potatoes appeared in the Caucasus in the late 19th – early 20th century.

Territorial disputes are one of the main problems in interethnic relations. As noted earlier, with the advent of Soviet power, territories were divided differently from historical maps. For example, Mozdok entered the territory of North Ossetia, although the population there is Kabardian. There are also conflicts between Ingush and Ossetians, as well as Ingush and Chechens. The Ingush claim is that they were deported to Kazakhstan, but when they were returned to their homeland, the Ossetians did not want to give them their land. The Chechens, as a more numerous people, infringe on the interests of the Ingush. Attempts to change the borders between Ingushetia and Chechnya sparked a wave of protests in Ingushetia in 2018 [19].

In Dagestan, as in the entire Caucasus, all peoples have conflicts with everyone with whom they have a common border. Further, the largest and longest conflicts will be briefly indicated. The conflict between the Chechens and the peoples of Dagestan (mainly Avars and Kumyks).

Aukh question: In 1921, Aukh was included in the Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, despite the desire of the Akkintsy to join the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. According to another version, the reason for the entry was the fear of the Akkians to lose their winter pastures on the territory of the present Khasavyurt district. In 1944, Akka Chechens were deported to Central Asia, and the area of their historical residence was renamed Novolaksky and inhabited by Laks. Two other villages were inhabited by Avars. In 1956, the Chechens (including the Akkintsy) began to return to their historical homeland, and the question of returning their lands to them arose [20].

Before the deportation of the Chechens in 1944, the village of Leninaul was part of the Aukh region, where the Akka Chechens traditionally lived. After their forcible resettlement to Central Asia, the region as a whole was renamed Novolaksky, and the Laks from the Laksky and Kulinsky districts were resettled in the vacated lands. Specifically, the settlements of Leninaul and Kalininaul entered the Kazbekovsky district where they were settled by residents of the Avar village of Almak. In recent years, conflicts have often erupted on the border between Dagestan and Chechnya over these territories [21]. In addition to territories, conflicts are caused by the personality of Imam Shamil. Some (Dagestani peoples) consider him a hero, while the attitude of the Chechens varies from "yes, he was once good, but not a saint" to "traitor".

The conflict between Laks and Kumyks: In the town of Karaman, where clashes have regularly erupted for more than fifty years due to unsettled land relations between Kumyks and Laks. At the same time, residents of the Kumyk villages of Alburikent, Kyakhulai and Tarki are asking to recognize themselves as a repressed people and return their territories. The evidence of the Kumyks are historical documents. In 2012, there was a clash here, during which people from both sides were injured. Since then, the tension has decreased little because the authorities did not receive an official response to the claims of the parties, meaning the conflict continues to smolder [22].

Separately, we can consider the claims of the Lezgins to Azerbaijan, which, after the collapse of the USSR, passed a significant part of southern Dagestan along with the Lezgins living there [23]. For a long time Azerbaijan applied the policy of assimilation to them, but after the war in Karabakh it began the policy of multinational republic. According to the Lezgins themselves, the principle was originally: "Tats, Lezgins and Avars of Azerbaijan are the same Azerbaijanis," thereby depriving small peoples of the right to learn their native languages.

HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Today we are faced with the question: "How do we resolve these conflicts before they become armed?" The answer to this question will not be easy to find, the named conflicts do not have quick solutions. As for the cultural and historical aspect: I see the solution in conducting the most objective research in which independent impartial scientists will be involved. Territorial disputes cannot be resolved without the dissatisfaction of any side as any attempts to change the existing borders will cause a violent reaction. Returning to the topic of this article, I would like to note that for women to participate in any peace process, they must be recognized as full-fledged members of society. Accordingly, what can we do now so that the voices of women are heard in society:

1. Develop state and public mechanisms to protect women from male violence. At the moment, feminist-activists are promoting the idea of the need to adopt a law on domestic violence, but men, and in particular the church, are resisting [24];
2. Support girl's access to education (both schooling and college and university education);
3. Educate the general population on the need to respect women's rights, the ideas of self-respect, as well as the importance of the realization of women in the professional sphere. To do this, it is necessary to use various resources: publishing articles on the Internet, holding forums and conferences on these topics, and supporting bloggers who work on women's issues in the Caucasus. It is possible to appeal to the history of peoples whose "Amazon women" were a normal phenomenon in the past (as an example of the fact that the bravery and courage of women in the old days was not censured). The Nart epic contains examples of brave and wise women. Also, in the myths and legends of some peoples of the North Caucasus, there are stories about women warriors, which does not correspond to modern ideas about the image of a mountain woman, submissive and silent. Popularizing these bold feminine images will help promote ideas about the power of women in society.

Society convinces the women of the Caucasus that respect for them is possible if the following aspects are observed: become a wife and a housewife; become a mother (preferably with many children). However, respect for any person begins with respect for his basic human rights and human dignity. If a person needs to play a certain role expected from society, to adhere to the expected behavior model in order to have a voice, this cannot be called respect. If a woman needs to give birth to someone, so that she is respected and appreciated, so that people begin to

listen to her opinion; if society perceives her only as a mother, and not as a specialist, not as politicians, not as a full-fledged person who has all the opportunities for self-realization; if she cannot control her life, make her own decisions, this is not respect. Therefore, first of all, it is necessary to strive for the recognition of women as full-fledged individuals, and only after that can we talk about women's participation in political processes.

REFERENCES

[1] Chiknaeva, Vita. 16.03.2021 "Управленческий патриархат: сколько женщин находится у власти в России" Утопия. Last accessed 28.11.2021 https://mediautopia.ru/story/upravlencheskij-patriarxat-skolko-zhenshhin-naxoditsya-u-vlasti-v-rossii/

[2] World economic forum. "Global Gender Gap Report 2020". Last accessed 28.11.2021 https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

[3] 25.06.2021 "Смертная казнь и преступность" АНО Левада-Центр. Last accessed 19.12.2021 https://www.levada.ru/2021/06/25/smertnaya-kazn-i-prestupnost/

[4] 25.11.2019 "В МВД назвали число пострадавших от домашнего насилия женщин" РБК. Last accessed 19.12.2021 https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/5dd6844f9a794787117e082d

[5] Zhukova, Larisa. Kryukov, Dmitriy. Mishuk, Ekaterina. Skovoroda, Egor. Shishaev, Arseniy. 25.11.2019 "«Я тебя сейчас, сука, убивать буду». Большинство женщин, осужденных за убийство, защищались от домашнего насилия" Медиазона. Last accessed 19.12.2021 https://zona.media/article/2019/11/25/women-105

[6] 1.06.2021 "Проект «Мы считаем». Социологическое исследование «Воспитание и наказание: взгляд поколений». Тезисы и комментарии. Физическое наказание – допустимо ли применять в воспитании детей?" Михайлов и партнеры. Last accessed 19.12.2021 https://m-p-a.ru/proekt-%C2%ABmyi-schitaem%C2%BB.-socziologicheskoe-issledovanie-%C2%ABvospitanie-i-nakazanie-vzglyad-pokolenij%C2%BB.-tezisyi-i-kommentarii.html

[7] 24.08.2019 "Remarks to the General Assembly high-level meeting on peacebuilding and sustaining peace" Official United Nations website. Last accessed 12.12.2021 https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2018-04-24/peacebuilding-and-sustaining-peace-remarks-general-assembly

[8] O'Reilly, Marie. Ó Súilleabháin, Andrea. Paffenholz, Thania. June 2015. "Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes" New York: International Peace Institute. Last accessed 28.11.2021 https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IPI-E-pub-Reimagining-Peacemaking.pdf

[9] Aggarwal, Rajesh. Boyson, Nicole M. Edited by Bradford D. Jordan. April, 2016. " Special Issue: Hedge Funds: Performance, Disclosure, and Regulation" Boston, MA 02115, USA, Northeastern University Boston, D'Amore-McKim School of Business. Last accessed 28.11.2021 https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1058330016000148

[10] "Marina Simonyan & Irina Grigoryan, Nagorno-Karabakh" Community of Democracies, Women in Peacebuilding: Stories. Last accessed 28.11.2021 https://community-democracies.org/women/marina-simonyan-irina-grigoryan/

[11] Christie, D. J., Wagner, R. V., & Winter, D. A. 2001. "Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century" New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs.

[12] Rehn, Elisabeth. Johnson Sirleaf, Ellen. 2002. "Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building" New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women.

[13] McKay, Susan. 1.01.2004 "WOMEN, HUMAN SECURITY AND PEACEBUILDING, A FEMINIST ANALYSIS". In "Conflict and Human Security: A Search for New Approaches of Peace-building" edited by Hideaki Shinoda, Ho-Won Jeong, 152-175. Hiroshima: Hiroshima University, Institute for Peace Science. Last accessed 12.12.2021 https://www.peacewomen.org/node/89699

[14] 25.10.2021 "В России зафиксировали рост межнациональных и религиозных конфликтов" РИА Новости. Last accessed 19.12.2021 https://ria.ru/20211025/konflikty-1756125644.html

[15] Slivkov, Philipp. Rezchikov, Andrey. 31.03.2021 "Межнациональные конфликты в России провоцируют из-за рубежа" Взгляд, деловая газета. Last accessed 19.12.2021 https://yandex.ru/turbo/vz.ru/s/politics/2021/3/31/1092081.html

[16] Tyutina, Viktoria. Balashova, Anna. Yushkov, Mikhail. 6.12.2021 "ЦИАН запретит сдавать жилье «только славянам»" РБК. Last accessed 19.12.2021 https://www.rbc.ru/society/06/12/2021/61ae26bc9a79476dd667bc20

[17] Polyakova, Viktoria. 22.11.2021 "Чечня внесла законопроект о запрете указывать национальность преступников" РБК. Last accessed 19.12.2021 https://www.rbc.ru/society/22/11/2021/619b30ad9a794789e44acee9

[18] Danver, Steven L. 15.11.2015 "Native Peoples of the World: An Encyclopedia of Groups, Cultures and Contemporary Issues" p. 528. London and New York: Routledge.

[19] Baranovskaya, Marina. 4.10.2019 "Ингушетия спустя год после протестов: конфликт исчерпан?" Deutsche Welle. Last accessed 11.01.2022 https://www.dw.com/ru/ингушетия-спустя-год-после-протестов-конфликт-исчерпан/a-50691055

[20] 27.02.2019 "Дискуссия об Ауховском районе обозначила конфликтный потенциал проблемы" Кавказский узел. Last accessed 12.01.2022 https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/361218/

[21] Levchenko, Grigoriy. 12.06.2019 "Конфликт в Кизляре из-за границы между Чечней и Дагестаном. Главное" Медуза. Last accessed 26.12.2021 https://meduza.io/feature/2019/06/12/konflikt-v-kizlyare-iz-za-granitsy-mezhdu-chechney-i-dagestanom-glavnoe

[22] Nikolaeva, Polina. 22.07.2019 "ЖАРКОЕ ЛЕТО СЕМНАДЦАТОГО" Национальный акцент. Last accessed 26.12.2021 https://nazaccent.ru/content/24812-zharkoe-leto-semnadcatogo.html

[23] Adiev A. Z. 2009, Dissertation on the topic: "Этнополитические конфликты в Дагестане: особенности и механизмы урегулирования" ("Ethnopolitical conflicts in Dagestan: features and mechanisms of settlement"), Last accessed 26.12.2021 https://www.dissercat.com/content/etnopoliticheskie-konflikty-v-dagestane-osobennosti-i-mekhanizmy-uregulirovaniya

[24] 10.09.2019 "Православная Церковь выступила против принятия закона о "домашнем насилии" в России, который должен защитить женщин и детей" Весьма. Last accessed 26.12.2021 https://vesma.today/news/post/30748-rpts-vystupila-protiv?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fyandex.ru%2Fnews%2Fsearch%3Ftext%3D

VALERIYA ARSHBA

YOUTH AS A DRIVING FORCE IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES IN ABKHAZIA

Young people are generally regarded as important catalysts for the social and political development of societies. However, they cannot realize this potential for positive change to the same extent everywhere. The article highlights various structural, cultural and societal obstacles to the greater inclusion of young people in socio-political processes in Abkhazia. The unresolved conflict with Georgia, the dominance of ethnic identities, and the lack of a shared civic identity are the most important aspects, although not the only ones. Nevertheless, the article shows that youth inclusion is possible and outlines ways to further increase it in the future.

KEY WORDS: ***youth participation, Abkhazia, identity, youth policy, National Youth Parliament***

INTRODUCTION

It is an often expressed opinion that the active involvement of young people is a key factor in solving social and political problems. The role and place of young people in public affairs are determined primarily by their readiness to participate in the processes of state and social development. Therefore, we can safely say that supporting the young generation by attracting them to active participation in the life of society and the state should be considered as an investment in the development of the state's strategic resources. But how do youth perceive themselves?

The perception of one's existence in society depends on a vast number of aspects, be it the environment, education, or other essential needs. But a person's identity is also important. A partial answer to the question "What is identity?" would be "It is how one answers the question 'Who are you?'" or "My identity is how I define who I am." Identity refers to "people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others" (Abrams 1988: 2; Hogg 1987).

Ethnic identity is "a distinctive identity felt, shared, or claimed by individuals or a group, or ascribed to them, based on shared characteristics associated with a definition in terms of ethnicity and forming the basis for their subcultural or political

differentiation from other groups in a society"; and "civic identity involves the formation and negotiation of personal and group identities as they relate to presence, role, and participation in public life."[1] Ethnic identity is closely related to the traditions of previous generations and has not lost its relevance in modern society. Civic identity, in contrast, acts as an awareness of belonging to a community of citizens of a particular state and its common history, which has a prominent meaning for an individual. The concept of an ethnic and a civic community refers to the same collective subjects.

Every nationality in Abkhazia has an ethnic identity, referring to a specific historical past. The attitude of the young generation is inspired by such historical memories, which always refer to concrete experiences. Regarding the armed conflict in 1992–1993, this includes specific family tragedies and war traumas. But the identity of the citizens of Abkhazia does not include only the ethnic aspect; it is necessary to include a general civil component as well. There are historical experiences to be taken into account that are common to the whole population of Abkhazia. These are linked to the coexistence of different nationalities in the same territory. For instance, the Abkhaz youth, whatever the ethnic identity of a specific individual, is the product of major and long-term political processes, whether the collapse of the Soviet Union, the aggravation of ethnopolitical conflicts in Abkhazia since the end of the 1980s, or the formation of a new Abkhaz state.

The diversity of the ethnic composition of Abkhazia sets the task of intercultural dialogue, cooperation, mutual respect, and stability of interethnic relations. The task of educating a person who is both a representative of a certain ethnic group (the bearer of its culture) and a citizen of a country has become obvious. In other words, in conditions of multiethnicity and multiculturalism, it becomes necessary to cultivate both the ethnic and civic identities of individual citizens.

In Abkhazia, we can observe the imprint of traditional attitudes developed by young people, which can be considered outdated to some extent. The psychological pressure imposed on young people, based on reverence for elders and secrecy in the presence of adults, expresses itself in silent behavior, particularly because young people are not encouraged to express their thoughts openly. Such pressure impacts the civic awareness of young people, manifesting as difficulties analyzing situations independently and making autonomous decisions. At times, even defending one's personal point of view can be considered disrespectful. At Abkhaz State University, for instance, students do not sufficiently exercise their student

1 "Ethnic identity" in Oxford Reference. Last accessed on 21.12.2021. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095759523

rights and interests and, for the most part, do not reference provisions of the student charter.

Civil society in Abkhazia is divided into institutionalized and initiative groups. The first category is organized civil society, represented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Its main characteristics are autonomy and self-organization. The second category includes informally organized initiative groups – for example, a group of people, specialized in any sphere, who can analyze a problem and find a solution. In conditions of transitional statehood, institutions exist that are directly involved in the activities of civil society, while other groups can learn how to participate in such activities only over time, as a result of the consolidation of democracy (Gezerdava 2019: 5). In this regard, the active part of civil society encourages and teaches civic participation, and many attempts are made to draw attention to social and political problems. For example, amid the presidential elections in Abkhazia in 2004, some civil society organizations launched a public election observation campaign, which included workshops on competent observation. These organizations sought to involve the rest of society and therefore created a politically neutral Supervisory Commission, which was independent of political parties. This action had some positive effects, but it is also true that the small number of NGOs cannot cope with the large volume of tasks at hand.

Undoubtedly, the development of civic identity has a tremendous influence on social and political processes and on the formation of individual personalities, taking into account that the basic identity of the various communities in Abkhazia continues to remain mainly ethnic, referring to their specific origin. The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, followed by the war, brought the issue of national identity to the fore. The only partial international recognition of the Abkhaz state has created additional challenges, since it is difficult to create a nation in the modern sense based on ethnicity. To build a modern state, people of different ethnic origins must be integrated into a single community, one considered – and felt – to be the homeland by all community members – in this case, Abkhazia (Inal-Ipa 2015: 1–2).

"The current crisis compounds the need to nurture young human capital" (European Commission 2009: 2). Youth, according to UNESCO, is the period during which a person develops the capacities and social skills essential for future professional and social responsibilities. One of the most important elements influencing adolescent participation in society is level of interest. Gender, educational level, and place of residence can all influence the level of interest in becoming involved in society and in modes of participation (Gender and Educational Attainment 2017). Numerous studies have been conducted on youth participation in political life. According to

research performed on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the future of democracy is always uncertain because political participation by adults is driven by habits learned in adolescence, i. e., contemporary young people are the political leaders of tomorrow. In line with the disengagement paradigm, scholars worldwide have noted that young people are those least likely to vote in national elections, with youth membership in political parties on the decline as a consequence of a general lack of political interest. According to scholarly comparisons of past political attitudes and present behaviors, young people have historically been motivated to vote for certain candidates or to write to their elected representatives due to issues of concern to them. Modern youth, in contrast, address such issues through consumer actions, protests, and demonstrations, as well as through social networks, charitable fundraising, or volunteering at the community level (Lührman 2015).

The irreversible process of globalization, which has both positive and negative features, must be considered when assessing civic engagement by youth. As young people are the primary consumers of media-produced information, they should, according to UNESCO, become more active participants in the media rather than passive consumers (Asthana 2006). In the case of Abkhaz youth, the international isolation of Abkhazia and the prevailing siege mentality resulting from the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict have favored the use of digital technologies, whereby youth can be at once passive consumers of and active participants in the media, and through which they can familiarize themselves with different cultures around the world. Youth participation in Abkhazia is complex and specific, as the region is inhabited by a diversity of groups that greatly differ in their values and behavior. This prompts the following questions: Are Abkhaz youth capable of creating a civic idea? What main means are at their disposal to do so? Having identified several problems, their prerequisites, and their conditions, we will pursue answers to these questions for the purpose of determining the basic political position of youth in the Republic of Abkhazia. In this paper, we also raise questions concerning how to distinguish different attitudes among Abkhaz youth by focusing on their participation in public life, the obstacles they face to active participation, how they identify themselves in public and civic spheres, and the means they have at their disposal to become involved in the social and political spheres. These issues are analyzed through interviews.

IDENTIFICATION CHOICE OF THE YOUTH IN ABKHAZIA

Concerning civic participation, Abkhaz youth can be divided into three types: formally active, passively critical, and responsible. Formally active young people participate in official and public events and are engaged in career building, entailing their

adaptation to the established order. Passively critical young people, in stark contrast, are dissatisfied with their sociopolitical circumstances and skeptically or dispassionately observe the events and forces transpiring around them. Needless to say, such youth are not involved in Abkhaz politics, nor do they follow local news. Lastly, responsible young people are neither satisfied with their sociopolitical circumstances nor detached from or disinterested in them. That is, they are prepared to qualitatively change their circumstances by working to improve living conditions and engaging in civic affairs.

Some examples of responsible young people are volunteers who regularly participate in different social and public activities, and members of discussion groups or projects whose goal is to resolve societal problems, such as by helping vulnerable segments of the population. Many responsible young people are also active in environmental and cultural campaigns, such as initiatives intended to preserve Abkhaz historical and cultural heritage. A specific example in this regard is youth involvement in the excavation of Dacha Dunder, an archaeological site with tremendous historical significance. These responsible young people were actively involved in cleaning the site and staging an exhibition on the theme of "Sukhum Modern." Currently, the exhibition serves as an arena in which creative youth meet, share skills, hold lectures, and host evening events (Inal-Ipa 2015: 8–10).

In principle, it would not be difficult for Abkhaz youth to experience the sense of belonging to a single community despite the ethnic diversity of the republic. This is because of the prevalence of certain conditions in the region favorable to the development of a common, pluralistic civic identity. And yet, these conditions are counteracted by the predominance of numerous practical obstacles, such as ignorance of the official Abkhaz language as the state language, a problematic structure of interaction among national communities, and, most importantly, deficiencies in the ideological work of nation building. Concerning Abkhaz youth specifically, no unified youth policy presently exists. All of these factors undoubtedly hinder the generation of a single civic nation. As a result, when faced with problems, many young specialists experience uncertainty and doubt with respect to the extent to which their knowledge and skills are actually in demand in Abkhazia. This challenge – that of finding a rightful place in contemporary Abkhaz society – is pushing many Abkhaz young people out of the country.

Three main environments for the development of youth activity in Abkhazia can be identified: civic (related to NGOs), parastatal (related to governmental organizations), and political (related to different political parties) – and all three function under different rules. The civic environment provides an opportunity for the formation of a

civic identity. Actors in this environment pursue the goal of developing society in general and educating young people in particular to appreciate and exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms. Training and workshops on developing and implementing social projects for the benefit of society are one example of a civic environment. However, it is important to note that the non-governmental entities, be they international NGOs or pro-Georgian NGOs, have their own interests and agendas. Accordingly, Abkhaz youth should be just as well prepared to confront and repel political manipulation in this environment as any other.

The parastatal environment is one of the main sectors aimed at mobilizing and working with youth in Abkhazia. The governmental agencies and institutions that operate in this environment, such as the Department for Youth and Sports Affairs and the Administration for Youth and Sports Affairs, define and administer general youth policy in the country. That said, the parastatal environment is not yet fully developed in Abkhazia due to the absence of a clear and unified management system and proper government attention.

The political environment in and through which youth policy is implemented in Abkhazia consists of both ruling and opposition parties, each of which, in the context of Abkhaz youth, pursues its political goals via youth policies. In other words, for the political parties in Abkhazia, youth policy constitutes another way through which to attract public attention, appreciation, and respect.

Young people in Abkhazia have been mobilized in support of either the ruling or the opposition political party. For example, in 2018, representatives of the opposition party, "Amtsakhara," held the Forum of Abkhazian Youth, at which young people criticized the policies of the current government. In 2020, as a consequence of a political power struggle between the government and the opposition, the "Amtsakhara" opposition party took the helm. In the fall of 2021, representatives of the new opposition held a meeting with young people to discuss the current political situation. Such events were aimed at attracting broad support from young people for the opposition party and its policies.

Accordingly, we raise the issue of youth participation as the main nexus in the public and social life of Abkhazia. In this regard, we can observe the emergence of an active youth environment that may function competently and independently. According to the UNDP, the establishment of a National Youth Parliament favors the empowerment of active citizens at both local and national levels. It also provides an opportunity for Abkhaz youth to contribute to the framing of national policy through direct dialogue with parliamentarians. Such political education in democratic practices

should make young people more competent in deciding among alternatives as they can learn how to consider public issues and form their opinions on these issues in a judicious manner. The concept of youth evokes a sense of hope and aspiration, and a National Youth Parliament would be a good means to foster such sentiments. This is because it would endorse civic competences among young people. That said, how would it work in practice?

The National Youth Parliament is a program in which group discussions and role-playing techniques can be effectively implemented (UNDP 2019). Youth parliaments have been conceived as a means to reconnect young people with politics, give them a voice in public debates, and ultimately boost the legitimacy of the parliaments themselves as democratic institutions. Amid growing concerns that youth participation in formal politics is declining, youth parliaments provide a channel through which youth can proactively and positively engage with the parliamentary system while also benefiting themselves and their communities. In Europe in particular, youth parliaments have become a widespread phenomenon. Nearly every European country has established a youth parliament, and even though their institutional features vary greatly, they share the common goal of fostering political engagement among young people by giving them a voice (Matthieu et al. 2020: 4–5). The creation of a National Youth Parliament in the Republic of Abkhazia would constitute a solid foundation from which structured work by young people could be developed and facilitated.

YOUTH POLICY IN ABKHAZIA

Youth activism in Abkhazia is a complex phenomenon, one that includes many actors. Among Abkhaz youth, inconsistent value systems prevail, with contemporary youth exhibiting a range of perspectives and accompanying attitudes, from that of an indifferent spectator to that of a radical participant to that of a responsible actor in internal political and social events. About this, in-depth interviews allowed us to examine the issue of youth involvement in Abkhazia more closely and intimately.

The creation of a National Youth Parliament in Abkhazia, according to the interviewees, would be a valuable step toward the development of a kind of school for introducing young people to political life, for helping them to realize and exercise their abilities and skills, for teaching them to learn how to compete, and for establishing a dialogue with each other. However, the respondents noted the importance of ensuring that such an initiative originates with young people themselves. Otherwise, they feared, the activities of a National Youth Parliament would likely become an instrument exploitable by opposing political forces.

One of the respondents, an Abkhazian politician, stated that youth policy must constitute a preliminary exploration of the political and ideological policies of the state. The governmental concept of youth policy in Abkhazia is relatively vague. For instance, the Law on Youth Policy in Abkhazia, which came into effect in 2011, defines the legal basis for the formation and implementation of state youth policy and is intended to strengthen legal guarantees for the exercise of rights and freedoms by young citizens in the Republic of Abkhazia. And yet, there is no clear youth policy concept in the republic. This is a challenge, according to a representative of the Administration for Youth and Sports Affairs, for young people in Abkhazia. Domestic problems related to this challenge stem from the lack of a clear focus and understanding of youth policy. One civic society representative pointed out that there is no interest from either the state or other actors in the youth policy concept.

Although it is exceedingly difficult to assess the active or passive participation of young people in Abkhazia, one respondent from a civic society organization claimed that the youth of Abkhazia are mostly passive, for several reasons. First, there is a problem of mentality, since the traditional patriarchal consciousness prevalent in Abkhazia directly or indirectly influences the activities of young people. In a similar way, conservatism also hinders the development of youth participation. From the perspective of conservatism, it is difficult to give the same degree of attention to the opinions of young people as that afforded to the opinions of adults, and as such it is challenging to cultivate real dialogue between generations. Another reason for the prevalence of youth passivity in Abkhazia are limited educational prospects due to the isolation of the republic. Additionally, the principle of meritocracy is fundamentally absent. Therefore, young people feel neither involved in public affairs nor motivated to participate in the political life of the republic.

It is, however, possible to overcome such passivity among young people. For example, in Abkhazia, city youth houses exist that seek to contribute to the education of young people and to their training in civic competences. Their current and future development, however, largely depends on the extent to which conflicting conservative mechanisms can be bypassed to create a favorable environment for youth activities. The head of one youth organization in Abkhazia noted that international organizations have been working to sponsor activities among young people in Abkhazia in, for instance, the field of ecology or agricultural development. It is also necessary for the state to develop and successfully implement platforms aimed at enhancing interaction, involving young people in different projects concerning climate change, social development, education, charity, and administering working groups to unite young people from different regions in communal projects.

However, according to the head of one local youth organization, such enhanced interaction between parastatal institutions and NGOs is presently lacking.

According to a 2021 public opinion poll conducted among young people in the city of Sukhum by the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, most young people have no clear idea of what youth policy is nor what structures are responsible for its implementation. Nor are they aware of the ways in which they can participate in the public and political life of the country.

CONCLUSION

The issue of youth policy in Abkhazia is highly salient and yet conspicuously absent from the political agendas of decision makers in the Republic of Abkhazia. As such, Abkhaz young people are, in general, left to themselves. It is for this reason that youth organizations in the republic are for the most part scattered, dysfunctional, and insufficiently proactive. These problematic characteristics are attributable to a lack of prospects for personal development and education, the ineffectiveness of governmental organizations insufficient interaction and dialogue with youth concerning civic – and particularly political – issues, the absence of a clear youth policy, and a pervasive disinterest among political parties in the republic to pursue instrumental goals aimed at cooperating with Abkhaz youth. Needless to say, these problems have neither been sufficiently examined nor adequately discussed in Abkhazia.

REFERENCES

Asthana, Sanjay. 2006. "Innovative Practices of Youth Participation in Media. A Research Study on Twelve Initiatives from around the Developing and Underdeveloped Regions of the World." Paris: UNESCO.

Gender and Educational Attainment. 08.2017. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Last accessed 21.12.2021 https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida61xxxen-gender-and-educational-attainment.pdf

Gezerdava, Said. 2019. "Correlation of the Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia and International Standards in the Field of Freedom of Association: Significance for Civil Society." The Journal of Foreign Law and Comparative Law, no. 1: 5.

Hogg, Michael and Dominic Abrams. 1988. "Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes." Taylor & Frances/Routledge, 2.

Inal-Ipa, Arda. 2015. "Civil Nation and Youth Identification Choice." The Center for Humanitarian Programs: 1-2.

Inal-Ipa, Arda. 2015. "Civil Nation and Youth Identification Choice." The Center for Humanitarian Programs: 8-10.

Lührmann, Anna. 2015. "Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle UNDP: Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle." The United Nations Development Programme.

Matthieu, Joke, Julien Vrydagh, Didier Caluwaerts, and Silvia Erzeel. 2020. "The Democratic Credentials of Youth Parliaments. The Case of the Belgian Jeugd Parlement Jeunesse." The Journal of Legislative Studies.

Oxford Dictionary. Last accessed 21.12.2021. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english

Report on Youth Parliament. 2019. UNDP. Last accessed 21.12.2021. https://www1.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/UNV/Publications/NYP%202019%20Report.pdf

NAALA CHACHKHALIYA

STUDENT MOBILITY AS A MEANS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION IN ABKHAZIA

Education is the key to change. For many ages, educated individuals were the main source of ideas that favored the development of societies. In the globalized world of the XXI century, modern societies offer many educational opportunities to youth. One of these opportunities is the possibility to study abroad. The experience of student mobility gives young people the chance to enlarge their horizons, explore the world, establish networking ties, and contribute to their community's development. Unfortunately, not everyone has the chance to have such an experience. The younger generations from conflict regions belong to a less fortunate category of people. The Republic of Abkhazia is one of these countries. After the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992–1993, many sectors were damaged, one of them being the higher education sector. Abkhazia is in a so-called "educational blockade" due to their unresolved conflict with Georgia and the global community's refusal to recognize it. The lack of internationalization in various fields of higher education inevitably reflects negatively on Abkhazia's education system. The present paper aims at analyzing student mobility, as one vital element of internationalization. It reflects on international student mobility practices, explores experiences of Abkhazi youth and discusses how those experiences impact their value orientation and carrier perspectives.

KEY WORDS: ***internationalization, student mobility, higher education, Abkhazia, globalization***

INTRODUCTION

If one were to describe the 21st century in one word, the term used would likely have been globalization. This particular concept became widely used because it can be applied to every sector of our daily lives. As it is defined in scientific literature, "globalization is the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas across borders" (Knight 1997; de Wit 1997: 14). If we look deeper into the issue, we will see that globalization affects various dimensions of our lives in different ways. One of these ways can be referred to as internationalization. Sometimes the term is interchangeably used with globalization. In particular, internationalization is perfectly applicable to the sector of higher education. There is no single, generally

accepted definition of internationalization of higher education. The terms evolved over time. According to one definition, "internationalization is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society" (de Wit 2015: 3). This is a widely accepted definition of the internationalization of higher education.

Internationalization as a phenomenon has different dimensions and rationales. It rests on two separate, but related, pillars. This distinction makes it easier to establish patterns in internationalization and understand its complexity. First, "internationalization at home" refers to campus-based strategies that include the intercultural and international dimensions in the teaching learning process, research, extracurricular activities, relationships with local cultural and ethnic community groups, as well as the integration of foreign students and scholars into campus life and activities (Knight 2021: 23). Second, "cross border education" refers to student mobility, which occupies a central part in the pillar of cross border education. Students are earning a full degree abroad or participating in short-term – semester or year-abroad – exchange programs, internships, summer schools, and study tours (Knight 2012: 23). As a part of internationalization and globalization processes, student mobility is facilitated by collaborative programs between two or more universities.

Student mobility is a key to educational diversity. Students with the experience of studying abroad bring innovative ideas to their home countries, thus raising competitiveness in the market and stimulating development. The innovation aspect is highly relevant for less developed countries. Students who study abroad and return to their home country have an international experience. The relationships they established with their peers from abroad may pave the way for collaboration between two countries (Levent 2016). This is quite beneficial for less developed countries. Moreover, foreign students are also important for local economies in another way. In the globalized market, more and more new jobs are appearing that require skillful specialists. This may lead to a situation where international students are staying in a foreign country after completing their studies or moving to another country that may offer them a promising job that is not available in their home country. This labor mobility means that there is a risk of brain drain, which is detrimental for less developed countries that participate in the student mobility programs. This aspect can be considered as a threat or even a negative outcome, even if it is seen as a brain gain for richer countries and part of the creation of a larger economic space in Europe (Gerard 2017; Sanna 2017).

One may assume that student mobility being a priority for internationalization, and internationalization being inherent in globalization processes, is a byproduct of modern tendencies of the 21st century. In fact, student mobility takes its roots from ancient times. Internationalization and the mobility of scholars and students started with the Sophists in the Greek world, but these two elements were also part of the Roman and Islamic cultures and characteristic for the universities created in Europe during the Middle Ages. In the post-World War ll era, academic exchange was a tool of foreign policy. Later, with the creation of the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) Program in 1987, student mobility became an instrument of European integration. Such exchanges were strongly supported by national organizations, such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Germany and the British Council (Guruz 2008).

In the past, a study abroad experience was generally only possible for a privileged few. The situation has changed today, due to a number of initiatives on the European level. In May of 1998, the Sorbonne Declaration was signed. It aimed to harmonize academic services and the system of European higher education. In June of 1999, twenty-nine ministers in charge of higher education in Europe signed the Bologna Declaration. The implementation of the Bologna Declaration, with the help of different types of scholarships, cross-border study programs, and the convergence of educational policies among countries, improved the quality of higher education all over Europe. Student mobility is seen here as a major tool to promote peace among European countries and build a joint future. The 1999 meeting was followed by the Prague meeting of 2001, which was designed to define further directions of the Bologna process. The involvement of the European Commission demonstrates that this process is a policy instrument of the EU. The involvement of member states of the Council of Europe, such as Russia and Turkey, and the collaboration on the level of higher education, shows that it is a pan-European initiative.

Numerous structures are involved in this process. There is, for instance, the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), which is responsible for maintaining further development processes. The BFUG includes representatives from all participant countries, the EU Commission, and the Council of Europe, which is represented as a consultative member of the group (Guruz 2008). Another structure functioning within the European framework of higher education is the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). The EQAR has European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) as criteria and contains information on quality assurance agencies that comply with a common European framework.

Though student mobility was initially a means of sharing values and ideas among different cultures, it progressively became part of the economic policies of the participating member states of the Council of Europe. Countries that attract international students tend to have strong economies. The presence of foreign students at European universities has importance for the local economy. This is due to tuition fees that the students pay to the universities, and also to the costs for accommodation and other living expenses.

The history of student mobility practices results in distinct ways of approach in different countries. The outcomes are different, respectively. The present paper aims at analyzing student mobility experiences and perspectives in the Republic of Abkhazia, particularly how those processes impact the value orientation and carrier perspectives of the Abkhaz youth. The analysis itself is built on observing the current situation with student mobility in Abkhazia, depicted in the next section. The interviews are taken with three different categories of Abkhazian students: those who have experience of studying in Russia, those who have experience studying in the universities in the EU, and those who do not have experience studying outside of their country, as depicted in the third section. The paper concludes with recommendations.

STUDENT MOBILITY EXPERIENCES IN ABKHAZIA

To understand the present situation of student mobility practices and the work of universities in Abkhazia, one should refer to its history and current political status. Abkhazia is a small country located in the South Caucasus, still overcoming the outcomes of the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992–1993. In 2008, Russia recognized Abkhazia's independence, followed by recognition from a number of other countries, such as Nicaragua, Nauru, Venezuela, and Syria. Yet, it did not lead to a general form of recognition by the international community.

The conflict with Georgia remains unresolved and is being referred to as a frozen conflict. The only platform where Abkhazia may currently address its interests is the Geneva Discussions on Security and Stability in the Transcaucasus. The non-recognition attitudes within the international community of the Republic of Abkhazia provide handicaps for developing various sectors. Amongst others, due to passport issues, the citizens of the country cannot freely move across international borders. Thus, higher education institutions (HEIs) in Abkhazia became victims to the unresolved conflict and cut off from international academic exchange (Lowis 2020; de Whaal 2020). There are two main institutions of higher education in Abkhazia: the Abkhaz State University (ASU) and the Sukhum Open Institute (SOI). There are also musical, art, technical, and medical colleges. Close relationships with

Russia in different spheres resulted in a partial adaptation of Russian educational standards to the curricula of the ASU, and Russia became the main destination for students from Abkhazia, resulting in significant brain drain. For the higher education sector, the recognition of Abkhazia's independence led to the recognition of diplomas issued by ASU and to the provision of Russian scholarships to Abkhaz youngsters (Dzhikirba and Relitz 2020). The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Cultural Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) offers bachelor's and master's degrees to individual students from Abkhazia. There are, however, no one-semester exchange practices between universities in Russia and Abkhazia, as Russia offers, for example, Erasmus. Due to the vast Abkhazian diaspora in Turkey, this country is another destination for Abkhazian students. The flow of Abkhazian students to Turkey is lower than to Russia and there are also, in this case, no ties between the universities of those two countries. There was an attempt to enlarge the list of universities with whom ASU establishes relationships. One of the most remarkable examples took place in 2013 and 2014 and was provided by the Free University of Brussels (VUB) with the support of the European Union. The project activities included courses taught at ASU by lecturers from EU countries. About a thousand books were donated to the university's library. Later, the project came under political pressure and could not be continued (Coppieters 2021). Other initiatives were coming from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). There was, for instance, a TOEFL teaching course to enhance language learning, but the funding was cut in 2021. There is also Chevening, which the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office funded and which is available for students from Abkhazia to receive their master's degrees from universities in the UK. Other cross-border and internationalization at home practices remain limited.

Cross-Border Educational Experiences in Abkhazia

The possibility for students from Abkhazia to apply for cross-border educational programs is generally hindered by passport issues, a lack of language proficiency, and the non-recognition of their home country. Yet there is a certain number of young Abkhazians that managed to overcome these obstacles, paving their way to study in the EU or other Western countries. There are also those who study or studied in Russia, and finally, those who are eager to study abroad, but still cannot fulfil their aspirations. These three groups are those that I have interviewed for this paper.

Most of the young Abkhazians are ASU students/alumni or Russian university students/alumni. The main goal for those who seek to study in Russian HEIs is to receive better quality educational skills. They also justify the thought that Russian universities are the most practical option. Russia is close to home and does not imply

problems regarding the recognition of the Abkhaz identity papers and diplomas. There are also no visa issues for those who seek to study in Russia. Choosing Russia can also be explained by the lack of any language and required skills barriers that high school graduates usually face when studying abroad. Furthermore, as one of the respondents mentioned, *"Rossotrudnichestvo carries out a very good marketing campaign."* Yet not all Russian HEIs manage to meet foreign students' expectations.

Students also choose Russian opportunities due to other motives. Abkhazian students are attached to their homes and tend to choose places of study that are closer to home. These students are not necessarily interested in confronting very different values and cultures. However, some choose Russian universities that can offer cross-border educational programs, such as Erasmus. In this case, they see Russia as a way to gain access to other parts of the European educational space and confront different values and cultures. As one of the respondents emphasized, *"I took a lot of time checking whether the Russian University I was going to apply to had exchange programs with other universities from abroad. It was one of the key factors to me."*

Russian bachelor's diplomas allow Abkhaz students to continue their post-graduate education at other universities in the world, whereas ASU diplomas only give limited access to foreign universities. Alumni from ASU generally continue their studies in Russia or apply to universities in the West that are open to Abkhazian participants that want to receive MA or PhD degrees. When applying for a Chevening scholarship, the participants from Abkhazia choose "South Caucasus" as their origin. This kind of approach overcomes issues related to national identity since there are non-recognition attitudes from the global community towards Abkhazia. The reference to South Caucasus became a useful alternative to a reference to a particular state. The British government funds the Chevening scholarship and covers the associated expenses and visa issues. Despite this, the number of applicants is not very high. Most of the Chevening applicants are students of the International Relations Department or the Department of Linguistics of ASU. Other departments' graduates are not prepared to face the language barrier, and consequently, do not apply.

Chevening is considered a great opportunity for those from Abkhazia who seek to become qualified specialists in different spheres. Some students who do not struggle with the language barrier prefer Western HEIs rather than Russian ones, if given the choice. As one of the Chevening scholarship holders mentioned, *"I knew that the system in Russian HEIs would not be drastically different from the one we have in Abkhazia. Many Abkhaz people with Russian diplomas could not find a job in their home country after graduation. But what determined my choice in favor of the British university was the fact that Russian HEIs were not able to offer me the major I wanted to study."* Overall, the methods of teaching and delivering information in Western HEIs are very different from in Abkhazia. *"There is a huge emphasis on research, self-education, critical thinking and analysis. Libraries in universities have big funding and students have access to almost any kind of literature. Unfortunately, we lack it in ASU."* There are always pros and cons everywhere. *"ASU gives students a very good factual base, but the system shows itself weak and a little outmoded when it comes to research or analysis."*

As for HEIs in other countries, there has recently been an increase of interest in Abkhazian students going to study in Turkey. In this case, there is no problem regarding the acceptance of high school diplomas. Abkhazian high school graduates can apply to Turkish universities for a bachelor's degree.

Those who seek cross-border education have strong career ambitions. Some tend to realize this potential in Abkhazia, with the goal to contribute to its development. Others realize their ambitions outside of Abkhazia, in the countries that can offer them better career opportunities. This leads to a brain drain that all of the respondents agreed is a problem. The root of this problem, as one of the respondents emphasized, is that *"the government cannot offer them proper jobs and salaries. Thus, it does not pay off and many students leave for better career opportunities."* Though there is a notion that cross-border educational practices lead to brain drain, the amount of students willing to contribute to their home country's prosperity at the cost of career perspectives is high. As another respondent mentioned, *"The ultimate goal of me going to study to Russia was to receive academic skills I couldn't receive in my home country. In ASU, there is a lack of choice when it comes to specialties. I was keen on receiving the education and skills that would benefit my country as well, not only my carrier."*

RECOMMENDATIONS ON ENHANCING MORE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS FROM ABKHAZIA

Based on the research and interviews, three main recommendations on enlarging the internationalization capacity for Abkhazian students can be made:

1. To avoid the risk of brain drain related to Abkhazian high school graduates directly applying to study in Russian universities for better quality education, more educational capacities could be enhanced in the sector of higher education. One semester exchange programs with Russian Universities for the students of ASU and SOI would make Abkhaz HEIs more attractive to Abkhaz youngsters.

2. Internationalization at home. Another possible solution is inviting professors from foreign universities to give lectures to students and exchange experiences with local professors at ASU and SOI and other educational institutions.
3. Strengthen the ways that English is taught at other faculties and departments at ASU in order to avoid the situation where only the students of the International Relations Department and the Department of Linguistics apply for Chevening and other scholarships that require English language skills. It is also important to encourage more Abkhazian students to learn English by creating language clubs at ASU and other educational institutions of Abkhazia in order to avoid the language barrier when it comes to applying to studying in non-Russian HEIs available for Abkhazians.

REFERENCES

Coppieters, Bruno. 2021. A Struggle over Recognition and Nonrecognition: The Internationalization of the Abkhaz State University. Cambridge University Press.

De Whaal, Thomas, and von Lowis, Sabine. 2020. "Higher Education in Europe's Unrecognised Territories: Challenges and Opportunities" in ZOiS REPORT.

De Wit, Hans. 2015. "The Future of Internationalization of Higher Education in Europe." International Higher Education 83, 2-3.

Dzhikirba, Salima, and Relitz Sebastian. 2020. "Strengthening Internationalization of Higher Education in Abkhazia: Status-Quo, Potentials, Challenges, and Recommendations." In: Sebastian Relitz (Ed.) Insights from Young Scholars and Peacebuilders from the Caucasus. Corridors Proceedings II.

Gerard, Marcel, and Sanna, Alice. 2017. "Students' Mobility at a glance: Efficiency and fairness when brain drain and brain gain are at stake," Journal of International Mobility 5, 43-74.

Guruz, Kemal. 2008. Higher Education and International Student Mobility in the Global Knowledge Economy. State University of New York Press.

Knight, Jane. 2012. "Student Mobility and Internationalization: Trends and Tribulations." Research in Comparative and International Education. University of Oxford.

Knight, Jane, and De Wit, Hans. 1999. "Quality and Internationalization in Higher Education. Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)".

Levent, Faruk. 2016. The Economic Impacts of International Student Mobility in the Globalization Process. Journal of Human Sciences 13, 3.

MANE TORSOYAN

RESPECTING, PROTECTING AND FULFILLING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION DURING ARMED CONFLICTS: A CASE STUDY ON NAGORNO KARABAKH

Armed conflicts around the world pose a significant threat to the full realization of children's fundamental right to education. Children living in conflicting non-recognized states are more vulnerable due to the international isolation of their states and a lack of opportunities to engage in larger international efforts toward strengthening the respect and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Hence, this policy paper aims to study the impact of armed conflicts on the realization of children's right to education. It examines the best practices and challenges of respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to education in Nagorno Karabakh (Republic of Artsakh) in the context of the Forty-four-day War of 2020. The paper offers specific and targeted recommendations for public authorities, civil society organizations and international development agencies to contribute to policy, regulatory and procedural reforms toward the higher ambition of the universal fulfillment of children's right to education, based on the principle of the "universality of human rights" and the concept of "engagement without recognition." As a whole, the research provides practical knowledge and a common language to talk about the protection of the rights of children in conflicting states both internationally and in the internal policy making community.

KEY WORDS: ***right to education, education and conflict, armed conflict, 4-A Framework, Nagorno Karabakh***

INTRODUCTION

The right to education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right, assuming, inter alia, that every individual is entitled to "free education at least in the elementary and fundamental stages", which "shall be directed to the full development of the human personality". (UDHR 1948) Stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, this right has since been enshrined in various international treaties, national constitutions and development strategies. However, armed conflicts around the world pose a significant threat to the full realization of children's right to education. Moreover, children living in conflicting non-recognized states are more vulnerable due to the international isolation of their states and a lack of

opportunities to engage in larger international efforts to strengthen the respect and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Hence, the proposed research studies the impact of armed conflicts on the realization of children's right to education by examining the best practices and challenges of respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to education in Nagorno Karabakh (Republic of Artsakh) in the context of the Forty-four-day War of 2020. In particular, the analysis focuses on the provision of general education services during the escalation of conflict in Nagorno Karabakh and how it ensured the realization of children's right to education. The availability and accessibility of general education institutions are examined.

The policy paper seeks to provide specific and targeted recommendations for public authorities, civil society organizations and international development agencies to contribute to policy, regulatory and procedural reforms toward the higher ambition of the universal fulfillment of children's right to education, based on the principle of the "universality of human rights" and the concept of "engagement without recognition."

METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology for the research is an illustrative case study, as this methodology is well adjusted to answering the "how" and "why" questions and providing a common language to talk about the target issue.

The analysis of the practical implications of the right to education is based on the 4-As conceptual framework (availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability). This framework was developed by Katarina Tomaševski, the first UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, and is considered to be best suited to classifying state obligations relating to the right to education; it has proven to be a holistic analytical lens that emphasizes both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the right to education (Beco 2009). In this policy paper, the availability and accessibility dimensions of the right to education are examined.

Relevant data were collected through an in-depth desk review of relevant documents and semi-structured interviews with key informants.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND THE 4-A FRAMEWORK

The right to education is mainly classified as an economic, social and cultural right, often lacking effective remedies for alleged denials and violations. However, according to Katarina Tomaševski, *"Different from its frequent but erroneous image as being only an economic, social and cultural right, the right to education is also a civil and political right. Moreover, it straddles individual and collective rights, embodying both"* (Tomaševski 2001).

Initially enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the right to education has been reflected in various international and regional human rights laws. Article 26 of the UDHR guarantees everyone's right to education and states obligations relating to primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as to the content of education – also called the social aspect of the right to education. It also deals with the right of parents to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Particular importance should be given to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention for Children's Rights (CRC). The ICESCR reflects some of the most wide-ranging and comprehensive provisions of the right to education (ICESCR: Art. 13, 14 1966). Furthermore, two general comments were issued by the Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights on the right to education: General Comment No. 13 on the right to education (in regard to Article 13 of the Covenant) and General Comment No. 11 on plans of action for primary education (in regard to Article 14 of the Covenant). The CRC also enshrines deliberate provisions of the right to education. Although Articles 28 and 29 repeat most of the rights protected under Article 13 of the ICESCR, new dimensions to the right to education are also added.

As a whole, the following key aspects of state obligations in regard to the right of education are deliberately outlined in international human rights law:

a) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity and shall strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society and promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups.

b) Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all.

c) Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.

d) Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.

e) Fundamental education shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education.

f) The development of a system of schools at all levels shall be actively pursued, an adequate fellowship system shall be established and the material conditions of teaching staff shall be continuously improved.

g) Parents and legal guardians shall have the liberty to choose schools for their children other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards and ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

h) Educational and vocational information and guidance shall be available and accessible to all children.

i) Effective measures shall be undertaken to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.

j) The state shall not interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the requirement to fulfil the content and purpose of education and the requirement that the education given in such institutions conform to such minimum standards.

Under international law, states have the obligation to use the maximum of their available resources to realize the right to education. Hence, most of the obligations relating to the right to education are meant to be realized progressively according to the maximum available resources of a state. This is, for instance, the case with the obligation to ensure that secondary and higher education are made available for free (Beco 2009).

"… No legal obligation can force the state to make education available if this is beyond its powers; nobody can be legally obliged to do the impossible."
Katarina Tomaševski, 2001

However, even with very limited resources, the state is obliged to prioritize certain immediate obligations, such as the introduction of free primary education, and to guarantee education for all without discrimination. According to CESCR General Comment No. 13, the minimum core obligations in the context of Article 13 of the ICESCR are the obligations to ensure the right of access to public educational institutions and programs on a non-discriminatory basis; to ensure that education conforms to the objectives set out in Article 13 (1); to provide primary education for all in accordance with Article 13 (2) (a); to adopt and implement a national educational strategy that includes provision for secondary, higher and fundamental education; and to ensure a free choice of education without interference from the State or third parties, subject to conformity with "minimum educational standards" (Art. 13 (3) and (4)). The state is also obliged to take immediate and progressive steps to fully realize the right to education and must not take retrogressive measures.

4-A FRAMEWORK

To classify and describe state obligations relating to the right to education in a systematic way, the 4-A framework was developed by the first UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Katarina Tomaševski, and adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment 13 on the right to education. The 4-A framework is the most closely linked to international human rights law, since this framework appears to be the best way to classify state obligations enshrined in international human rights law (IHL) and establish a clear general structure for those obligations.

According to this framework, obligations relating to the right to education may be divided into the 4-As: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability.

Availability mainly refers to the government's obligation to ensure free and compulsory primary schooling. Post-compulsory education may become an obligation through the "progressive realization" of human rights law. Availability also does not necessitate government-run schooling exclusively (Tomaševski 2001). *"Human rights safeguards are orientated towards balancing the right of the state to compel children to be educated and the right of their parents to decide where and how"* (Klees and Thapliyal 2007). Accessibility requires educational institutions and programs

to be accessible to everyone, especially the most vulnerable groups, without discrimination on any grounds. For this purpose, measures shall be undertaken to overcome existing social, economic and physical barriers. Acceptability requires an acceptable form and content of education, including *"curricula and teaching methods (e.g., relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality), meeting the requirements of educational objectives and minimum educational standards as laid down by the state"*. Adaptability means that education shall be flexible to adapt to the needs of each child, changing societies and communities (CESCR: General Comment No. 13 1999).

Each of these dimensions involves a comprehensive set of right to education indicators that should be taken into account while studying practices of respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to education in a particular context (see Figure 1). For the purposes of this paper, the availability and accessibility indicators of the Artsakh Republic's general education system have been examined and are presented below.

Figure 1
Conceptual framework, as developed by K. Tomaševski (Tomaševski 2001)

Right to education	**Availability**	• fiscal allocations matching human rights obligations • schools matching school-aged children (number, diversity) • teachers (education & training, recruitment, labor rights, trade union freedoms)
	Accessibility	• elimination of legal and administrative barriers • elimination of financial obstacles • identification and elimination of discriminatory denials of access • elimination of obstacles to compulsory schooling (fees, distance, schedule)
Rights in Education	**Acceptability**	• parental choice of education for their children (with human rights correctives) • enforcement of minimal standards (quality, safety, environmental health) • language of instruction • freedom from censorship • recognition of children as subjects of rights
	Adaptability	• minority children • indigenous children • working children • children with disabilities • child migrants, travellers
Right through Education		• concordance of age-determined rights • elimination of child marriage • elimination of child labor • prevention of child soldiering

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN ARTSAKH: AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF GENERAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Availability

Availability presumes the presence of functioning educational institutions and programs in sufficient quantity. The conditions of being functional may differ depending on numerous factors, including the particular developmental context. All institutions and programs are likely "to require buildings or other protection from the elements, sanitation facilities for both sexes, safe drinking water, trained teachers receiving domestically competitive salaries, teaching materials, and so on; while some will also require facilities such as a library, computer facilities and information technology" (CESCR: General Comment No. 13 1999).

General Education System Matching School-Aged Children

In the Republic of Artsakh, two types of educational programs are implemented: general and professional. As stated in the NKR Law on Education, general education programs are aimed at the comprehensive development of the individual, the formation of his/her worldview, preferences, inclinations and abilities, the choice of professional programs and the creation of a basis for professional education. The main general education programs are preschool, elementary, basic and secondary (Art. 10). Secondary education is provided by a three-level secondary school with a total duration of twelve years, with the following consecutive degrees: elementary school (grades 1–4), basic school (grades 5–9), and high school (grades 10–12). The first two levels of secondary school make up basic schooling (Art. 18).

Although a thorough analysis and needs assessment is needed to precisely picture the scope and the way the armed conflict influenced the general education system of the Artsakh Republic and its infrastructure and facilities, some general observations may be drawn at this stage.

During the second Nagorno-Karabakh war, which lasted from September 26, 2021 to November 9, 2021, civilian objects in Stepanakert and other densely populated areas of the Artsakh Republic (AR), including schools, hospitals and cultural buildings, were targeted intensively and in an indiscriminate way. All 220 schools in Artsakh were forced to stop their activity, suspending the fulfillment of around twenty-four thousand children's right to education (AR Human Rights Ombudsman 2020). Most of the civilian population were forcibly displaced to the Republic of Armenia (RA), where the RA government adopted simplified procedures for displaced children to enter public

schools. After the end of military actions, non-damaged schools in the Armenian-controlled part of Artsakh started to offer education services, facing the challenges of the humanitarian crisis and the need to effectively engage the children displaced from the occupied regions of Artsakh.

Due to territorial losses in the Artsakh Republic, the quantity of general education institutions has been reduced twice (by 110 schools), from 32 to 22 in urban areas and from 188 to 88 in rural areas. Out of 24,000 students, only 18,497 returned to school in Artsakh after the war. 6,113 students are displaced from their residences.

Armed conflict greatly affects the continuity of education. Violations of the ceasefire not only suspend children's right to education for the period of active military actions but also hinder their engagement in educational institutions afterwards. Renovation of damaged schools requires time, and children have to wait for reconstruction work (AR Human Rights Ombudsman 2021). The general education institutions in Artsakh also face the challenges of insufficient building conditions. Given the consequences of the war, thirty-nine general education institutions out of 110 need either partial renovations or major repairs, e.g., the N 10 secondary school of Stepanakert was significantly damaged due to air strikes (Interviews with Karakhanyan, L. and Karakhanyan, T. 2021). In this regard, the schools in the capital city of Stepanakert are considered to be in better condition than those in rural communities (Interview with Avanesyan, L. 2021). According to the interview participants, renovation work in some of the institutions is currently underway and efforts are being made to ensure that school building conditions match the needs of students (Interviews with Karakhanyan, L. and Karakhanyan, T.).

By admitting displaced children, some schools have become overloaded, and there is a certain need to establish new buildings.

> *"There are schools designed for around 900 students that currently deliver education to 1,500 children. The classes in some cases may comprise 39–40 students."*
>
> Tereza Karakhanyan,
> Head of the Education and Sports Department
> of the Stepanakert Municipality

According to data from the AR Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MESCS), the shortages of technical and laboratory equipment in general education institutions have become more evident as the result of war due to property damages and losses of schools with subsequent equipment. The general education system has lost at least eleven well-established engineering laboratories, libraries with around

617 thousand books, information and communication technologies, school furniture, and other property. The Ombudsman Office of Artsakh issues alerts about the telecommunication issues in Artsakh. It is assumed that mobile access and internet access in the territory of Artsakh are deliberately silenced by Azerbaijan through influencing the frequencies and technical means that are used by the telecommunication service providers of Artsakh. According to the Ombudsman Office of Artsakh, the problem has become particularly severe since November 2021, and the means of communication in Artsakh have been operating with serious disruptions. The problem is more acute in the communities that appeared near the line of contact (AR Human Rights Ombudsman 2021). This issue should be under the concern and further investigation of national and international actors involved in conflict regulation and human rights protection, as high-quality internet access is of particular importance for the full enjoyment of the right to education during the Covid-19 pandemic, when general education is often organized remotely through electronic means. Distance learning may also become an effective way to ensure the continuity of education during armed clashes.

Governmental Obligations Regarding the Right to Education

As stated by Tomaševski, there are two different governmental obligations referring to the availability of education: "The right to education as a civil and political right requires the government to permit the establishment of educational institutions by non-state actors, while the right to education as a social and economic right requires the government to establish them, or fund them, or use a combination of these and other means so as to ensure that education is available" (Tomaševski 2001).

To respect, protect and promote the right to education effectively, states should ensure that a sufficient proportion of the public expenditure is allocated to education financing and that the resources are used cost-effectively and equitably to guarantee education for all and redress inequalities.

In 2021, the Artsakh Republic planned public expenditures of 132,342 billion AMD, of which 14,675 billion or eleven percent should have been directed to the education sector. The public funds directed to the financing of general education comprise around seven percent (AR Law on State budget 2021). However, international declarations, such as the 2011 Jomtien Statement, recognize that states should spend at least 6% of their GNP and/or at least 20% of their public expenditure on education to achieve quality education for all (Jomtien Statement 2011). This fact needs to receive the particular attention of national authorities during the further strategic planning of the education sector development.

The freedom of parents and communities to establish schools has long been part of international human rights law. It is guaranteed among civil and political rights and is therefore subject to international as well as domestic legal enforcement (Tomaševski 2001). The European Commission on Human Rights has affirmed the right to establish private schools, subject to their regulation and supervision by the government, to ensure that education, especially its quality, conforms to the prescribed standards (Application No. 11533 1987).

However, the government also has the obligation to ensure that quality education is delivered, and most countries operate some system of accreditation and/or licensing to ensure that schools are properly equipped and staffed to deliver quality education. In the Artsakh Republic, the freedom to establish private schools is guaranteed, and general educational programs can be implemented only with a license. The license is issued to the educational institution if the following requirements are met: 1) Basic pedagogical teaching staff, 2) a laboratory and educational areas, 3) educational-methodological support, 4) a library information system and 5) areas for training and production practice. The license for educational activity is issued by the authorized body of state education management, i.e., the AR Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (NKR Law on Education, Art. 41 2000).

Accessibility: Engaging Displaced Children in the General Education System

Although schooling may be nominally available, its accessibility may be impeded for different groups of children. One of the key barriers to access is the cost of education. Other factors, such as gender, citizenship, migrant status, disability, race, ethnicity, language, religion and imprisonment, may also affect children's actual engagement in the education system. Public education systems are claimed to be embedded with inequality and discrimination on the basis of different factors, which contributes to the underperformance of disadvantaged students and/or their inability to complete compulsory education (Klees and Thapliyal 2007).

All-encompassing Compulsory Education

According to international human rights law, non-discrimination must be secured immediately and fully, and it is not subject to progressive realization. Respect for parental freedom of choice for the education of their children is yet another dimension of the right to education that is not subject to progressive realization but should be guaranteed fully and immediately. Parental freedom of choice, however, sometimes clashes against the elimination of discrimination for the rights of the child, such as the deprivation of education (Tomaševski 2001).

The NKR legislation guarantees the basic requirements necessary for making general education institutions accessible to everyone and excluding discrimination on any basis. The state guarantees the right to education for all, regardless of nationality, race, sex, language, religion, political or other views, social origin, property status or other circumstances. The Constitution of the Artsakh Republic states that secondary education in public educational institutions is free of charge (AR Constitution: Art. 38 2006). Basic general education is compulsory. The requirement for compulsory basic general education is maintained until the student reaches the age of 16.5 if it has not been met before. At the age of 16.5, a student may leave school with the consent of his or her parents (adoptive parents or guardians) (AR Constitution: Art. 38 2006).

Along with free general secondary education, free initial (vocational), secondary, higher and postgraduate professional education are offered on a competitive basis. In non-state higher education institutions with accredited educational programs, free postgraduate professional education can be provided on a competitive basis with full reimbursement of tuition fees by the state. In addition, the state provides textbooks free of charge to students of all grades in public secondary schools at the expense of the state budget (NKR Law on Education: Art. 6). In this regard, one of the key conditions of the accessibility of general education is ensured, as it is free at the initial stages and may be provided free of charge on a competitive basis at the later stages of education.

The admission of students to an educational institution is carried out by the order of the principal on the basis of an application of the school-age child's parent or his/her legal representative (NKR Law on General Education: Art. 16 2009). To prohibit discriminatory denials of access, screening procedures and testing of knowledge are prohibited during the admission of a child to the first grade of secondary school. Admission of children with special educational needs is also done on a general basis (NKR Law on General Education: Art. 16 2009). Such legal regulations are important for the respect of parental freedom of choice regarding the education of their children and for the prevention of discrimination in admission procedures. However, no clear criteria and deadlines for decision-making on the admission of children are set in the legislation, and there are no established procedures for notifying parents of the documents required for school admission. As noted in the AR Human Rights Ombudsman's office on children's rights, cases were reported in which parents were asked to submit the document package later and their children were then denied admission because the vacancies were full or other reasons (AR Human Rights Ombudsman 2021).

Assured Attendance (the Dropout Situation)

According to the data provided by the AR Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, as of November, 2021 thirty children have dropped out of compulsory education, a significant share of whom come from families in hard socio-economic conditions who refuse to enroll their children in the education system. The interview participants do not mention other factors, such as sex and refugee status, as significantly impacting the dropout situation. According to the key informant interviews, displaced children have been effectively engaged in the general education institutions in line with the parent's or legal representative's applications to schools. However, operational issues existed in cases when children had no proof of their identity or recordings of their past engagement in general education. In some cases, the information provided by the parents was inaccurate, and it took additional effort and time to verify that information (AR Human Rights Ombudsman 2021).

The office of AR Human Rights Ombudsman raises the issue of a possible discrepancy between the number of children enrolled in secondary schools and the number of children actually attending. The latter is an obstacle to the accuracy of statistical data and to an effective fight against the issue. One of the reasons may be that financing of educational institutions is carried out in accordance with the students' enrollment rate, as a result of which educational institutions may not be consistent in reporting on the regular absence of children. As a whole, the legislation lacks the necessary regulations to detect children who dropped out of education, identify the main reasons for dropping out and effectively engage the children in general education. The concept of a child who dropped out of education is not defined in the legislation, which causes many practical issues.

According to AR legislation, the parent is responsible for the inclusion of the school-aged child in the educational institution. The head of the district administration and the mayor in Stepanakert coordinate and supervise the registration of school-age children in their area, while the educational institution, the local self-government and territorial administration bodies ensure the inclusion of the school-age child in the educational institution (NKR Law on General Education: Art.16). The legislation, however, does not outline the exact scope of the powers and responsibilities of the territorial administration, local self-government bodies, police and other bodies in regard to registering school-age children and detecting and engaging children who dropped out of compulsory education. Hence, it is important to initiate the process of developing and introducing detection and referral procedures for children out of compulsory education, as well as the necessary tools for their effective engagement (AR Human Rights Ombudsman 2021).

According to the AR MESCS data, 6,113 children were displaced from the regions of Artsakh currently under the control of Azerbaijan. Around 1,500 children have returned to Artsakh and become enrolled in general education institutions, while the majority continue to receive education in the Republic of Armenia and a small part are left abroad. Given this fact, effective communication and cooperation are needed between the responsible bodies in RA and AR to address the needs of displaced people in a targeted and functional way. The level and quality of the administrative data exchange between the responsible bodies of Armenia and Artsakh is considered sufficient, as the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of RA provides periodic reports to the AR MESCS. Data are also provided by the operative headquarters of the Government of the Artsakh Republic in the Republic of Armenia, which was established after the war to collect operational data on displaced people and their needs and conditions while assisting in gaining the necessary support (Interview with Karakhanyan, L.). However, procedural issues exist regarding collecting actual and timely data on displaced children's engagement in general education institutions outside of the Republic of Artsakh, as the official statistics on a student's flow are based on the parent's application to the school to receive the student's relevant document package and pass to a new school. During the war, many children became enrolled in the general education institutions of the Republic of Armenia without those formal procedures. In this regard, teachers and proposals usually get in contact with their students residing in Armenia and seek to collect information about their actual engagement in a general education institution (Interview with Karakhanyan, T.). However, there is a certain need for a more systemic approach to administrative data collection on displaced children's engagement in schools.

It seems that additional efforts need to be undertaken to thoroughly integrate students belonging to disadvantaged groups, especially those who suffered directly from the war in the general education system. As stated by the AR Human Rights Ombudsman Office, children who have been displaced or become refugees as a result of an armed conflict face serious social and psychological problems that affect their mental health, personal development, and educational progress (AR Human Rights Ombudsman 2021). Education should be seen as part of the bigger social, economic and psychological issues the children face, and a holistic approach should be applied to enable their smooth integration into the new communities and schools.

The accessibility of schools is greatly endangered in communities near the line of contact with Azerbaijani armed forces. In some communities, security concerns prevent parents from sending children to school and school staff from organizing the learning process in a proper way. According to the AR Minister of ESCS, some of the

schools are under direct military surveillance, and children need to pass near Azerbaijani soldiers' military vehicles to get to school.

> *"There were cases when children met Azerbaijani soldiers on their way to school, and soldiers showed throat-cutting gestures. Sadly, children start to get used to such scenes."*
>
> Lusine Karakhanyan
> Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports
> of the Republic of Artsakh

Given the security issues and the risk of armed conflict in Artsakh, child protection and rehabilitation actions should be included in state policy and annual child protection programs as continuous strategic measures. Such a targeted approach is necessary for any military conflict to mobilize and effectively organize the protection and rehabilitation of children in the case of conflict escalation (AR Human Rights Ombudsman 2021). The presence of well-equipped shelters, clear evacuation plans and operational security systems are also among the most important preconditions to mitigate security concerns and deliver education in emergency situations (Interviews with Avanesyan, L., Karakhanyan L., Karakhanyan, T.).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To summarize the findings of this research study, the following conclusions and recommendations can be highlighted:

- The second Nagorno-Karabakh War has greatly affected the capacities of the general education system of the Republic of Artsakh to effectively realize children's right to education. During the Forty-four-day War, all general education institutions stopped their activities, as the schools and other civilian objects were targeted intensively and in an indiscriminate way. During that period, the education of around 24,000 children was organized in the Republic of Armenia. After the end of military actions, the schools of the Armenian-controlled part of Artsakh started to offer education services, facing the challenges of a humanitarian crisis and the need to effectively engage the children displaced from occupied regions of Artsakh.
- As a result of the war, the quantity of general education institutions was reduced twice, from 220 to 110. Given the consequences of the war, thirty-nine general education institutions out of 110 need either partial renovations or major repairs. By admitting displaced children, some schools have become overloaded, and there is a need to establish new buildings. Shortages of technical

and laboratory equipment in general education institutions are also reported, as the general education system has lost at least eleven well-established engineering laboratories, libraries with around 617 thousand books, ICTs, school furniture and other property. In this regard, a thorough analysis and needs assessment are needed to precisely picture the scope and the way the armed conflict influenced the general education system of the Artsakh Republic and to effectively coordinate the investments and contributions of different actors.

- The Ombudsman Office of Artsakh issues alerts about the serious telecommunication issues in Artsakh. It is assumed that mobile access and internet access in the territory of Artsakh are deliberately silenced by Azerbaijan through influencing the frequencies and technical means that are used by the telecommunication service providers of Artsakh. This issue should be of particular concern and further investigation of national and international actors involved in conflict regulation and human rights protection endeavors is warranted. High-quality internet access is of particular importance for the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the right to education in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, when general education is often organized remotely through electronic means. Distance learning may also become an effective way to ensure the continuity of education during armed clashes.
- In 2021, the Artsakh Republic had a planned public expenditure of 132,342 billion AMD, of which 14,675 billion or eleven percent should have been directed to the education sector. The public funds directed to the financing of general education comprise around seven percent. However, international declarations, such as the 2011 Jomtien Statement, recognize that states should spend at least 6% of their GNP and/or at least 20% of their public expenditure on education in order to achieve quality education for all. This fact needs to be under the particular attention of national authorities during further strategic development planning of the education sector.
- AR legislation guarantees the freedom of parents and communities to establish and operate schools. To ensure quality education, general educational programs should meet certain criteria and acquire state-issued licenses. The license is issued to the educational institution if the following requirements are met: 1) Basic pedagogical teaching staff, 2) laboratory and educational areas, 3) educational-methodological support, 4) a library information system and 5) areas for training and production practice. The license for educational activity is issued by the authorized body of state education management, i.e., the AR Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

- NKR legislation guarantees the basic requirements necessary for making general education institutions accessible to everyone and excluding discrimination on any basis. The state guarantees the right to education for all, regardless of nationality, race, sex, language, religion, political or other views, social origin, property status or other circumstances.
- Secondary education in public educational institutions is free of charge, and basic general education is compulsory. Free vocational, higher, postgraduate professional education is offered on a competitive basis. In this regard, one of the key conditions for the accessibility of general education is ensured, as it is free at the initial stages and may be provided free of charge on a competitive basis at the later stages of education.
- The admission of students to an educational institution is carried out by the order of the principal based on an application of the school-age child's parent or his/her legal representative. Such legal regulation is important regarding respect for parental freedom of choice for the education of their children. However, there is a need to set clear criteria and deadlines for decision-making on the admission of children in the legislation and to establish proper procedures for notifying parents of the documents required for school admission.
- The overall number of displaced children is 6,113. Around 1,500 children have returned to Artsakh and become enrolled in general education institutions, while the majority continue to receive education in the Republic of Armenia and a small part are left abroad.
- The level and quality of the administrative data exchange between the responsible bodies of Armenia and Artsakh on displaced children's engagement in general education institutions is considered sufficient. However, procedural issues exist in regard to collecting actual and timely data on children's engagement in schools outside of the Republic of Artsakh. The official statistics on a student's flow are based on the parent's applications to the AR school to receive the student's document package and pass to a new school. In this regard, teachers and proposals usually get in contact with their students residing in Armenia and seek to collect information about their actual engagement in a general education institution. However, there is a need for a more systemic approach to administrative data collection on displaced children's engagement in school.
- According to official statistics, around thirty children have dropped out from general education, a significant share of whom come from families in hard socio-economic conditions who refuse to engage their children in the education

system. Other factors, such as sex and refugee status, were not mentioned as significantly impacting the dropout situation.

- A discrepancy between the number of children actually in secondary schools and the number of children actually attending may be possible. One of the reasons may be that financing of educational institutions is carried out in accordance with the students' enrollment rate, as a result of which the educational institutions may not be consistent in reporting the regular absence of students.
- The legislation lacks the necessary regulations to detect children who dropped out of education, to identify the main reasons for dropping out and to prevent this phenomenon. The concept of a "dropout" is not defined in the legislation, which causes practical issues.
- The exact scope of the powers and responsibilities of the territorial administration, local self-government bodies, police and other bodies in regard to registering school-age children and detecting and engaging children who dropped out from compulsory education is not clearly outlined in the legislation. Hence, it is important to initiate the process of developing and introducing detection and referral procedures for children out of compulsory education, as well as the necessary tools for their effective engagement.
- It seems that additional efforts need to be undertaken to thoroughly integrate students belonging to disadvantaged groups, especially those who suffered directly from the war, in the general education system. Children who have been displaced or become refugees as a result of an armed conflict face serious social and psychological problems that affect their mental health, personal development and educational progress. Education should be seen as part of the bigger social, economic and psychological issues children face, and a holistic approach should be applied to enable their smooth integration in the new communities and schools.
- The accessibility of schools is greatly endangered in communities near the line of contact with Azerbaijani armed forces. In some communities, security concerns prevent parents from sending children to school and school staff from organizing the learning process in a proper way.
- Given the security issues and the risk of armed clashes in Artsakh, child protection and rehabilitation actions should be included in state policy and annual child protection programs as continuous strategic measures. The presence of well-equipped shelters, clear evacuation plans and operational security systems are also among the most important preconditions to mitigate security concerns and deliver education in emergency situations.

REFERENCES

AR Human Rights Ombudsman. 2020. Special report on the rights of children affected by Azerbaijan's attacks against the Republic of Artsakh.

AR Law on State Budget of the Republic of Artsakh for 2021. Adopted February 11, 2021. Last accessed 11.12.2021. https://minfin-nkr.am/uploadfiles/1615811213.pdf

Convention on the Rights of the Child. General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. Entry into force 2 September 1990. Last accessed 30.11.2021. https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

De Beco, Gauthier. 2009. Right to Education Indicator Based on the 4-A framework. Right to Education project. Last accessed 24.11.2021. https://www.right-to-education.org/es/node/243

European Commission on Human Rights. Ingrid Jordebo Foundation of Christian Schools and Ingrid Jordebo v. Sweden, Application No. 11533. Decision of 6 March 1987. Decisions & Reports, vol. 51.

General Comment No. 13: The right to education (Article 13). Adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at the Twenty-first Session, E/C.12/1999/10. 8 December 1999. Last accessed 17.12.2021. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/d)GeneralCommentNo13Therighttoeducation(article13)(1999).asp

Human Rights Ombudsman of The Republic of Artsakh. Access to mobile communication and the internet was deliberately blocked by Azerbaijan. Media Report. Last accessed 20.12.2021. https://hetq.am/hy/article/138421

Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh. 2021. Extraordinary report on the legislation and situation of the protection of children's rights in the Artsakh Republic. Stepanakert.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966. Entry into force 3 January 1976. Last accessed 30.11.2021. https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx

Jomtien Statement, High-Level Group on Education for All, 10th, Jomtien, Thailand, 2011. Last accessed 11.12.2021. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000191931

Klees, Steven J., and Nisha Thapliyal. 2007. The Right to Education: The Work of Katarina Tomasevski. The University of Chicago Press. Last accessed 02.12.2021. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312103344_The_Right_to_Education_The_Work_of_Katarina_Tomasevski

NKR Law on Education. Adopted on 15.03.2000. Entry into force on 15.04.2000. Last accessed 04.12.2021. http://arlexis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=24276

NKR Law on General Education. Adopted on 23.12.2009. Entry into force 27.01.2010. Last accessed 05.12.2021. http://www.arlexis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=22982

Right to Education Project. Last accessed 07.12.2021.
https://www.right-to-education.org

The Constitution of the Republic of Artsakh. Adopted on 10.12.2006.
Last accessed 05.12.2021. http://www.nankr.am/hy/1838

Tomaševski, Katarina. 2001. "Human Rights Obligations: Making Education Available, Accessible, Acceptable and Adaptable." Right to Education. Last accessed 20.12.2021.
https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/Tomasevski_Primer%203.pdf

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. General Assembly resolution 217 A, 10 December 1948. Last accessed 25.11.2021.
https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

LIST OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Interview with Lusine Karakhanyan, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Artsakh.
Conducted on November 25, 2021.

Interview with Lusine Avanesyan, Senior specialist of the Monitoring, Analytics, Research and Education Department of AR Human Rights Ombudsman Office.
Conducted on November 29, 2021.

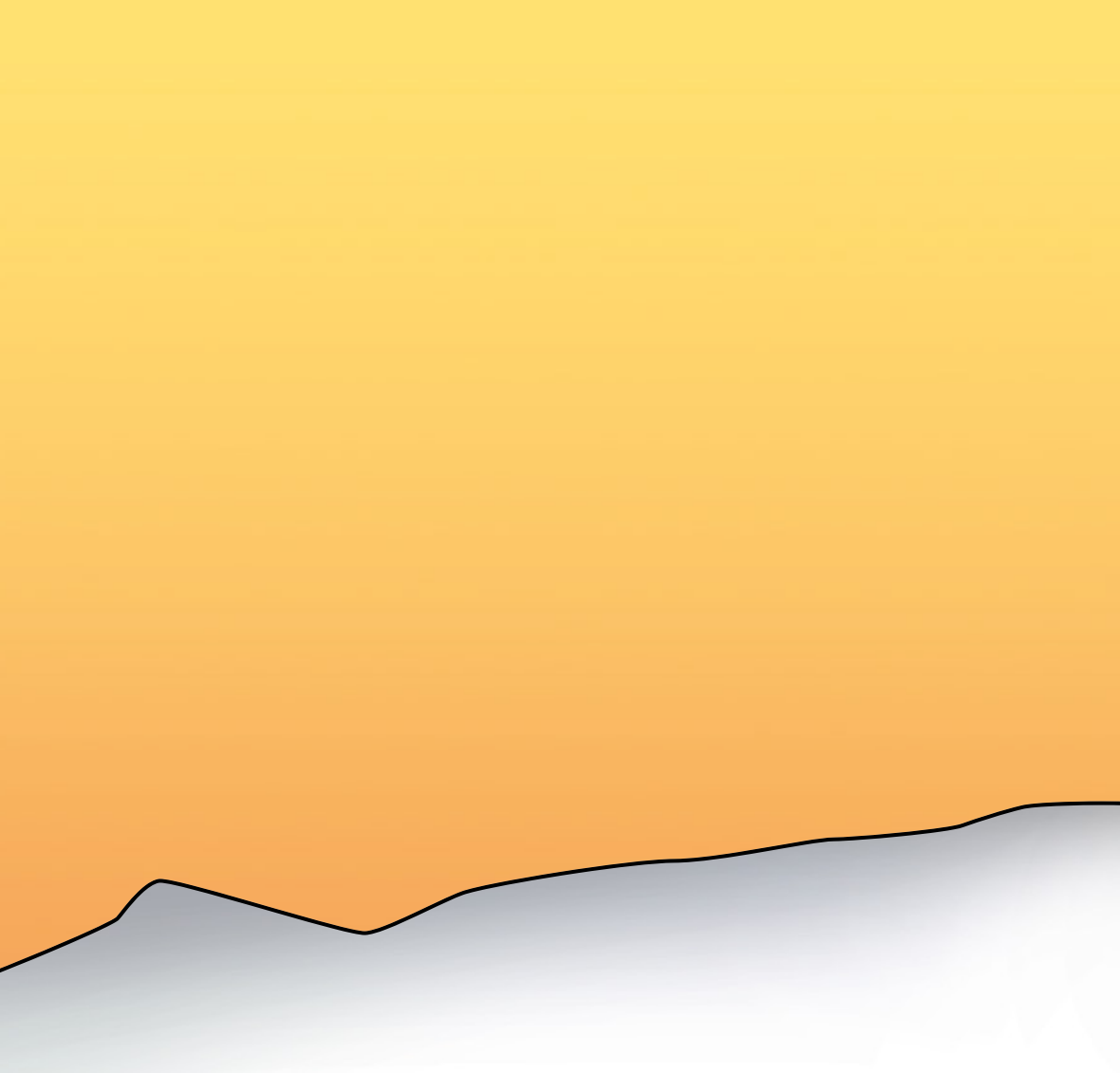
Interview with Tereza Karakhanyan, Head of the Education and Sports Department of the Stepanakert Municipality.
Conducted on December 20, 2021.

DONOR

The publication was made possible through the financial support of the
German Federal Foreign Office in the framework of the Civil Society Cooperation.

Federal Foreign Office

CIVIL SOCIETY COOPERATION



CORRIDORS

DIALOGUE THROUGH COOPERATION