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**Constructing Nagorno-Karabakh: a
diachronic discourse analysis**

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Abstract

In over 20 years of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, there has been no significant progress towards a peaceful agreement. It has been argued that there is not enough incentive for leaders to agree to a compromise and that the citizens are not ready to accept one. In this context, the way the conflict and the enemy are described in public discourse is important not only because it represents the viewpoints of those producing the discourse but because it can have a real effect on public opinion. This paper examines discourse on Azerbaijan and the future of Nagorno-Karabakh in an official newspaper, showing that distrust of Azerbaijan and rigid expectations about the future of Nagorno-Karabakh are dominant.

Abstrakt

Ve více než 20 letech konfliktu v Náhorním Karabachu, nedošlo k žádnému významnému pokroku na cestě k mírové dohodě. To bylo argumentovan, že není dostatek motivace, aby vedoucí představitelé se dohodly na kompromisu a že občané nejsou připraveni přijmout kompromisu. V této souvislosti, jak jsou popsány konflikt a nepřítel ve veřejném diskurzu je důležité nejen proto, že představuje názory těch lidech, které produkují diskurz, ale protože to může mít skutečný vliv na veřejné mínění. Tato práce zkoumá diskurzu o Ázerbájdžánu a budoucnosti Náhorního Karabachu v oficiálním tisku, což dokazuje, že nedůvěra Ázerbájdžánu a pevné očekávání o budoucnosti Náhorního Karabachu jsou dominantní.

Klíčová slova

Arménie, Ázerbájdžán, Náhorní Karabach, řešení konfliktů, analýza diskurzu, média

Keywords

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh, conflict resolution, discourse analysis, media

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Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague ...May 17, 2013

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Master thesis proposal

This work intends to examine the world according to state-sanctioned discourse in Armenia, and to examine what elements of the discourse on Azerbaijan remain constant across time and across changing political situations. More particularly, it intends to isolate what 'Azerbaijan' means in the world depicted by reports from *Respublika Armenia*, the official government newspaper (in Russian), and what the future of Nagorno-Karabakh looks like. The analysis will thoroughly survey the news output around different key events in recent Armenian history, to describe what 'Azerbaijan' and the future of Nagorno-Karabakh meant at those times and to identify commonalities across the different times and events.

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Introduction

For almost the last two decades, neighboring Armenia and Azerbaijan have been at odds and totally isolated from each other, following a period of ethnically motivated violence and a war over the would-be autonomous enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.¹ No serious or lasting steps towards resolution have been made since the Russian-brokered cease-fire in 1994, in spite of the OSCE Minsk group's mediations, other attempts at mediation by foreign officials, and the fact that the status quo negatively impacts both Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Nearly 600,000 internally displaced Azerbaijanis (IDPs) are still living in isolated communities that were (are) intended to be temporary (Huseynov, 2011), while lingering animosity coupled with Turkish and Azerbaijani blockades stunt Armenia's potential growth by limiting trade and excluding Armenia from lucrative regional projects.² The line of contact, which roughly follows the official border between the two countries in the north, and then juts into Azerbaijan such that almost all of Nagorno-Karabakh and some of the surrounding area is de facto in Armenia, is now occasionally breached only by bullets.

The nature of the breakdowns in mediation defies explanation by a single primary cause; different scholars will highlight their own particular field of focus but ultimately there are many factors interacting with each other. At times already fragile hints at compromise may have been quashed by unforeseeable influences like the ill-health of a leader or domestic terrorism (Zyberk, 2007)³, but more relevant are the persistent and underlying reasons why anything approaching compromise always seems so tenuous to begin with. Some point out that the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group

1 This work uses 'Nagorno-Karabakh' to describe the territory in question as it is the most commonly used English transliteration, although some sources use 'Nagorny Karabakh' which is the correct transliteration of 'Нагорный Карабах,' the Russian name of the region. The term 'Nagorno-Karabakh' is in fact derived from the adjective 'Нагорно-Карабахская' which is often used to modify 'republic' or 'oblast.'

2 The Baku-Ceyhan pipeline transits through Tbilisi in part (or perhaps entirely) because it cannot possibly cross Armenia, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway under construction is a response to the closure of the Baku-Gyumri-Kars railroad, which was the previous rail route for goods and people crossing between Eastern Turkey and Azerbaijan. For further reading on the regional impacts of these projects, see Samuel Lussac's "The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railroad and Its Geopolitical Implications for the South Caucasus" in Caucasian Review of International Affairs, Volume 2(4)-August 2008.

3 A 1999 shooting and hostage situation in the Armenian parliament left the Prime Minister, Speaker of Parliament, and 5 other important officials dead. The attack was not motivated by the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process (although one Russian former intelligence officer disagrees, see Zyberk 2007,

are bound to act as representatives of their own countries, and as such cannot operate together purely as a group of mediators (Betts, 1999; Jacoby, 2005; Leckie, 2005). In addition, the two main parties to the conflict have conceived of the legitimacy of the secession/occupation in opposing ways, so that to Armenia it was an entirely legal secession and Nagorno-Karabakh cannot accept Azerbaijani rule, while to Azerbaijan it is an illegal occupation and justice dictates that Azerbaijan's official borders be restored, with Nagorno-Karabakh inside them (Oskanian 2005; Mammadyarov 2005). Armenia and Azerbaijan have each identified with one of two opposing principles of international sovereignty: self-determination or territorial integrity, respectively. The two populations on either side of the conflict, in part due to the decades of isolation, still express high levels of antagonism towards each other (CRRC, 2009). As a result, and perhaps most troublingly, there does not appear to be any political incentive at this point for the president of either country to come to a compromise. The elites have been exploiting the existing nationalist sentiment and antagonism inside their own countries for political gain, and in so doing have nurtured a political environment in which it is prohibitively risky to suggest making concessions of any kind. Indeed there has already been an instance, in Armenia in 1998, when political elites were able to capitalize on Levon Ter-Petrosyan's attempt at reconciliation to force him out of office⁴ (Astourian, 2000). The ethnic animosity that motivated violence before the war has persisted, and is compounded by the continued separation of the two populations and the rhetoric of elites.

It is this elite rhetoric that will be the focus of this work. Discourse plays a particularly important role in ethnic conflicts, because so much of the nature of the conflict lies in the opposing parties' perceptions of each other. Given that the intractable attitudes in Armenian (and Azerbaijani) society are a major driving factor in the continued stalemate, understanding the way in which attitudes towards the 'other' are formed is particularly relevant to the outlook of the peace process. In the case of such a prolonged and isolated conflict, the question of how people form opinions on each other

p.10), but it understandably took center stage in Armenian political consciousness and the domestic insecurity it caused contributed to a slowing of negotiations.

⁴ This event was by no means entirely caused Ter-Petrosyan's resignation; discontent with the economy and some of his positions had already eroded his support, and in the lead up to the announcement of the proposed agreement his own party was fracturing. However, the suggestion of a conciliatory

is particularly interesting: What is the primary source of information on the 'other'? Is the dominant discourse driven by elites, or are they responding to public opinion? What are the main factors influencing public opinion? Opinion formation is a very complex and multi-faceted process – for a deeper and longer-running research project, it would be interesting to investigate how public opinion in Armenia or Azerbaijan is formed in a more comprehensive way. An equally interesting topic of investigation is the space of 'allowed' political discourse in a society. That is to say, what ideas are taken for granted, what ideas are thought to require justification, and what ideas are not considered viable at all? While any (contested) political sphere is of course home to a certain amount of debate, there will be those ideas that are seen of as controversial, and then beyond that there will be ideas that are considered taboo. An investigation of official or officially-sanctioned discourse can reveal where these lines are drawn in public discourse.

This work intends to examine the world according to state-sanctioned discourse in Armenia, and to examine what elements of the discourse on Azerbaijan remain constant across time and across changing political situations. More particularly, it intends to isolate what 'Azerbaijan' means in the world depicted by reports from *Respublika Armenia*, the official government newspaper (in Russian), and what the future of Nagorno-Karabakh looks like. The analysis will thoroughly survey the news output around different key events in recent Armenian history, to describe what 'Azerbaijan' and the future of Nagorno-Karabakh meant at those times and to identify commonalities across the different times and events.

agreement on Karabakh created a focal point for public discontent that the opposition made use of to speed the dissolution of Ter-Petrosyan's government.

1 Literature Review

1| a The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Although the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan have many centuries of shared history, the current conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan (simply termed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict) is very much of the 20th century. There are a number of factors that contributed to the growing enmity between the two peoples in the late 80s, which, after having erupted into violent conflict in 1988, has continued until today.

The first instances of violent conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis took place in 1905 in Baku, then part of the Russian Empire, when a period of internal unrest had weakened imperial central authority, allowing tensions between ethnically-identified social classes to boil over (Armenians were favored by imperial authorities and generally wealthier). The events of 1905 provoked a strengthening in Armenian nationalism and served as one of the catalysts for the rise of Azeri nationalism; interestingly, Nagorno-Karabakh held an important place for both of these movements – seen as a stronghold of autonomy by the Armenians and link between ancient roots and new national identity for the Azeris (Croissant, 1971: pp.9-12). The Ottoman genocide of Armenians during World War I would loom large over Armenia's relationship with Azerbaijan, despite their not having been involved. However, Azerbaijan's linguistic and ethnic proximity to Turkey also ties them into a powerful narrative of suffering and persecution that played a role in another eruption of violence in Baku in 1918 and has serious implications for the modern-day conflict.

Armenia and Azerbaijan fought over the three disputed regions⁵ on their southern borders as short-lived independent states in 1918-1919, and it was the Soviets who would ultimately decide on the matter after their takeover in 1920. Having initially decided to award all three territories to Armenia for their conversion to Bolshevism, failure to immediately enact this change along with complaints from the Azerbaijani SSR and an anti-Bolshevik uprising in Armenia caused the initial agreements to be reconsidered. The decisions to give Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan and Zangezur to Armenia were largely *faits accomplis*, and Joseph Stalin of the Caucasian Bureau decided to

⁵ From West to East, Nakhchivan, Zangezur (now Syunik), and Nagorno-Karabakh

place Nagorno-Karabakh inside Azerbaijan as an autonomous oblast, whose borders gave it a wide Armenian majority population (de Waal, 2003: pp.127-130). During the Soviet period, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh lived happily within the Azerbaijani SSR, although they never lost their sense of connection to Armenia, using their limited autonomous power to safeguard Armenian culture, and indeed petitioning to be joined to the Armenian SSR in 1945, 1965, and 1977 (de Waal, 2010a: p.105).

The rise of nationalism in Armenia and Azerbaijan in the late Soviet period, as in many other Soviet republics, was the result of a web of Soviet institutional factors and local cultural ones. Although changes in Soviet structure and rules made room for some amount of nationalist action starting in the 1960s (e.g., the Genocide Memorial in Armenia, or institutionalizing 'republican languages'), *glasnost* and *perestroika* were what made it possible for nationalist movements to organize in earnest (de Waal, 2005). Gellner has stated that nationalist movements are particularly suited to situations like the thaw of the Soviet Union, because in the absence of a tradition of local political organization a movement based in cultural and social structures can build much faster (Gellner, 1992: pp.249-250). The increased interest in national revival tapped into a wealth of documents in both Armenia and Azerbaijan that had been accumulating, as part of a decades-long 'historical arms race' of sorts, portraying conflicting historical evidence that depicts each side as the longest-standing nation in the region, and importantly, as the custodians of Nagorno-Karabakh (Shnirelman, 2001: pp.154-184). Thus, as nationalist sentiment grew on both sides of the border, ideas about the nature of Nagorno-Karabakh became more and more opposed. There were also concerns that as nationalism in Azerbaijan increased, it would put pressure on the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as concerns that Karabakh Azeris were not being appropriately accommodated by the largely Armenian Karabakh leadership. According to Posen's definition, Armenia and Azerbaijan at the time fit a number of criteria for a security dilemma (Posen, 1993: p.37), which may, along with the opposing and increasingly antagonistic narratives on either side of the conflict, have contributed the ethnic violence that began to take place in the region.

By the time the NKAO held a resolution to join the Armenian SSR in 1988, there had already been accounts of ethnic violence between the two ethnic groups. Violence continued to escalate in spite of (or, some have argued, partially as the result

of) the central administration's attempts to mitigate the tensions between the two republics, and as the Soviet Union fell apart there were already full-scale military offensives taking place in Nagorno-Karabakh (Cornell, 1999: pp. 22-27). When Armenia and Azerbaijan began their existence as sovereign countries, they were already in a state of war. After three years of fighting, during which Azerbaijan had suffered several internal political crises and Armenia had managed to gain control of most of the former NKAO and seven of the districts surrounding it, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a Russian-brokered cease-fire in Bishkek. To the Armenians, the result of the war was to correct the historical injustice by which Nagorno-Karabakh was assigned to Azerbaijan in the 1920s, while to the Azerbaijani side it represented Armenian aspirations on Azerbaijani territory.

Already in 1992, after newly independent Armenia and Azerbaijan joined the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (now the OSCE) the Karabakh conflict became the first conflict in which the CSCE served as mediator, under the newly formed Minsk Group (Hakala, 1998). In the early years of mediation a number of specific proposals were presented to the parties in Minsk Group mediations, including: a 'package' proposal that foresaw the withdrawal of troops and return of displaced persons while granting highly autonomous status to Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan, as well as access to a corridor connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia; a 'step-by-step' proposal that called for the removal of troops and establishment of peacekeepers with the status of Nagorno-Karabakh to be determined later; a 'common state' proposal granting Nagorno-Karabakh 'statehood' within the boundaries of Azerbaijan; and even some suggestions of a land transfer between parts of Armenia connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan and parts of Azerbaijan connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh. The closest the parties have ever been to a settlement came in 1997, when leaders Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Heydar Aliyev both agreed to a 'step-by-step' proposal for which they both faced criticism at home (Tchilingirian, 1997), culminating in Levon Ter-Petrosyan's ousting in 1998. In the 15 years since then, mediations have continued, with occasional halts and moments of optimism, but without any serious progress.

While there are many factors contributing to the stalemate, the most important internal ones have been identified has a lack of incentives (or outright disincentives) for

the political leaders to agree to a proposal, and the hardened stances of the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan on outcomes of the conflict. According to Mooradian and Druckman, while the situation towards the end of the war was damaging enough to both sides that it was in their interest to sign a cease-fire, the following years of relative stability reduced the attractiveness of various peace proposals (Mooradian and Druckman, 1999). Having risen to power as nationalist movements, and in the middle of a war, Armenia's political structures are ill-equipped for the kind of change necessary to come to an agreement. Bunce and Wolchik, in a paper on regime change in former communist countries, have argued that regimes who have based their appeal on nationalism and political order (citing Armenia as an example) "deligitimate calls for change, since such arguments can be easily characterized as unpatriotic" (Bunce and Wolchik, 2010: p.61). Though this kind of structure can be used to silence opposition, in the case of Armenia it also places pressure on ruling elites not to push for change in the status quo on Nagorno-Karabakh. It has been argued that as opposition actors are ready to condemn any compromise as defeatist, political leaders more intent on building the economy and keeping their hold on power are discouraged from making concessions (Özkan, 2008). In all this time, the position of Armenians that Nagorno-Karabakh is 'theirs' has become increasingly entrenched, making it even harder for official to approach compromise (de Waal, 2010b). Lines of rhetoric that were used in the past to garner more power in negotiations have become entrenched in the psyche of each side of the conflict, and it is for this reason that an examination of the common narratives used by elites about the conflict and about the enemy are important indicators of the possibilities (and challenges) for resolution.

1| b Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA; sometimes referred to as critical linguistics) is a field of approaches to analyzing speech or written language with special interest in the relationship between language and power. It relies on the principles of pragmatic linguistics, which deals with the way language interacts with context and the levels of meaning that cannot be explained by word choice or sentence structure alone. This knowledge is applied in conjunction with the understanding that readers and listeners do not passively receive language input and that different social groupings will express

their own values and meanings in systematic ways. Furthermore meanings are "conferred by historically specific systems of rules" (Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis eds, 2000: p.2), such that discourse cannot be accurately interpreted outside of the historical and political context that has informed it (and which is expected of listeners or readers). According to Fairclough, "discourse includes assumptions about what there is, what is the case, what is possible, what is necessary, what will be the case, and so forth," and these discourses and the assumptions they are associated with may be considered ideological (Fairclough, 2003: p. 58). The assumptions present in a given discourse can reveal the ideology or ideologies that are inherent to it. In Wodak and Meyer's *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, CDA is defined as "fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak and Meyer eds, 2001: p.2). Thus, close analysis of the language used by different groups and institutions is intended to reveal what themes and relationships are central to that group's understanding and representation of the world.

Discourse is an important focus of social science research because it shapes people's understanding of the world, sometimes transforming the same material realities into quite different concepts and experiences across time and space. For instance, Ian Parker notes that discourses in pre-scientific societies made spirits and elves real in the same way that we now understand atoms and electrons to be real today (Parker, 1992). Different contemporary societies may interpret the same event (take, for instance, the legalization of gay marriage) as fundamentally different in nature (positive, indication of social progress and advancement of human rights; or negative, indication of moral decline and breakdown of social structures) depending on the dominant discourses and values of that society. Dominant discourses in a society reflect the opinions of those participating in and reproducing them, while informing that society's shared values. According to Roy D'Andrade and Claudia Strauss:

"For societies to survive they need to inculcate dominant values in their members. Whether through sacred rituals or mundane child-rearing practices, these dominant values are imparted, creating the motivational states that will lead to actions that recreate the social order." (1992: p.8)

However, socialization is not a transparent, top-down process. Discourses influencing social values come from various places and are reproduced by various means, and as such do not constitute a uniform ideological message. In addition, members of a society

will internalize these messages differently, not necessarily "copying them in straightforward ways" (D'Andrade and Strauss, 1992: p.10). It is important to remember that individual realities are shaped not by discourses in and of themselves but by tensions between discourses and how that tension is interpreted. Thus, sensible work in discourse analysis does not attempt to fully account for how opinions are formed in a society or group of people. What it can do is act as a helpful tool to investigate "the way in which social practices articulate and contest the discourses that constitute social reality"(Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis, eds., 2000: p.3). In systematically and rigorously examining public discourse, it is possible to draw conclusions about what lines of thinking may influence the perceived reality of a certain group, and how or why different actors present their own realities to the public.

Critical discourse analysis is proving to be a useful tool in examining political discourses, because, in the words of Teun van Dijk, "who controls public discourse, at least partly controls the public mind, so that discourse analysis of such control is at the same time inherently a form of political analysis" (1997: p.43). Depictions of political actors, organizations, and events are informed by the political and ideological underpinnings of whoever is producing them – thus a society's dominant lines of discourse will reflect the political and ideological backgrounds of the elites which contribute to it. Political discourse is not only affected by the ideologies of those producing it:

"Politics here is bound up with history, both in the sense that we have discourse now at this point in history (here we feel the weight of the past), and in the sense that politics and power are about the ability to push history in particular ways (there we construct a hope for the future)." (Parker 1992)

The legacy ideologies that have been important in the past can be felt in what is espoused by actors in the present, whose ideologies will affect the direction of discourse in the future. This continuity in discourse can have real effects on political decision-making and therefore on peoples' lives. For instance, international peace negotiations are not merely about the material realities of the situation in question, they also depend on "mutual perceptions, representations, prejudices, and intercultural relations and communication, and hence on symbols and forms of talk and text" (Korzenny & Ting-Toomey, 1990, cited in van Dijk, 1997). So, investigating political discourse can be a means to reveal important dynamics and phenomena in political science. Political

discourse analysis (PDA) is one such method, as coined by van Dijk, that deals specifically with 'political discourse'. Not all discourse that can be relevant to politics is expressly political, and members of different politically active groups may simultaneously inhabit different discursive worlds, so it is important to clearly define what constitutes political discourse. In van Dijk's terms, for clarity, discourse is 'political' only "when constitutive part of the political process of e.g. governing, legislating, election campaigns, party propaganda, and so on" (1997). However, it is still possible to make meaningful contributions to political science in the analysis of other forms of public discourse.

Discourse in the media is another helpful way to examine the ideologies at play in political decision-making, and indeed can sometimes be a force in political decision-making. Van Dijk, on the potential power dynamics between the media and other elites:

"If such elites are able to control these patterns of media access, they are by definition more powerful than the media. On the other hand, those media that are able to control access to elite discourse, in such a way that elites become dependent on them in order to exercise their own power, may in turn play their own role in the power structure." (van Dijk, 1996)

Depending on the structures of power in a given society, the media may have some ability to constrain elite discourse (or vice versa). This type of interaction is the focus of discourse dynamics, which looks at "the tensions within discourses and the way they reproduce and transform the world" (Parker, 1992). The media is not only potentially constrained by political power from above, but also from where it can source its information. As has been previously discussed, the ideologies or assumptions to which a person ascribes will manifest in the speech (or writing, etc.) that they produce. Thus, if a journalist is regularly constrained to a small or homogenous set of sources for information on a given topic, the information will reflect that source's ideology. This can be "particularly acute in circumstances such as war or conflict where only a limited number may be allowed in to the key zones for reporting," but this is an equally important concern in areas such as health, employment, or new policy development (Philo, 2007:p. 182). In light of this, it is just as or more important to consider the "professional ideology of journalists and the institutions which they represent" (Philo, 2007: p.18). Even with wide access to sources, the information a journalist retrieves will be perceived and repackaged through their own understanding of the world (and likely the understanding of the world their employer prefers), such that the information

they spread will be the result of the interaction between the discourses of the source, the journalist, and the institution.

Given that the media is the main structure through which people get information and form opinions on current events, the ideologies shaping discourse in the media have a great ability to shape discourse in a society in general. Van Dijk remarks, on cases where certain ideologies are reiterated and become pervasive in discourse, that "after some time, there is little need for conspicuous manipulation of specific knowledge and opinions of the readers for each case" (van Dijk, 1996). This is achieved when certain discourses have become so commonplace as to be accepted as a part of life or essential to society, which usually means they must exist across different media and levels of society. In this case, facts need not be presented with explicit markers of the normalized ideology, because listeners or readers will independently assign the assumptions that accompany the dominant discourse. However, in instances where a number of different or opposing discourses on a given theme exist in the same audience space, this streamlining of ideology into seemingly innocuous discourse cannot be taken as a given. As Zaller notes, "media exposure, even if well measured, is still only a measure of exposure to politics" rather than an indicator of information internalization (Zaller, 1992: p.335). In order to attempt to understand the ideologies and internalized discourses of an audience it is then necessary to examine the entire field of discourses to which they are exposed, and even then their own interpretations of various discourses may be opaque. However, analysis of a specific source can reveal the underlying assumptions and ideologies espoused by the creators of that discourse.

2 Methodology

Critical discourse analysis can refer to a wide range of specific methodologies with diverse theoretical underpinnings. The specific focus of this work is inspired by the work of Dorothy Holland dealing with 'figured worlds.' Holland defines the 'figured world' as a "socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (Holland, 1998: 48). The 'figured world' essentially represents the same set of assumptions about the nature of the world, of other people, of the self, and of relationships that have been discussed earlier, while providing a certain framework in which to examine these assumptions. A figured world is populated by the "figures, characters, and types who carry out its tasks and who also have styles of interacting within, distinguishable perspectives on, and orientations toward it" (Holland, 1998: 51); the way these characters are represented in a given discourse is indicative of their relationship to and how they are perceived by the makers of that discourse.

This work was conceived with the following methodological concerns in mind:

Source selection: The official Russian-language newspaper, *Respublika Armenia*, was chosen for both academic and logistical reasons. A newspaper (with government affiliations) will not have the same need to tend toward diplomatic that official government statements do, and will be created by a larger circle of people. While it reports official government business and sometimes features politicians as contributors, it does not consist only of official statements, and as such can represent a wider range of viewpoints than official business alone – or give a broader view of what discourse that is considered viable in association with government sources. In addition, *Respublika Armenia* has a more complete archive available online than many other regional newspapers, many of which have no articles dating from before 2008, at the earliest. The longer time-span allows for a more interesting evaluation of the existence of long-standing trends in sanctioned discourse.

Time period selection: The times chosen for evaluation do not represent the basis for a strict comparative survey, because of the difficulty in isolating all factors that may affect the content and distribution of news articles over a given period of time. They are intended to provide a 'snapshot': a small-scale but detailed description of the image of Azerbaijan and the future of Nagorno-Karabakh at the period of time in question. In addition, different political situations were used to identify which lines of discourse persist across different political climates. The dates chosen are the following

- 25 May 2001 – 25 June 2001, the breakdown of the Key West talks
- 20 January 2006 – 20 February 2006, the Rambouillet talks
- 10 February 2008 – 10 March, 2008, the presidential election and subsequent protests
- 15 May 2012 – 15 June 2012, cease-fire breaches

Two instances of mediation (The Key West Talks and the Rambouillet talks) were chosen to see if there was any softening of discourse on Azerbaijan in the lead up to talks, which would perhaps indicate an anticipation of making progress: In many ways the more interesting of these is Key West in 2001, because it was thought at the time that it would lead to real steps forward in the negotiations process, and because the success of negotiations (and anticipation of progress leading up to them) has declined since then. Unfortunately the archives available start just after April 2001, so the snapshot for this time corresponds to the anticipation of and subsequent cancellations of the talks following Key West where more agreements were to be made. The snapshot evaluating the 2006 Rambouillet talks will cover the lead-up to and failure of those talks. The 2008 election was chosen because it was a time of political turmoil in Armenia, and given that fear in political discourse can serve to reinforce the existing distribution of power (Robin, 2004: p.79), the discourse of the time may show an increase in anti-Azerbaijani sentiment. Finally the 2012 cease-fire breaches were

chosen because it is a time that is expected to show how discourse changes at times when negative images of Azerbaijan are an obvious choice.

After having isolated all the articles referencing Azerbaijan in a given selection, the next step was to read them closely to evaluate the positioning of Azerbaijan or Azerbaijani actors in reference to the subject matter and the author, as well as to determine what the text assumed about Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis. In addition, note was made of any words frequently tied to Azerbaijan and its actors, based loosely on Fairclough's concept of "collocation," which describes words that are more likely to appear together than other combinations. References to Nagorno-Karabakh were analyzed for statements depicting or implying the details of its future. The 'future of Nagorno-Karabakh' in this instance was limited specifically to references about its future political status, its future boundaries, its future inhabitants, and the possibility (or not) of war. While there are many different factors influencing the resolution of the conflict whose discursive representations may be relevant to settlement prospects (attitudes towards the resolution process, attitudes towards the OSCE Minsk group and other international actors, ideas about the legitimacy of Nagorno-Karabakh's secession), they were not included in this analysis for the sake of clarity and space, and because in terms of prospects for eventual harmony in the region, the discursive images most relevant are those which describe what Azerbaijan is and those which describe what Nagorno-Karabakh can or must be.

3 Textual Analysis

This section presents the findings of close textual analysis of *Respublika Armenia* news articles from the times of four different important historical events. The results are first broken down chronologically, with each period of time being preceded by a historical overview of the event in question. Following the chronological breakdown is a summary of the results as a whole. The articles used as source material are numbered and listed chronologically in the bibliography under the heading 'Media sources for analysis'. All quotes are translated from Russian by the author.

3|a 2001 Key West Talks

3|a.1 Historical Overview (2001)

Presidents Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Robert Kocharyan of Armenia were invited to several days of talks hosted by the OSCE Minsk Group in Key West in early April, 2001. The talks followed up on meetings hosted by French president Jacques Chirac earlier that year. The Minsk Group co-chairs did not set any specific goals for the conference beforehand, stating that the purpose was to work directly with the two presidents and "hopefully increase the potential for finding a solution to this conflict" (OSCE, 2001). Subsequent analysis by a panel at the Carnegie Endowment would point out a number of reasons why the talks came at a favorable time for compromise: the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan had taken leadership roles in negotiations, there were no other international crises competing for attention, and indeed the Minsk Group co-chairs and other international actors were much more engaged and cooperative at this time than before (Carnegie Endowment, 2011). Few details were released about what transpired at the talks, but it was reported that three different proposals were discussed and that the initial verdict was that the talks had been successful. In a press conference released towards the end of the negotiations, the three co-chairs, Ambassador Carey Cavanaugh from the United States, Ambassador Jean-Jacques Gaillarde from France, and First Deputy Foreign Minister Viacheslav Trubnikov from Russia all spoke of what a satisfying week it had been and what progress had been made. Cavanaugh spoke optimistically about a comprehensive plan to be discussed at a meeting planned for Geneva in June of 2001 (US Department of State, 2001).

However, the meeting at Geneva was postponed indefinitely, and the apparent progress made at Key West made no lasting impact on reconciliation prospects. As early as a week after the Key West talks, Aliyev assured foreign press that he "did not believe a document would be signed during a new round of negotiations" in Geneva, in response to Kocharyan's assertion to the contrary (Agence France Presse, 2001). By the end of May the involved parties, including Kocharyan and Minsk Group co-chairs, were pessimistic about upcoming progress. The failure of the 2001 negotiations is often summarized as an instance where the elites were ahead of their constituents in terms of readiness for compromise. The presidents may have been maintaining a hardline stance at home as a way to gain more power at the bargaining table, and entrenched public opinion on both sides would have made a president who pushed too hard for compromise vulnerable to political attacks (Matveeva, 2002). The Carnegie Endowment panel cited above concluded that "while a compromise agreement was discussed privately, it remained absent from public discourse in both countries" (Carnegie Endowment, 2011). The implication is that although Aliyev and Kocharyan may have been prepared to make a deal, there had not been any significant attempt to prepare their people for a compromise, and neither president felt he had enough political capital to impose one. The positions of both Armenia and Azerbaijan have since hardened, and indeed the parties have not since come as close to signing an agreement.

3|a.2 Analysis (2001)

For the period of time surrounding the breakdown of negotiations following Key West, all articles mentioning 'Azerbaijan' over the month between May 25, 2001 and June 25, 2001 were included in the analysis. During this time, 100 articles were printed, of which 17 mention Azerbaijan. Of those 17, five articles (2, 3, 6, 8, 10), covering a range of topics from the President's weekly schedule (2, 8), a Collective Security Treaty meeting (3), a meeting of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (6), and even a short write-up of the failure of Geneva talks (10), all mention Azerbaijan in a neutral way (i.e., no modifiers or ascribed actions, often in a list of other countries), and as such are not included in the following textual analysis (though they will be included in later discussion). Excerpts from the remaining articles are broken down thematically below,

covering the different narratives at play in relationship first to Azerbaijan, and then to the future of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Depictions of Azerbaijan

One repeated theme portrays Azerbaijani elites as stubborn and uncooperative in its negotiations and dealings with Armenia. Article 1 refers to Heydar Aliyev's "harsh statements" about refusing to make any unilateral concessions at potential upcoming talks in Geneva. In article 16, the author notes that "of course" Azerbaijani elites are against any economic cooperation. The implication is that Aliyev and Azerbaijan are being inflexible (and should be expected to be inflexible) on negotiations, and thus are portrayed as responsible for breakdowns in talks. Article 16 also quotes Azerbaijani criticism of Armenia, calling it "the customary formulations" of the ministers, which implies that criticism of Armenia is a habitual ploy used by Azerbaijani actors and therefore not to be taken seriously.

The spread of anti-Armenian propaganda by Azerbaijani elites is also commonly referenced. In article 4, on the visit of Arkady Ghukasyan, president of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), to France, he is said to have discussed perspectives on the resolution of the conflict, referring in particular to increased anti-Armenian propaganda in Azerbaijan. Here the proliferation of anti-Armenian sentiment by Azerbaijan is placed in a position of primacy above other possible obstacles to resolution. Article 7 also referenced complaints about Azerbaijan's "anti-Armenian propaganda campaign," equally noting aggressive statements and the possibility of renewed war. Naira Melkumyan, Nagorno-Karabakh's minister of Foreign Affairs, is quoted as saying that Baku's "destructive policy," both from officials and from the opposition, is shaping negative opinions in Azerbaijan and throughout the region (7). The author of article 13, who is also the editor of the Nagorno-Karabakh newspaper *Defacto*, calls Azerbaijan's aggressive tendencies 'being profane,' and implies that Azerbaijan is the only party engaging in such practices. He says to stop Azerbaijani actors from calling for a military solution to the conflict, it would be necessary to call out "the profound contradictions" of Azerbaijan's policy: peaceful declarations on the one hand, and naked aggression on the other (13). Taken all together, this narrative depicts Azerbaijan as a cynical and

uncooperative international actor, and implies that the failure to reach a constructive conclusion to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem is largely their fault.

Over the span of time in question, Azerbaijani press and intellectuals are differentiated from ruling political elites, but are nonetheless depicted as somewhat reactionary and unreasonable. Article 1 cites two recent *Echo*⁶ articles, one speculating on whether the Turkic former-soviet states of the collective security treaty would have to support Armenia in a renewed war over Karabakh, and another in which the "tireless" Vafa Guluzade argues that Armenia and Azerbaijan "have blood and war between them" and that once an agreement is reached should simply exist as separate countries, rather than as friends. The chosen quotes specifically highlight unfriendly positions harbored by Azerbaijani elites. With this background, the author of article 1 then concludes that the Azerbaijani press is treating Heydar Aliyev's recent claims that Azerbaijan will make no unilateral concessions at upcoming talks as almost a "victory for the people," and presenting Azerbaijan as having the upper hand in negotiations. The implication throughout is that the Azerbaijani press is deliberately presenting provocative politically-motivated viewpoints.

Azerbaijani intellectuals are the focus of articles 14 and 17. Article 14 is dedicated to dismantling recent statements from two prominent Azerbaijani intellectuals (Eldar Namazov and Tofik Zulfugarov)⁷: the author notes that they are former high-ranking officials now "wearing the garb of political scientists," who have decided to "eliminate the 'ignorance' of their countrymen" in regards to what Karabakh Armenians really want when they ask for independence and to be included in negotiations (14). In article 14, the words "teach" and "knowledge" are always placed in ironic quotes. The author contends that these intellectuals are using their "knowledge" to try and create a 'third force' in politics, calling this a "'super-smart'[again, quotes the author's]" plan (14). The author claims that this kind of posturing is exactly the dream of the various opposition factions who are "tired with Aliyev and his corrupt team, and rushing towards power" (14). Interestingly, the author (likely unintentionally), draws a parallel

6 Echo is a prominent Russian-language newspaper in Azerbaijan. <<http://www.echo.az/>>

7 Namazov was head of the Presidential Administration and Zulfugarov was Foreign Minister, both resigned in protest in 1999 (along with Vafa Guluzade), for more information see Elmar Gusseinov's "Aliyev's Allies Desert Him Over Nagorno-Karabakh Talks," published by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting's Caucasus Reporting Service (Issue 4, 29 October 1999), available at <<http://iwpr.net/report-news/aliev-s-allies-desert-him-over-nagorno-karabakh-talks>>

between himself and president Aliyev, noting (after repeatedly mocking their credentials and motivations) that Aliyev himself has called the academics “amateurish.” Overall, article 14 seems to suggest that intellectuals and the opposition in Azerbaijan are worse perpetrators of the spread of anti-Armenian information than the elites in power, which goes against what has been said in other articles. Article 17 is a criticism of the Azerbaijani participants in a Caucasus peace conference in Moscow written by one of the Armenian participants. He says that upon returning home, Azerbaijani scholars presented themselves as having courageously beaten the Armenians on “the field of scientific battle” despite the fact that they are “not ready to discuss the issue based on the principles of international law,” and they produced “muffled silence” towards demands to back up some of their claims (17). The author also uses irony and mockery to delegitimize the Azerbaijani presenters, putting ironic quotes around the “documents” and “materials” the Azerbaijani scholars intended to present, and joking that perhaps the clocks have stopped in Baku and “Madam Irada [Irada Huseynova] thinks she has arrived that the next party congress in the times of Leonard Illyich [Brezhnev].” The author of article 17 also accuses the Azerbaijani scholars of “hiding the truth from their own society” in not having reported the findings of Armenian scholars. The derisive and sometimes mocking tone used to describe Azerbaijani intellectuals, along with references to political aspirations, implies that their views are not only incredible but also potentially politically motivated.

Another prominent line of discourse portrays Azerbaijan as essentially undemocratic. Article 11 is a report on the anti-corruption changes being made in Georgia, and following an explanation of the changes Georgia is making, and the plans Armenia has to fight corruption, it notes that Azerbaijan continues to “comfort itself” on the basis that ‘corruption exists in all countries.’ In article 12, which is an interview with Mikael Danielyan from the Helsinki Association in Armenia, Azerbaijan is explicitly used as a negative benchmark for press freedom: in response to a question about free press in Armenia, Danielyan says that “even in Azerbaijan” they have more opposition newspapers than in Armenia. In this case, the situation in Azerbaijan is presented as better than in Armenia, but the comparison establishes that the baseline expectation is that Azerbaijan is not a strong example for human rights. Article 15, titled “Lawlessness Azerbaijan-style,” is entirely dedicated to exposing the human rights

abuses of the Azerbaijani government, touching on problems with freedom of press, freedom of assembly, the justice system, and abuses at the highest levels of power. In addition to enumerating the various ways in which Aliyev's regime has failed his people, the author rhetorically normalizes Azerbaijan and its leadership as essentially un-free, without preamble calling it "unsurprising" that 10 years of independence have led to a system that suppresses dissent (15). In response to claims by Aliyev that recommendations from the Council of Europe cannot be considered binding so as to not infringe upon Azerbaijani sovereignty, the author notes how "zealously Azerbaijan defends its 'sovereignty [quotes the author's],'" thanks to which it can perpetrate all manner of human rights abuses. This critique suggests that Azerbaijan uses its sovereignty (placed in ironic quotes to present it as unreal or illegitimate) primarily to mistreat its citizens – the implication here that Azerbaijan is perhaps not deserving of its sovereignty also ties into the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, as sovereignty is a main theme of the legal debate in the conflict. In addition to being a prominent feature in the discourse on Azerbaijan during this time period, the framing of comments cultivates the idea that Azerbaijan is by definition undemocratic.

In the 2001 snapshot, references to past aggression on the part of Azerbaijan are centered around the destruction of the Martakert district of Nagorno-Karabakh. Article 5 features a short write-up on the late May visit of the Minsk Group co-chairs to Nagorno-Karabakh, specifically highlighting their trip to the Martakert region, "one of the most aggrieved" during the time of the war, and of which a large part is still "under the occupation" of Azerbaijani military forces. The destruction and ongoing reconstruction in Martakert is also mentioned in article 7, although mention of the co-chairs' hike from Agdam is not accompanied by any discussion of its destruction as a result of the war.⁸ In highlighting the destruction of Martakert over other (specifically Azerbaijani) regions feeds into a wider narrative that Azerbaijan is primarily responsible for destruction during the war.

⁸ Agdam was a majority-Azerbaijani city on the Nagorno-Karabakh border which sustained very heavy damage (primarily from Karabakh Armenian troops) during the war and is now effectively a ghost town. For more information see "Azerbaijan: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh," published by Human Rights Watch on 8 December 1994, available at <<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/AZER%20Conflict%20in%20N-K%20Dec94.pdf>>

The texts analyzed from this period tend to make a distinction between Azerbaijani elites (press/government/intellectuals) and the citizens of Azerbaijan, rarely expressing negative comments over the latter. The only place where the Azerbaijani public is specifically criticized is in article 14, where the author says that the Azerbaijani mentality is such that “any triviality expressed by an ‘informed person’” is seen as the ‘opening to America,’ the implication being that Azerbaijanis can be taken in by any arguments masquerading as ‘enlightening.’ On the other hand, article 15 seems to express some sympathy for the people of Azerbaijan (perhaps especially minorities), noting forced assimilation policies and the fact that Aliyev should rather protect the rights of all his citizens, not just those of his “clan.” There is one somewhat positive note about interactions between Armenian and Azerbaijani elites during this time: article 16 notes that two Armenian delegations took part in international meetings in Baku, which is unusual and perhaps a positive sign of cooperation between the two countries.

Depictions of the future of Nagorno-Karabakh

The only explicit discussions of the future of Nagorno-Karabakh relate the importance that it be independent of Azerbaijan. In article 9, Arkady Ghukasyan is quoted as saying that subordination of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan may lead to war, and that “the path to peace and stability” is only in recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh's independence or its incorporation into Armenia. The author of article 15, on human rights abuses in Azerbaijan, echoes this sentiment, arguing that the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic cannot trust that it will be granted a high level of autonomy within Azerbaijan, when “the Azerbaijani population is enslaved to a small group of criminals.” This last argument specifically addresses some of the proposed solutions to the conflict, suggesting that even a measure of autonomy within Azerbaijan is not acceptable.

Other outlooks on the future of Nagorno-Karabakh deal with the return of refugees and the possibility of renewed war. In article 5, Slava Barseghyan, the head of the Martakert district, addressed the question of people deported during the conflict (referring only to Armenians), saying that there were many “wanting to return to their

homeland" but not all could be accommodated given housing limitations. This statement normalizes the return of Armenians displaced in the war, while identifying it as a homeland for Armenians (and implicitly, not for Azerbaijanis) (5). The author of article 13 (and editor of *Defacto*, a Nagorno-Karabakh newspaper), says in response to militant Azerbaijani rhetoric that one should not "so lightly underestimate the strength of Nagorno-Karabakh's armed forces." It is interesting to note that both of these statements come from NKR elites, whose views may not line up exactly with those of the Armenian elites, but they are nonetheless given a significant platform in the Armenian official newspaper, and as such contribute to the discourses represented by the paper.

Summary

Though the May 25 – June 25 2001 snapshot contains fewer articles than the others (the paper was released less frequently at that time), it is still possible to identify some common narratives across the articles. References to elite actors in Azerbaijan, either within the political establishment or otherwise, are largely associated with negative traits (inflexible, opportunistic, unprofessional), although it is important to note that this trend is not totally pervasive given the neutral reference in an article about the breakdown in talks (10) – which would have been a salient place for criticism. The official Baku establishment is placed in opposition to the principles of democracy and human rights, including in one article entirely dedicated to the subject. There is some reference to aggressive policies on the part of Azerbaijan, although only in reference to one event, and there is no one clear narrative on the *people* of Azerbaijan, in part because they are rarely mentioned. The future independence of Nagorno-Karabakh is portrayed as imperative but not as a given.

3|b 2006 Rambouillet talks

3|b.1 Historical Overview (2006)

In 2006 a new series of meetings (culminating in an OSCE Minsk Group summit in Rambouillet outside Paris on February 10, 2006), was widely viewed with cautious optimism. Talks between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Vartan

Oskanian and Elmar Mammadyarov, in late January of that year had resulted in the drafting of 'basic principles' for the settlement process. Once agreed upon, these principles were intended to guide negotiations and pave the way for more substantive agreements in the future. Apart from the possibility of establishing an international peacekeeping force, the specifics of what the principles may consist of were not largely discussed at the time (Fuller, 2006). After the summit, a statement from the Minsk Group co-chairs outlined the principles that had been proposed, including demilitarization and redeployment of Armenian troops from the occupied regions around Nagorno-Karabakh (with exceptions for the Lachin and Kelbajar districts), deployment of an international peacekeeping force, provisions to allow the de-facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic limited international diplomatic opportunities, and a referendum on the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh to be held at a later date.

The talks were coming at a particularly auspicious time given that neither president was immediately facing elections, and thus might have had some leeway to present potentially unpopular settlement decisions to the public. Thomas de Waal, talking to Radio Free Europe, suggested in the days before the talks that Armenia may be willing to accept a step-by-step approach, which could in turn encourage Azerbaijan to be more flexible (Parsons, 2006).⁹ In the same article, the American representative to the OSCE Minsk Group, Stephen Mann, is quoted as saying that the process was moving in the right direction, and that the meetings coming up were "a very important opportunity." Unfortunately, the promise of this particular opportunity was not realized.

After the summit, the tone of reporting and official statements had changed. The talks resulted in no agreement, on the aforementioned 'basic principles' or otherwise, and although one US State Department official called them "the most important meeting in at least five years regarding this conflict," even the usually optimistic Minsk Group co-chairs had few positive comments on the subject (BBC, 2006). An International Security Network report following the summit suggests that the main disagreements involved how the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh was to be decided, whether or not

⁹ The step-by-step approach is the type of agreement that Levon Ter-Petrosyan had advocated for prior to his having to resign (Libaridian, 2005); one in which some elements of the peace deal (i.e., questions about refugee return, 'buffer territories' and blockades) can be agreed upon before others (mainly, the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh's sovereignty). This approach is contrasted with a 'package' approach, traditionally favored by officials in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, in which all parts of the resolution are addressed at once.

Armenian troops would pull out of the Kelbajar region, and perhaps the parameters for refugee return (Rahder, 2006). In spite of the setbacks, mediators and other international actors maintained that 2006 was the right time to push for progress, and that attempts should continue while diplomatic interest in the situation was still heightened and before the 'window' between election cycles closed in 2007 (Babayan and Peuch, 2006). More meetings were held in June and October/November of that year, although still no significant agreements were signed (OSCE, 2006; Dehdashit-Rasmussen 2007). The 'Madrid principles,' which were first presented in November 2007 and have served as a framework for negotiations over the last several years (albeit with some contention and multiple revisions), are the extension of the principles presented in Paris in 2006 (RFERL, 2010).

If it did not actually produce substantial changes in the status of negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh, the 2008 Rambouillet summit was at the very least the most anticipated set of talks since 2001, and the one most expected to prove successful. Given the hype that this event received in the international press, it will be interesting to see to what extent this is reflected in the Armenian official newspaper, and if so, whether it is accompanied by discourse that is less critical of the Azerbaijani position or more conciliatory.

3|b.2 Analysis (2006)

Between 20 January 2006 and 20 February 2006, there were 174 articles printed by *Respublika Armenia*, of which 33 mentioned Azerbaijan. A third of those articles (21, 25, 29, 30, 37, 39, 42, 44, 48, 49, 50) contained only neutral mentions. The topics of these articles included the peace talks (21), foreign diplomatic trips or events (42, 44, 48, 49), an interview with the speaker of the National Assembly (39), the price of Turkmen gas (25), and sport (29¹⁰, 30, 37, 50). The narratives surrounding

¹⁰ There is actually an interesting story (discursively speaking) that plays out in article 29: it reports on Yerevan soccer team 'Pyunik' being penalized for pulling out of a tournament game against Baku 'Neftchi' in Moscow. In a separate paragraph it is explained that "Russia allegedly could not provide safety guarantees" and Pyunik were concerned because of "clashes between fans and players that took place at a game in last years tournament," without specifying any involvement on the part of Azerbaijan. Interestingly, the clashes during the previous year were in fact between Armenian and Azerbaijani fans, a point that other Armenian news sources linked to the decision to forfeit, as well as reporting on Azerbaijani fans making threats:

Azerbaijan and the future of Nagorno-Karabakh in the remaining articles will be broken down below. In addition to the peace talks taking place within the scope of this analysis, reports of the success of the first negotiations on the final status of Kosovo were being released during this time (Foniqi, 2006) and received a fair amount of coverage in the Armenian press.

Depictions of Azerbaijan

A prominent theme of the 2006 snapshot (even before the failure of the Rambouillet talks) is that Azerbaijan and its officials are impeding the peace process. Article 19 cites an Azerbaijani scholar, Arif Yunusov, as saying that “the Azerbaijani position on negotiations is too strict,” and in article 43 Azerbaijan is said to be making “maximalist demands” about where borders should be drawn. The implication in these statements is that Azerbaijan is being unreasonable and demanding compared to Armenia's more neutral position. Arkady Ghukasyan, president of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), is frequently quoted during this period of time (in articles 20, 26, 27, 35) on his objection to Azerbaijan's approach to negotiations: he has said that “Azerbaijan has refused all kind of contact”(27) with the NKR, and that Nagorno-Karabakh's “openness and readiness to compromise is in direct proportion to Azerbaijan's readiness to do the same” (26; a slightly different wording of this sentiment is repeated in article 20). Ghukasyan has also intimated that the behavior of Ilham Aliyev is not indicative of any desire to reach a resolution. In article 26 he's quoted as saying that it is “incomprehensible” to him why the president would “order his scholars to show that Armenians never lived in Karabakh” or release statements about defense budget increases and his readiness to resolve the conflict by force, given the possibility for settlement. Ghukasyan goes further, saying that if Azerbaijan wants Nagorno-Karabakh to be its integral part, logically, its representatives should “talk about how it loves them and how it would be good for Armenians” in Azerbaijan, instead of “trying to blackmail and intimidate” them (26). He also states in article 35 that Azerbaijan is still “making attempts to subdue Artsakh.”¹¹ President Robert Kocharyan is also quoted

<http://www.armtown.com/news/en/a1p/20060119/35095/> (from A1+, reported by Armtown) [10 May 2013]

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saying that in Azerbaijan “there is no or not enough political will” to make real progress on negotiations (43). Taken together, these statements paint a picture in which Azerbaijan, through its unyielding and hostile comments, is responsible for foiling good faith attempts by Nagorno-Karabakh (and Armenia) to come to a settlement.

As the talks approach Azerbaijani rhetoric becomes increasingly negative and so does the Armenian response. In article 43, published on the day of the talks, the author says that Baku is “openly torpedoing the peace process,” with Azerbaijani foreign minister Elmar Mammadyarov noting that Baku “cannot compromise” and will try to use different arguments. Vahan Hovannesyan, deputy speaker of the National Assembly and Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF/Dashnaksutyun) party member is quoted as saying that the neighboring republic had turned to “anti-Armenian hysteria,” including calls for Azerbaijani forces to re-take some parts of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the destruction of the NKR (43).

Azerbaijan is also portrayed as having no respect for the peace process in general. After the talks, Vartan Ohanian is quoted calling criticism from Azerbaijan on Sargsyan's delegation “absurd,” which implies that Azerbaijani officials are politicizing the talks and therefore uncommitted to the process (46). Article 34, which talks about a meeting of Minsk group co-chairs in Baku before the talks, notes that “the capital gave them an unfriendly welcome.” The Karabakh Liberation Organization is reported to have protested the meetings, carrying banners saying “Armenian collaborators!” and “Down with the co-chairs!” and even at one point attempting to enter the foreign ministry (34). Although the protesters represented only one group, their actions are presented as representative of Baku's response to the Minsk Group visit.

Another common line of reasoning depicts Azerbaijani scholars and politicians as opportunists, saying what is most politically convenient at the time, as opposed to expressing their actual opinions. In article 19, a quote from Arif Yunusov calls the “patriotic statements” of Azerbaijani politicians “nothing other, than the scheming of those who have never fought.” The author of the same article calls Arif Yunusov's conclusions “a more or less realistic approach... a great rarity in the neighboring country,” which presents the expectation that most Azerbaijani scholars do not produce reasonable work (19). In article 40, on the question of Kosovo as a precedent for other would-be independent states, the author concludes that Azerbaijani analysts are

“increasingly peddling” the non-uniqueness of the Karabakh problem because they believe it will contrast it to Kosovo. In the same article the author notes that in the case of disagreements over the definition of the Karabakh conflict, “Baku constantly, at every convenient or inconvenient opportunity” repeats that Yerevan is laying claim on an Azerbaijani province, “cleverly hammering in the point” (40). The implication here is that Azerbaijani scholars and officials are not forming or presenting their ideas based on research or scientific bases, but rather on political interests. Article 24 talks about Azerbaijan's having presented a motion to suspend Armenia from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and upon quoting Azerbaijan's rationale the author adds that in addition to “the traditional charges” there are now new ones. Not even bothering to counter the charges cited by Azerbaijan, the author implies that this kind of accusation is a regular (unfounded) occurrence, not to be taken seriously.

Azerbaijan's democratic record and questionable human rights history are common threads in *Respublika Armenia* over the period in question. Arif Yunusov, in article 19, is quoted as saying that in the negotiations, “one side is not able to form an atmosphere of tolerance for different opinions in the country,” making it clear that the one side he's referring to is Azerbaijan. Article 45, about Iran-Armenian relations, offhandedly remarks on the Iranian embassy in Baku's response to Azerbaijani newspaper caricatures of the Virgin Mary and Jesus. The statement is intended as a testament to Iran's respect for religious freedom, but in so doing suggests that Azerbaijan as a place that is not necessarily respectful of religious diversity. Vahram Atanesyan, chair of the NKR Parliamentary committee on external relations, is quoted in article 32 as saying that by many measures of democracy and human rights, Nagorno-Karabakh has “outperformed formally recognized republics, including Azerbaijan.” Articles 23 and 24 talk about the motion to suspend Azerbaijan from PACE and then the subsequent decision not to (with some caveats). Article 23 notes that a number of parliamentarians called into doubt Azerbaijan's credentials, quoting one as saying that PACE “cannot abandon its principles” as far as democratic elections are concerned, and that “for five years [they had] been conducting monitoring in Azerbaijan, but no change [was] taking place.” Article 24 is cheekily subtitled “Could barely keep its membership to PACE...” and notes that while PACE accepted Azerbaijan's credentials it “approved a list of urgent measures” to ensure confidence in elections and democratic process. The

articles correctly report the proceedings at PACE, but is the framing of the facts and more importantly the articles' placement on the first page of the newspaper that speaks to the weight of the 'undemocratic Azerbaijan' narrative.

The discussions on PACE also led to some criticism of the Azerbaijani press. In article 31, vice-speaker of the National Assembly Tigran Torosyan is quoted chiding Armenian journalists, saying that "for some incomprehensible reason," Armenian journalists were "scooping information (or rather, disinformation)" on recent PACE proceedings from Azerbaijani sources.

Azerbaijan is frequently portrayed as an aggressive and dangerous neighbor, from incidents in the past to the possibility of violence in the future. The 'brutal destruction by Azerbaijani armed forces' of thousands of Armenian cross-stones located in the exclave of Nakhichevan is covered in articles 18 and 31, along with attempts to get recognition of the event from the international community.¹² Article 35 reports on the ARF's calls for worldwide protests on its 'Day of Protest against the Criminal Policies of Azerbaijan (February 28, 2006).' The specific policies in question include "the deportation of Armenians from Artshakh, Nakhichevan, and Gandzakh, the massacre of Armenians in Baku and other regions of Azerbaijan, and the complete destruction of Armenian historical monuments" (35). In the same vein, article 47 discusses the creation of a commission to assess the "damages caused to Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan" during the war – all mentions of damage to Nagorno-Karabakh in this article are followed by "by Azerbaijan." These types of portrayals substantiate the mentality that in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan is the aggressor.

The same kind of mentality exists towards the ongoing cease-fire violations on the line of contact. Article 38 talks about the development of Berd, near what would be the border. The author notes how one can see Tovuz, that "brother" (quotes the author's) from which "shelling was carried out during the years of the aggression," and that construction of a cultural center moves forward despite nearby Azerbaijani outposts "provoking the Armenian border areas" (38). Arif Yunusov is quoted in article 19

¹² „Khachkars” or “cross stones” are an important part of Armenian symbolism – the destroyed cemetery at Julfa (in Nakhichevan) was one of the largest remaining repositories. For more information see:

saying that shootings occur occasionally, but “mainly due to the fault of the Azerbaijani side.” He is also quoted as saying that “militaristic rhetoric from the Azerbaijani side will not let Armenians relax” (19). Not only the content of these statements, but their sources (residents of the border regions, and a voice from Azerbaijan), give the idea that Azerbaijan is largely to blame for border incursions legitimacy.

In fitting with the image of Azerbaijan as the aggressor, there is a certain amount of concern over Azerbaijani military development. Articles 22 and 28 talk about the possibility of Russia arming Azerbaijan, and article 41 voices concern over the relative amounts of US military aid budgeted for Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2007. Azerbaijan is awarded slightly more aid in all areas (which is normal, given the countries' relative sizes), but the Armenian Assembly of America is reported to reject the “unequal distribution of military aid” given the tense situation between the two countries (41). Similarly, although Sergei Lavrov, Foreign Minister of Russia, assured Armenian journalists that arms would be cheaper for Armenians thanks to the Collective Security Treaty (CST), his agreement to also arm Azerbaijan is presented as cause for concern (28). Sergei Minasyan, founder of the Research Institute for South Caucasus Security and Integration studies, is quoted in article 36 as saying that even if Russia only intends to even the balance of military technology, providing them with any arms would “in reality, change the military balance” because Azerbaijan has far more sources of military technology than Armenia. Minasyan is also quoted saying that Azerbaijan has been “in violation of the Conventional Armed Forces treaty in Europe for 15 years” for being over their limit on at least one of the categories of arms and military technology (36). The cohesive message from different articles across this period of time is that Azerbaijan's military is increasing in strength, and that this is a source of concern.

Finally, between the 20th of January and the 20th of February 2006, there was one report in *Respublika Armenia* of an entirely positive interaction between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in article 38: on a trip to Germany for a seminar, the mayor of Berd met his Azerbaijani counterpart, the mayor of Tovuz, and they “socialized normally;” the mayor of Tovuz said that “all should be resolved peacefully” and lamented no longer being able to trade with Dilijan. This excerpt is perhaps the most revealing, because

¹⁹“Azerbaijan: Famous Medieval Cemetery Vanishes”. Institute for War and Peace Reporting. Available at <<http://iwpr.net/report-news/azerbaijan-famous-medieval-cemetery-vanishes>> [May 6, 2013]

after analyzing all the negative things that were said, (and how, and with what underlying assumptions), it represents what by and large wasn't said- which can be just as meaningful.

The Future of Nagorno-Karabakh

The dominant line of discourse on Nagorno-Karabakh is that it must be independent (or at least, not subordinate to Azerbaijan). Both Gagik Melkumyan, secretary of the Armenian Republican Party (HHK) (33) and Vahan Hovanessian of the ARF (43) are quoted saying some version of 'Nagorno-Karabakh's independence from Azerbaijan must be secured in any agreement.' In article 43 Hovannessian argues that Nagorno-Karabakh never fell within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and therefore its right to self-rule could not be questioned. Arkady Ghukasyan has been quoted saying that "the people of Nagorno-Karabakh declared their independence, and the heads of the NKR, as executors of the will of the people, are obliged to protect that independence" (26). No explicit statement about the future of Nagorno-Karabakh in the time period in question has entertained any option other than independence or inclusion in Armenia. In article 26 Arkady Ghukasyan is even said to "half-joke" about what he would do "when the NKR becomes a member of the OSCE," and in article 32, Vahram Atanesyan of the NKR parliament goes further, saying that in its 15 years of self-governance the NKR has proved itself committed to the "European values of democracy and human rights," and therefore can be "integrated into Europe in a dignified way as an independent state." Joking or serious, all the depictions of the future of Nagorno-Karabakh printed in *Respublika Armenia*'s articles over this time period look the same: independent of Azerbaijan, and maybe even integrating into Europe.

On the status of the 'buffer zones' currently under Armenian control, there are two main arguments. Sergei Minasyan, in an article largely about Azerbaijan's military development, is quoted espousing the first line of reasoning: the current configuration is "useful for defensive operations" (36) and therefore it is important to maintain all the border territories, at least until a binding agreement is reached. He does however differentiate between 'Lower Karabakh', which is "at the present time under the jurisdiction of the NKR," and the NKR itself, implying that the buffer territories are not

necessarily an integral part of Nagorno-Karabakh and up for eventual negotiation. The other line of reasoning holds that in any resolution scenario Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh must share a border. Vahan Hovanessian is quoted as saying that where the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh fall “can be the subject of discussion,” but also says that “the NKR must have a land connection to Armenia, and not just in the form of a corridor.” In terms of the buffer territories there is less discussion, and what discussion there is not entirely cohesive.

Summary

During this time Azerbaijani elites are variously depicted as inflexible, uncooperative, and opportunistic, although these narratives are generally only visible in contexts directly relating to the conflict (and even then, not always, given the neutral reference in article 21). The narrative of Azerbaijan as undemocratic and repressive is addressed in a more global sense – there is an entire article on page 1 dedicated to Azerbaijan's poor human right's record and possible suspension from PACE (23). There are repeated references to violence perpetrated against Armenia by Azerbaijan in the distant and the more recent past, as well as some references to threats of violence in the future. The possibility of Azerbaijan's increasing military acquisitions spell trouble for Armenia and the peace process is also a common theme. While some room for negotiation on the subject of the territories surrounding the NKR is allowed, the need for the NKR to be independent from Azerbaijan is addressed many times, often by officials from Nagorno-Karabakh.

3|c 2008 elections and protests

3|c.1 Historical Overview (2008)

In the February 2008 elections, the two main candidates were Serzh Sargsyan, a member of the ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) and standing prime minister under Robert Kocharyan, and Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the first president of independent Armenia who had previously been ousted by Kocharyan in 1998. Sargsyan promoted the economic growth that had occurred under the regime he was a part of (compared to the economic troubles under Ter-Petrosyan in the 90s), while Ter-Petrosyan criticized

corruption in the ruling administration. Outside commentators did not have high expectations for these elections to be totally fair, given the increasing concentration of power within a small group of elites and the fact that only one of Armenia's elections since independence, in 1991, had been widely perceived as free and fair (Iskhanian, 2008; Fuller, 2008). Most predictions had Sargsyan as the winner, and even before the elections took place Ter-Petrosyan maintained that he would call for protests in response to any indication of foul play.

On February 20th, the day after the election, Sargsyan claimed a first-round victory with nearly 53% of the vote, as Ter-Petrosyan made claims of widespread irregularities. Nonetheless, France, Turkey, and the United States congratulated Sargsyan on his win, and the OSCE's International Observer Election Mission published an early press release attesting that the voting had been "mostly in line with the country's international commitments, although further improvements are necessary to address remaining challenges" (OSCE, 2008). Armenian civil society advocates criticized the OSCE (which was already facing criticism in other former-Soviet countries) for not being harsh enough on poor election practices (Peuch, 2008). It has been noted that the OSCE would have done well to wait longer than a day to speak on the legitimacy of elections, as further violations came to light in de-briefings after the initial press release, the details of which were included in the final report weeks later (Zulueta-Fülscher, 2008: p.2).

As promised, Ter-Petrosyan's supporters gathered in protest on Yerevan's Freedom Square, calling for a re-vote. The protests persisted for days, during which time some key opposition activists were arrested, with Kocharyan affirming that "'law and order' was to be enforced" (RFE/RL, 2008). On March 1st, the tenth day of protests, police placed Ter-Petrosyan under house arrest and dispersed the protesters by force, leaving 10 dead. In the aftermath police and protesters blamed each other for initiating the violence and Robert Kocharyan instituted a state of emergency amid claims that the whole situation had been mishandled and would undermine the legitimacy of the government (Bigg, 2008). The incident has come to serve as a symbol of the weakness of modern Armenian democracy.

In the lead-up to the election Nagorno-Karabakh became a hot-button issue; both because it had been so central to Ter-Petrosyan's previous departure and because the

declaration (and subsequent recognition) of Kosovo's independence just days before the election begged comparisons with the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Although Levon Ter-Petrosyan had been Armenia's leader through victory in Karabakh, in his later years his approaches to the conflict (and the way the opposition characterized his approach) made him seem 'defeatist' on the issue. He was quick to point out that the solutions being discussed in 2008 were remarkably similar to the ones he had been ousted for supporting ten years earlier, but Sargsyan maintained that if Ter-Petrosyan won he would "surrender Karabakh" (Asatiani, 2008). This election showed how the way Armenian national consciousness views Nagorno-Karabakh (and its possibilities for the future) can be emphasized for political purposes.

3|c.2 Analysis (2008)

In the month surrounding the fateful 2008 election and subsequent protests, between 10 February 2008 and 10 March 2008, *Respublika Armenia* printed 146 articles, of which 25 mentioned Azerbaijan. Of those, eight featured only neutral mentions, on topics including sport (55, 70), local economic stories (58, 73), campaign stories (52, 54), election monitoring (63), and a meeting with a the US Minsk Group co-chair (75). Excerpts from the remaining articles are broken thematically in the coming paragraphs. In addition to the election and protest deliberately covered by this snapshot of the news, there are two other important events that received a lot of coverage. First, Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, and most importantly, the ensuing debates over recognition and precedent in international law (BBC, 2008). The other event is a series of border incursions that took place on March 4th in the Martakert region. Neither side claimed responsibility for attacks that left at least four dead (the total count is disputed), and there is some indication its motivation was related to Armenia's internal political strife following the elections (Ohanian, Ahmedbeyli and Muradyan, 2008).

Depictions of Azerbaijan

The cynicism and opportunism of Azerbaijani elites is a common theme in the coverage of Azerbaijan. There are numerous references to instances of "spreading disinformation" (53), "massive falsification of recent history" (67), "distortion of facts" and "gross falsification of facts" (74). In article 53, about allegations that there are

Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) bases in Nagorno-Karabakh, it is insinuated that Azerbaijani authorities are aware that they are obviously not telling the truth. Although Nizami Bahmanov, head of the Karabakh Azerbaijani community in exile, is the one making statements about potential PKK bases, the author suggests that the statements were initiated by officials in Baku, who “understanding all their absurdity” used Bahmanov to make the pronouncements. The responses to these events and others are categorized as an attempt on the part of Azerbaijani officials to use global and local political situations to their own advantage. In reference to Azerbaijan calling Kosovo's declaration of independence illegal, the author of article 69 reports that they “immediately responded with full knowledge of how dangerous the Kosovo precedent could be to themselves” (69), implying that the only reason Azerbaijan had reached such a decision (and so quickly) was consideration for their own interests. In articles 71 and 74, Azerbaijan's reported instigation of and responses to the Martakert skirmishes are called a “serious abuse...of the current domestic political situation” (71) and “exploitation of Armenia's having entered into a state of emergency” (74). Article 71 describes Azerbaijan's filing of a resolution in the UN at the same time as “another attempt” to take advantage, adding that Azerbaijan is “using the situation in Kosovo and the domestic political situation in Armenia” to solve its problems and get a declaration of its territorial integrity, as well as putting newly-elected Serzh Sargsyan in an “uncomfortable situation.” In article 72, sitting president Robert Kocharyan is quoted as saying that he does not consider it “politically correct to use such situations for a totally different goal.” The author of article 74 notes that Azerbaijan's “distortion of facts” is “favorable to political interests of Baku authorities and “an attempt to manipulate public opinion” in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The author of article 74 also notes that Azerbaijan has “many times tried” similar tactics “without success.” The narrative of Azerbaijan's political opportunism is frequently depicted as having a long-standing role in Azerbaijani politics. The author of article 53 ties assertions that Nagorno-Karabakh needs to be cleared of the PKK in with the global fear of terrorism, concluding that “depending on the state of global political affairs,” Azerbaijan tries different forms of “essentially the same method” of gaining traction in the Karabakh problem, furthermore suggesting that OMON operations and other crackdowns on Nagorno-Karabakh had been justified similarly. These types of claims are also called

Azerbaijan's "favorite propaganda tactics" (53), again suggesting that they have more to do with Azerbaijan's dishonesty and desire to control Nagorno-Karabakh than with any real security concerns.

Some mentions of Azerbaijan involve nontransparent or dishonest behavior in governance. In article 53, in response to claims that the PKK may be working out of Nagorno-Karabakh, the author claims that Heydar Aliyev, as head of the KGB in Soviet Azerbaijan may have had a hand in training PKK members and there may be sympathisers living in Azerbaijan today. In article 50 Grant Pogosyan notes that the USSR had suggested a development plan for the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), but that the "government of Azerbaijan" did not carry out those recommendations "so as not to create jobs." Although this is a reference to the Azerbaijani Soviet leadership and not modern-day Azerbaijan, the contrast of Azerbaijan's decision making with that of the USSR gives the impression that even in Soviet times Azerbaijan was working against Nagorno-Karabakh.

The February-March 2008 coverage of Azerbaijan featured illusions to insanity or instability in a couple of instances. 'Hysteria' in Azerbaijani society is referenced in articles 56 and 62. The author of article 56 writes that official policies intended to "heighten anti-Armenian hysteria" have sowed hate and distrust in Azerbaijani youth and "distorted the psyches of more than one generation." Given the increasingly antagonist attitudes the author suggests that "the EU should rather be carrying out psychotherapy sessions" in Azerbaijan (56). She further asserts that it is likely thanks to "Baku's psychopathic reactions, blackmailing everyone with their hydrocarbon reserves and threats of renewed military actions" that Europe is unwilling to officially recognize Nagorno-Karabakh (56). This line of reasoning implies not only that the manipulation of Azerbaijani elites is hampering progress on the Karabakh issue, but that their manipulations are having such a negative effect on Azerbaijani society as to be compared to psychosis. Article 62 refers to the "Azerbaijani hysteria" directed at Armenian composer Ara Gevorgyan. It tells the story of how Azerbaijan's ambassador to Russia mistook the mixing of two songs on a Russian television program (one Armenian and one Azerbaijani) as the plagiarism of an Azerbaijani song by the Armenian composer (62). The author of article 62 refers to those two minutes of Russian television as having "literally 'blown up' Azerbaijani society." The depictions

of Azerbaijani reactions throughout the article leave the impression that in Azerbaijani society and officials do not behave rationally as far as Armenia is concerned.

There is also a certain amount of mockery used to discredit Azerbaijani intellectuals and elites. The author of article 69 presents Ergin Gadirli's point of view by saying that in “confusing his terms and formulations, he tries to assert” that Kosovo will not serve as a precedent for other conflicts. Article 57 is titled “Joke of the day,” and is just one block quote, without comment, from ex-Minister of Education Firuddin Jalivov, in which he says that arguments with Armenian scholars are amateurish and rooted in ignorance, because they do not recognize that Armenians do not exist and are in fact an Altai people who migrated to the middle east in the middle ages. Granted, this point of view lies far outside mainstream historical thought, but the editorial decisions surrounding its presentation reinforce and are indicative of a general derision towards Azerbaijani intellectuals. Another installment of “Joke of the day,” in article 68, makes light of a proposed Azerbaijani law identifying 23 “Armenian terrorist organizations” so as to prosecute their members and those who associate with them. The author comments that “by that logic ...all high-ranking officials who had participated in visits to the region, including Minsk Group co-chairs” could be sent to jail for 8-15 years (68). These representations of Azerbaijani elites imply a level of laughable ignorance rather than outright malice.

There are many references to the past aggressions of Azerbaijan against Armenians; in particular to the Sumgait massacres¹³, whose anniversary took place during the time period in question. The article reporting on the rally for Serzh Sargsyan after his election makes note of the moment of silence for the victors of Sumgait, referred to as a “bloody massacre unleashed by Azerbaijan” (65). Article 60, which discusses the history of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, describes the “mass anti-Armenian pogroms accompanied by the brutal killing of children, women, and old people.” Article 67, dedicated to the memory of Sumgait, writes that the “mass pogroms, beatings, brutally horrific murders of defenseless Armenians” were “a bloody and inhuman response of the leadership of the Azerbaijan SSR” to the NKAO's decision to

13 The Sumgait Massacre was a series of violent riots targeted at Armenians in the industrial town of Sumgait, near Baku, in February 1988. With ethnic tensions already high, the riots were apparently sparked by reports of violence against Azerbaijanis in southern Armenia. For more details, see (de Waal, 2003: p. 31-37)

leave Azerbaijan and join Armenia. This positioning of Azerbaijani-Armenian violence within the wider story of Nagorno-Karabakh's fight for freedom is also visible in article 60, which notes that the League of Nations refused to admit the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in 1920 because of "massive anti-Armenian pogroms carried out by Turkey and Azerbaijan." Article 67 refers to Sumgait as a "no less terrible genocide" in the history of the Armenian nation, and the author of article 61 writes that Azerbaijan had "led a long and vicious policy of genocide" against its Armenian citizens. In these instances the memory of Sumgait taps into a wider narrative of historical persecution. The author of article 67 mentions the other massacres that took place in the two years following Sumgait in "other cities of 'brotherly' Azerbaijan [quotes the author's]." By and large the rhetoric avoids placing blame on Azerbaijani civilians, although article 67 labels the Azerbaijanis participating in Sumgait as "brutal from blood and hate," and in article 51, Grant Pogosyan calls the Azerbaijanis who destroyed Shushi in 1920 "barbarians." In article 60 Azerbaijanis are not explicitly referred to as barbarians, but in saying that Armenians all over the world (in Armenia, Karabakh, and the diaspora) have always stood in the way of "barbarians and aggressors," it is implied that those barbarians and aggressors are Azeris and Turks. The way memories of Sumgait and other historical tragedies are presented calls forth an image of ongoing animosity between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The image of Azerbaijan-as-aggressor continues into representations of the war and subsequent frozen conflict period. In article 66 Vartan Oskanian, Armenian foreign minister, sets up the context for negative comments about Levon Ter-Petrosyan's past behavior by saying it happened "when Nagorno-Karabakh found itself in a ring of fire, and Azerbaijani artillery and airplanes were endlessly bombarding southern Armenia." The reference to the war is not particularly relevant to the content of the article (it is presumably intended to shame Ter-Petrosyan), yet it floridly depicts violence perpetrated by Azerbaijani forces. The March 4 cease-fire violations are naturally depicted in the news as example of Azerbaijani violence. In article 74, it is said that Azerbaijan "grossly violated the cease-fire," which is later described as a "bloody enterprise" which cost the Azerbaijani side 11 lives thanks to "unrefined intelligence." In article 71 Vartan Oskanian is quoted calling the incidents "serious abuse on the part

of Azerbaijan.” The accounts tend to depict Azerbaijan as both the instigator and the loser, suggesting inappropriate and ill-advised decisions from Azerbaijan.

The idea that Azerbaijan threatens to and might actually commit violence in the future is repeatedly referenced. Article 71 says that to Ilham Aliyev, “diplomatic efforts alone will not be enough to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,” and quotes him talking about Azerbaijan’s expansive military budget. The author of article 67 talks about the “incessant militaristic threats” coming from the highest Azerbaijani officials, commenting that in their light it is hard to see “the possibility of sober dialogue and a sensible resolution” to the conflict. In article 64, Illka Kanerva, Chairman-in-office of the OSCE at the time, responded to a question about “Azerbaijan’s continuing militaristic statements” by saying that strong words are not always the best solution to a problem. In an article about Sumgait, mourners are said to be worried that instead of repenting, Azerbaijan is only heard “‘saber-rattling’ and threatening revenge” (67). Article 60 quotes a letter from members of the US parliament to Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State, asserting that while Azerbaijan has been “threatening Armenia with war for many years,” recent developments suggest this rhetoric could turn into a “very real and dangerous threat.”

Future of Nagorno-Karabakh

There are not many explicit statements about the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh in the time period in question (as there are no major negotiations looming, it’s possibly not a salient point). The very little attention paid to this point, along with frequent discussions about whether or not the NKR is more or less deserving of international recognition than Kosovo (articles 56, 59, 61, 69), gives the impression during this period that earning international recognition (which takes independence as a given) is more important. However, Serzh Sargsyan is quoted saying in an interview that while Kosovo’s independence will give more arguments for the case of Nagorno Karabakh, it “does not mean... that Armenia will suddenly recognize Karabakh’s independence.” The articles in this time period suggest room for hope on the issue of the NKR’s independence, but not much certainty.

There is some discussion about the future of the areas surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh that remain under the control of Armenia/NKR. In article 66, Robert

Kocharyan is quoted as saying that without the buffer zone, there would have been no cease-fire and “Armenia in its current borders might not exist.” His statements unequivocally support Armenia’s control over the surrounding territories, but do not exclude the possibility of their return to Azerbaijan in the future. The other discussion of the fate of the buffer zones takes a much harder line: Arman Melikyan, former Foreign Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh and presidential candidate, says that it might once have been possible to “successfully colonize the territories and declare them an integral part of the NKR” (59). He suggests that Russia now might not support Armenia in keeping the territories, so in order not to lose them the NKR “should colonize them,” adding that if Armenia and the NKR agreed that these territories are in integral part of Nagorno-Karabakh, they could serve as “compensation for Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan.”

Summary

Azerbaijani elites in this period of time are depicted in two somewhat opposing lights – on the one hand, official Azerbaijani actions are often portrayed as cynical and manipulative, while at the same time some Azerbaijani actors are associated with instability and incompetence. There is one reference to the public at large having 'distorted psyches', although it is said to come at the hands of Azerbaijani elites. There are numerous references to Azerbaijani violence in the past and present, although most are relevant within the context of current events. The narrative that Azerbaijan also intends to renew military hostilities features prominently in the articles analyzed. The discourse on the future of Nagorno-Karabakh centers on the quest for recognition, and the relatively little-discussed issue of the territories surrounding the NKR hints at the radical option of colonization.

3|d 2012 cease-fire violations

3|d.1 Historical Overview (2012)

Although the OSCE agreed in 1994 to send peace-keeping forces to monitor the cease-fire between Armenia and Azerbaijan in principle (Blank, 1995), the cease-fire has for all intents and purposes been self-monitored for nearly 20 years. According to Matthew Sussex in a 2012 book, 20,000 soldiers line the 100 miles of contact line with

only 6 unarmed OSCE observers (Sussex ed, 2012: p.204). Though both sides have officially held to the cease-fire's terms, shots are fairly regularly exchanged across the line of contact with casualties amounting to about 30 lives a year (Barry, 2011). In 2008, the OSCE Minsk Group proposed that snipers be removed from the front line to reduce the number of yearly casualties, but only Armenia agreed and so both sides kept snipers in place (International Crisis Group, 2011: p.5). In 2010 and 2011 there were increased cease-fire breaches as well as acquisitions of new military technology on both sides.¹⁴

Early June 2012 saw an unusual concentration of violence on the line of contact which raised fears of further military escalation. Between separate incidents on June 4 (Monday) and 5 (Tuesday) in the northern Tavush/Qazax regions, eight soldiers were killed and at least six were wounded. Unsurprisingly, Armenia and Azerbaijan have each presented opposing versions of the events: according to Armenian officials, Azerbaijani soldiers killed 3 Armenians and wounded 6 on Monday, and then on Tuesday Armenian border patrols 'neutralized' a group of armed Azerbaijanis who had attempted to invade Armenian territory. According to Azerbaijan, their forces were not responsible for any deaths on Monday, and on Tuesday a group of Armenian 'saboteurs' crossed into Azerbaijan and was repelled, although 5 Azerbaijani soldiers were killed in the fighting (BBC, 2012). Then, the Defense Ministry of Nagorno-Karabakh reported on June 6 that one Karabakhi soldier was killed and two were wounded in shootouts with Azerbaijani soldiers during the night (RFE/RL, 2012).

Although it is still unclear exactly what transpired, every version of the story seems to suggest a coordinated breach of the cease fire by one side or the other, as opposed to the isolated sniper fire that is more typical to this conflict. International actors, including Hilary Clinton who was on a diplomatic trip to the region at the time, condemned the violence unequivocally. At the same time Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders took a more vitriolic tone, with Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan Ali

14 Although both sides of the conflict have been amassing weapons (and investing in new military technologies), prolonging of status quo benefits Azerbaijan in this regard much more than it does Armenia. With a GDP roughly six times that of Armenia, Azerbaijan is able to totally outpace Armenia's spending, and in 2007 president Aliyev made a pledge that Azerbaijan's military expenditures should exceed Armenia's entire state budget in coming years (International Crisis Group, 2011: p.6). For more information on Armenian and Azerbaijani military expenditures, see notes from the June 2012 European Parliament Workshop "Nagorno-Karabakh: Security Situation" available at

Hasanov going so far as to say that the army was ready to clear Nagorno-Karabakh of its Armenian occupants (RIA Novosti, 2012). Ultimately the situation did not escalate beyond the one week of intense aggression, but the incident served as a reminder of the fragility of the status quo. One would expect to observe deeper animosity in the discourse of this period.

3|d.2 Analysis

Between 15 May 2012 and 15 June 2012, around the time of a series of violent border incursions, 204 articles were published in *Respublika Armenia*, of which 27 mentioned Azerbaijan. Of those 27, four mentioned Azerbaijan in an entirely neutral context: article 87, on the upcoming visit of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to the region; article 88, on the troops guarding the Turkish border; article 100, reporting a statement from the OSCE; and article 102, on rising milk prices. The remaining articles have been dissected by theme and presented below.

Depictions of Azerbaijan

The narrative of Azerbaijan and its elites spreading false information to manipulate political situations is common in articles from the 2012 snapshot. In response to Serzh Sargsyan's statements at a Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) meeting, the Azerbaijani representative is said to have “broken out the latest series of historical distortions” (83), implying that dishonesty on the part of Azerbaijani officials is to be expected. Article 84, about the BSEC meeting in Yerevan, refers to the “disinformation spread by the Azerbaijani media” about the Azerbaijani delegation's visit the Armenian Genocide Memorial, with speaker of the National Assembly Samvel Nikoyan calling them too frightened of the reaction at home. This statement criticizes both the integrity of Azerbaijani elites and the state of attitudes towards Armenians in Azerbaijani society.

There are excerpts that imply a cynical use of dishonesty on the part of Azerbaijani politicians. The author of article 82 notes that “Aliyev is using 'Eurovision' as a means of personal PR,” and adds that it doesn't seem to be working. Samvel Nikoyan notes in article 84, in reference to the BSEC meeting, that the Azerbaijani

delegation always “tries to raise the Karabakh question in the framework of that organization” even though, generally, “they understand, their attempts are pointless,” implying that Azerbaijan’s delegates try to politicize even those events where there is no hope for positive change. In article 81, which discusses Azerbaijan’s asking NATO to be involved in the peace process, the author suggests that “Azerbaijan will sell itself to the outside power that will unequivocally support it in the Karabakh question”, noting that Azerbaijan had distanced itself from NATO in the past. Article 94 reiterates the theme of Azerbaijan getting its way through blackmail, saying that “blackmail is afoot” and that “Azerbaijan traditionally blackmails the US with the prospect of moving closer to Russia (and vice versa),” in attempts to get the most out of mediators on the Karabakh situation. Article 94 also refers to the border incursions (which took place during the Hillary Clinton’s visit to the region) as a “subversive ‘salute’” and as Azerbaijan’s way of “‘welcoming’ [quotes the author’s]” Clinton’s arrival to the South Caucasus, suggesting that Azerbaijan is using violence on the border in some kind of political game. The author of article 96 goes further, saying that it’s possible that Azerbaijan “undertook this military action so as to provide grounds to raise the issue [of the conflict] with the UN Security Council,” given that Ban Ki Moon (UN Secretary-General) had already expressed an interest in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict. This line of reasoning suggests that Azerbaijani elites regularly make choices based on their own political agendas rather than the issues at hand.

Multiple articles make reference to Azerbaijan attempting to spread anti-Armenian sentiment. Article 80, on human rights in Azerbaijan, calls Azerbaijan to task for sowing “an attitude hostile to Armenians, even in international forums.” On a similar note, NKR President Bako Sahakyan is quoted in article 98 as saying that “one of the main obstacles to resolution of the problem is the militaristic and anti-Armenian policy carried out by Azerbaijan, which has taken on near-radical forms.” In article 94, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry is said to “traditionally try to place the blame on the heads of the innocent” and refers to “azerprop [Azerbaijani propaganda]” blaming the Armenian side for the border clashes. The author of article 82 says that official Baku has tried to call reports of human rights abuses in the lead-up to the Eurovision Song Contest as “machinations of the Armenian lobby,” with little success. In article 92,

which features Serzh Sargsyan's response to the border clashes, he says that the Azerbaijani side "continues to do the exact opposite" of preparing for peace, taking to "encouraging xenophobia as a means of distracting the citizens' attention from domestic problems." Azerbaijan is portrayed here as engaging in cynical and uncooperative politics.

Azerbaijan is also frequently portrayed as generally uncooperative in the settlement process and towards international actors. In article 78, Vahram Atanesyan, chair of the parliamentary Committee on Foreign Relations for the NKR, notes that if "Azerbaijan won't even let observers go to the front line," there can be no real investigation (of cease-fire violations in general; this statement was made before the June 4-6 clashes). In article 96, on the aftermath of the June border incidents, it is noted that the attempts of international observers to conduct an investigation are "supported, by the way, by Armenia and perceived negatively in Azerbaijan." In article 80, on human rights in Azerbaijan, the author refers to international debates over the conflict (i.e., relating to resolutions in international bodies or foreign parliaments) as "squabbles in international channels, initiated by Azerbaijan," painting attempts at garnering international favor on the part of Azerbaijan as shallow and unjustified. In addition, the author of article 94 speculates that Hillary Clinton's condemnations border incidents will "not be abided" in Baku, because "any action on the part of mediators merely toughens their positions."

The incident described in article 77 does not relate to the peace process but nonetheless paints Azerbaijan as uncooperative in international interactions. Azerbaijani troops are reported to have "occupied" a monastery in Georgia on a disputed part of the border and "would not let Georgian tourists enter part of the grounds," while a joint Georgian-Azerbaijani commission was supposed to be determining its status (77). Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili was quoted suggesting a compromise, although "the Azerbaijani side refuses to discuss those conditions" (77). The incident and the way it is reported fits into a narrative in which Azerbaijan does not cooperate or behave appropriately in international dealings.

Official Azerbaijani actions are often categorized as overly emotional or unprofessional. In article 76, Baku is described as "behaving hysterically" when international actors put any pressure on them, and article 80 asserts that the only reason

the EU won't send representatives to the NKR is because of Baku's "hysterical fits" of disapproval. Similarly, Baku is said to have responded to comments by Serzh Sargsyan about the benefits of open borders with an "attack of paranoia" (83). The tendency to link 'paranoia' and 'hysteria' to official Azerbaijani actions suggests that they are illogical and disruptive to international operations. There is also a tendency to tie Azerbaijani statements to negative or overly emotional adjectives. In article 79, the Azerbaijani press is reported to "indignantly state" and "angrily note" its critiques of a visiting German MP who had been critical of Azerbaijani human rights. An Azerbaijani MP is said to have asked the same German MP a "provocative question" about Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijan (79). There are also occasional hints that Azerbaijani elites are oblivious to the realities of the world and international politics. In article 83, Azerbaijan is referred to as "imagining itself the center of the world" and in article 79 it's written that in Baku they "were surprised to learn" that the international community by no means ascribes totally to their "understanding of 'Azerbaijan's territorial integrity' [quotes the authors]." Thus there are various discourses at play that depict Azerbaijani elites as overly emotional or irrational.

In a few instances the actions or statements of Azerbaijani elites are presented as laughable or ridiculous. In article 83, Rasim Musambekov is quoted making statements about the history of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, which the author refutes by saying that "if the most famous Azerbaijani political scientist, as he is called, has lost his memory," she would gladly remind him – calling into question both his credentials as a scholar and the judgment of the people who look up to him. In a discussion in article 80, on a complaint sent by Azerbaijan to the UN about elections being held in the NKR, the author notes that Azerbaijan has called them "'breaches of human rights'(?!) [punctuation the author's]" and says that "in a civilized world such a reaction can cause a whole range of emotions – from bewilderment to Homeric laughter." The use of an interrobang and the classification of the assertion as laughable serve to posit the statement, and the people who made it, as absurd. In article 94, the information released by Baku about the June border incursions is called "so clumsy that even some more sober-minded Azerbaijani media outlets don't believe it," implying not only that officials are unable to hide their lies, but that in general Azerbaijani media outlets are not 'sober-minded.'

A portion of the discourse on Azerbaijan focuses on its poor democratic and human rights record. In article 76 a Swedish MP is quoted saying that the NKR has fought to be independent from the “anti-democratic tyranny of Azerbaijan,” while the author of article 80 argues that the international community has stood by as Azerbaijan “suppressed minorities living in Azerbaijan and spread ideological fascism and racism.” Article 82, about Eurovision, cites the BBC saying that if the country were graded on its human rights record, “Azerbaijan would receive 0 points.” Article 80, which is entirely about the Azerbaijan’s rights record, notes that international human rights organizations and the European press have “literally come out screaming” about the poor state of human rights in Azerbaijan, but that “talking to Azerbaijan about human rights and free press is in principle meaningless.” Article 80 also refers to statements about human rights breaches in Azerbaijan as a “familiar image.” These statements portray the situation in Azerbaijan as serious, from a human rights perspective, and also unlikely to change.

There are a large number of references to Azerbaijani aggression towards Armenians, both in reference to the beginnings of the conflict and war in the 90s and to more contemporary transgressions. The war over Nagorno-Karabakh is described in article 79 as having begun with “Baku leadership using brutal force” in response to the NKAO’s attempt to separate and join Armenia. Article 101 describes the “mass attacks by Azerbaijani OMON on all Armenian regions” of Nagorno-Karabakh, and articles 80 and 82 refer to the actions of Azerbaijani leadership between 1988 and 1991 as “bloody genocide” and “the crudest acts of ethnic cleansing and genocide,” respectively. In both articles 80 and 82, there is mention of Azerbaijani fighters or Azerbaijani leadership being responsible for the deaths of Azerbaijanis as well as Armenians. In article 82 the author asserts that Azerbaijanis died in the war because, in suppressing the rights of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, the “military action unleashed by Baku turned Azerbaijanis living in Artsakh¹ into victims.” The author of article 80 makes the quite controversial assertion that Azerbaijani fighters were in fact responsible for the atrocities committed at Khojali.¹⁵

¹⁵ Khojaly was a town in Nagorno Karabakh between Agdam and Stepanakert where Azerbaijani civilians were massacred by Karabakh Armenian fighters on February 25-26, 1992, as they were fleeing the city with the remaining Azerbaijani troops. More information about the incident can be found on p. 19 of the Human Rights Watch report, "Bloodshed in the Caucasus" available at <<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/1992%20Bloodshed%20in%20Cauc%20-%20Index.html>>

Depictions of the more recent acts of violence trend towards vivid descriptors and assertions that Azerbaijan is at fault. The author of article 80 asserts that “official Baku has continued to kill people on the border with the NKR and Armenia” since the end of the war. There are actually too many individual mentions of violence perpetrated by Azerbaijan in the month between May 16th and June 16th to cite them all individually, however they can be broken down into a few common archetypes. The most common descriptor used is ‘sabotage/diversion’ or ‘saboteur,’ which is used to describe incidents on the border (and the Azerbaijani fighters involved) in articles 76, 89, 91, 94, and 97. In fact, every instance of violence in articles 91 and 94 is described as ‘sabotage.’ Border incursions are referred to as ‘provocative’ or ‘provocations’ in articles 89, 92, 95, and 96. In articles 76, 80, and 85 refer to Azerbaijani ‘aggressions’ or ‘aggressive aspirations.’ Finally, violence committed by Azerbaijanis is described as ‘criminal’ in articles 76 and 80, and ‘barbaric’ in articles 101 and 89. In article 76 (published before the June 4-6 skirmishes, but referring to cease-fire breaches in the past), Davit Babayan, the head of the NKR Information Office of the President, is quoted as saying that “the mediators know that Azerbaijan is guilty of the violations.” The author of article 92 writes that “it is certain that the global community and the population of Azerbaijan know “on whose conscience the victims lie.” In the many references to violence documented during this time period, present and past, the Azerbaijani side is always presented at fault.

The threat of renewed violence from the part of Azerbaijan is a pervasive theme during the time period in question, although there are some dissenters. In article 78, Vahram Atanesyan of the NKR National Assembly, states that in Azerbaijan it is thought that “if the Karabakh problem is not resolved peacefully in the way that they imagine it, then it will be resolved militarily.” The concern of increased military spending on the part of Azerbaijan is addressed multiple times. Tigran Sargsyan, Armenian Prime Minister, is quoted in article 90 saying that “Azerbaijan’s manufactured and uncontrolled military spending and the intention of the latter to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict militarily is increasing political tension in the region.” Article 99 cites an Oxford Analitica publication, which claims that Azerbaijan is

%20Escalation%20in%20NK.pdf> More information on the theory to which article 80 refers can be found in the following letter to the UN General Assembly from the Permanent Mission of Armenia: <<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/52/plenary/a52-85.htm>>

increasing arms procurement to “achieve operational capability by 2014, threatening to go to war on the 20th anniversary of the cease-fire agreement” if no progress is achieved in negotiations by then. In the same article it is reported that Azerbaijani officials say “they need 10 days to free the occupied territories and reach the Armenia-Iran border.” Both articles 79 and 86 reference Azerbaijan's military budget being larger than Armenia's entire state budget, with commentary in article 86 that the budget is “another message to the Armenian side and to international actors that Baku is not satisfied with the existing status-quo” and its maintenance may lead to war. However, in article 86 Segei Minasyan is quoted as saying that “threats of renewed military action are instruments of political pressure, not real preconditions for a new war,” although he admits to danger of unforeseen occurrences igniting the conflict again. In spite of some doubts, the predominant message of this time is that threats and military growth in Azerbaijan are cause for concern.

In contrast with the lines of rhetoric about Azerbaijani aggression and militarism, one article made repeated insinuations about the weakness or fallibility of the Azerbaijani military. Article 94 (which is in fact titled “Azerbaijan escalates... and takes losses”), in its description of the events of June 4-6, describes Azerbaijani forces at the end of each incident as having “[been] ejected over the border... retreated with losses,” “once again retreated with losses,” “once again ejected,” and “ejected, with losses.” In addition, Azerbaijan's forces are not mentioned in reference to Armenian deaths or injuries – which contrasts the way in which historical acts of violence are often described, making a point to specify Azerbaijan as the agent of violence. In addition, military expert Artsrun Hovannisyan is quoted saying that “the large number of deaths on the Azerbaijani side – 20-25, according to the count of some experts, testifies to the poor preparedness of the Azerbaijani saboteurs.” The message inherent in this article is that, while Azerbaijan may seem intent on challenging Armenia's military strength, Armenian forces are certainly up to the task of defending themselves.

In the month of articles under investigation, there was one unusual incidence of outright calls for aggression against Azerbaijan. Article 93 describes a protest against the border incursions held by the youth organization 'Hayazn,' which also delivered a letter to the President and Foreign Minister demanding that Armenia “withdraw from the negotiations process with Azerbaijan, and also avenge the life of every killed

Armenian soldier with the annihilation of ten enemy fighters.” The article presents this information as is, without any comment – which may not amount to tacit support but is at least indicative that the paper was comfortable printing the statements without condemnation.

Future of Nagorno-Karabakh

The June 2012 time frame features some explicit references to the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh. In article 92, Serzh Sargsyan writes that “the settlement must be based on the possibility of the people of Artshakh to exercise their right to self-determination.” This statement does not in fact outright call for independence to be assured in the final solution, only a referendum or some other means to allow the citizens to decide (although, as it stands now, allowing the citizens of Nagorno-Karabakh to decide would mean independence). Article 97 features a letter written by several NKR politicians, which calls for “recognition of the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic” by the international community, and asserts that “the people of the NKR are determined on the issue of defending the territorial integrity of their country and strengthening its independent and sovereign government.” The representatives of the NKR present a firmer position on independence, including the implication of willingness to defend themselves militarily.

The topic of Nagorno-Karabakh being able to defend itself in the event of war is covered deeply over the period of time in question. In article 78, Vahram Atanesyan, chair of the parliamentary Committee on Foreign Relations for the NKR, is quoted as saying that mediators should “fully recognize the abilities of the NKR Defense Army,” going so far as to say that “Baku should not be seen to have a monopoly on the renewal of war.” In article 96, Davit Babayan, an NKR spokesman, is quoted as saying that “no aggressor or criminal has ever yielded to entreaties or appeals, so with him, that is in this case, with Azerbaijan, it follows to speak in the language of force.” He also says that the manifestation of force could be seen as an “adequately tough” response from the Armenian side, as well as a “clear reaction from the international community” (96). In the words of NKR officials, the NKR is not only capable of defending itself, but willing to instigate military action if an unacceptable resolution is made. In article 83 Sergei Minasyan of the Caucasus Institute gives detailed information on the Armenian side,

saying that if Azerbaijan declares war on the NKR, Armenia “will fire its multiple rocket launcher systems from the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh at vulnerable targets in the depths of Azerbaijan.” The author of that article claims that Azerbaijani experts are beginning to understand that “they will not see the 'easy victories' that Azerbaijani propaganda has promised,” cheekily adding that although “Armenians are not threatening Baku with their military capabilities,” if Azerbaijan decides to unleash a new war they should be warned that “whatever happens to them, oh, that's too bad” (83). While there are conflicting messages on whether or not Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia are willing to instigate war, the message that Nagorno-Karabakh (with Armenia's help) will be able to handle itself in the event of war is clear.

Summary

Azerbaijani elites are depicted as dishonest and uncooperative in the international sphere, both in relation to the conflict with Nagorno-Karabakh and in other situations. There is also a narrative in which Azerbaijani elites are overly emotional or ridiculous, traits that are portrayed as either laughable or a serious impediment to productive relations with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's poor human rights record is prominent in the discourse on Azerbaijan, including one article (80) dedicated entirely to the subject. Easily the most prominent discourse on Azerbaijan during this time period is the depiction of Azerbaijan-as-aggressor, both in the past and present (mainly the present, which is logical given the context of the time). There are also two somewhat opposed lines of discourse, the first about Azerbaijan as a threatening military power that may bring about war, and the other as a country that overestimates the strength of its military. Finally, Nagorno-Karabakh is depicted as a country that must be able to decide the nature of its own governance, and is prepared to use force to ensure its independence.

3|e Summary of findings

By and large, the broad themes of discourse about Azerbaijan observed in *Respublika Armenia* have been consistent. Many narratives remained constant throughout all snapshots, while some themes remained constant but changed in intensity

or character, and a few appear only at certain times. One of the pitfalls of this type of research is that the presence and predominance of different narratives will naturally somewhat reflect the state of the news at that time: during times of increased violence there will of course be more indication of narratives involving violence, while during a period of negotiations there are likely to be more depictions of the resolution process and the future of Nagorno-Karabakh. Thus, it is important when comparing the discourses across time not to draw conclusions based solely on the predominance of a given line of discourse, rather taking into account the way in which that discourse is presented and its relevance given the context of the time.

Those themes that appear throughout are meaningful because they are evidence of a line of thinking that is so pervasive to the idea of 'Azerbaijan' that it will appear in a wide range of contexts. Azerbaijani elites and their behavior are characterized negatively in all cases, although the specific negative characteristics with which they are associated varies slightly. Dishonesty (along with being dishonest for political gain) is a theme that pervades all time periods, associated with the conflict specifically and in a range of other contexts. Azerbaijani elites are often outright condemned for this fact, though there is also a certain tendency to simply dismiss Azerbaijani elites as ridiculous or emotional through the use of mockery, particularly in the snapshots in 2008 and 2012. Azerbaijan's poor human rights record is a common theme but not ubiquitous – it features prominently in the articles from 2001, 2006, and 2012, but is not specifically addressed in 2008. Based on the findings here, the general idea that Azerbaijani elites and the government of Azerbaijan are dishonest (often maliciously) is an essential part of modern Armenian discourse on Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is associated with aggressive tendencies in every snapshot in one form or another, although in 2001 it is related to only one specific incident in the past (the destruction of Martakert), which is unusual compared to the others. The periods of time observed in 2006, 2008, and 2012 all feature numerous references to aggressions in the present and past, with this topic pervading the discourse in 2012 (which is the expected result given the cease-fire violations occurring at the time). References to Azerbaijan's threats of future aggression are distributed similarly: they appear across all time periods, but are only mildly prevalent in 2001 and rise in prevalence until 2012. In 2006, 2008, and 2012 this discourse is accompanied by the theme of Azerbaijan's

military expansion. Based on the findings here there appears to be a steady increase in the prevalence of Azerbaijan's aggressive tendencies in discourse through the years (not only that this theme is most prevalent in 2012, but that it is represented steadily more in each snapshot), however more research is needed to determine whether the seeming trends observed here constitute actual trends.

The snapshot of 2012 also contains a number of lines of discourse that are not observed or barely observed in the other time periods under investigation. Though there was one mention of the strength of the NKR military in 2001 (13) and a vague mention of Azerbaijani military incompetence in 2008 (74), the narratives of Azerbaijani military weakness and the ability and willingness of Nagorno-Karabakh to defend itself (along with Armenian military forces) are unique to 2012. The one article (93) reporting one group's calls for vengeance, while as a single instance cannot be called a narrative in and of itself, adds to the sense in the 2012 snapshot that Armenian discourse is much more reactionary at that time than previously observed. Much of the emphasis on the militaristic possibilities for the conflict is likely spurred by the events of the time, however it is important to note that period of time investigated in 2008 also saw unprecedented violence on the line of contact but not see the same militaristic lines of discourse.

The question of neutral mentions of Azerbaijan is interesting, because it in some sense serves as a marker for the delineation between 'Azerbaijan the enemy' and just Azerbaijan – more neutral mentions in the media detracts from the idea of Azerbaijan as enemy above all else, while fewer neutral mentions will support this idea. Over the time periods discussed, Feb-March 2006 saw the highest proportion of neutral mentions, with a third (11/33) of the articles mentioning Azerbaijan neutrally, while May-June 2012 saw the least, with less than a sixth (5/27) of articles mentioning Azerbaijan only neutrally. The snapshots from 2001 and 2008 each saw close to a third of articles mentioning Azerbaijan only neutrally (5/17 and 8/25, respectively). There is no sense drawing causative conclusions from the numbers here, although the numerical discrepancy in neutral mentions leads to some interesting observations about the contexts in which these mentions appear. There are some common topics for articles in which Azerbaijan is described neutrally that reoccur across the years. Short write-ups of political events, including the president's weekly schedule (2,8) and peace talks(10, 21),

as well articles on diplomatic visits (42, 44, 48, 49, 75, 87) which tend towards more diplomatic language, are examples of this. Sports stories (29, 30, 37, 50, 55, 70) and stories about local or regional economic trends (25, 58, 73, 102) are an important group because they demonstrate that it is not unusual to refrain from making negative comments on Azerbaijan or Azerbaijanis outside of a political context (for a specific example of this, see footnote 10 in the 2006 textual analysis). In general, Azerbaijan was more broadly painted in a negative light in the 2012 snapshot than in previous years, and for the most part sports and economic interests were fields in which Azerbaijan was often referenced neutrally.

In the same vein, it is important to note that the majority of references to Azerbaijan involve elites (intellectuals, press, political and military decision-makers), rather than citizens. Apart from the one mention of “the Azerbaijani mentality” in article 14, the only even implied negative mentions of regular Azerbaijani citizens come in reference to historical violence and especially the Sumgait massacre, although even in that case the blame is in some places (article 67) ascribed to Soviet Azerbaijani authorities. In reference to the human rights situation in Azerbaijan, its citizens are sometimes portrayed in a sympathetic light (particularly but not exclusively ethnic minorities). Whether or not this distinction is felt by readers, it seems that in the times observed for this research, the writers of *Respublika Armenia* are deliberately painting Azerbaijani elites rather than regular citizens in a negative light.

The future of Nagorno-Karabakh is given much more attention in the time periods when negotiations are taking place, which is to be expected. The one narrative in regards to Nagorno-Karabakh that persists across all the time periods studied is the notion that Nagorno-Karabakh must be independent, expressed explicitly or couched in terms of recognition. On the subject of buffer zones there is not one clear message, although all discussions on the subject imply retaining control of at least some part of the territory. Much of the discourse on Nagorno-Karabakh comes from NKR elites, who are frequently given a platform in *Respublika Armenia*.

The last thing that bears pointing out is the space of things that are not said in this sampling of Armenian media. Given the current political atmosphere, it is not possible to expect that these things might be said, but part of the point of looking at discourse is thinking about which actions and outcomes it values, and which ones it

ignores. There is never any suggestion of Armenian (i.e. mutual) culpability in any of the events of the last 20 years. In this light, it is no surprise that reconciliation and more specifically compromise are not seriously considered. While there are abundant statements on the need for a peaceful resolution and the importance of the peace process, there are no mentions of compromise or of any outcome that does not satisfy all of the Armenian side's current expectations.¹⁶ In the world reported by *Respublika Armenia*, Nagorno-Karabakh is independent from Azerbaijani control and on its way to recognition but (thanks largely to untrustworthy Azerbaijani elites) a peace agreement is not on the horizon.

16 In fact, there were instances in the 2008 presidential elections where having agreed to a peace plan in the past was a serious political liability. The fact that Levon Ter-Petrosyan agreed to a step-by-step deal in negotiations was held against him (54), and there appears to have been a significant negative publicity campaign to spread news that he might have once privately agreed to a Meghri corridor exchange (54, 66).

Conclusion

Through a thorough study of the news coverage around specific events in recent history, it has been established that across different years and political climates, official Armenian news sources consistently present an image of Azerbaijan as dishonest and a hindrance to the peace process, and an image of Nagorno-Karabakh that is necessarily in Armenian hands. There is a reason why OSCE Minsk Group negotiations moved away from presenting full settlement proposals years ago, opting rather for smaller agreements on 'guiding principles' for the process. At the current time, the requirements of each side are mutually exclusive to the point where there is no room for overlap, and as such a solution that would be acceptable to both sides does not exist. This state of total incompatibility is related to the rigid and opposing discourse on both sides. Understanding the nature of that discourse and what drives it will help to understand the difficulties in reaching an agreement, although it will not necessarily lead to ways to address the problem.

There are numerous ways in which this research can be expanded upon. It may be helpful to compile data on the way mediators and foreign actors are viewed, or on the ways the Armenian position in the conflict is justified. Given that research has shown that most Armenians get their news primarily from television rather than newspapers, a study of coverage of Azerbaijan and the conflict in the news would provide say more about the information on which people are basing their views more directly (Pearce, 2011).

The point of this work is not that *Respublika Armenia* is specifically fabricating or manufacturing a negative image of Azerbaijan, because it's not – it is by and large reporting on actual events or statements. However, the point is that, through actions on the part of Azerbaijan and the way they are subsequently interpreted and presented, this is the image of Azerbaijan that exists, and that is presented to Armenia by official actors. A study on Azerbaijani elite discourse aimed at how they justify their position on the conflict also revealed serious impediments to peaceful resolution (Tokluoglu, 2011). In this conflict, the statements made by Azerbaijani and Armenian elites feed off each other, as a provocative statement from one side is met with a provocative reaction from the other, causing distrust to grow entrenched in both societies. This distrust poses

problems not only from the point of view of coming to an agreement in the peace process, but also in the more general sense of future harmony in the region. It is likely that this growing distrust will have to be addressed before a real peace settlement can be signed, but it is certain that distrust has to be addressed before the two peoples can coexist peacefully.

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