

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Ahmad Hasanov**

**2014**

# **CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE**

## **FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

International Economic and Political Studies

### **Participation and role of the EU in resolving the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh**

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Subject: IEPS

Academic Year: 2013/2014

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Date Submitted: July 30, 2014

# **THESIS PROJECT**

# Master's Thesis Proposal

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## Proposed Topic:

Proposed title of thesis: Participation and role of the EU in resolving the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

## Topic Characteristics

The thesis will analyze the involvement and role of the EU in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. It will begin with a summary of the history of the conflict, noting that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has its own special historical background. The South Caucasus, including the territory of Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh as integral parts, has been through ethnic and demographic change due to the process of the disintegration of the USSR, followed by ethnic conflicts in the country akin to civil war, and finally the beginnings of territorial problems associated with its status as a post-Soviet state. All of these influences have affected the demography and geopolitics of the wider region. However, these problems did not come from nowhere and they have a historical background, for example the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan that emerged after territorial claims by Armenia on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

## **Hypotheses**

1. Despite the fact that the Nagorno-Karabakh War has ended a long time ago, the conflict is still ongoing between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which makes the region a hot spot.
2. Russia is interested in maintaining the status quo in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Such actions are undertaken by Russia in order to prevent Armenia and Azerbaijan from leaving its sphere of influence, and in order to have levers of influence on Western countries.
3. Turkey and Iran have their interests in finding a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but rather restrain from direct participation in order not to interfere with Russia.
4. The United States of America wants to keep Armenia away from Russia's sphere of influence, and also not to lose Azerbaijan, thus having its own interests in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.
5. Engagement of the European Union in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through its different institutions can contribute to effective resolution of disputes between the parties involved in it.

## **Methodology**

For the purpose of writing this thesis, I will use the methodology of historical analysis. I will provide an overview of historical development of the Nagorno-Karabakh region in order to track the causes and reasons that have provoked the current state of things in the region. My research dedicated to relations between different parties directly or indirectly involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will be based on the methodological approach of institutional realism. I will investigate the multilateral relationships between Azerbaijan, Armenia, the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, the United States, Russia, Iran, Turkey and the European Union from the perspective of institutional links established between them, and taking into consideration the role of different formal institutions used by such parties in the course of this conflict. The principles of deductive analysis will be used to analyze the current

state of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, and synthesis methods will be applied to forecast the conflict's development in the future, and the EU's role in its mediation.

Bibliographic sources used for the purpose of running my research will include publicly available printed scientific publications, and information available in open access on the web. I will use publications of authors supporting Armenia or Azerbaijan in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, and third-party authors tending to remain objective in their analysis of those events. This is crucial for forming a complete image of the current state of things in the region, and drawing a comprehensive conclusion on the role of different parties involved in the conflict.

To investigate the current and potential future role of the European Union in resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, I will analyze not only official documents involving the EU as their party, but also expert opinions clarifying the ways to reach EU's mediation success.

## **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.

Ahmed Hasanov

Prague 2014

**Acknowledgments:**

**I would like to be thankful to my thesis supervisor Mgr. Martin Riegl for his assistance and advices, also to my family, mother, father and sisters for their continuous support and inspiration.**



# Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1 NAGORNO-KARABAKH: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2 NAGORNO-KARABAKH WAR: REASONS AND OUTCOMES OF THE CONFLICT</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>3 ROLE OF THIRD PARTIES IN THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH WAR</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1 RUSSIA'S ROLE IN THE CONFLICT	27
3.2 KAZAKHSTAN'S ROLE IN THE CONFLICT	31
3.3 IRAN'S ROLE IN THE CONFLICT	33
3.4 TURKEY'S ROLE IN THE CONFLICT	35
<b>4 NAGORNO-KARABAKH REPUBLIC, ITS STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT AFTER 1994</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>5 TERRITORIAL DISPUTES BETWEEN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN FOR NAGORNO-KARABAKH AFTER 1994</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>6 EUROPEAN UNION AS A MEDIATOR AND PEACEMAKER IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH</b>	<b>51</b>
6.1 CURRENT SITUATION	51
6.2 EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE AND RECOMMENDATIONS	54
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>63</b>

## **Abstract**

The thesis analyses the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh which both parties claim to be their historical territory. The thesis explains how the conflict started and continued with a full-scale military conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which is commonly referred to as the Nagorno-Karabakh War.

One of the most important chapter of the thesis is the description of roles played by foreign mediators such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran and Turkey. All those countries pursued their own geopolitical and economic goals in the region, and wished to actively participate in it in order to spread their influence. The European Union has constantly been playing an important role in settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict thanks to its active involvement in all peacekeeping and mediation processes in the region.

Nonetheless, despite all international efforts, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh still continues as of today, and the parties cannot come to any compromise due to the antagonistic nature of their territorial disputes for Nagorno-Karabakh. Both, Azerbaijan and Armenia have started actively deploying their troops on the mutual borders, which raises fears among the international community that a new war for Nagorno-Karabakh might start already in the near future.

## **Keywords**

Armenia

Azerbaijan

conflict

Mediator

Nagorno-Karabakh

Russia

The European Union

The state of war

Turkey

## **Introduction**

The thesis is dedicated to the problem of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. It examines the history of the conflict, ethnic conflicts in the country akin to civil war, and finally the beginnings of territorial problems associated with its status as a post-Soviet state. To understand the situation it is necessary to conduct a brief historical tour of the history of Nagorno-Karabakh. In contrast to the Armenian side of the conflict, the Azerbaijani side considers that the Armenians, until their mass migration to the territory of Caucasian Azerbaijan, were not the main ethnic element of Nagorno-Karabakh. This does not mean that there were no Armenians, but that the overall population of these lands was Azerbaijani (Russian sources: ‘the local Muslim population’). Armenians hold the opposite position, viewing Nagorno-Karabakh as part of the Armenian state in different periods of history. But it should be emphasized that during the Russian invasion and occupation of the Caucasus, including Nagorno-Karabakh, Russia negotiated with the Azerbaijani khanates. In May of 1805, the Russian Empire signed a contract with the Muslim ruler of Karabakh, which indicates that the territory that Russian troops entered was not an Armenian state. During Russian rule many incidents arose between Armenian migrants and local Muslims as the immigrants settled in territories belonging to Muslims. From 1918 to 1920, during the existence of the Armenian and Azerbaijan republics, there were conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh. After the fall of Azerbaijan and Armenia as independent states, the problem was not resolved, and continued during the Soviet period. The result was the formation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region in Soviet Azerbaijan. On 7 July 1923 the AzTsIKa decree was published: “On education in the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh”. After this, the Soviet era started and on 1 December the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR obtained the regulation: “On the Reunification of the Armenian SSR and Nagorno-Karabakh” (which, incidentally, has still not been cancelled by Armenia). Between 1989 and 1993, Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent territories of Lachin, Kelbajar, Gubadly, Zangilan, Jabrail, and Agdam and Fizuli (regional centers and large parts of the territory), all administrative districts of Azerbaijan, were occupied by Armenia. In 1994, the armistice was signed, which continues until today despite local disorders. During this period, the OSCE Minsk Group has been responsible for

management of these issues. The European Union did not engage in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh either conceptually or systematically, which is understandable as it had not participated directly in resolving the conflict. The main reason being that at the beginning of the conflict, the South Caucasus was a territory controlled by Russia, which usually reacts badly to any outside interference. But then the situation changed. EU documents from the beginning of the conflict until the present day suggest that the main trend has been the recognition of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The EU could play a more important role in helping to resolve the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, and its position on the issue has gone through several stages. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, EU intervention purely consisted of the provision of economic and technical assistance to the regions involved in the conflict. Later, the EU took a more active position because of institutional and political changes within the Union itself, which lasted more than ten years. The emergence of the European Neighborhood policy was the beginning of a completely new stage in its cooperation with the countries of the South Caucasus. According to the so-called Program of Action which was signed by Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, the role of the EU in resolving the regional conflict became a priority question within the confines of an alleged closer collaboration. It is still difficult to predict whether or not the EU's involvement in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will increase. There have been significant changes in the foreign and security policies of the EU over the past 10 years, and developments in 2008 between Georgia and Russia are clear evidence of this. However, despite much effort, many lost opportunities, the development of the EU's strategy to resolve the conflict in Balkans and in Africa might be play a very important role for the EU in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

## **1 Nagorno-Karabakh: historical background**

Nagorno-Karabakh is a historical and geographical region located in the South Caucasus, namely in the Lesser Caucasus mountains. As of today, the greatest part of Nagorno-Karabakh's territory is governed by the self-proclaimed and unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, and has long been contested by Armenia and Azerbaijan claiming this territory to be their integral part in terms of ethnic, historical, cultural and other aspects. The territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is one of the major hot spots on the territory of the post-Soviet Union, as tensions are high between the aforementioned geopolitical subjects and third parties involved in the peaceful settlement process. The essence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is rooted in the region's history, which to a large extent predefined the current state of things, and development of the situation with the disputed territory (Chorbajian 1994: 27-29). Therefore it is important to analyze the history of Nagorno-Karabakh in order to understand the factors and forces that ultimately preconditioned development of territorial conflict in this area.

The ancient history of Nagorno-Karabakh known as of today shows that the region was inhabited by the Kura-Araxes people back in the IV-III millennium B.C. However, the first written memories about the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and public life in this area can be found in the inscriptions of Sardur II, King of Urartu, which dates back to the VIII century B.C. The state formation governing this territory back then was called Artsakh, and people inhabiting it spoke their own language, which was a particular dialect of Armenian. Due to this, Armenian historians believe that the first Armenians settled here in the VIII-VII centuries B.C. (Geukjian 2013: 135-142). In the early 2nd century B.C., the region of Artsakh officially became a province of the Armenian Kingdom. However, there are still disputes between historians with regards to the rights Artsakh had under the Armenian rule – either it became an autonomous principality or subordinated directly to the King of Armenia (Kambeck 2013: 59-60).

In 387 A.D., the Kingdom of Armenia was divided between Byzantium and Sassanid Persia. The province of Artsakh was made part of Caucasian Albania. In this time, the Armenian culture and traditions were flourishing in the region. Also, Christianity spread in Nagorno-Karabakh during this epoch. The first Armenian school was founded based on the famous Amaras Monastery (Denber 1992: 32-33).

In the 9th century, the princely House of Khachen was rapidly gaining force in Nagorno-Karabakh. In 821, Sahl Smbatian, an Armenian prince representing the dynasty of Khachen, headed the uprising over Artsakh's rulers, and established his power over the territory. In 1000, the House of Khachen proclaimed Artsakh as an independent kingdom, and John Senecherib became its first king. Another independent kingdom was proclaimed at the same time in the Southern part of Nagorno-Karabakh, where the House of Aranshahik ascended to power. The two states existed separately up until 1261, when the king of Artsakh, Hasan Jalal Dola, married the daughter of the last king of the Dizak dynasty. The two kingdoms merged into a single formation under the name of Artsakh (Balayev 2013: 125-133).

As Artsakh continued existing as an independent principality, it was subject to numerous attacks from nomads seeking easy profit. In the 13th century, Nagorno-Karabakh was subject to numerous raids of the Tatars and Mongols. In the 14th century, the Turkic federations of Qara Koyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu made such raids. Such raids brought substantial damage to the prosperous region, which got the name of Karabakh ("black garden" from Turkic) (Ismayilov 2010: 80-82). After the invasion of Turks, in the XV century, the territory of Karabakh was divided between the two states ruled by the abovementioned federations of Turkic tribes. However, Karabakh was still ruled by the kings representing the dynasty of Khachen, as Turkic rulers appointed them as local princes for the purpose of avoiding tensions with the local population, and strengthening their power over the entire region (Russell 2012: 51).

Principdom Khachen ceased to exist in the 16th century, when it was invaded by Persia. The region was divided into five territorial and administrative units called *melikdoms*. Those were namely Giulistan, Dziraberd, Khachen, Varanda and Dizal. In aggregate, the five Melikdoms were called Khamsa. The Melikdoms were almost autonomous entities, with a wide range of powers delegated to them by the Ganja khanate subordinated directly to Safavid Persia (Hughes 2002: 213-216). In the early 18th century, the new Persian ruler Nadir shah established control over the territory, thus depriving Ganja khans of any powers over the region. In 1722, the Russo-Persian War began. Peter the Great's army moved forward to Caucasus, and Armenians united with Georgians in order to overthrow the Persian rulers, being backed by the Russian army. However, as a result of that war and the policy followed by Peter the Great, the

territory of Artsakh was invaded by the Turkish army, and struggle for the region's independence began (Hille 2010: 143-144).

In 1747, Panah Ali Khan Javanshir, a naib of Azerbaijani descent, proclaimed himself as the new Khan of Karabakh, and Karabakh Khanate was established on the former territory of Artsakh. The Khan was recognized as a legal ruler by the new shah of Persia, and gained legitimacy over the region. However, he was not supported by most meliks who were seeking help from either Iran or Russia. All those meliks were suppressed by Khan Ibrahim-Khalil, the son of Panakh Khan, and Karabakh Khanate gained its independence, only formally recognizing the power of Persia (Eichensehr 2009: 74-75).

In 1805, following the invasion of Persian armies, Ibrahim-khan signed a treaty with Russia, under which Karabakh recognized Russia's protectorate over the Khanate. Already in 1813, under the Treaty of Gulistan, the Karabakh Khanate was officially submitted to the Russian Empire as its subject. The Karabakh Khanate was abolished, and its territory was made part of the Russian Empire's Caspian Oblast (Kambeck 2013: 112). During the epoch of the Russian Empire, the region of Karabakh gained active development, and its major cities became important centers of trade and culture in Transcaucasia. As of this time, the majority of the region's population was made up by ethnic Armenians who mainly inhabited the region of Caucasian highlands (Chorbajian 1994: 166-168).

As a result of the 1917 October Revolution, the Special Transcaucasian Committee was established by the Provisional Government. The new Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic was proclaimed, and Karabakh was made part of the Transcaucasian Federation. Ethnic tensions in the regions already started in Karabakh with struggle between the local Azerbaijani and Armenian officials. In 1918, the Federation was dissolved, and separate Republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan were proclaimed (Denber 1992: 185-188). In the mid-1918, conflicts emerged between Armenian and Azerbaijani in Baku, and Bolsheviks supported the Armenian side. As a result of severe clashes, many people were killed, and Muslims were chased from Azerbaijan's capital. In those conditions, the official authorities of Azerbaijan declared their power over the region of Karabakh, but the latter refused to recognize it. In July 1918, Nagorno-Karabakh was proclaimed as an independent unit by the First Congress



of Armenians of Karabakh, and the Armenian government was established for governing the entire territory of the region (Geukjian 2013: 93-97).

In October 1918, the Ottoman Empire's army retreated from the territory of Transcaucasia, and Britain put its forces on the region's territory. Britain made all efforts to include Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan on the Paris Peace Conference, as it wished to deprive Russia of any title to Baku's oil, and therefore supported the government of Azerbaijan. However, the Armenian Council of Nagorno-Karabakh refused to recognize the ruling of Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, prior to the Paris Peace Conference, Azerbaijan actually established its control over the region (Hille 2010: 190).

In 1920, a war started between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenians organized an uprising in an attempt to overthrow Azerbaijani. However, attacks on Azerbaijani garrisons were unsuccessful, and in response, the latter burnt the Armenian part of the city of Shusha, and killed many people. In such conditions, the Ninth Congress of Karabakh Armenians adopted a resolution to join Armenia as its integral part. But still, the Azerbaijani army had control over the region (Eichensehr 2009: 99-104).

In 1921, the Bolsheviks took over Armenia. The ruling elite of the party promised to incorporate Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia, but due to the strategic interest in relations with Turkey, the Bolsheviks created the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast which was included in the Azerbaijan SSR, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the region's population were Armenians (Ismayilov 2010: 215-217). Throughout the period of Nagorno-Karabakh's existence within the Soviet Union, Armenians accused the Azerbaijani authorities of their discriminating policy aimed at reducing the share of the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh, and artificially populating it with Azerbaijani, suppressing the Armenian language, and so on. In 1988, an unofficial referendum was held in Nagorno-Karabakh, at which the local population supported the region's reattachment to Armenia. Clashes started between Karabakh Armenians and Azerbaijani. The Azerbaijani authorities were accused by Armenians of massacring the ethnic Armenian population. Following those events, in 1989, the USSR provided Azerbaijan with greater powers to maintain peace in the region. In response, the Armenian Supreme Soviet proclaimed reunification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia (Balayev 2013: 133-139).

In 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh held a referendum aimed at proclaiming the region's independence. However, such right was not granted to it under the Constitution of the Soviet Union. The option to join Azerbaijan as an autonomous region didn't satisfy the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflict started over the region, in which Azerbaijan opposed Nagorno-Karabakh supported by the independent state of Armenia (Russell 2012: 88).

Thus, as we can see, conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan were historically predefined, and are deep-rooted in the region's historical development. Tensions were objectively preconditioned by the existing conditions of interaction, and the Nagorno-Karabakh War was in fact unavoidable. In the next section of my thesis, I would like to deeply analyze it.

## **2 Nagorno-Karabakh War: reasons and outcomes of the conflict**

The Nagorno-Karabakh War between Armenia and Azerbaijan resulted from the events described in the previous chapter of this thesis. The war itself lasted from January 1992 to May 1994, and brought quite different consequences for the belligerents. It was also characterized by vast indirect involvement of many third-party foreign states (such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran, Turkey, etc.) following their own interests in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh (Potier 2001: 20). For the purpose of fulfilling the goals of this thesis, it is important to analyze the Nagorno-Karabakh War, and understand its course, reasons and outcomes.

Based on the above-mentioned information, it can be stated that the main reasons for emergence of the Nagorno-Karabakh War were mutual territorial claims between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which had remained unresolved for over seventy years, and the ensuing ethnic tensions in the region between the Armenian and Azerbaijani population. The final factor that restrained beginning of direct hostilities was existence of the Soviet Union, and presence of its armed forces on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, with the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the Soviet forces were withdrawn from the area, and as there was no longer any single government having power over different Soviet republics, the independent states of Azerbaijan and Armenia entered into a direct military conflict (Krüger 2010: 56-61).

However, as some researchers argue, the Nagorno-Karabakh War in fact started earlier, in November 1987, but rather in the form of sporadic clashes, with not as many casualties as during the active phase of the conflict. I believe that the events that preceded the 1992-1994 hostilities should be analyzed for the purpose of better understanding the main driving factors that provoked the long-lasting Nagorno-Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia (Croissant 1998: 62).

In November 1987, Azerbaijani refugees from several Armenian villages argued that they had to flee from their places of residence due to the threat of ethnic cleansings by the local Armenians. Cases of forced expulsions later occurred with several other villages, with the Azerbaijani side accusing Armenia of supporting ethnic tensions against the local Azerbaijani population. However, the Armenian side denied all such

allegations, and no express evidences were provided by the Azerbaijani authorities to support their arguments.

On February 20, 1988, the Karabakh National Council passed a resolution requiring the Soviet authorities to transfer the region of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia as its integral territorial unit. This provoked significant negative reaction among the Azerbaijani population. Moreover, information announced by Azerbaijani media said that several Azerbaijani civilians had been killed in Stepanakert during ethnic cleansings. Despite the fact that such information was unconfirmed, thousands of Azerbaijani people gathered and started moving in the direction of Nagorno-Karabakh. The local police were mobilized in order to prevent any riots with casualties and possible ethnic killings. However, in the Askeran region of Nagorno-Karabakh, a severe clash occurred between the local population and the Azerbaijani protesters. This event is today commonly referred to as the Askeran clash. As a result of those events, 2 Azerbaijanis were killed, and several dozens of Armenians were severely injured (Pellatt 2008: 111).

The Askeran clash was followed by the so-called Sumgait pogrom. On February 27, 1988, an outbreak of violence occurred in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait. Local civilians, mainly adult men and students, grouped into small gangs from 10 to 50 people, and came to the streets of the city. Armed by cobbles, knives and other similar objects, those people started attacking Armenian people living in the city, breaking their windows, burning their cars, and so on. There were many cases of sexual abuse. Several Azerbaijani rioters were killed by self-defending Armenians who started taking objects such as axes in order to defend themselves. The local law enforcement agencies didn't anyhow react in most cases, and left the violent clashes without any attention. Moreover, as the Armenian citizens of Sumgait later stated, they had been informed of the clashes earlier by the local Azerbaijani people who wished to help them survive. The Armenian state also claimed that the Sumgait pogrom was to a large extent supported by the Azerbaijani officials. Obviously, local people organized the pogrom due to the previous clashes in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh which had taken lives of Azerbaijani civilians. The Soviet armed forces only entered Sumgait on March 1, 1988, and the Armenian media accused Azerbaijan of organizing genocide of the local Armenian population (Potier 2001: 136-138).

On March 23 1988, the authorities of the Soviet Union ultimately refused to cede the region of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. Armed forces were sent to Yerevan in order to prevent riots of Armenians similar to the ones organized by Azerbaijanis in the city of Sumgait. Armenians feared that the Azerbaijani authorities would start ethnic genocide in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, where most people were of Armenian descent. However, in December 1988, interethnic violence continued in Kirovobad. During the so-called Kirovobad pogrom, thousands of Armenians were expelled from their houses by the local Azerbaijani population, and were forced to leave the country and seek asylum in Armenia.

On January 9, 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR passed a resolution under which Armenia allowed the population of Nagorno-Karabakh participating in Armenian elections, and included the Azerbaijani region in its budget. Thus, Armenia disregarded the regulation of the All-Soviet authorities which had prohibited Nagorno-Karabakh to be ceded to the Armenian state. Azerbaijani people were outraged with such actions made by Armenia, and demanded proclaiming independence from the USSR. Local nationalist organizations in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, started mobilizing people for fights against the local Armenians. The authorities of Azerbaijan didn't make any actions to prevent clashes, and didn't use the forces of law enforcement agencies. On January 13, massive pogroms of the Armenian populations occurred in Baku. As a result of those events, ninety people were murdered, and thousands were forced to flee from Baku. The Popular Front of Azerbaijan declared a state of emergency in most Azerbaijan's regions, and started blocking military barracks in order for the Soviet Army not to intervene. However, on January 19, 1990, under a decree signed by Mikhail Gorbachev, Soviet troops entered Baku and suppressed the riots organized by the Popular Front. In the course of street clashes in Baku, 93 Azerbaijani civilians and 29 Soviet soldiers were killed (Russell, Cohn 2012: 88-92).

In February 1990, clashes between Azerbaijani militia and Armenian forces occurred in the Azerbaijani exclaves on Armenia's territory. Armenians attacked the villages of Askiparli, Sofulu, and several other settlements. On March 26, 1990, Armenian fighters crossed the border with Azerbaijan and attacked several Azerbaijani villages, leaving twelve civilians dead. On August 19, 1990, Armenia used aircraft and artillery for attacking Azerbaijani villages on the border. On the next day, Soviet troops

intervened and forced the Armenians to move back to their territory (Ismailzade 2006: 44-45).

On April 20, 1991, the so-called Operation Ring was run by the Soviet government on the territory of Getashen and Martunashen, not far away from the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. A passport regime was implemented for the local population, and Soviet troops started expulsing all Armenians living there first to Nagorno-Karabakh, and then to Armenia, under the pretext of their support of Armenian militia which had run attacks against Azerbaijan. On May 7, a second operation under the same name was carried out by the same Soviet troops in the Armenian city of Voskepar. Similarly to the first operation, the local Armenians were expelled from their territory under the same pretext. This provoked outraged reaction of the Armenian officials, who blamed the Soviet Union for violation of all basic human rights and freedoms in the region, and for attacks directed against the Armenian sovereignty. Moreover, as Operation Ring was run by the Soviet troops together with Azerbaijan's armed forces, Armenia feared that a joint attack could be held by Azerbaijan and the USSR against it right on the country's territory (Croissant 1998: 60-62).

In the early 1992, the Armenian side started actively running its military operations in the region, by quickly conquering several Azerbaijani villages located in Nagorno-Karabakh, with many Azerbaijani civilians killed or wounded. Azerbaijani armed forces started actively responding, namely with the involvement of air forces. On February 25-26, Armenian armed forces held a massive attack on the Azerbaijani city of Khojaly. Those attacks were followed by severe ethnic cleansings, as a result of which 7,000 people were killed or tortured. However, Azerbaijani and Armenian historians tend to interpret this incident in different ways, and state different number and reasons of casualties among civilians (Pellatt 2008: 135-138).

In May 1992, the cities of Shusha and Lachin in Nagorno-Karabakh were conquered by the Armenian military, thanks to which the logistical issues were effectively resolved, as a corridor was ensured between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenian supplies now could freely reach Karabakh, and troops could move freely between the two territories. Due to such development of events, the Azerbaijani forces started their counter-offensive in June 1992, thanks to which they quickly reconquered a number of settlements in the Northern part of Nagorno-Karabakh. The large-scale Azerbaijani offensive operation run in the summer of 1992 is nowadays

largely known as Operation Goranboy. As a result of this offensive, the Armenian government officially declared that it would intervene in support of Nagorno-Karabakh, as previously, all support given by Armenia had been provided unofficially (Zeynalov 2012: 204-205).

In July and August 1992, several smaller Azerbaijani offensives were held in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Due to those events and the Nagorno-Karabakh government's inability to effectively resolve the situation, it finally resigned, and in late August, the State Defense Committee headed by Robert Kocharyan ascended to power in the rebellious republic (Croissant 1998: 66-67).

In January 1993, violent clashes brewed up again on the territory of Northern Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenians fought back the villages that had been held by Azerbaijan in the late 1992. In April 1993, the Armenian forces held successful attacks against the Azerbaijani in the rayon of Kelbajar. By April 3, Armenian forces wiped Azerbaijani troops out of the region completely, and conquered the settlements located there. The United Nations adopted a resolution under which both Armenia and Azerbaijan were called to conclude a ceasefire agreement, and the occupying forces had to withdraw their troops from Kelbajar. A state of emergency was introduced in Azerbaijan. In the long run, President Elchibey was made resign from his office, and Heydar Aliyev came to power in Azerbaijan in the early summer 1993 (Baser 2008: 129-130).

In July 1993, Armenian forces started artillery attacks against the region of Agdam. President Aliyev even held negotiations with the self-proclaimed government of Nagorno-Karabakh for the purpose of stopping military clashes, however they were unsuccessful. In August 1993, Armenians started massive attacks against the Azerbaijani regions of Jebrail and Fizuli located in the Southern part of Nagorno-Karabakh. As Armenian forces advanced deeper into the territory of Azerbaijan, the government of Turkey warned Armenia that it would not allow further conquering the territory of Azerbaijan, and even moved its troops to the borders (Novikova 2004: 228-236).

In October 1993, Aliyev was officially elected as the President of Azerbaijan, and the country adhered to the Commonwealth of Independent States. During the winter, both the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides suffered from lack of food and other

resources. In January 1994, Azerbaijani military were able to re-conquer part of the Fizuli region. The offensive on the region of Matakert held thereafter didn't bring any significant positive effect to the Azerbaijani side, and Armenia started officially sending its armed troops and forces of the interior to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh in order to stop Azerbaijani advancement to the territory (Russell 2012: 161-164).

When holding a major offensive aimed at reconstituting Azerbaijani power over the region of Kelbajar, Azerbaijan lost as much as 1,500 of its soldiers, and was completely broken down by the Armenian forces. Such harsh defeats occurred quite often, and were mainly due to the fact that Azerbaijani military officials actively involved young people without any experience, while the Armenian side involved professional soldiers, and was very well equipped. The Azerbaijani forces were to a large extent demoralized, and could not withstand the attacks of the Armenians (Ismailzade 2006: 253-255).

As Azerbaijan's military were ultimately exhausted, and the Armenian forces in fact obtained a free path on the way to Baku, Azerbaijan wished to sign a final ceasefire agreement, Armenian and Azerbaijani diplomats held negotiations in the early 1994, and in May 1994, all parties directly involved in the conflicts finally agreed to stop hostilities, under the active mediation of Russia and international organizations. On May 5, 1994, the Bishkek Protocol was signed, which shaped the results of the Nagorno-Karabakh War (Cornell 1999: 70-72).

Under the Bishkek Protocol, a ceasefire agreement was signed between all the parties to the hostilities. Nagorno-Karabakh was granted a very high degree of autonomy, but still, the sovereignty of Azerbaijan wasn't impaired. Armenian forces were set to withdraw from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Security of the Nagorno-Karabakh region was guaranteed by third parties, which had the rights to run peacekeeping missions in the area. The Lachin Corridor between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh was assigned a special status. An agreement was also reached for the purpose of returning all military refugees to their homelands between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Pellatt 2008: 135-140).

The immediate result of the Nagorno-Karabakh Wars was the complete military victory of Armenia. Despite the fact that the Azerbaijani army had been better equipped at the beginning of the war, it was ultimately defeated. Moreover, at the end of the war,



the sovereignty and independence of Azerbaijan were substantially threatened by the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh state. Azerbaijan lost approximately 25,000 people killed, while casualties of the Armenian side made up nearly 6,000 people, among which the majority were citizens of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan's military power was also significantly impaired by the great number of military equipment and aircraft destroyed by the Armenian side in the course of the war (Eichensehr 2009: 64-66). The economic consequences for both parties to the conflict were terrible. The gross domestic product of Armenia and Azerbaijan decreased almost five times, and the population was reduced by a significant percentage. Due to this, both Armenia and Azerbaijan required great amounts of time to restore the pre-war state of their national economies (Croissant 1998: 277).

Despite the undisputable military victory of Armenia, the provisions of the Bishkek Protocol stipulated that Nagorno-Karabakh would remain under the sovereignty of Azerbaijan, and the Armenian armed forces would retire from the Azerbaijani territory. Such terms were very beneficial to Azerbaijan, as the country faced significant threats to its independence and sovereignty from Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh due to the harsh military defeat suffered. This was mainly achieved thanks to the active mediation of third party foreign countries, namely Russia and Kazakhstan, and international organizations, namely the OSCE Minsk Group, most of which had their own interests in the Nagorno-Karabakh region (Novikova 2004: 202-208). However, despite the official provisions of the Bishkek Protocol, the main outcome of the Nagorno-Karabakh War was the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh became a *de facto* independent republic. Although being subordinated to Azerbaijan *de jure*, Nagorno-Karabakh's authorities have never recognized Azerbaijan's sovereignty over the territory. Since then, Nagorno-Karabakh has remained an unrecognized republic living under its own legislation, and actually without anyhow being connected with Azerbaijan (Zeynalov 2012: 152-154).

The region of Nagorno-Karabakh became a zone of frozen conflict, and has remained a hot spot since the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh War. Azerbaijan was unable to implement its power, and establish control over the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, and Armenia started heating tensions based on the Armenian population living in Nagorno-Karabakh. The situation was also worsened by the impact of third

parties, which continued even after the Bishkek Protocol had been signed (Baser 2008: 143-146).

Discrepancies between the military results of the Nagorno-Karabakh War, the provisions of the ceasefire agreement within the Bishkek Protocol, and the actual outcomes and consequences of the military conflict were mainly caused by the active involvement of third parties playing the role of mediators or indirect players in the War. The range of such third parties was quite wide, but the greatest role in those events was played by Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran and Turkey (Ismailzade 2006: 94). In the next section of this thesis, I would like to investigate the role of all the abovementioned countries in the course of the Nagorno-Karabakh War for the purpose of seeing their role in shaping the military conflict's actual outcomes.

### **3 Role of third parties in the Nagorno-Karabakh War**

#### **3.1 Russia's role in the conflict**

Russia's role in development of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict cannot be underestimated. This can first of all be explained by the Russian Federation's desire to preserve its influence over the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union, due to which the state undertook differently shaped steps in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Right after the collapse of the USSR, the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh arose for all parties involved. Among possible scenarios of events, there was one with Russia taking control over Nagorno-Karabakh's territory. However, despite of the fact that this scenario has never been implemented, Russia was actively involved in all events related to the development of the crisis in the region. Within the framework of such actions, Russia actively participated in diplomatic and other activities aimed at finding compromise in the long-lasting conflict and reducing tensions between the parties involved. Russia's diplomatic position was obviously destined to reach solutions most effective for the Russian state, and prevent third parties from increasing their influence in the region (Russell, Cohn 2012: 124-126).

On the first stage of confrontations, prior to the beginning of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh War, Russia had played an important role acting as a mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The first key stage of negotiations between the belligerent parties was held on September 20-23, 1991, in the city of Zheleznovodsk. Russia's President Boris Yeltsin initiated negotiations and signature of a joint memorandum for stopping hostilities in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. The negotiations were held directly between the highest officials of Azerbaijan and Armenia, with mediation of Boris Yeltsin and Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan. The mission proclaimed its diplomatic nature, without any territorial or other interest in Nagorno-Karabakh, thus distancing itself from any possible claims. Presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan declared their recognition of both belligerents' territorial integrity, and non-interference in their affairs. On September 22, the parties came to an agreement under which Armenia consented to renounce all its claims over the Azerbaijani territory. Thanks to this, on September 23, 1991, a joint communiqué was signed between the parties which is commonly referred to as the Zheleznovodsk

Communiqué. Under this agreement, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to withdraw their militias, renew the status of Nagorno-Karabakh as it had been in times of the Soviet Union, and set further rounds of negotiations in order to peacefully resolve the conflict and define the position of Nagorno-Karabakh in the system of bilateral relations (Donaldson, Noguee 2005: 267-278).

An important aspect of the Zheleznovodsk Communiqué was the fact that both Armenia and Azerbaijan accepted the fact that Soviet troops would continue remaining on the region's territory as a force aimed at ensuring peacekeeping and preventing development of hostilities. In fact, this meant that Russia's armed forces would remain in the region and take full control over it, thanks to which Russia was able to guarantee its high influence over the region, and received a considerable lever of tension on both Armenia and Azerbaijan (Brzezinski, Sullivan. 1997: 196).

However, despite the intentions declared in the Zheleznovodsk Communiqué and its overall important role for suspension of hostilities and build-up of dialogue between the conflicting parties, it has never been ratified by Armenia and Azerbaijan. Soon after its signature, the parties renewed military operations blaming each other for starting direct aggression (Mathilde, Hille 2010: 89-90).

As it has already been mentioned earlier in this thesis, the subsequent development of events led to deployment of full-scale hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia. This raised substantial concern among the international community, and attempts to mediate peace continued. In June 1992, CSCE (Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe) established the so-called Minsk Group including eleven states, which was aimed at mediating peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and defining the future of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The Group was headed by Russia, France and the United States. CSCE developed an initiative for deploying NATO and CIS peacekeeping missions in Nagorno-Karabakh for preventing any future hostilities and casualties among civilians. This initiative was strongly supported by the Armenian side. However, Russia's position strictly opposed the idea of introducing any Western peacekeeping mission on the post-Soviet space, and therefore all such initiatives ultimately failed due to lack of mutual consent between the Minsk Group members. This was first of all connected with Russia's will not to let foreign troops come near its borders, and definitely for preserving its geopolitical influence in the region (Arbatov 1997: 206-212).

Throughout the conflict, Russia provided armament support to both Azerbaijan and Armenia, which was most often done officially, through conclusion of interstate contracts for armament supplies. Thus, the Russian Federation distanced itself from support of either of the parties, but still contributed to development of the conflict. The amounts of supplies were quite large, as, in fact, both Armenia and Azerbaijan were struggling against the bad condition of their armed forces, and required considerable volumes of equipment and machinery to be purchased in order to effectively run operations in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, such armament supplies were also allegedly made unofficially. Russian mercenaries were actively involved in the conflict, especially those specialists which both belligerent parties required most, for instance aircraft pilots (Nalbandov 2013: 173-174).

Another important role was played by the Russian troops located on the territory of Armenia, near its border with Turkey. During the active phase of the conflict in 1993, Turkey started moving its armed forces closer to that border, which raised significant concern among the Armenians. The Armenian forces deployed on the border were obviously insignificant in number, and were definitely unable to withstand any potential attacks from the Turkish side, especially in the light of hostilities run against Azerbaijan. In addition, Turkey clearly showed that it supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, and didn't recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as part of the Armenian state. Furthermore, the Azerbaijani and the Turkish sides obviously held negotiations and developed programs of mutual military actions, which was proven by the data obtained by the intelligence services of Armenia. In such conditions, it was important for Armenia to eliminate the threat of Turkish intervention. Russian troops were moved to the border between Turkey and Armenia, and thus prevented any direct military activities by Turkey, as this would obviously have meant hostilities between Turkey and the Russian Federation (Trenin 1996: 209-214).

In May 1994, Russia played a major role as a peacekeeper in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Within the framework of the CSCE Minsk Group, a series of negotiations rounds were held featuring Russia as a mediator. On May 25, 1994, all belligerent sides, including the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, signed the so-called Bishkek Protocol, which was an important international treaty that froze the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The principles of the Bishkek Protocol were to a large extent developed by the Russian side and took into account the interests followed by the

Russian Federation. In addition to the general measures such as withdrawal of all armed forces from the region by all belligerents and exchange of refugees, the Protocol obviously led to recognition of Azerbaijan's sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh, and rejected any Armenia's claims over the region. That solution to the conflict was largely promoted by the Russian Federation. Moreover, the Bishkek Protocol set forth the necessity to ensure presence of peacekeeping forces on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, which should be Russian peacekeepers (Arbatov 1997: 307-310).

Thus, as we can see, Russia definitely played a key role in development of events during the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Russia's involvement in the mediation process was rather dictated by its own interests than by some altruistic goals. First of all, Russia prevented growth of power of Turkey and Iran over the region, which would mean loss of part of its levers for the Russian Federation. Second, in addition to the geopolitical reasons, the region of Nagorno-Karabakh was important for the Russian Federation due to Azerbaijan's abundance in oil and gas resources. Furthermore, important oil and gas pipelines were passing through the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, which linked the two belligerents with the Russian Federation, and then with Europe. Russia obviously needed to ensure safe and interrupted supplies of oil and gas to Europe, and therefore preserving the administrative condition of Nagorno-Karabakh as it used to be in times of the Soviet Union was the best choice for the Russian Federation to keep control over the vast oil and gas resources available on the abovementioned territory. Finally, the possibility to use peacekeeping forces stipulated in the Bishkek Protocol provided Russia with additional levers of tension on both Azerbaijan and Armenia, thus raising the state's authority and influence in the region (Rosner 2006: 63-65).

As we can see from the information given above, the Nagorno-Karabakh War was a large-scale conflict, with many third parties involved. In the next section of my thesis, I would like to consider Kazakhstan's role in the conflict.

### **3.2 Kazakhstan's role in the conflict**

Kazakhstan's interest in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh was mainly connected with the oil and gas pipelines connecting Azerbaijan with Russia, Kazakhstan and Europe. Under the threat of shelling, those pipelines could be destroyed, thus depriving Kazakhstan of a considerable part of the state's income. On the other hand, there was a geopolitical reason as well. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan largely remained within Russia's sphere of influence, and was considered to remain in the orbit of the Russian Federation's sphere of influence. Due to this, support of a country playing an important role in the region was important for Russia in order to impose its will on the belligerent parties, and mediate peaceful resolution of the conflict with the best results for the Russian Federation (Olcott 2010: 277-278).

Kazakhstan's most prominent role in resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was played in the very beginning of rising tensions, when Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation played the role of essential mediators promoting peace in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and prevention of any hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In 1991, together with Russia's President Boris Yeltsin, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev initiated peace negotiations between the belligerent parties. In September, the two Presidents arranged peace talks in Baku, Yerevan, Stepanakert, and Ganja. Those peace efforts in the long run led to signature of the so-called Zheleznovodsk Communiqué which has already been described earlier in this thesis. The document also featured the signature of Nursultan Nazarbayev as one of its main initiators. Despite the fact that this agreement ultimately failed, it was an important step on the way toward suspension of hostilities and establishment of temporary peace in the region (Cohen, Rosner 2006: 65-167).

The Zheleznovodsk Communiqué was in fact breached when the Armenian side shot down an Azerbaijani helicopter with Russian and Kazakh observers on board. This raised significant concern among the international community, and further promoted Kazakhstan's support of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Numerous Kazakh officials declared the country's support of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, and refused to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh's submission to Armenia (Ostrowski 2010: 160-161).

Due to the fact that the conflict gradually evolved into open hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the international community started actively undertaking measures in order to stop or freeze the conflict for preventing significant human casualties. The Minsk Group formed under the auspices of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe played a very important role in elaborating the principles for peaceful settlement of the conflict, even despite the fact that many of its initiatives were ultimately rejected due to disagreements between the member states. Kazakhstan didn't directly take part in the activities of the Minsk Group, but actively supported the organization's incentives, and took part in multilateral talks aimed at developing the principles of resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Pellatt 2008: 217-219).

On the last stage of the conflict, when the so-called Bishkek Protocol was signed, Kazakhstan actively promoted the Russian Federation's interests in the region. Thus, the authorities of Kazakhstan completely accepted the peaceful settlement plan proposed within the framework of the Bishkek Protocol. Kazakhstan didn't recognize independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, just as Armenia's claims over the region. Moreover, Kazakhstan clearly stated that it only recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan, and no violations of the Azerbaijani sovereignty were acceptable for the Kazakh authorities. Many Kazakh officials supported deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh for preventing any further escalation of conflicts between all belligerents (Croissant 1998: 175-176).

Kazakhstan's position in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh War was connected not only with support of Russia's geopolitical ambitions, but also with purely economic goals such as deeper cooperation with Azerbaijan in the oil and gas sector. The official position of Kazakhstan was to definitely support Azerbaijan, which was considered as a potentially major partner in the field of oil and gas exploration, production and transportation (Cohen, Rosner 2006: 251-254).

In the next section of my thesis, I will analyze the role of another third party in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, namely the one of Iran.



### **3.3 Iran's role in the conflict**

Iran was another major player in the region interested in development of events and resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This was predefined by several main reasons. On the one hand, Iran was neighboring the region and feared much any negative development of events, in which case any major military clashes involving third parties could potentially bring damage to Iran. On the other hand, Iran had its own material interests in resolution of the conflict which were first of all connected with the oil market conjuncture and competition with other Asian states on the market of oil supplies. As a major supplier of oil, Iran was not interested in strengthening of Azerbaijan's economic or geopolitical influence in the Asian region, and therefore the Iranian state supported Armenia's position in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Souleimanov 2013: 88-89).

Iran started actively taking direct part in negotiations aimed at settling the conflict in 1992. Back then, a new series of talks were launched under the initiative of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, President of Iran. In the first half of 1992, Iranian diplomats held bilateral negotiations with both the Azeri and the Armenian sides on their respective territories. Those bilateral talks resulted in the fact that the Iranian diplomats were able to convince President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosian and President of Azerbaijan Yaqub Mammadov to come to Tehran in order to hold multilateral negotiations under the mediation of Iran on a neutral territory. The three parties signed a memorandum commonly referred to as the Tehran Communiqué. The agreement declared both belligerent parties' dedication to hold meetings involving their respective higher officials and military personnel in order to develop mutually acceptable principles of conflict resolution falling in line with the principles of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Also, the parties undertook to effect exchange of all refugees (Balayev 2013: 222-225).

However, already on May 8, 1992, only one day after the Tehran Communiqué had been signed, the Armenian side breached its conditions and in fact unilaterally breached the ceasefire by attacking the town of Shusha and expelling thousands of Azerbaijanis from there. Subsequently, the situation only worsened, and the belligerent parties withdrew from the Tehran Communiqué. Despite this, the agreement still played an important role in demonstrating Iran's influence in settlement of the conflict, and

helped Iran establish itself as a major party involved in the peacekeeping process in Nagorno-Karabakh (Hunter 2010: 111-113).

In 1993, Iran's support of Armenia became even more evident than before. The Iranian authorities largely helped Armenia in the humanitarian field by providing the state with energy and electricity. This helped to prevent humanitarian crisis in Armenia, and enabled the state to preserve a great part of its industrial enterprises. Due to those events, the relations between Iran and Azerbaijan became much strained in this period.

Another important sphere of activities run by Iran during the time of the Nagorno-Karabakh War was creation of refugee camps where many refugees from the Nagorno-Karabakh region were displaced. Despite the fact that both Armenia and Azerbaijan had such camps on their territories, people from Nagorno-Karabakh wanted to guarantee security of their lives, and fled abroad in large numbers. Iran was among the biggest receivers of such refugees (Souleimanov 2013: 240-241).

Overall, it should be stated that Iran played a very important role in the peaceful settlement process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Even despite of the fact that Iran's initiative didn't ultimately bring any positive effects, the negotiations organized by Iran enabled to suspend hostilities for the first time. Iran's active involvement in the subsequent peace talks process was largely blocked by the Turkish side, as the two countries considered Nagorno-Karabakh as a battlefield for their domination over the region. The subsequent peace negotiations proposed by Iran were ignored by the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was due to the organization's desire to preserve Turkey's influence in the region, and not to let Iran strengthen its positions. Another important factor was that, after Iran had started actively supporting Armenia, the Azerbaijani officials claimed for the Azerbaijani population of Iran to secede and join Azerbaijan as its integral territory. This raised significant concern among the Iranian officials who feared any such development of events, and therefore were forced to considerably restrain Iran's initiatives aimed at raising its geopolitical power in the region (Mojtahed-Zadeh 2007: 159-163).

In the next section of the thesis, I would like to consider more in detail the role of Turkey in settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

### **3.4 Turkey's role in the conflict**

Turkey's involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict actively started from its earliest phase. The Turkish state openly expressed its support of the Azerbaijani side, Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh. Bilateral relations between the two countries started very actively developing. Armenia, fearing Turkey's direct invasion, was forced to seek allies among the Commonwealth of Independent States members (Krüger 2010: 256-257).

A new coil of tensions between Turkey and Armenia occurred in May 1992, with capture of the town of Shusha by the Armenian troops, which completely ignored the ceasefire agreement previously reached. Suleyman Demirel, the then President of Turkey, declared that the actions of Armenia on the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan were aimed at expulsing the Muslim population of the region, due to which the population of his country was upset and required him to take immediate actions to help Azerbaijan struggle against the Armenian threat. Armenia immediately appealed to the Commonwealth of Independent States and Russia for protecting its sovereignty against the threat of Turkish invasion. In May 1992, the commander of the CIS forces made an appeal to NATO stating that any involvement of NATO forces in the conflict ongoing on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh would pose the threat of World War III. Under the tension of Russia, Turkey was forced to reject its idea of directly participating in the Nagorno-Karabakh War. However, throughout the conflict, Turkey significantly helped Azerbaijan with supplies of weapons and machinery, military aid and support (Çelik 1999: 180-181).

On April 30, 1992, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 822 which was proposed by Turkey together with Pakistan. Under this Resolution, UNSC accused Armenia of multiple violations of the laws of war during the so-called Kelbajar Offensive, when many Azerbaijanis and Kurds were expulsed from their territories by the Armenian troops. In September 1992, the situation further worsened, when, seeing Armenia's domination over the Azerbaijani forces, the Turkish authorities warned Armenia of the consequences which would ensue in case of Armenia's attacks against Nakhichevan. Right thereafter, Turkey deployed its armed forces on the border with Armenia, which raised significant concern among the Armenians. The country was obviously unable to run hostilities with two rivals at once, and therefore Armenia asked

the Russian Federation to provide its military support. Russian troops deployed in Armenia were moved to the same border and re-deployed right in front of the Turkish forces. Due to the intervention of Russia, Turkey was again forced to reject its plans of direct military intervention in the Nagorno-Karabakh War (Oktav 2013: 166-167).

In 1993, Turkey launched a full-scale economic blockade against Armenia, just as it had previously been done by Azerbaijan. Thus, Turkey again manifested its support of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Due to the actions undertaken by Turkey, Armenia significantly suffered due to shortages of water and power supplies, having scarce own natural resources. Moreover, Armenia's transport connections with other Asian countries were damaged, as part of them running across the border with Turkey were closed. Also, the blockade imposed by Turkey deprived Armenia of the opportunity to participate in large-scale international projects in the oil and gas sector, against the background of Azerbaijan's participation in projects such as Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline or Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline. The economic prospects of Armenia were significantly hindered by Turkey's involvement (Martin, Keridis. 2004: 233-238).

Importantly enough, Turkey's economic blockade was aimed not only against Armenia, but also against Iran. As it has already been stated earlier in this thesis, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was a means for Turkey and Iran to show their initiative and raise their geopolitical influence in the region. While Iran supported Armenia, Turkey provided full support to Azerbaijan. As Azerbaijan was one of Iran's key competitors in the region in terms of oil production and supplies, the economic blockade of Armenia initiated by Turkey, and Azerbaijan's simultaneous participation in oil and gas pipelines construction projects, were aimed at lowering Iran's role as a major oil supplier in the region, and cut Iran off the pipelines for effecting oil supplies to other countries. Despite the effective economic restricting actions, Turkey didn't have a chance to completely impose its geopolitical will to all participants in the conflict due to the active involvement of the Russian Federation. Despite the fact that Russia didn't openly support Iran in its conflict with the Turkish side, it still created obstacles for Turkey, and restrained the means available to the country for getting its dividends from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Elik 2013: 77-79).

Signature of the Bishkek Protocol only strengthened Russia's geopolitical influence in the region, and, despite the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh de jure remained an

integral part of Azerbaijan, the aims pursued by Turkey weren't reached. However, thanks to its active participation, the country didn't allow Iran considerably strengthening its positions, and remained one of the region's most powerful leaders (Çelik 1999: 311).

Having analyzed the roles of the most prominent third parties in development of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in the next chapter of my thesis, I would like to focus of the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and its development after 1994.

## **4 Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, its status and development after 1994**

As of today, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic is unrecognized as a sovereign country by the international community, but is however a de facto independent state which isn't controlled by any other state entity, and corresponds to the generally recognized state sovereignty aspects. The current political status of Nagorno-Karabakh has been forming since the end of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh War in 1994, when, despite the support of Azerbaijani integrity by most countries within the global community, the region of Nagorno-Karabakh in fact remained uncontrolled by either of the belligerent parties.

Under the results of the 1991 referendum which proclaimed independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, on December 22, 1994, the authorities of the self-proclaimed state held a session of the Parliament, which elected Robert Kocharyan as the state's President. This was a forced measure, as, in the post-war conditions, the self-proclaimed republic had no funds to arrange elections, just as it had no legislation to ensure transparent elections on the national level. Therefore, vote by the Parliament was an inevitable measure, and it provided Nagorno-Karabakh with an opportunity to quickly build up the power vertical, and ensure structured management of the state in the conditions of deep crisis in all fields of economic relations (Miller, Vandome, McBrewster 2009: 178-180).

On the first stage of Nagorno-Karabakh's de facto independence, Armenia undertook important steps in order to provide its neighbor with the most urgently required resources, including food resources, humanitarian assistance, and many other points of cooperation. Nagorno-Karabakh had the same currency, the dram, on its territory, and therefore all operations with Armenia were much simplified. Due to the obviously close interaction between the two geopolitical subjects, significant sentiments among both the Armenian and the Nagorno-Karabakh population arose for inclusion of the latter as an integral administrative part of Armenia. However, the Armenian government had to refuse due to the negotiations held within the Minsk Group and the expected negative reaction of the international community (Arbatov 1997: 151-155).

On November 24, 1996, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic finally held the elections by universal suffrage. Robert Kocharyan was again elected as the state's

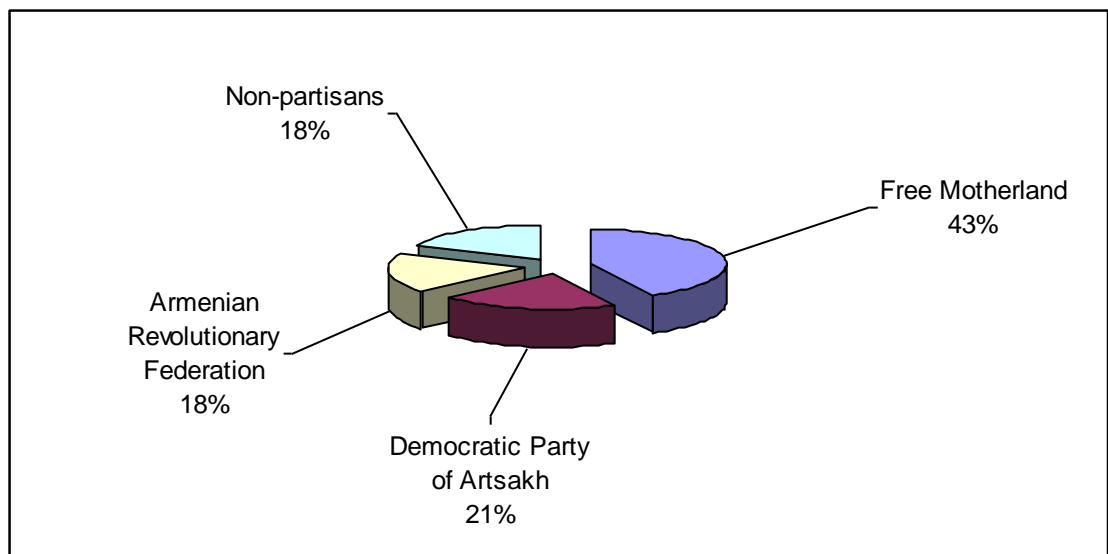
President. Interestingly enough, already in 1997, Robert Kocharyan was appointed as the Prime Minister of Armenia, and resigned from his position of President in Nagorno-Karabakh. One year later, he became President of Armenia, and implemented a policy of active negotiations with Azerbaijan on settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On September 1, 1997, Arkadi Ghukasyan was elected as the second President of Nagorno-Karabakh. In 2010, Bako Sahakyan won the elections, and became the third President of Nagorno-Karabakh (DeRouen, Heo 2007: 263-264).

It should be noted that all the three Presidents of the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic gradually followed the course toward the Republic's recognition by the global community, and closer cooperation with Armenia as the main partner in foreign relations. Despite the obvious inefficiency of such policies (as the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic hasn't yet been recognized by any sovereign state as an independent country), the constant policies followed by all of Nagorno-Karabakh's ruling authorities have allowed to preserve the de facto independent status, and remain an important factor of relations in the region, involving not only Armenia and Azerbaijan, but also numerous foreign states, including the world's superpowers (Cornell 2005: 75-77).

As of today, the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic covers a total territory of nearly 11,500 square kilometers, with the total population making up almost 147,000 people. The capital of Nagorno-Karabakh is Stepanakert, and the official currency is the Armenian dram. The country's division of authorities is similar to any other neighboring states: it has executive, legislative and judicial branches. Bako Sahakyan is currently the President of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. President is elected for a five-year term. The National Assembly of Nagorno-Karabakh is the legislative body which consists of 33 members (16 being elected by single seat constituencies for a period of five years, and the other 17 being elected by proportional representation). The Nagorno-Karabakh Republic has a transparent political system, with multiple parties being able to participate in the country's political life. Due to this, the government of the republic is formed by means of creation of coalitions in the Parliament, and the subsequent quota-based formation of the main executive body and its agencies (Miller, Vandome, McBrewster 2009: 199-205).

Party	Seats
Free Motherland	14
Democratic Party of Artsakh	7
Armenian Revolutionary Federation	6
Non-partisans	6

**Table 1. Structure of the National Assembly of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic after the 2010 parliamentary elections (Surhone, Timpledon, Marseken 2010: 45)**



**Figure 1. Structure of the National Assembly of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic after the 2010 parliamentary elections (Surhone, Timpledon, Marseken 2010: 45)**

Table 1 and Figure 1 above depict the current structure of the National Assembly of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. As we can see, the country's major political party is Free Motherland holding 43% of seats in the Parliament. The three other parties represented in the highest legislative body of Nagorno-Karabakh are Democratic Party of Artsakh (21% of seats), Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Non-partisans (18% each).

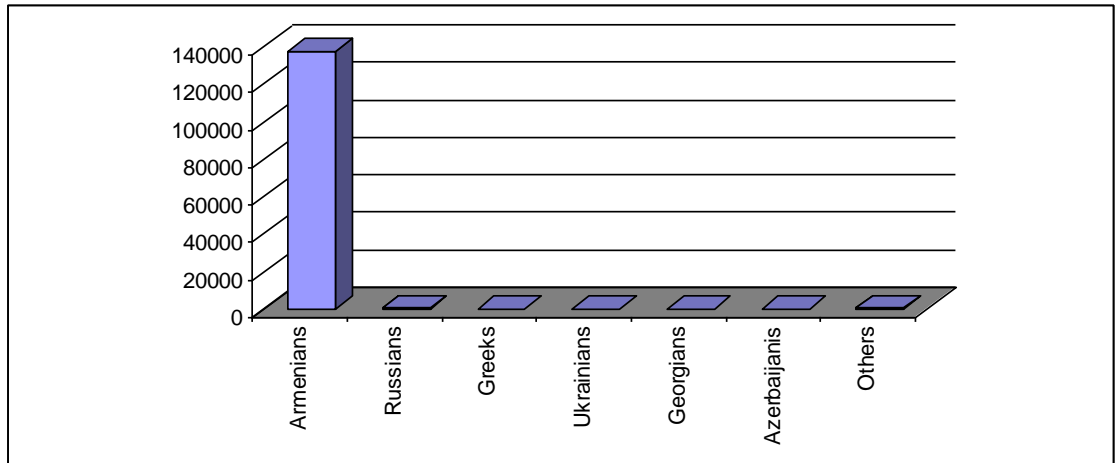
Free Motherland is a right-wing party promoting close relations with Armenia and opposition against possible actions undertaken by Azerbaijan to restore its



territorial integrity. The Democratic Party of Artsakh is a centrist political party standing for close economic and political cooperation with Armenia, recognition of the independent status of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic by the international community. Armenian Revolutionary Federation is a left-wing nationalist party promoting Nagorno-Karabakh's inclusion in Armenia as its integral territorial part. Non-partisans are those people who do not belong to any political party. However, the views of all non-partisans represented in the Nagorno-Karabakh National Assembly fall in line with either of the other parties elected to the Parliament (Jan Koehler, Christoph Zurcher. *Potentials of Disorder: Explaining Conflict and Stability in the Caucasus and in the Former Yugoslavia*, pp. 275-279). Thus, it is important to note that all political parties in the Nagorno-Karabakh National Assembly to some extent support integration or cooperation with Armenia, up to inclusion in Armenia as an autonomous region. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the nationalist left-wing movements gain far greater popularity in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. This testifies the sentiments among the Nagorno-Karabakh population. Here, it is important to look at the ethnical structure of the population in order to understand the reasons for such sentiments.

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Number</b>
Armenians	137380
Russians	171
Greeks	22
Ukrainians	21
Georgians	12
Azerbaijanis	6
Others	125

**Table 2. Ethnical structure of the Nagorno-Karabakh population, as of 2005  
(Lindsay 2012: 270)**



**Figure 2. Ethnic structure of the Nagorno-Karabakh population, as of 2005**  
(Lindsay 2012: 270)

As Table 2 and Figure 2 above testify, Armenians form the greatest share among the Nagorno-Karabakh population. Other nationalities represented on the Nagorno-Karabakh territory altogether account for slightly over 0.2% of the region's population. Therefore, it can well be understood why the sentiments of integration with Armenia are prevailing in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic: people of Armenian descent wish to return to their greater motherland together with the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, it is worth remembering that this structure of the region's population was much altered during the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh War in the early nineties, when almost all people of Azerbaijani descent were expelled from the region's territory.

However, as Armenia currently refuses to consider the idea of annexing the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, the self-proclaimed state aims to reach recognition of its independence by the international community in order to be subsequently free to choose its ways of development, including integration vectors in the field of international geopolitics. Nagorno-Karabakh started seeking recognition of its independence right in 1991, after proclaiming its territorial sovereignty. The process was slowed down by the war, but the country came back to those efforts in 1994. They were not supported by the international community, which promoted signature of the Bishkek Protocol, under which Azerbaijan's territorial integrity was supported, and Nagorno-Karabakh was proclaimed an integral territorial and administrative part of the Azerbaijani state (Shoemaker 2013: 313).

In the 2000's, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic was able to reach its recognition as an independent subject of foreign relations by only three non-UN members: Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, all three being partially recognized states largely supported by the Russian Federation. However, this didn't give any benefits to Nagorno-Karabakh, as the abovementioned states were not recognized by the international community. The situation started improving for Nagorno-Karabakh in 2007-2008. First, after bilateral negotiations between Azerbaijan and the US, the latter's representatives declared that the right of self-determination of people stood higher than any state's territorial integrity. Second, in 2008, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on territorial integrity of Azerbaijan which was supported by 39 UN members and rejected by 7 of them, with 100 abstentions. This vote showed that Azerbaijan no longer had any full-scale support among the international community in the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh (Souleimanov 2013: 149-153).

In October 2012, New South Wales, an Australian state, recognized the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic's independence. Later in 2012, the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh was also recognized by the American states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In 2013, another two states' authorities declared support of Nagorno-Karabakh's independence: Maine and Louisiana. In 2014, their example was followed by California. Also, in 2014, five American states rejected a bill recognizing Azerbaijan's sovereignty over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh: Wyoming, Tennessee, South Dakota, Mississippi and Hawaii. All the abovementioned states' authorities urged President Obama to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh's independence. Only the state of Vermont rejected a bill promoting recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2014. As for the Russian Federation, the country still doesn't recognize Nagorno-Karabakh's independence, however this issue periodically arises in the Russian Parliament (Walter, Ungern-Sternberg 2014: 160-166).

Also, it is worth noting that, despite being an unrecognized state, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic has its official representative offices in many countries, namely in Armenia, Germany, France, Russia, Australia, Lebanon, Canada and the United States (Jesse Russell, Ronald Cohn, *Nagorno-Karabakh War*, p. 154). This situation also allows the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh expecting improvements in its negotiations on recognition of the state's sovereignty in the future.

Thus, it can be stated that, as of today, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic hasn't yet been able to reach its recognition by any independent state, but has obviously made some progress in comparison with the situation that existed right after it had proclaimed its independence. Azerbaijan is gradually losing support of the international community, which is testified by the votes of the UN General Assembly. Taking into consideration domination of Armenian nationalist political movements in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, it can obviously be judged that, in case of its recognition as a sovereign state, Nagorno-Karabakh would seek inclusion in Armenia as its territorial part, which is absolutely unacceptable for Azerbaijan.

Due to the current indefinite status of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and possible future outcomes of the situation, Azerbaijan and Armenia are still in a state of severe tensions, and the conflict is only frozen, but not ended. In the next chapter of my thesis, I would like to analyze more in detail the territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh after the end of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh War in 1994.

## **5 Territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan for Nagorno-Karabakh after 1994**

Despite the fact that the Nagorno-Karabakh War ended in 1994, the region has since then remained a zone of frozen conflict, the ceasefire agreement has numerous times been breached by either of the parties. Thus, territorial disputes over the Nagorno-Karabakh region still persist between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and it is worth analyzing them more in detail in order to be able to forecast development of the situation in the future.

In the second half of the 1990's, the tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia were rather limited to political actions, while there were no military clashes or direct military opposition between the two states. Armenia actively supported the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic with different material and financial resources, humanitarian help, food products, and even military equipment and weapons, which was unacceptable for Azerbaijan seeking to implement its control over the region. In opinion of the Azerbaijani officials, such actions undertaken by the Armenian authorities violated the principles of the Bishkek Protocol, which recognized Azerbaijan's authority over the region, while the Armenian side obviously openly supported separatism in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia definitely rejected any such accusations as it didn't recognize Azerbaijan's sovereignty over the region (Nichol 2011: 165).

However, understanding the negative reaction it would get from the international community, the Armenian government didn't make any direct steps to annex the territory of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, even despite the fact that such idea was largely promoted among both the Armenian and the Nagorno-Karabakh population, and many time arose among the Armenian highest officials. As tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia continued, the OSCE Minsk Group continued to undertake steps to ensure peaceful settlement of the conflict. In 2002-2005, a series of negotiations commonly referred to as the Prague Process started between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the region of Nagorno-Karabakh on the level of ministries of foreign affairs. The first series of meetings were held in Prague in May 2002, the second round occurred in July 2002. The process was continued on the level of Foreign Ministers Vartan Oskanian (Armenia) and Elmar Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan) already in 2004. During this third

round of the Prague Process, Russian, the United States and France assisted as international mediators. The Prague Process terminated in May 2005, with a meeting between Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, and Robert Kocharyan, President of Armenia. Despite their important role for reducing tensions between the two states, previous rounds of the Prague Process hadn't had any expressly stipulated agenda or goals, and only had a declarative role, while the last round of negotiations on the presidential level allowed reaching important agreements. Thus, the Armenian side agreed to withdraw its troops from five of the seven Azerbaijani regions adjacent to the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in case of settlement of the conflict. However, under the agreement reached, international peacekeepers had to be deployed on the territory in order to prevent any further military clashes (Balayev 2013: 97-102).

In 2005, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 1416 which declared that Armenia was occupying Azerbaijani territories, and that Nagorno-Karabakh was a separatist region, however remaining an integral part of Azerbaijan. Also, Resolution 1416 of PACE condemned Armenia's ethnical cleansings against the Azerbaijani population on the occupied territories. This Resolution was largely opposed by Armenia, which rejected all such allegations (Pellatt 2008: 111-113).

In 2007, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe adopted the so-called Madrid Principles. The Madrid Principles assumed stage-by-stage resolution of the conflict and all territorial disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The first phase of the Madrid Principles assumed that Armenia had to withdraw its armed forces from Azerbaijan's regions adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh. Thereafter, communications on the territory were planned to be restored, and the territories were to be demilitarized. In fact, this provision doubled the same principles promoted in the agreement reached as a result of the Prague Process. The second stage assumed withdrawal of Armenia's troops from Kelbajar and Lachin, and the subsequent return of Azerbaijani people to their territories, from which they had been expelled during the Nagorno-Karabakh War in the early 1990's. International peacekeepers were to be deployed on those territories in order to prevent any further ethnical cleansings or military clashes in the region. Finally, it was assumed that a solution should be found on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, but without any violation of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity (Cohen, Rosner 2006: 164).

The approaches stipulated in the Madrid Principles were accepted by the Azerbaijani authorities, as they in fact confirmed the West's support of Azerbaijan and its sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, they were criticized by some Azerbaijani officials due to the fact that they assumed possibility of referendum on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh for determining the subsequent vectors of the region's development. At the same time, even despite the referendum clause, Armenia didn't recognize the Madrid Principles, as the country believed Nagorno-Karabakh to be its historical territory, and therefore couldn't finally recognize Azerbaijan's complete integrity or sovereignty over the region (DeRouen, Heo 2007: 357-358).

In 2008, the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Declaration was signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia. This international instrument in fact didn't bring any new solutions to the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis, but it was important in order to reduce tensions between the states. The Declaration stipulated both countries' will and readiness to further undertake measures to eliminate all and any conflicts on the disputed territory, and settle the crisis in compliance with the principles of international law. Despite its crucial role for reducing tensions, the document didn't anyhow stipulate the principles on which both states would attempt to resolve their mutual territorial claims (Walter, Ungern-Sternberg 2014: 276-278).

In spring 2008, the Organization of the Islamic Conference held a summit at which it adopted Resolution 10/11-P (IS), which supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and stipulated that Armenia had occupied lands belonging to the Azerbaijani state. Armenia was accused of territorial cleansings of the Muslim population in Nagorno-Karabakh, and of destruction of the Azerbaijani cultural heritage in the region. A few days later the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 62/243 which requested immediate withdrawal of Armenia's troops from Azerbaijan's occupied territories. Thanks to the abovementioned resolutions, Azerbaijan confirmed its support by the Western world, on the one hand, and the global Islamic community, on the other hand, which was crucial for further supporting its territorial claims in relations with the Armenian state (Ismayilov 2010: 90-91).

In 2009, situation over Nagorno-Karabakh worsened, as Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev declared that Azerbaijan could again use military force in order to regain control over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The international community started urging the two opposing parties to hold negotiations, which ended up in a mutual summit in

Munich in November 2009. In 2010, the so-called Astrakhan declaration was signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia for exchange of war prisoners and dead bodies from recent clashes. Again, despite being important for reducing tensions between the two states, the Declaration in fact didn't bring any positive effect to development of principles for or approaches to resolution of the conflict (Nalbandov 2013: 100-102).

In February 2010, due to violation of the ceasefire agreements, three Azerbaijani soldiers were killed on the frontier with the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. According to the declarations of Azerbaijani officials, the Armenian side used snipers across the contact line, just as some heavy arms such as machine guns or grenade launchers, including against civilians from the Azerbaijani side. The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon requested withdrawal of Armenian troops from the contact line. Also, Azerbaijani officials claimed that an Armenian sniper had shot a 9-year-old Azerbaijani boy from the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. In connection with this fact, Written Declaration 12591 was adopted by PACE which condemned the Armenian side of crimes against humanity. However, the aforementioned declaration was only signed by Turkish and Azeri members of PACE, while no international investigation had been held. The Nagorno-Karabakh side denied all accusations and stated that the Azeri side was altering the facts. The situation in the region was reaching its peak tension, and a new coil of hostilities for the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh was expected by the international community (Lindsay 2012: 208-210).

In May 2010, the Organization of Islamic Conference passed another resolution supporting Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and condemning Armenia of crimes against Azerbaijani civilians. The Western world feared escalation of military conflict involving Islamic states on the side of Azerbaijan, which could to a full-scale war on the Eurasian continent. On the same day, the European Parliament passed a resolution called The need for an EU Strategy for the South Caucasus. This resolution promoted demilitarization of the Azerbaijani territories adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh, and withdrawal of Armenian troops from those boundaries (Krüger 2010: 125-126).

In 2011, an unnamed aerial vehicle was shot down over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, which was claimed to be an Azerbaijani unit by the Armenian side. This episode gave birth to the so-called "arms race" between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which started actively increasing their military potential, including thanks to attraction of



funds from foreign creditors, in order to modernize their armies, and prepare for the possible state of total war (Zeynalov 2012: 298).

The situation required immediate intervention of foreign mediators. Russia undertook to arrange bilateral negotiations between the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2012 in the city of Kazan, with the Russian Federation involved as a mediator, in order to reach compromise in the renewed conflict over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, such negotiations ultimately failed, and a new coil of tensions occurred. The two conflicting states started increasing their military potential at an even higher pace, and clashes on the boundaries with Nagorno-Karabakh renewed. European leaders stated that the conflict was on the verge of being defrosted, and hostilities could start at any moment (Nalbandov 2013: 211-212).

However, the situation remained in the field of arms race for over a year, and again worsened in the early 2014. In January, Azerbaijani armed forces started actively moving military equipment and deploying armed battalions near the country's frontier with the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. In response to such actions of the Azerbaijani side, Armenian armed forces were also regroup in order to support the Nagorno-Karabakh republic Defense Army in case of direct hostilities with Azerbaijan. A set of mutual provocations and killings of soldiers occurred on the border, and the situation remained to the largest extent dangerous. As of today, both conflicting parties' armed forces are still performing maneuvers on the frontier, and the outcome of those clashes is yet to be seen (Walter, Ungern-Sternberg 2014: 382).

So, it can obviously be stated that the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia for the region of Nagorno-Karabakh has never exhausted, and still remains a major frozen conflict on the Eurasian continent. The reasons for the conflict lie deep in the history of Armenia's and Azerbaijan's relations. Both sides believe Nagorno-Karabakh to be their inherent territory, and therefore refuse to recognize the rival's sovereignty over this territory. Due to such uncompromising positions of both conflicting parties, it is not likely that the conflict would be resolved in the near future. Moreover, recent events have shown that there is a substantial risk that a new war for Nagorno-Karabakh would start already in the near future.

In the next chapter of my thesis, I would like to investigate the role of the European Union in the processes of mediation and peacemaking in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

## **6 European Union as a mediator and peacemaker in Nagorno-Karabakh**

### **6.1 Current situation**

Throughout the period of conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the European Union has constantly been playing an important role as a mediator and peacekeeper in the region. Some of the EU's initiatives have already been described earlier in this thesis. They were mainly aimed at provisionally reducing tensions between the opposing parties. Despite the fact that such initiatives have never been able to provide grounds for mutual consent between Azerbaijan and Armenia or development of common principles for resolution of territorial disputes, they played an essential role in preventing full-scale hostilities over Nagorno-Karabakh.

As of today, the European Union implements several main foreign policy tools in order to address the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, as any potential hostilities over it represent a significant threat for the EU. Such policy tools used by the Union are its European Neighborhood Policy developed under the auspices of the European Commission and the EU Special Representative for South Caucasus under the mandate of the Council of the European Union. Also, association agreements have lately become a major tool for eliminating possibility of direct conflicts and ensuring peace in the Nagorno-Karabakh region (Martin, Kaldor 2009: 377-379).

The European Neighborhood Policy Action Plans for both Armenia and Azerbaijan were adopted within the European Union in 2006. The Action Plan for Armenia is rather a declarative document. It stipulates the EU's commitment to resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The main focus is made on de-mining of the territories adjacent to the Nagorno-Karabakh region and protection of the civilian population living in those regions. The Action Plan also assumes further steps to be undertaken by the European Union for closer engagement with Armenia. However, it is worth noting that the Action Plan doesn't emphasize resolution of the conflict as such or any approaches to settlement of territorial disputes. In contrast to this, the EU's Action Plan under ENP with Azerbaijan primarily focuses on the need to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This document provides for increased diplomatic efforts in order to reduce tensions, namely through involvement of the OSCE Minsk Group, and

promotion of dialogue between the conflicting parties involving the European Union as a mediator. The Action Plan also assumes implementation of a complex of rehabilitation measures by the European Union in order to stabilize the post-conflict situation, and ensure political and economic stability in the region, as well as to eliminate any crises among the civilian population (Wagnsson, Sperling, Hallenberg, 2009: 107-110).

The European Parliament's resolution The need for an EU Strategy for the South Caucasus adopted in 2010, among other things, stipulated the following: *“frozen conflicts are an impediment to the economic and social development and hinder the improvement of the standard of living of the South Caucasus region, as well as the full development of the EaP of the ENP; whereas a peaceful resolution of the conflict is essential for stability in the EU Neighbourhood.”* The same principles can be tracked throughout all activities of the EU related to Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict for domination over the region. The EU Special Representative for South Caucasus is a position under the mandate of the Council of the European Union, which is responsible for monitoring of the situation in the region, and prevention of any possible conflict escalations through immediate arrangement of negotiations with the EU as the main mediator. Also, the European Union has its representative in the OSCE Minsk Group, which is another lever to mediate the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (Tocci 2011: 113-116).

The EU member states have also been largely involved in the opportunity to deploy peacekeeping forces on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh under the auspices of NATO. However, as of today, this variant is rather impossible to implement as all conflicting parties stand against such scenario (Dellecker, Gomart. 333-334).

Recently, association agreements have become a powerful tool used by the European Union in order to ensure peaceful coexistence of all conflicting parties in the region, and for seeking further compromise between them in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The main aim of association agreements offered by the European Union is to deepen cooperation with the respective non-member states involved in both economic and political spheres. The EU has lately been interested in entering into the respective agreements with both Armenia and Azerbaijan, as those countries officially declared their foreign political course toward integration with the EU. However, conclusion of

such agreements is still on the stage of negotiations due to the inconsistent positions of Azerbaijan and Armenia (Shoemaker 2013: 362-363).

In 2013, sudden deterioration in EU-Armenia and EU-Azerbaijan relations occurred in terms of signature of association agreements. Armenia actively showed its desire not to make part of the European Union, while Azerbaijan didn't fulfill the EU's requirements to human rights protection, which was essential at this stage of negotiations. In both cases, the states allegedly refused to enter into the association agreements with the European Union due to their desire to integrate with Russia within the framework of the European Union. This position was declared by many of the EU's highest officials. Also, it can be stated that Azerbaijan and Armenia do not want to integrate within the same supranational formation in order to avoid direct contacts, as this would mean the need to seek further compromise in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which is unacceptable for both parties (Souleimanov 2013: 130-131).

Despite the fact that the European Union sees association agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan as an opportunity to involve both states in deeper negotiations processes and build-up consistent dialogues between them, this idea is very hard to implement, as the situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan is only further worsening on the boundaries with the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. As of today, negotiations on accession to the EU under association agreements still continue with both states, however it is doubtful that they would successfully end in the near future (Walter, Ungern-Sternberg 2014: 279-281).

As we can see, the EU plays an important role as a mediator and peacekeeper in the region, however some of its initiatives lack mechanisms for practical implementation, and the turbulence of situation in the region makes it hard to forecast even for the short-term perspective. In the next chapter of my thesis, I would like to consider forecasts related to the region for the future, and provide my own recommendations for the EU's more effective involvement as a mediator and peacekeeper.

## **6.2 Expectations for the future and recommendations**

As it has already been stated earlier in this thesis, development of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is very hard to forecast due to its high turbulence and great danger of re-explosion of the frozen conflict. However, based on the findings of my analysis, it can be said that the situation will be likely to have three scenarios of its subsequent development: start of hostilities between Azerbaijan, on the one hand, and Armenia and the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, on the other hand; conservation of the frozen conflict in its current state; and resolution of the conflict, namely thanks to involvement of international mediators. I would like to consider all those scenarios from the perspective of their probability, paying particular attention to the European Union's participation in the processes in the region, and providing recommendations for the EU to improve its activities as a peacemaker and mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Let's first consider the variant with mutual compromise reached by all parties involved, and resolution of all territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In my opinion, this variant is purely Utopian, and can only exist as a declarative principle promoted by international mediators such as the European Union or the OSCE Minsk Group. There are too many obstacles preventing search for peaceful conflict resolution between the states of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Moreover, such contradictions between the two countries are in my opinion antagonistic, which especially eliminates all possibilities to reach an agreement on the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The reasons for disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia for the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and their overall strained relationships are rooted deep in the two states' history. Azerbaijan and Armenia have long been competing in different political, economic and military aspects, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990's heated up conflicts between the two states. The region of Nagorno-Karabakh became the pinnacle of disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan. As both countries believed this region to be their historical territory, they were not willing to seek any compromise in order to settle the conflict, as any such option was detrimental to either of the states. Therefore, as we can see, from the very beginning, the situation has remained antagonistic. Neither of the countries involved wished to lose territory which it believed to be its integral part. This was even further emphasized by support of those nationalist

aspirations among the countries' population. Since then, the situation hasn't changed. Moreover, the 1992-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh War only deepened the conflict, and multiple human casualties in fact made any peace negotiations impossible for a certain period of time. Expulsion of the Azerbaijani population from the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh contributed to aggravation of the situation as well. No international mediation efforts have since then been efficient in search for compromise between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and permanent clashes with casualties on the countries' mutual border has constantly been showing that Nagorno-Karabakh still remains a core point of dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and that neither of the parties is ready to give way to its rival. Thus, as no compromise has yet been reached in the territorial disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia, in my opinion, this compromise is simply impossible.

The second possible scenario is conservation of the frozen conflict in its current state, and continuation of opposition between Azerbaijan and Armenia without start of direct hostilities between the two states involved, and the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic as an administrative entity loyal to the state of Armenia. In fact, it should be understood here that such state of opposition between Azerbaijan and Armenia has never ended since the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh War. Despite having entered into a ceasefire agreement, both sides of the long-conflict have multiple times since then breached its conditions, with many military clashes occurring on the countries' borders with the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Multiple bilateral and multilateral international initiatives have never yielded any substantial positive results due to the antagonistic opposition between Azerbaijan and Armenia for the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh which have been described earlier in this thesis.

The practice of international initiatives in South Caucasus in the 2000's shows that all such efforts are generally limited to reduction of tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia, but not to resolution of territorial disputes or final settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In fact, all such initiatives in the long run only led to provisional improvements in the situation with clashes on the border. However, they didn't anyhow affect the overall situation with the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. In my opinion, as of today, no initiatives, either with or without international mediators, could anyhow bring resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. They could only be potentially positive, if either of the parties acknowledged and accepted the other

conflicting party's sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is absolutely impossible taking into account the historical aspects and the current situation in the region.

Taking into consideration the above facts, I believe that the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia for Nagorno-Karabakh will persist in the near future, and no agreement will be reached between both parties. The only question here is whether the conflict will still continue in its latent phase, when direct hostilities are blocked through mutual negotiations with third parties as mediators, or clashes on the border will escalate into a full-scale military conflict, just as it was during the 1992-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh War. The third scenario that I assume possible for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a new war between the parties involved.

Recent development of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has shown that the variant with direct hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia is the most likely scenario of continuation of the long-lasting conflict in South Caucasus. The number of victims taken by border clashes between Azerbaijani and Armenian troops has lately been growing, with more and more civilian casualties allegedly caused by actions of either of the parties. In connection with such events, both Azerbaijan and Armenia started actively moving their troops closer to the borders with the region of Nagorno-Karabakh in the early 2014. As of today, maneuvers in the region still continue, and there is a significant threat that direct hostilities could start at any moment, which would undoubtedly bring numerous casualties among civilians from both sides.

Start of war is also possible due to the actions of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army which is the official armed forces of the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh. Due to the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh isn't recognized as an independent state by any country in the world, but is de facto an uncontrolled territory, it is largely used by the Armenian side for a range of different actions, allegedly including military operations, which Armenia couldn't directly implement due to the possible reaction of the international community. Involvement of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic's troops in clashes with the Azerbaijani army only provokes further escalation of the conflict and increases the probability of its transformation into a full-scale conflict including Armenia, as the population of Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenian to 99.8%. Also, it should be mentioned that the nationalist parties of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, which promote inclusion of the former in the latter as an autonomous province, only makes us think that the probability



of further deepening of territorial disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia is very high.

Also, it is quite obvious that, in case of direct hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic wouldn't stand apart, and would support Armenia. This is predefined by the fact that the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh expressly proclaim their course toward inclusion in Armenia, and do not pursue any goal of maintaining the self-proclaimed state's independence. Therefore, Armenia would have an ally in case of conflict, which moreover has a substantial equipment and weapons base thanks to the previous assistance of Armenia. Also, it should be understood that foreign countries would try to assist either Azerbaijan or Armenia, but, in my opinion, no direct involvement would be possible due to conflict of major superpowers' interests. In fact, I believe that direct hostilities would be run in the same way as it was during the 1992-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh War.

Thus, I believe that the scenario of hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the near future is quite possible, taking into account the current situation and development of events. If such scenario indeed occurs, assistance of international mediators will be required in order to peacefully settle the conflict or at least reduce tensions between the belligerent parties. The European Union's involvement may play an essential role in the peacemaking processes in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. However, as of today, the EU's efforts are not enough in case of potential warfare, and therefore, the European Union should significantly reshape its current policies with regard to South Caucasus already today in order to be ready to mediate the potential military conflict in the near future.

First of all, the current versions of the European Union's European Neighborhood Policy Action Plans for both Azerbaijan and Armenia should be significantly modified and improved, especially when speaking of the Action Plan for Armenia. As of today, those Plans are only descriptive and declarative. Moreover, they do not stipulate any particular measures for improvement of the situation and settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. They do not even put this issue in the core, but rather simply state the need to improve the overall situation in South Caucasus. The new versions of Action Plans should contain expressly stipulated measures for reduction of tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia. As of today, the EU should in my opinion focus on preventing casualties among civilians on the border, and eliminating any

possibility of hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as resolution of territorial disputes is anyways impossible at this stage.

The role of the EU Special Representative for South Caucasus could even further increase in case of hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In my opinion, this position is potentially very important, and it should be provided with greater powers for operative settlement of the conflict in South Caucasus. Also, as of today, the European Union only has unofficial representatives in the OSCE Minsk Group which deals specifically with the issue of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but they in fact do not have any significant powers of authorities. Therefore, I believe that the best option for the European Union would be to combine the position of its Special Representative for South Caucasus with the position of representatives in the OSCE Minsk Group. This would allow most effectively undertaking peacemaking operations in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, with coordination with OSCE's special body dealing with this issue.

When speaking of association agreements, in my opinion, the only possible variant for their effective implementation is if the EU enters into such agreements with Azerbaijan and Armenia prior to the potential escalation of direct hostilities between the countries. If a new war starts, conclusion of such association agreements will become impossible. As of today, there are significant problems on the way to conclusion thereof, but they are still possible. Their effective implementation could be ensured in case of effective use of other tools of the European Union's policy for South Caucasus, and especially the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. However, territorial disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the contested territory of the Nagorno-Karabakh region may become a major obstacle to such plans.

In my opinion, regardless of the possible scenario which could occur in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, the European Union will still play an essential role as a mediator and peacemaker in South Caucasus, and efficiency of measures undertaken by the European Union will to a large extent predefine further settlement of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

## Conclusion

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is a long-lasting conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh which both parties claim to be their historical territory.

The conflict started right after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the unrecognized referendum on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh proclaimed the region's secession from Azerbaijan and its independence, with the subsequent plans to join Armenia. Armenia's support of separatist activities in Nagorno-Karabakh gave birth to a full-scale military conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which is commonly referred to as the Nagorno-Karabakh War.

The Nagorno-Karabakh War lasted from 1992 to 1994, and was won by Armenia in military terms. However, thanks to the active involvement of foreign mediators and peacemakers, the Bishkek Protocol signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 1994 recognized Azerbaijan's sovereignty over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Nonetheless, the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic has since then remained de facto independent.

An important role in stoppage of hostilities in the period from 1992 to 1994 was played by foreign mediators such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran and Turkey. All those countries pursued their own geopolitical and economic goals in the region, and wished to actively participate in it in order to spread their influence. Russia and Kazakhstan were the first countries to arrange peace negotiations between the officials of Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, despite the fact that they didn't officially support any of the conflicting sides, Russia and Kazakhstan conducted supplies of armaments and weapons to both belligerent states, which only favored continuation of the conflict. Iran expressly supported Armenia, however it had to withdraw from the conflict due to fears that Azerbaijan would make the Azerbaijani Iranians secede from the state's territory and join the state of Azerbaijan. Turkey's active involvement in the conflict on the side of Azerbaijan was prevented by Russia's troops deployed on the Armenian-Turkish frontier.

Since the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh War, the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic has remained only de facto independent, but its sovereignty hasn't been recognized by any independent country as of today. The only international

subjects that recognized independence of Nagorno-Karabakh were the self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria. However, in recent years, Azerbaijan has considerably lost its support by the international community, and several American states and one Australian state have already voted for recognition of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

The European Union has constantly been playing an important role in settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict thanks to its active involvement in all peacekeeping and mediation processes in the region. As of today, the EU uses European Neighborhood Policy Action Plans, EU Special Representative for South Caucasus and association agreements as the main tools for influencing the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and reducing tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Nonetheless, despite all international efforts, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh still continues as of today, and the parties cannot come to any compromise due to the antagonistic nature of their territorial disputes for Nagorno-Karabakh. Most recently, both Azerbaijan and Armenia have started actively deploying their troops on the mutual borders, which raises fears among the international community that a new war for Nagorno-Karabakh might start already in the near future.

The subsequent development of events is hard to forecast due to the turbulence of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Among three possible scenarios of events, namely compromise between Azerbaijan and Armenia, continuation of the frozen stage of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict or re-ignition of direct hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the third variant looks most probable taking into consideration the current situation and lack of any grounds for mutual compromise between the conflicting parties. Mediation of the international community will be likely to play a key role for preventing direct hostilities in South Caucasus in the near future.

In the course of my work, I have tested several hypotheses related to the topic of my research, which are given in the beginning of my thesis.

The first hypothesis can be confirmed. Indeed, despite the fact that direct hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia for the region of Nagorno-Karabakh ended back in 1994, the conflict has never been resolved since then, and the territory can still be considered a hot spot as of today. This is testified by the ongoing territorial disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia, clashes between both countries' troops on the

boundaries provoking human casualties, involvement of international mediators in order to reduce tensions, and so on. The territorial dispute for Nagorno-Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia is inherently antagonistic due to the fact that both countries believe the region to be their historical territory, and the high probability of re-ignition of the frozen conflict which has been proven in the course of my research only further confirms reliability of this hypothesis.

The second hypothesis can be confirmed as well. Indeed, from the very beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia hasn't expressly supported either of the parties, but still provided them both with armaments in the period from 1992-1994, and blocked intervention of third-party states in the conflict. The conflict in the region is beneficial to Russia thanks to the fact that it can help keep its military presence in the region as peacekeeping forces, thus affecting both Azerbaijan's and Armenia's domestic and foreign policies, and most importantly, it gets an opportunity to control the level of prices on oil and gas, as the conflict prevents Azerbaijan from becoming a major exporter of energy resources and replace Russia as the EU's main trading partner in the field of oil and gas supplies. Therefore, maintaining the status quo between Azerbaijan and Armenia is a great tool for Russia to maintain its influence in the region, and make other countries take into account its own interests.

The third hypothesis can partially be confirmed. Indeed, Turkey is very interested in participating in the conflict on the side of Azerbaijan, as it has both historically strained relations with Armenia and its own geopolitical interests in South Caucasus. However, the position of Russia is such that no third parties should be allowed to participate in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in order not to interfere with Russia's interests. During the 1992-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh War Turkey once tried to prepare for direct military involvement in hostilities between the belligerent states on the side of Azerbaijan, but Russia quickly deployed its military contingent on Armenia's frontier with Turkey, and thus prevented Turkey from entering the conflict. Therefore, the hypothesis can be confirmed for Turkey. However, Iran's interests didn't directly interfere with the ones of Russia. Iran's active participation is rather prevented by Azerbaijan's authorities claiming for the possibility to call for secession of Azerbaijani Iranians from the territory of Iran and join the state of Azerbaijan as an autonomous province. Therefore, the hypothesis can be disapproved for Iran.

The fourth hypothesis can be confirmed. The United States of America indeed pursues its own interests in the region, and wishes to have influence over all participating parties. The US mainly acts through international organizations, mediation missions, and so on, and actively promotes the idea of deploying NATO peacekeeping forces in Nagorno-Karabakh, which has so far been rejected by all parties involved. The interests of the US are dictated by its will to ensure geopolitical power in the region and oppose Russia on all vectors of their struggle for global domination. Control over the ex-USSR republics is one of the main vectors which can be tracked in the United States' foreign policy.

The fifth hypothesis can be disapproved. At least, as of today, enlargement of the European Union through accession of Azerbaijan and Armenia rather seems impossible due to the antagonistic territorial disputes between the two states. Neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan show readiness or will to enter into association agreements with the EU, in part due to the same integration steps undertaken by their respective opposing party. Enlargement of the EU through South Caucasus can only contribute to resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, if the current policies of the EU with regard to the region are significantly modified and improved, in order to provide grounds for the subsequent negotiations between all parties. Nevertheless, the European Union still plays a very important role as a peacekeeper and mediator in the region.

Thus, I believe that the aim of my research has been fulfilled, and its goals have been reached.

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