

## THE INTERVENTION OF THIRD PARTIES IN NAGORNO KARABAKH CONFLICT\*

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*After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Caucasus region was full of conflicts in both territorial and ethn-national dimensions. What happened to Caucasian republics after the collapse of the Soviet Union? It is very important to underline that the Soviet republics achieved independence by this getting an opportunity to make individual decisions in world politics. However, the two autonomous republics (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) in Georgia declared independence. Azerbaijan is still conflicting for Caspian Sea oil zones. Armenia and Azerbaijan are engaged in territorial disputes connected to Nagorno Karabakh. In 2008 Georgia and Russia engaged in a war and mixed the geopolitical situation in their turn.*

*The Nagorno Karabakh conflict, one of the lasting and brutal conflicts in the Caucasus region, is one of the long discussed topics in politics as an unresolved and long-term conflict. Different actors have been involved here as third parties in order to overcome the crisis among the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis in peaceful ways, however it is more than two decades that there is neither war nor peace, and the Nagorno Karabakh people live under the fear of new brutal operations in the NK territory.*

*The Nagorno Karabakh conflict broke out in 1988 alongside with massive demonstrations in Stepanakert and in Yerevan that demanded the separation of the Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabakh from the Azerbaijani SSR and its unification with Armenian SSR.[1] Then the Supreme Soviet of the USSR decided to give the territory of Mountainous Karabakh to Azerbaijan, and since this period the crisis expanded and transformed into an armed conflict. In April 1991, the Soviet troops entered Nagorno Karabakh and started to deport the Armenian population from this territory.[2] Then, in December 10, 1991 people in Nagorno Karabakh held a referendum on independence and claimed their wish to be separated from Azerbaijan. However, the political situation was problematic until 1994, then after Aliyev's coming to power the war was stopped and a cease-fire was signed in Bishkek (May 12).[3] The Bishkek's event became the beginning of the long-term negotiations over the Nagorno Karabakh issue.*

*The Nagorno Karabakh conflict is not only in the interests of Armenia and Azerbaijan. There are other actors involved in the conflict: Turkey, Russia, Iran, USA and several other countries. At the beginning of the crisis it was clear that Armenia and Azerbaijan alone were not able to solve the disagreement in a quick and peaceful way. That is why the third parties were needed in order to help to bring peace to the region. However, as Başer claims, the involvement of several actors in the conflict was "empty hopes".[4]*

*As Stephen John Stedman claimed in 1991 "peacekeeping is uneasy, risky and sensitive business".[5] The challenges to the peace and peacekeeping are coming from the "spoilers". The "spoilers" are the parties or the leaders of the conflict who are convinced that the peaceful results of negotiations could damage their power, interests or viewpoint. And, in order not to threaten their interests in the conflict by negotiations, they start violations to underline the power they*

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\* Հոդվածն ընդունվել է 02.12.15:

Հոդվածը տպագրության է երաշխավորել ԵՊՀ քաղաքական ինստիտուտների և գործընթացների ամբիոնը:

have.[6] Finally, the “spoilers” win or lose the conflict by the intervention of international actors who take the peacekeepers’ role in the conflict. The “international custodians’” role in the conflict process is to make efficient strategies of conflict resolutions, to establish peace and to govern the “spoilers”. However, there are many cases when the “custodians” do not intervene and as a result of this one of the “spoilers” wins in the expense of many killed or suffering people.[7] The existence of two or more “spoilers” in the conflict makes the “custodian’s” construction process harder.

“International custodians” can be individual states, international organizations or other groups of third parties which are worried about the conflict’s results.[8] Individual states are usually the allies of the parties who, as “big brothers” try to defend the interests of the parties in the conflict or, as in many cases, as a third party they try to achieve benefits from the conflict. Usually, the allies seem to be motivated to enter into the conflict or war.[9] If there is “a conflict of interest between allies” the conflict management will become easier. According to Baral, there are “minor” and “major” allies. He argues that a “minor ally” is more interested in local and regional consequences of the conflict or its results; however the “major ally” is not only concerned with local and regional consequences but also with the global effects of the conflict’s outcome. Besides, the “minor ally” has a character of involving its major partner into the conflict, while the major ally always tries to keep its neutral position in the conflict.[10] Nevertheless, the alliances usually try to show that they have neutral position and they are not determined to enter into the ongoing conflict, while the involvement of an individual state into the conflict is easier and more explicit. However, as Singer and Small mention that this does not mean that alliances have less interests in the conflict than individual states as third parties.[11]

There are three strategies for “custodians” to intervene. The first one is to give the “spoiler” whatever it wants. The second one is the establishment of norms in order to change the “spoilers” behavior and the third one is the punishment of “spoiler” for ruining the peace.[12] Kim argues that as third parties some “custodians” can have negative effect on conflict resolution problems and lead the conflict to the spread of war. The reason is the fact that in several cases the “custodians” are motivated to get their own benefits (for instance, they can secretly sell weapons to the parties) from crisis and do not let the conflict to be solved easily.[13]

In 1991 Russia, Kazakhstan and Iran intervened to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict trying to offer solutions, however they did not succeed (Zheleznovodsk Declaration).[14][15] In 1992 Kazakhstan repeated the attempt of intervention supporting the idea of keeping the existing borders and saving the territorial unity. CSCE (former OSCE) also started to intervene in the conflict as a third party since 1992 to 1994\*. Now the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) is the internationally mandated actor (especially the Minsk Group) in the promoting of peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan.[16][17] From the very beginning the main goal of CSCE’s intervention was the finding of peaceful solution to the conflict, however it failed in its mission.

The strong role of Russia in the region made hardships for other actors to take the situation in their hands. Başer claims that Russia was the main barrier that CSCE could not intervene successfully in the conflict. To weaken the strong influence of Russia in the NK conflict solution the “American intervention” also started to be underlined. The main argument of West was based on the creation of Minsk group.[18] The 1993 is familiar with “3+1” initiative. Here the “3” parties were the U.S., Russia, Turkey, and the “1” was the CSCE, which discussed the proposal, according to which in two months the Armenian forces would have been departed from Kelbajar. This action would have been considered as a ceasefire.[19] It is possible that Armenia had

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\* During the 1992 Helsinki Additional Meeting of CSCE, the Council agreed that the CSCE would become a third party in NK conflict and play a significant role in the peace establishing process.

declared this new plan. UNSC adopted 4 resolutions concerning the Nagorno Karabakh (822, 853, 874, 884) which criticized the capture of Zangelan, Aghdam, Kelbajar and Horadiz by Armenians. Finally, when in 1994 CIS also became a third party in the conflict resolution process, Russia, CIS, and the CSCE “convinced” Armenia and Azerbaijan to sign a cease fire agreement. This became the beginning of the frozen conflict between the parties, because the brutal war was over but, there was yet a political disagreement to be solved.[20]

As it was already mentioned, during the brutal period of conflict the parties were determined to believe that their power, interests or viewpoint in the conflict would be damaged if they showed the enemy any motivation to negotiate. Parties continue to fight in order to win and underline their power in the conflict. These kinds of conflicts are usually called “intractable conflicts”. [21] The Nagorno Karabakh conflict also was an intractable one. The role of the third parties was underlined here from the very beginning of the conflict. Russia, Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan and the U.S.A. acted in the NK conflict as individual mediators. CSCE (OSCE), CIS and UNSC participated as international powers in order to bring peace to the conflict. However, as some scholars also claim, “their mediation efforts did not serve for their main purpose and even prolonged the resolution of the conflict”.

The Russian Federation is actively involved in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict resolution process since the early period of the conflict prevention process (Zheleznovodsk Declaration).[22] The Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation are in bilateral relations. The Armenian-Russian alliance has become a basis for strong diplomatic relations between the two states since the 19th century. Russia and Armenia generally have close and coincident attitudes towards the key international political issues and Armenia shares the viewpoints of Russia considering the latter to be a guarantor for its security and defense in the Caucasus region. The importance of the Russian involvement has been underlined many times both from Armenian and Russian sides. [23]

Even though the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia still has a strong influence in the Caucasus which does not let other actors to take the situation in their hands. As for the NK conflict, Russia sometimes actively suppresses the two parties to find a solution, sometimes it acts as a secondary “character” in the conflict resolution process, sometimes it plays a double game keeping good relations both with Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, one thing is clear-The Nagorno Karabakh conflict resolution process is already impossible to imagine without the presence of Russia with its all positive and negative sides. Even though Russia is a security guarantor for Armenia it sells armament to Azerbaijan and signs military contracts. The example is the signing of the Cooperation Plan for 2015 by the defense ministers of Russia and Azerbaijan. This point shows that Russia clearly uses the Nagorno Karabakh conflict in order to get its own benefits from the conflict. [24] Russia shows Armenia that the conflict will be solved in favor of the Armenian side, however when Azerbaijan and Turkey underline their oil-pipeline opportunities in any period of conflict, Russia changes its attitudes. There is even an argument that it was the Soviet Union’s government which engendered the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.[25] So the roots of the conflict are coming from the Russian diplomacy. In the conflict resolution period Russia tried to be the main actor to deal with the conflict. For instance when CSCE started to participate in the peacekeeping actions Russia, instead of cooperation and joint construction of an agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, was making barriers for CSCE to intervene.[26][27][28] So Russia is blamed by the both parties for its uncertain diplomacy as a mediator.

In Nagorno Karabakh conflict the USA has its strategic and economic interests. As Cornell put it there were two main attitudes in the U.S. towards NK negotiations: the first one was on Capitol Hill, and the second in the White House.[29] The State Department conducted more pro-Azerbaijani policy, while the Congress a pro-Armenian.[30] The pro-Armenian motives in the congress were the result of the Armenian Diaspora lobby.[31] However, U.S. will never conduct a strong pro-Armenian policy because it has developed economic relations with Azerbaijan.

*Moreover, Russia is also an obstacle because Armenia and Russia are strategic and military partners, which is not in the circle of U.S.'s interests. In its turn, Turkey is in ethnic and historical relationship with Azerbaijan, which means that its actions were biased only pro-Azerbaijani and unacceptable from the side of Armenia. During the long process of conflict resolution Turkey was the ally of Azerbaijan.*

*Iran's mediation efforts were unsuccessful because the Azerbaijani part accused Iran in selling weapons to Armenia, while the Kazakhstan's intervention was denied as the Armenian side argued that it was pro-Azerbaijani.[32] What concerns to the role of CSCE as a mediator in the conflict, both Azerbaijan and Armenia were members of it since their independence. Even though UN was more experienced in conflict prevention issues, CSCE was a better candidate to participate as a third party in the conflict, taking into account its regional uniqueness. During 1991 and 1992 the job of CSCE was "completely inefficient", because the military clashes continued between Armenia and Azerbaijan.[33]The CSCE Minsk group members did not like the efforts of Russia to become a dominant actor in the region. There was an underlined competition which was not beneficial for solving the disagreement around the territory of Nagorno Karabakh.[34]*

*In the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, which was based on historical hatred there was no communication and negotiation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. So the third parties served as communicators between the disputants. However the communicator should lead to the peaceful resolution of the conflict. They should also be "manipulators" in order to have successful results. As the results of this examination show, the third parties succeeded in the role of communicators, but as manipulators they **were** and **are** losers because there is no change in the relations after 1994 ceasefire. The role of the third party should firstly be the achievement of results, which is usually done by enforcing the states to come to a compromise. In the case of the NK conflict the third parties were biased and had their own interests in the conflict. In some cases the mediators started to fight against each other for several reasons. All this actions made the conflict a long-term and unresolved until today. To conclude, instead of thinking about the peaceful resolution of the conflict and in order to be honest in their attitudes the third parties immersed the conflict and started to satisfy their own interests in the conflict leaving the NK issue unsolved until now.*

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### **ԱՄՓՈՓԱԳԻՐ**

#### **Երրորդ կողմի միջամտությունը Ղարաբաղյան հակամարտության կարգավորման գործընթացում Հասմիկ Ղազարյան**

***Բանալի բառեր՝** Լեռնային Ղարաբաղ, կոնֆլիկտ, միջամտություն, հակամարտություն, երրորդ կողմ, միջազգային, կոմպրոմիս, դերակատարներ, շահեր, հարաբերություններ*

Ղարաբաղյան հակամարտությունը դասվում է կովկասյան տարածաշրջանի տևականորեն քննարկվող և երկարատև կոնֆլիկտների շարքին: Կոնֆլիկտի պատմության ընթացքում երրորդ կողմի կարգավիճակով բազմաթիվ դերակատարներ են ներգրավված եղել հակամարտության կարգավորման գործում՝ խնդիրը խաղաղ ձևապարհով լուծելու համար: Սակայն ավելի քան երկու տասնամյակ է, ինչ կոնֆլիկտի կարգավորման գործում շոշափելի արդյունքներ չեն գրանցվել: Երրորդ կողմերին չի հաջողվել Հայաստանին և Ադրբեջանին բերել կոմպրոմիսի, և հակամարտությունը շարունակվում է օգտագործվել՝ ի բավարարումն տարբեր պետությունների շահերի:

### **РЕЗЮМЕ**

#### **Вовлечение третьей стороны в процесс урегулирования Карабахского конфликта Асмик Казарян**

***Ключевые слова:** Нагорный Карабах, конфликт, вовлечение, противостояние, третья сторона, международный, компромисс, участники, интересы, отношения.*

Карабахский конфликт относится к разряду самых обсуждаемых и длительных конфликтов. На протяжении истории конфликта различные участники были вовлечены в процесс урегулирования в качестве третьей стороны, для решения вопроса мирным путем. Однако уже более чем два десятилетия не зарегистрировано осязаемых результатов в урегулировании вопроса. Третьей стороне не удалось привести Армению и Азербайджан к компромиссу, и противостояние продолжает использоваться в целях реализации интересов различных государств.

**SUMMARY**

**The intervention of third parties in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict  
Hasmik Ghazaryan**

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a long lasting and the most discussed one in the Caucasus region. During the conflict's history different actors have been involved as third parties in order to arrange peacefully the crisis among Armenians and Azerbaijanis, however in two decades not a single tangible result has been achieved. Third parties succeeded in the role of communicators, but they didn't enforce the states to come to a compromise. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been used for the interests of different actors.