

GOVERNMENT NARRATIVES IN AZERBAIJAN ON THE ARMENIA-
AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT OVER KARABAKH AND THE OCCUPIED
TERRITORIES

by

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and the Occupied Territories

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Anthony, who held down the fort when I was traveling, writing, and putting everything together. Further, I would like to thank my dog, Lady, for incessantly nudging my arm with her nose and messing up my typing and reminding me daily of the value of taking a break.

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List of Abbreviations

Central Intelligence Agency	CIA
Congressional Research Service	CRS
Group of Seven	G7
Heydar Aliyev Foundation.....	HAF
Internally Displaced Person	IDP
Karabakh Liberation Organization	KLO
Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security).....	KGB
Minister of Parliament	MP
Non-Governmental Organization.....	NGO
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	OSCE
Soviet Socialist Republic	SSR
Suitable Target of Externalization	STE
United Nations	UN
United Soviet Socialist Republic	USSR

Abstract

GOVERNMENT NARRATIVES IN AZERBAIJAN ON THE ARMENIA- AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT OVER KARABAKH AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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George Mason University, 2019

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This thesis describes current-day (2019) Azerbaijani government narratives regarding the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and explores how government narrative impacts potential peace building efforts. The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is described as intractable, and therefore understanding the active conflict and peace narratives perpetuated by the leaders of the nations at war is key in considering conflict transformation strategies. The study included a three month textual study of publications in selected Azerbaijani newspapers as well as thematic analysis of twenty-four semi-structured interviews in the capital of Azerbaijan. The results of the analysis show that government conflict narrative in Azerbaijan contributes to a willingness amongst the Azerbaijani people to engage in conflict in order to accomplish collective territorial goals. This thesis is intended to be a resource for researchers looking to understand the long-term impacts of identity-based conflict narrative on peace processes in a time of rising territorial disputes.

Introduction

The research in this thesis is centered on internal narratives within Azerbaijan in order to analyze the production and function of governmental narrative, and how it impacts public opinion in Azerbaijan. I am also interested in how governmental narrative impacts issues such as future implications for the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and potential peace building processes. My hope is that the research will shed more light on this conflict in a critical time when not only attention has lessened on the nation and the conflict, but also at a time the Azerbaijani government has made it harder for international organizations and researchers to work in Azerbaijan to conduct broader studies on this topic.

Therefore, the purpose of this social constructivist study is to understand the current governmental narratives of conflict within Azerbaijan as they pertain to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Karabakh and the Azerbaijani occupied territories, in the interest of learning how this post-isolationist narrative might impact current and future peace building efforts between the nations. The research question at the heart of the thesis is: What is the prevalent national narrative created by the Azerbaijani government about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia, and how does it impact peace building efforts in Azerbaijan? The key findings of the research on this question reveal that governmental narratives within Azerbaijan on the Armenia-Azerbaijan

conflict negatively impacts potential peace building processes. This is due to a number of factors, which have resulted in one dominant Azerbaijani government narrative on the conflict resulting in uncompromising mindsets, making Azerbaijanis more likely to engage in conflict escalating instead of peace building behavior. It should be stated here, that I also propose a repeat of this study, but focusing on Armenia, therefore capturing current data on both parties in the conflict.

Context of the research:

At the crossroads of Europe and Asia lies a narrow strip of land in between the Black and Caspian seas, known as Transcaucasia. Within this region are three nations, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, and is surrounded on both sides by the regional powers Russia, Iran, and Turkey (CIA). As a land bridge between Europe and Asia, Transcaucasia was very important for travel and trade for millennia (Chorbaijan, 2001, p. 32). Because it was a very important migrant and economic region, many empires have come to claim it throughout time. These empires include the Arabs, Mongols, Turkmens, Seljuk Turks, Ottoman Turks, Safavid Persians, and the Russians (p. 33). Due to this, it has become “one of the most ethnically and culturally heterogeneous areas of the world,” (Croissant, 1998, p. 2). This type of fluid border movement and consistent ethnic infusion has led to a number of territorial claims in the region, in which the nations cannot agree where true borders should lie. One of the most lasting and violent territorial conflicts is between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and centers on the small region of Nagorno-Karabagh (p. 3).

The conflict over Karabakh is unique because it is an interstate conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, yet also a separatist conflict between an unrecognized government in Karabakh and the government of Azerbaijan (Simão, 2016, p. 1). Karabakh is a small region only slightly larger than the U.S. state of Rhode Island, near the western border of Azerbaijan and the eastern border of Armenia (Croissant, 1998, p. 10). While mountainous and non-agricultural, Nagorno-Karabagh is integral to the identities of both nations, and they have been at war over the region since 1988, with only a 25-year-old ceasefire agreement keeping full-scale war at bay (CIA, 2019).

The full-scale war that defines that Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict began as the USSR collapsed in 1991, and both nations rushed to define new and independent national borders (Croissant, 1998, p. 77). The open fighting over the Nagorno-Karabakh region resulted in approximately 30,000 deaths (BBC, 2016). In 1994, a ceasefire was signed after Armenia not only took Nagorno-Karabakh militarily, but also seven further eastern Azerbaijani regions (CIA, 2019). The military defeat was not only humiliating for Azerbaijan but resulted in almost one million refugees, now mostly Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (Cornell, 2011, p. 127).

Since the 1994 ceasefire the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is sometimes called a “frozen conflict,” which is defined by Sociologist Louis Kriesberg (1968) as “conflicts in which both sides have remained fully committed to their incompatible positions but where neither has yet dared to attempt resolution through accommodation, withdrawal, or military conquest,” (Grant, 2017, p. 373). However, it is nothing close to frozen, with dozens of soldiers dying every year (de Waal, 2010, p. 165). Currently, an excess of

20,000 soldiers face each other across an almost 200 kilometer militarized ceasefire line, dotted with trenches and dugouts (p. 166). In addition, this conflict has no peacekeeping forces on the ground (Simão, 2016, p. 1).

With the pace of militarization accelerating over the past twenty-five years since the ceasefire, and with the parties failing to agree on any meaningful de-escalating or peace-building activities, it could be a matter of time before direct hostility increases into war (Simão, 2016, p. 1). This was briefly seen in April 2016 during what is now called the Four Day War, when fighting along the Line of Contact devolved into a military engagement resulting in Azerbaijani land gains (p. 2).

While militarization in Armenia and Azerbaijan increases, international efforts at conflict transformation or resolution have been “modest,” with Transcaucasia not seen as a high-priority region deserving of major resources (de Waal, 2010, p. 169). However, the consensus that there is both no immediate threat of war, and oppositionally that there is no hope for peace between the leaders of the nations should be re-examined (p. 174). This is due to the fact that conflict re-igniting in Transcaucasia “would spread catastrophe over a wide region, impacting not just Armenia and Azerbaijan, but Georgia, Russia, Turkey, Iran and energy routes across the Caspian Sea” (p. 169).

Over the past thirty years there has been a great deal of research on this topic. However, the majority of research on Azerbaijan and the conflict over Karabakh took place in the 1990’s and the first decade of the new millennium, with publications on the nation and the conflict dropping off dramatically after 2013. Reasons for this could be that the war had ended in ceasefire 19 years before the final book publications took place

in 2013 and therefore the topic might have been relatively exhausted, or not enough new information was emerging at the time to continue heavy research, or that other territorial conflicts in Eurasia flared up and required action, such as the Georgia-Russia conflict over South Ossetia drawing focus away from Karabakh in 2008, as well as the Crimea conflict between Ukraine and Russia occurring in 2014 along with the alleged Russian and Ukrainian separatist occupation of eastern Ukraine (Gotev, 2016). Despite this it is important to note that the reduction of focus on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict came at a critical time for Azerbaijan, however, as from 2011 to 2015 the nation underwent a series of authoritarian changes that are working to change the dynamic of the conflict and the direction of the nation itself.

Due to the current shortage in research, this thesis on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is important -for understanding of current conflict dynamics and impediments to the peace process. In addition, this thesis proposes areas for further research based upon the results. It will aid practitioners who enter an escalated conflict environment in Transcaucasia with an understanding of current dynamics and trends and can take educated and strategic action. Finally, with the rising number of territorial disputes in Eurasia it is important for the researchers and practitioners of these disputes to understand the history, conflict management models, and the results of third party efforts in former Soviet states in conflict, such as Armenia and Azerbaijan. This is because understanding the complexities of such a long standing dispute in the former Soviet states may yield constructive ideas for how to develop other conflict management or

transformation frameworks in these post-millennium, post-Soviet territorial disputes, or what could be done better in current and future disputes.

Organization of the thesis:

This thesis is organized as follows. The first chapter is a literature review and presents theory that will be used to help us understand the conflict and analyze the results of the research in detail. The second chapter is a case study of the nation of Azerbaijan in concern to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Karabakh and the occupied territories, and will draw from theory presented in chapter 1. Chapters 3-5 present the research methodology and resulting research. Chapter 6 analyzes the results of research and applies the theory in order to answer the research question. To conclude the thesis, I summarize the results of the research and the answer to the research question, and propose possible areas of further research based upon the outcome of this study.

Chapter One: Social Identity and the Concept of Nation

Before diving into governmental narratives of conflict in Azerbaijan, I first need to discuss established theory, which will help us understand any and all results of the proposed research. This chapter discusses how social groups form, interact, develop rivalries or conflict with each other, and what happens when they do. To do this, I will explain the theory of social group development, how and why groups differentiate themselves, form distinct or competing narratives, and how governments can influence these social mechanisms and processes. My goal is to connect the ethnic nations of Armenia and Azerbaijan to the theory being presented. This chapter is broken down into seven theory based sections: Social Identity, Social Boundary, Social Narratives and Collective Axiology, Intergroup Competition and Ethnocentrism, Government and Polis, Nations and Nationalism, and 4-C Model for Conflict Analysis. In the next chapter, the nation of Azerbaijan and the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict will be the historical case study for analysis found in this chapter.

Social Identity:

Social identity and its many functions were defined in the 1960's and 1970's as the focus of Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and later elaborated on by

many other researchers including John Turner, Michael Hogg, and Marilynn Brewer, amongst others (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, p. 259). Social Identity Theory references sociology and psychology to explain how individuals form groups and intergroup relations (p. 255). In essence, this is how an individual sees his or her social self, which is one's self-concept in relation to social groups and one's place in a social group (Brewer & Gardner, 1996, p. 83). To an individual, group membership also carries an emotional significance (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69).

Simply, group memberships provide individuals with a social identity because groups represent common attributes and values having emotional significance to the individuals that join them (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, p. 260). These attributes and values can be examples of "what one should think and feel, and how one should behave" (p. 260). Group attributes can also feature some kind of congruous trait such as having common characteristics or sharing a common fate (Tajfel, 1974, p. 72). Essentially, social identity is centered around a sense of "we-ness" between members of a group, and the stronger a group's identity, the more interest group members have in the health and welfare of the group (Volkan, 1997, p. 91). This "shift from 'I' to 'we'" leads the social self to develop into a collective self, in which the individual internalizes many of "the norms and characteristics of important reference groups, and consists of cognitions about the self that are consistent with that group identification" (Brewer & Gardner, 1996, p. 84).

This formation of individuals into groups in order to find a place for themselves within society is known as social categorization. According to Tajfel (1974), social

categorization is “the ordering of social environment in terms of social categories, that is of groupings or persons in a manner which is meaningful to the subject” (p. 69). One effect of this as individuals categorize themselves, is that group boundaries are “sharpened” as individuals categorize themselves and others into distinct groups. These distinctive groups in society act to standardize intergroup roles and perceptions, and clarifies the relevance and position of the individual in society (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, p. 260). This process of categorization leads to the creation of social patterns, which leads to the simplification of complex ideas into simpler terms such as symbols, classes, professions, and so forth (Korostelina, 2013, p. 35).

In order to define these distinctive group attributes and clarify the relevance of individuals in society, each group naturally works to differentiate itself amongst the other groups around it. Tajfel (1974) stated the concept in his research when he wrote that a group becomes a group directly due to the fact that there are other groups present in any given environment (p. 72). Michael Hogg (Terry & White, 1995), explained that the reason groups will work to categorize and then differentiate themselves from others is due to the “basic need to see themselves in a positive light in relation to relevant others (i.e. to have an evaluatively positive self-concept)” (p. 260). Basically, the “we-ness” Volkan discussed, in which the health and wellness of the group is paramount provides a “clear value differential” for comparative analysis from the ingroup to the outgroup (Turner, 1975, p.8). Therefore, individuals join groups to uphold their values and emotional attachments, which, in turn, heightens self-esteem leading to a group with a

collectively positive self-assessment. This process is known as favorable comparison (Turner, Brown, and Tajfel, 1979, p. 190).

This positive self-esteem is enhanced and ingrained when the group makes comparisons to other groups in ways that favor the ingroup (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, 260). In fact, evaluating one's own group in a positive light in order to "preserve and enhance" self-esteem is a common factor in Social Identity Theory (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979, p. 190). This is known as metacontrast, in which intergroup differences are minimized and intragroup differences are maximized in order to reduce intergroup friction and feature similarities such as goals and values, while highlighting its distinction from outside groups (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, 261).

Social categorization, group differentiation, favorable comparison, and metacontrast works to create something called a binary system within societies. Binary systems make favorable comparison easier for individuals and groups by splitting the environment into polarities that explain opposites good and bad, or even the "sacred and profane" (Korostelina, 2013, p. 35). Binary systems are important for group logic systems, allowing groups to easily make judgments or adopt values quickly and efficiently, as well as having a clear choice between positive and negative comparison (Korostelina, 2013, p. 35).

Social groups developing binary systems commonly leads to intergroup competition, which many times acts as the basis of intergroup conflict (Turner, 1975, p. 5). But before I dive into conflict, I will explain the mechanisms of intergroup interaction

that can (but does not always) contribute to conflict's creation. Primarily, we will look at social boundary, normative positioning, collective axiology and narrative.

Social Boundary:

Karina Korostelina and Daniel Rothbart (2006) explain that some of the main social mechanisms that help groups strive for a positive self-identity are “moral obligations, rights, duties, and expectations that guide individuals,” (p. 34). This is known as normative positioning, and this functions to help social groups make decisions and take action cohesively (p. 34). Interestingly, normative positioning practices can vary from group to group based on how the groups differentiate themselves from other groups in the environment. These could be differences in culture, ethnicity, geography, government, and a number of other factors. These differences between groups become apparent when they interact, and therefore the meeting points between groups are known as social boundaries.

In essence, social boundaries are the social mechanisms that help people differentiate their social groups from others, which also helps to solidify the makeup of their own social identities. As a result, social boundaries can be complex, contain many layers, and help groups define shared identity traits and common meanings through differentiation along group contact lines. Charles Tilly (2016) explains social boundary descriptively as, “any contiguous zone of contrasting density, rapid transition, or separation between internally connected clusters of population and/or activity for which human participants create shared representations,” (p. 134).

Tilly goes on to describe the ways in which humans can interact via social boundary, signifying how ingrained they are in the human experience. There are four ways in which humans operate with social boundaries: “distinctive relations between sites on one side” of a social boundary, “distinctive relations between sites on the other side” of a social boundary, “distinctive relations across the zone” between two social boundaries, and on each side of a social boundary, “shared representations of the zone itself” (Tilly, 2016, p. 134). Inescapably, individuals interact with social boundaries daily, whether they experience the world from within their own social boundary (ingroup) or are introduced to interactions from the other side of a social boundary (outgroup). These social boundaries can change, transform, activate and de-activate, or be suppressed as an individual or a group comes into contact myriad social boundaries over time (p. 134).

Due to all of these cross-boundary and within-boundary relations, we can see how groups build an idea of similarity within their own group, and differences between other groups. As Tilly explains, these transactions between social sites help us infer “a relation between sites: a friendship, a rivalry, an alliance, or something else... Cumulatively, such transactions create memories, shared understandings, recognizable routines, and alterations in the sites themselves,” (Tilly, 2016, p. 7) In essence, these ideas and stories create collective identities (p. 8).

Yet the question remains exactly what these transactions which can create or contribute to collective identity are, or how groups build normative positioning mechanisms such as morals and values. Tilly attempts to explain these practices as the

construction of shared stories about who people are, how they are connected and what has happened to them (Tilly, 2016, p. 209). For the basis of this study, I will call the construction of shared stories and their social proliferation: narratives.

Social Narratives and Collective Axiology:

Sara Cobb (2013) explains that narrative theorists have described narrative as a “system of meaning,” (p. 67). These narratives include plots, themes, and characters, and are used to reinforce the experiences of an individual or group (p. 67). This type of narrative syntax helps a group moderate internal relations and moral constructs (p. 53). She goes on to state that narrative is consistent with the theory of social constructionism, in which humans use narrative in order to structure and organize their experiences (p. 22). Over time, these stories are elaborated on as they are told over lifetimes, and can even become an integral part of a group’s culture (p. 22). Therefore, Cobb concludes that identity itself belongs “to that potent set of social arrangements in which people construct shared stories about who they are, how they are connected, and what has happened to them,” (p. 22).

Over time, these narratives are passed down from generation to generation, creating a communal memory and contributing to the shared history of the group (Zandberg, 2010, p. 6). This is known as a collective memory, and is perpetuated in the form of narrative (p. 6). Essentially, narrative is a social tool that provides a group with the ability to shape and re-shape their culture, values and memory, giving them agency in

identity construction and a role in structuring their unique history, which can even include the legitimization of nations and social institutions (Korostelina, 2013, p. 31).

At times collective memory includes narratives that define the victories and tragedies of a group, and are called chosen glory (p. 81) and chosen trauma (Volkan, 1997, p. 48). Chosen glories unite members of a group around feelings of success and can be memories of a great military victory, revolution, or golden era in the group's past, among other positive and defining memories (p. 81). Chosen traumas on the other hand, define memories of a "calamity that once befell a group's ancestors," and who define their "identity by the transgenerational transmission of injured selves infused with the memory of the ancestors' trauma," (p. 48). This means that memories of tragedy are passed from one generation to the next, and if the trauma remains an unhealed wound, meaning that the ingroup never achieved justice or peace from the wrongs that befell their ancestors, the trauma can undergo transgenerational transmission.

Transgenerational transmission of trauma happens "when the mental representation becomes so burdensome that members of the group are unable to initiate or resolve the mourning of their losses or reverse their feelings of humiliation," (Volkan, 1997, p. 45). When this occurs, "their traumatized self-images are passed down to later generations in the hope that others may be able to mourn and resolve what the prior generation could not," (p. 45). This consistent revisiting of the past's most traumatic chapters in the present generation is an example of time collapse. This phenomenon invokes emotions and memories of a shared trauma from the past in future generations (p. 35), and therefore implants the traumatic memory almost as if it were "psychological

DNA” planted in new generations (p. 44). This is simply one example of how groups use narrative to structure and organize experiences and ingrain collective memory into the culture of the group.

Yet, how specifically does narrative impact social identity and boundary?

According to Cobb, narratives can do three things. The first, is narrative can set limits on how groups will consider interacting with each other (Cobb, 2013, p. 64). If the narratives two groups tell about each other are hostile, their interactions may also be hostile, or there may be a resistance between the groups to interact at all. The second, is narratives influence the way a group collectively presents itself (p. 64). A group can present itself and interact uniquely from other groups based upon the values and symbols important to that group’s narratives. And the third is, narratives show individuals within the group how to embody standards of proper performance (p. 64). Based upon normative positioning narratives influencing values, morals and standards, group members might be more likely to join the military to defend against a common threat, with their parents even after marriage to show deference and care to elderly family, or pass down traumatic cultural narratives of the past to inform the goal orientation of future generations, for example. This implies that large groups use narrative to enact a type of social force, which Cobb describes as, “the way in which the storyline organizes meaning such that persons oblige the storyline itself to be elaborated as a duty or ‘work’” (p. 80).

In social group environments, narratives help to uphold normative practices, which inform social boundaries and their processes. This kind of feedback loop between normative practice, social boundary, and narrative creates something within a group

called a collective axiology, which is a value system that packs up all of the norms, taboos, appropriate actions, necessary tasks, societal values, commitments, and worldviews, into criteria for evaluating ingroup and outgroup membership (Korostelina & Rothbart, 2006, p. 4). Basically, collective axiologies draw upon social categorization and binary systems to create a framework that explains distinctive relations within and across boundaries between groups, which highlights similarities within the boundary (ingroup), such as how we behave and what we value, and differences on the other side of the boundary (outgroup) (Korostelina, 2013, p. 39). To do this, a group draws upon its narrative history and uses its categories of right and wrong or good and bad to shape the group's collective "obligations, expectations, requirements, demands, and rights" (p. 39).

According to Korostelina and Rothbart (2006), there are four criteria needed for the creation of a collective axiology. The first is consensus amongst the ingroup on the perception of the outgroup and its behaviors, the second is consistent stability of ingroup attitudes, values, and behavior, the third is ingroup resistance to change their ideas and beliefs about the outgroup, and the fourth criteria is the ingroup's range of differentiation from outgroups via categorization (p.47). This set of criteria used to create a collective axiology leads to a balance amongst ingroup members regarding the structure of their social environment. This axiological balance helps the group "validate, vindicate, rationalize, or legitimize actions, decisions, and policies," which help solidify ingroup membership and helps the group make sense of its unique characteristics and collective challenges (p.46). Axiological balance also leads to a generality on how ingroup members process information in terms of social categorization and favorable comparison.

These two processes, axiological balance and axiological generality, in turn feeds back into the collective axiology of the group and reinforces or adapts it to new information in ways which will preserve the favorable view of the ingroup (p. 47).

The process of evaluating ingroup and outgroup distinctions using narrative creates what Cobb calls an “enmity system,” which happens when narratives divide groups of humans into “us” and “them” (Cobb, 2013, p. 6). This “us” and “them” dynamic creates a social construct, which is a set of oppositional terms or values across groups (p. 65). Essentially, it is narrative’s place in a binary system. Volkan echoes this idea from his studies on large group psychology. He notes that not only can one group not be the same as a neighboring group, but that each group also naturally maintains a psychological border between the identities of neighboring large groups (Volkan, 1997, 202). This formation of individuals into distinct groups, which consistently compare and contrast with each other for positive self-comparison, can lead to intergroup competition especially if both groups have common goals or opposing values (Turner, 1975, p. 12). Intergroup competition impacts group narrative as ingroup solidarity is reinforced through favorable comparison, and differences with out groups are emphasized via negative perceptions, which enhance rivalry (Korostelina, 2013, p. 33).

Therefore, as each group in an environment uses narrative, normative positioning and collective axiology in the attempt to identify itself via positively valued differentiation, rivalries can take place between groups (Turner, 1975, p. 10). In groups with a high level of collective axiology, they will generally be more homogeneous, committed to their value and belief systems, and be more resistant to change

(Korostelina, 2013, p. 39). Therefore, when high collective axiology is added to social competition, escalation is more likely to take place due to inability to compromise on group goals or values. It is important to note that this is not always a negative competition. Competition for positive self-identity could take the shape of sports rivalries, create opportunities for political activism, and create other areas for the development or enhancement of positive self-esteem.

However, when two or more groups in an environment already have a history of hostility or conflict of interest, intergroup competition can develop into a negative rivalry leading to stereotyping, bias, and discrimination (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979, p. 189). This negative competition between groups is where conflict studies begin, as these narratives, as Tilly (2016) explains, “play an indispensable part” in the emergence of agreements, disagreements, and the very coordination of social interaction itself (p. 209).

Intergroup Competition and Ethnocentrism:

In a short review of Social Identity Theory, we can securely say that individuals naturally give meaning to themselves and their place in their environment by simplifying complex values and characteristics through social categorization and the differential structuring of groups in the search for positive self-esteem. Because individuals are driven to view themselves and their social groups in a positive light, groups strive to differentiate themselves in a meaningful and positive way. Due to this favorable comparison and metacontrast between groups, social boundaries are hardened as positive aspects of one’s own group, and differences between outgroups are highlighted.

Additionally, when groups with common goals or opposing values occupy the same space, this can create social competition.

According to Brewer (1985), this intergroup competition also links to discriminatory processes as it “reduces discriminability among individuals within categories and enhances perceived distinctiveness between members of different categories,” much like metacontrast (p. 223). Paired with depersonalization of the self, groups can fall victim to mental processes and behaviors that include stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and prejudice (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, p.261). The key social mechanism that begins the dive into intergroup conflict is negative intergroup competition which can lead to ingroup favoritism, bias, and identity salience.

Ingroup favoritism refers to the habit of the group to favor itself over any other outgroup, especially in cases where there is ingroup bias that may reach beyond available evidence (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979, p. 187). Cases of ingroup favoritism leading to extreme bias supports Hogg’s (1995) assertion that social competition for the enhancement of positive self-esteem is largely a “subjective belief structure” created by the group itself (p. 260). This is because, in order to highlight only the positive aspects of the group’s identity and distance itself from the negative, groups must consistently “focus those aspects of experience which are subjectively meaningful in a particular context” (p. 260). This means that favorable comparison can lead to a pure image of the ingroup among members, which can create an image of outgroup that absorbs all negative aspects of intergroup interaction. Brewer supports this by explaining that “social identity, in other words, leads to self-stereotyping” (Brewer & Gardner 1996, p. 86).

One example of favorable comparison leading to self-stereotyping is through fundamental attribution errors. A fundamental attribution error takes place when the ingroup likens the outgroup's actions in a specific situation, such as war, to the internal disposition and characteristics of the group itself, instead of the situational aspects taking place such as the state of war (Pettigrew, 1979, p. 464). This means that an outgroup in conflict with the ingroup could be seen as fundamentally evil in disposition, simply because its actions in conflict are threatening to the ingroup. The results of a fundamental attribution error, according to Taylor and Koivumaki (1976), is that a disliked outgroup will always be seen as responsible for bad behavior (p. 464). Pettigrew also explains Heider's (1958) point that this negative attribution to outgroups can also help the ingroup avoid and negative attributions of its own, and therefore protects the ingroup's self-esteem by attributing all negative behaviors and outcomes to others (p. 464). In essence, this means that members of the ingroup will rarely be given the benefit of the doubt (p. 464).

This kind of self-stereotyping, especially in a competitive process, can lead to identity saliency. A salient identity is one which is used to increase an individual's membership influence in his or her group, and can be activated in diverse situations to signal one's group membership (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 229). These salient identities "clearly demarcate the intergroup boundary and allow easy identification of outgroup members" (Bar-Tal, 1990, p. 74). Therefore, the degree of ingroup identification becomes paramount when discussing intergroup conflict issues such as discrimination or ethnocentrism (Perreault, & Bourhis, p. 100). This is because salient identities amongst

groups can become the most important factors for evaluation, as these are the identities that activate when social boundaries touch (Brewer & Gardner, 1996, p. 91). As stated before, when these salient identities come together it could be for a positive rivalry such as a sporting event. However, when large groups such as ethnic groups have a history of negative rivalry, such as a conflict of interest or past war, salient identity can lead to discriminatory practice, or even hostility if social boundaries contact each other.

According to Turner (Brown & Tajfel, 1979), there are four major conditions in which ingroup favoritism can lead to ingroup bias (p. 190). The first is that individuals must define their self-concept per their ingroup membership, the second is that intergroup comparison must be salient in nature, the third is that the outgroup also has a salient identity and is a relevant comparison to the ingroup, and the fourth and final aspect is that there is some ambiguity in the “comparative dimensions” between the groups, meaning that bias comparisons are not always clean cut or clearly obvious to others (p. 191). When the conditions are filled and bias occurs, this can lead to deeper emotional processes such as ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism is a term used to describe the tendency of individuals in a social group to accept their ingroup and “reject” outgroups (Bar-Tal, 1990, p. 73). When an individual is in a competitive ingroup with established favoritism and bias, terms of acceptance and rejection stems from “seeing one’s own group (the ingroup) as virtuous and superior, one’s own standards of value as universal, and outgroups as contemptible and inferior” (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006, p. 926). This leads to uncooperative relations with outgroups, while cooperative behaviors are reserved for members of the ingroup (p.

926). Turner (1975), referencing a study by Wilson and Miller (1961), explained that ethnocentrism can lead the ingroup to undervalue other groups it is in competition with (p. 31). This “devaluation,” as Bar-Tal (1990) puts it, is a direct result of the ethnocentric tendency to attribute unfavorable qualities to outgroups while at the same time placing their own qualities higher on a moral scale (p. 74).

Once negative intergroup competition gets to the level of devaluation delegitimization is likely to occur, and where violent conflict is most likely to break out (Bar-Tal, 1990, p. 74). According to Bar-Tal, delegitimization is a group process in which outgroups are morally excluded from ingroup consideration (p. 65). There are five distinct features that lead to delegitimization: the use of salient identity traits for categorization, the denial of the outgroup’s humanity, the rejection, contempt, fear or disgust of the outgroup, the knowledge that the outgroup can endanger one’s ingroup (competitive threat), and the justification of harming the outgroup due to its perceived subhuman nature (p. 72).

Furthermore, delegitimization can lead to dehumanization. This is the process of “labeling a group as inhuman by characterizing members as different from the human race” (Bar-Tal, 1990, p. 65). There are four mental processes groups use to dehumanize outgroups. The first trait is characterization, in which an outgroup absorbs unfavorable and unacceptable traits such as the “aggressor” (p. 66). The second is outcasting, in which members of the outgroup are excluded from the environment of the ingroup as their qualities are seen as transgressing on the positive aspects of the ingroup (p. 66). The third process is use of political labels. Political labels upon the outgroup can signify that

they are a threat to the ingroup's institutional systems and basic social values (p. 66). And the fourth process is group comparison, through which negative names are associated with the outgroup "such as 'vandals' or 'huns'" (p. 67).

Once delegitimization and dehumanization take place, cases of outgroup hate and hostility are likely to occur (Brewer, 1999, p. 435). The following are five trigger causes identified by Brewer, in intergroup interaction to potential open hostility. The first is moral superiority, which can provide justification for looking down on or acting against an outgroup, as well as triggering feelings of contempt for the outgroup (p. 435). One example of this is just cause, or legitimizing the ingroup's mistreatment of the outgroup by using their axiological positioning as the protagonist to justify that they must make sacrifices to overcome their struggles (Korostelina & Rothbart, 2006, p. 4). This is an example of a moral binary, which works to legitimize all ingroup actions and delegitimize all outgroup actions along the boundaries of "sacred and profane," which can increase ingroup salience against an outgroup (Korostelina, 2013, p. 36).

The second cause of open hostility is perceived threat, in which competition can lead to a struggle over resources or positive self-esteem, resulting in a reciprocal struggle to disadvantage the outgroup in order for the ingroup to remain at advantage (Brewer, 1999, p. 435). For ingroups with a high identity salience or axiological balance, threat logic can feed into a moral binary system, which can create a defense response against the "aggressive" outgroup (Korostelina & Rothbart, 2006, p. 5).

The third trigger is common goals, in which the ingroup may feel pressure to cooperate with an outgroup that it has already delegitimized (Brewer, 1999, p. 436). This

threatens intergroup distinction by sharing a common goal with an undesirable outgroup, leading to scapegoating and distrust between groups (p. 436).

The fourth trigger for outgroup hostility is social comparison, through which groups define their distinctive identities (Brewer, 1999, p. 437). When a delegitimized outgroup shares common values with the ingroup, this threatens ingroup positive distinctiveness and it must heighten its competitive behavior to preserve self-worth (p. 437). Again, groups will refer to their collective axiologies to reinforce or adapt their values and norms, which in turn can heighten the degree of collective generality in the ingroup, and lead to conflict escalation (Korostelina, 2013, p. 43).

And the fifth trigger is power politics, in which political entities deliberately manipulate narratives of outgroup threat in the interest of securing or maintaining political power (Brewer, 1999, p. 437).

In closing on how discriminatory and dehumanizing practices can develop from negative intergroup competition, it can be seen that elements such as political labels and power politics play a role in the functions of intergroup interaction. It is a necessary observation to make, then, that the above mechanisms and processes for open hostility and conflict can become broadly accepted when they are assimilated into the culture, national history, and government institutions of a nation and ethnic group. In the next section, I will discuss the role of nation and government in social identity and intergroup competition, and explain how ethnic ties can become integral to national identity.

Government and Polis:

Even more than simply understanding collective identity and narrative, this study is interested specifically in governmental narratives of conflict. Therefore I also must define government, a group's relationship to its government, and how governments influence identity and narrative.

I will begin by agreeing with Tilly's (2016) assessment that identities become political in nature when they become connected to governments (p. 210). Some examples that he provided for identities connected to governments are political or bureaucratic officials, members of the military, citizens of governments, those detained or jailed by governments, and welfare recipients (p. 62).

What is a government, then, and how can it politicize identity? For the purpose of this study, I will define a government in the way Tilly does, as "any organization that controls the chief concentrated coercive means within some substantial territory," (2016, p. 192). This government can be a state government when it "A) does not fall under the jurisdiction of any other government and B) receives recognition from other governments in the same situation," (p. 192). Here, I will clarify words such as coercive means and relatedly, power. In this study, coercion or power is not meant in a negative or violent way, but instead to describe the kind of social persuasion being applied by governments. These words are the influence a state government would use to institutionalize itself, impose regulations, or compel action from a group by a leadership. To quote Cobb (2013), a government has a certain kind of centralized coercive power, with which it "invokes as the 'civitas' that brings forth laws, the covenant, of itself, to itself," (p. 115).

For example, based upon these guidelines both Azerbaijan and Armenia, the nations at war within this study, would be considered to have state governments. Although there are contested territorial boundaries between the two both nations A) have controlled central power over most or all of their perceived territories, B) their governments do not fall under the jurisdiction of any other governments, and C) they each receive recognition from other state governments; the governments. The nations of Armenia and Azerbaijan even recognize each other despite their fierce disagreements in other areas.

Some of the operations that state governments oversee are the establishment of national boundaries, a declaration of rights for its subjects, the creation of citizenship, and the obligations connecting citizens to the government (Tilly, 2016, p. 175). The function that plays a large part in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is the concept of a national boundary. For the purpose of this research, I will follow Tilly in his definition and define national boundary as “a precise geographical perimeter around a specific territory, [which] assigns citizenship categorically to some or all the legal occupants of the territory,” (p. 176).

Now that the role of government has been established, I need to discuss what role the citizens of a state government play. In my previous discussion of collective identity and narrative, I explained with the help of Tajfel, Turner, Brewer, Cobb, Korostelina, Rothbart, Hogg, Tilly and others how collective identities are formed. These formations along social boundary seem ambiguous, with interactions happening across and within boundaries, with transformations, activations and de-activations happening as identities

evolve. However, while citizenship is a type of identity one can have, it is much more organized than ambiguous social categorization based on common values and traits (Tilly, 2016, p. 173).

By this, I mean that there are a particular set of laws, rights, and obligations that connect citizens to the government, and a government to its citizens (p. 173). This ties back into the concept of a collective axiology, which a government can use to “blend politics with value-commitments” and connect to the social and/or religious characteristics of its polis (Korostelina and Rothbart, 2006, p. 4). Another important aspect of citizenship was brought up by Cobb when she wrote, “speakers cannot legitimize themselves by themselves,” (p. 104). This means that a state government, which speaks for and represents its citizens, can rarely be legitimate without the consent of the citizens of that nation. Therefore, citizens have a role in electing (or supporting the succession of) the leadership of the state government, or dismissing it when they no longer want it. Therefore in a utopian view, a citizen’s role is to legitimize their state government by participating in their obligations to the government, while governments ensure rights which provide a stable and secure life to its polis.

Volkan (1997) provided an excellent example of group identity and the relationship between citizens and their government, in his case a “leader” (p. 27). In his analogy, he asks the reader to picture a person wearing tight fitting clothing. This, he explains, is a human and the clothing is the individual identity, fit closely to the person. Yet over the tight fitting clothing there is a loose fitting cloth, and this cloth is also worn by many other people around the individual. This cloth, Volkan says, is group identity,

which acts as a bond between humans. The analogy goes even further to explain that this group of people is standing under a large canvas cloth, which a central pole is holding up like a tent. This pole, according to Volkan, is the leader. At the end of this analogy he makes his point that, “it is the leader’s (the pole’s) task to prevent the tent from collapsing... The leaders must be able to shoulder, so to speak, the weight of the canvas, responding to the special needs of the group,” (p. 28).

Now that the relationship between a state government and its citizens is clear, we must understand the concept of the nations that governments and their people represent, and what motivates groups to build these institutions. Interestingly, national identity is generally considered to be one of the most salient identities a group can have (Korostelina, 2013, p. 29).

Nations and Nationalism:

Some of the basic ideas of group origin, values and meanings come with questions such as, “Who are we? What are our rights and obligations? What do we intend? Who are they? What are their rights and obligations? What do they intend?” (Tilly, 2016, p. 64). By repeating these questions and retelling the narrative answers on a citizen and governmental level, the group then solidifies its national identity, which, according to conflict and identity scholar Richard Ashmore (2001), “is the group’s definition of itself and basic values; its strengths and weaknesses; its hopes and fears; its reputation and conditions of existence; its institutions and traditions; and its past history, current purposes, and future prospects,” (p.191). Korostelina (2013) supports this view by

explaining that national identity creates a moral framework specifically to define a national community, and is inherent in the development and education of each member of the group (p. 25). These national narratives are inspired by the collective axiology of the group and works to support their social needs and political interests (p. 30). Therefore, collective axiology is used by governments to help create the concept of the nation and everything that the nation represents.

One way governments use collective axiology is via narrative. Under the power of a centralized government, the leader becomes the main narrative speaker of the group. Due to this, the government and its leaders are able to use determinant judgments, which is the promotion of dominant narratives that will strengthen group cohesion and create support for the nation and leadership (Cobb, 2013, p. 36). In order to encourage the dominance of one narrative over another, a government will engage in a process Rom Harre (2009) described as “first-order positioning” to promote one narrative as legitimate, and find ways to delegitimize other narratives within the range of the group’s moral landscape (Cobb, 2013, p. 61). One example of this is in a democratic election, when one candidate will attempt to delegitimize the narrative of all other candidates while promoting their own, in the interest of winning votes from citizens. However, not all determinant judgment processes are so public and swift as an election might be. At times governments will evolve a national narrative over the course of years to serve the current interest of any given government administration. To do this, a leader will take an interest or need, and transform it into an ideology for followers to rally around (Volkan, 1997, p. 153).

Many times these national ideologies and narratives will take into account the nine components of national identity, which are national traditions and values, national language, characteristics of fellow citizens, national history, national territory and specificity of landscape, national ideology, interrelations with outgroups, and reverberated identity, which is a binary form of ingroup comparison (Korostelina, 2013, p. 28-29). These components tie heavily into shared values and characteristics, social categorization, self-esteem development and reinforcement, metacontrast, group narrative, collective axiology and balance, national boundary, binary value systems, and intergroup competition

Another form of narrative that impacts national identity is historical narrative, which has three functions in establishing a national identity (Korostelina, 2017, p. 172). The first function of historical narrative is defining the meaning of national identity, which builds a vision of a shared future, builds group cohesion, and facilitates a moral framework (p. 172). The second function is evaluative, and assists in developing attitudes toward other nations via historical comparison and differentiation. The third function is normative and helps establish social boundaries, defines national power and authority, and legitimizes group decisions and activities both in the present and in planning for the future (p. 173). This normative function consists of four main mechanisms that help with the development of all of these social processes. The first of these four mechanisms is recognition, which is using historical narrative in order to identify problems in society associated with an aggressive outgroup in the past (p. 186). The second normative mechanism is assessment, which is framing the problems identified as injustices within

the historical narrative (p. 186). The third normative mechanism is connotation, which is the establishment of national identity from historical narrative, which promotes meaning, motivation, and agency (p. 186). And the fourth normative mechanism is prescription, which defines the strategies and plans for group action based upon historical narrative (p. 186).

Although this research is not going to be an exhaustive list of all the ways that nations can impact collective identity and there are many more examples I could discuss, there is one further governmental impact that is integral to this particular study. As stated before, governments have a primary role in defining the borders of a nation. Volkan (1997) has written that collective identity stems from identity formation in large groups, stating that tribes or clans are a natural, “emotionally bonded” form of human interaction (p. 24). These groups that share emotional bonds are what he calls the end result of people living in one geographic location, experiencing similar events together, and sharing stories such as a myth of a common beginning, noting that this has happened naturally throughout the history of mankind (Volkan, 1997, p. 22). Due to this, geography can heavily effect collective identity, which in turn has a heavy impact on how governments define and defend their homelands. Ashmore (2001) explains, “The collective identity of each group is bolstered by a national narrative – an account of the group’s origins, its history, and its relationship to the land – that explains and supports its sense of distinctiveness, its positive self-image, and the justice of its claims and grievances,” (p. 191).

When such deep ties are fastened to geography and history amongst a people who share a specifically defined collective identity, national history and narrative can become ethnic and salient in nature. Volkan notes that there can be a distinct tie between ethnic groups and nations, stating that the only difference between a nation and an ethnic group at times, is that a nation is politically autonomous with established borders (1997, p. 23). Therefore, when both a nation and ethnic group are attached and both are simultaneously valued, this is a form of ethnonationalism, (p. 23). Connor (1973) expands on this explanation by specifying that ethnonationalism happens when there is a “link between political legitimacy and ethnic identity” (p. 1). However this can be a slippery slope, as while politics is changeable ethnic identity is less so, and therefore tends to contribute to identity saliency and higher axiological balance. In effect, ethnonationalistic governments are more prone to naturally developing prejudices toward outgroups (Volkan, 1997, p. 23).

Many times, an ethnonationalistic government will express their ingroup glories and outgroup prejudices via a nationalistic narrative. Nationalism is a form of governmental support from the polis in which the leader’s claims are the dominant narrative over any other claims, and the political sovereignty of the nation is the priority (Miscovic, 2014). In these kinds of situations, political privilege and economic opportunity might depend on one’s ethnic linkages, which is wholly dependent on identity claims (Tilly, 2016, p. 210). And when identity becomes the dominant narrative in terms of a government’s conception of rights, obligations, and social boundary lines,

the potential for tension along those lines grows as identity becomes more salient and rigid.

4-C Model for Conflict Analysis:

I would like to provide a model that can be used to filter both the theory presented in this chapter and the data we will receive in the coming pages for the purpose of conflict analysis. This model is Korostelina's (2011) 4-C model, which describes the relationship between identity, interests, and conflict between groups. To use this model Korostelina has established four stages of conflict intensity and mobility, which will help us understand how conflicts of interest or identity escalate and become ripe for conflict mobilization (Korostelina, 2011, p. 102). The four stages in the 4-C model are comparison, competition, confrontation, and counteraction.

Stage one, comparison, describes the conflicts of interest or identity that occur naturally within any group or between groups. Even in homogenous societies, there will be behaviors that some consider "unacceptable or inadmissible," and one can even find differentiation for minor differences such as loyalties to certain cities or geographic regions within the group (Korostelina, 2011, p. 102). Ingroups will still differentiate themselves from the outgroup and show minor forms of stereotyping or negative attribution toward others (p. 103).

Stage two is competition. As explained in this chapter, once social competition comes into play, biases and stereotyping can escalate alongside the escalation of the competition. When two groups compete over common resources or goals, issues of

control or power can result in threat perceptions, security dilemmas, and distrust, thereby heightening the potential for hostility between groups (Korostelina, 2011, p. 103).

Stage three, confrontation, leads to binary systems as groups polarize themselves based upon conflicts of interest, thereby bringing group identity to the fore in terms of social differentiation (Korostelina, 2011, p. 103). In this stage, group loyalty and conflict potential is increased, and leaders will exploit group identity as political or economic interests to gain support for the conflict over resources, as well as employ past traumas or histories to increase identity salience (p. 104). Enemy images of the outgroup are created, and negative attribution takes place (p. 104).

Stage four is counteraction, “in which identities become a cause of confrontations between groups” who are competing with each other over resources which have become tied to ingroup values, beliefs and worldviews (Korostelina, 2011, p. 104). In this stage, the binary system has created a polarization of “positive we – negative they,” changing the group’s axiology to believe that it is moral or necessary to destroy the outgroup, making it a primary goal of the ingroup (p. 104).

This model is helpful to this research, as it will assist us in filtering the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict through these four stages. Where did the competition over Karabakh become ingrained in the identities and axiologies of the nations, and therefore what social mechanisms might we be able to perpetuating conflict between the two? How are leadership narratives impacting collective axiologies and informing conflict behavior. And finally, in answering our research question, what is the prevalent national narrative

created by the Azerbaijani government about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia, and how does it impact peace building efforts in Azerbaijan?

In the next chapter, I discuss what happens when ethnic identity salience becomes an issue after two nations challenge each other over what they both consider their own historic homeland. The case study centers on Azerbaijan's quest to claim to the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the social boundary changes and events of the last 100 years which brought the nation into war and a 25-year long ceasefire with neighboring Armenia. The ceasefire remains in place today, which means the nations are technically locked in a frozen, intractable war. The narrative and political DNA of what created a protracted conflict such as this will be evaluated as I explain the history that led Azerbaijan down this path.

Chapter Two: Case Study of Azerbaijan

In all, the full physical war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Karabakh took place over the course of six years, from 1988-1994 (BBC, 2016). And over the past 25 years since the May 1994 ceasefire there have been resounding affects concerning social identity and narrative development in Azerbaijan. In this chapter, I present the history of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict from historical records to the present, and discuss how Karabakh has come to define the modern political, ethnic, cultural, and narrative identity represented by Azerbaijan's government based upon the theoretical concepts in the previous chapter. I have divided the history of the conflict into four main sections relating to social identity theory, which I propose have affected Azerbaijan's intergroup competition and willingness to engage in conflict the most. These historical categories are origin story and reconstructed past, pre-existing ethnic tension and Soviet nation building, trauma and collective memory, and leadership and nationalism. First, I will discuss previous research conducted on the topic of Azerbaijan and the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

Previous research:

There have been a number of previously published materials not only on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, but also on the government of Azerbaijan. A handful of these materials are books such as *The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict* (Croissant, 1998), *Azerbaijan Diary* (Goltz, 1999), *The Making of Nagorno-Karabakh: from Secession to Republic* (Chorbajian, 2001), *Azerbaijan Since Independence* (Cornell, 2011), *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War* (De Waal, 2013), and *A Political History of Azerbaijan* (Bolukbasi, 2013).

Scholarly journal articles on the topic include publications such as, “The Revenge of the Past: Socialism and Ethnic Conflict in Transcaucasia” (Suny, 1990), “National self- determination and the limits of sovereignty: Armenia, Azerbaijan and the secession of Nagorno- Karabagh” (Tololyan, 1995), “Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict” (Migdalovitz, 2001), “Who gains from the ‘No War No Peace’ Situation? A critical analysis of the Nargorno-Karabakh conflict” (Özkan, 2008), “Ethnic Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh” (Kuburas, 2011), “The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Between Azerbaijan and Armenia: security issues in the Caucasus” (German, 2012), and “The problematic role of EU democracy promotion in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh” (Simão, 2012). These titles are sophisticated, in depth, and focus on many topics that help to diagnose issues that led to the Armenia-Azerbaijan war, issues that prevent resolution, and issues that could impact the future of the conflict. A number of these resources are or have already been referenced in the body of this paper.

These resources cover the history and culture of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Transcaucasia, and the ethnic and political histories of each nation. In addition, these

sources cover the history of the war itself, critical aspects of how the territorial rivalry over Karabakh developed, how the nations evolved and developed as nations since the ceasefire, and the impact of long-lived conflict on the peoples of these nations.

Furthermore, they give voice to the living victims of the conflict, whether they be IDPs or refugees, military members, the families that have survived them, and the families of other victims of the conflict. These sources also describe each nation's interpretation of their history and political policy as it pertains to Karabakh and the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Finally, some of these sources provide discussion of conflict management frameworks such as the OSCE Minsk process and other negotiation efforts, with research and hypothesis on why these conflict resolution attempts have not been successful. These sources will assist us in understanding the history of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict as well as the Azerbaijani government's position on the topic as we look into the following case study.

Origin story and reconstructed past:

One of the main, defining aspects of conflict surrounding territorial claims over the Nagorno-Karabakh region stems from the concept of Karabakh's place in the ethnic and cultural development of modern day Azerbaijan. It is an observed phenomenon established in the previous chapter that those who belong to the same ethnic group share traits such as a common language, religion, fate, or history, and that these are often wrapped up in an associated territory (Kuburas, 2011, p. 45). For Azerbaijan, one of these territories is Karabakh. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation (HAF), which works to promote

the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan, and the Karabakh Foundation, which promotes the culture, arts and heritage of Azerbaijan, detail Azerbaijan's history with the following narrative.

Azerbaijan sees Karabakh as one of the direct foundations of Azerbaijani nation and culture, tracing their lineage back to at least the 4th century and potentially earlier (Kuburas, 2011, p. 45). Within the Azykh cave in the Karabakh region, human remains have been found dating human presence in the region back to about one million, two hundred thousand years (1,200,000 yrs.), making "Azerbaijan to be one of the cradles of mankind along with Karabakh, the Mediterranean Sea basin and East Africa" (HAF, 2010). Even so, the development of culture and distinct society in the region did not develop until about 9-6 centuries B.C. (2010). While it is difficult to ascertain the specific origin point of the Azerbaijani ethnic group, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation has noted that at least "prominent researchers and collective monographs authors expressed unanimous views on the political history of Transcaucasia and have determined that these people were not Armenian of origin as the Armenian ethnos did not yet exist at that time" (2010).

Although the area of Transcaucasia has been multiethnic and experienced many passing kingdoms and empires in its long history, Azerbaijani researchers have been able to trace back their lineage back 1,300 years to the time of the Caucasian Albanians, which "covered the entire territory of Karabakh and it did everything possible to hold this region in its hands and reached its aim with few exceptions" (HAF, 2010). These few exceptions include periods of occupation or oversight by the empire of Alexander the

Great, the Arabian Caliphate, and Mongolian Empire, among others (2010). Therefore, it has been established in Azerbaijani history that the Caucasian Albanians are the direct ancestors of modern-day Azerbaijanis (Karabakh Foundation, 2015). It is notable that most of the Caucasian Albanian population before Christianity were Zoroastrians, or fire worshippers, which gives credence to Azerbaijan's name, meaning "land of fire" (2015).

With the establishment of the Sefevi State in 1501, Azerbaijan was reportedly "completely centralized as a single state" for the first time and "ethnic and political borders" were made clear (HAF, 2010). It was at this time that four principalities were established within Azerbaijan, including the Karabakh province (2010). The Karabakh Foundation goes on to establish that 1,300 geographical Azerbaijani names were used to title the principalities, regions, and districts within the Sefevi state, and mentions that none of the names were Armenian (2010). By the mid-18th century, the Karabakh Khanate had been established, resulting in the construction of mosques, towers, and other architectural achievements of Muslim culture (2010). It was around this time that Karabakh's capital Shusha was founded by Panah-Ali khan Javanshir, an Azerbaijani general and first ruler of the Karabakh khanate (Karabakh Foundation, 2015). Therefore, as Azerbaijani researcher Tabib Huseynov notes, "Shusha is the cornerstone of the Karabakh Azeris' identity and existence" (Huseynov, 2016, p. 27). In the beginning of the 19th century Karabakh was overtaken by the Russian empire, but the Kurekchay agreement resulted in the inclusion of Karabakh into a Muslim nation within the Russian empire, on the land that Azerbaijan now occupies (HAF, 2010).

From here, history becomes a back and forth between ethnic Azerbaijanis and ethnic Armenians over Karabakh due to the reported development of Armenianized-Albanians in the region (Croissant, 1998, p. 12). This point in the 19th century is the first mention of an Armenian population existing within Azerbaijani history. From this point onward, although Azerbaijan openly admits that the sheer number of conquests and ethnic shift in Transcaucasia throughout the last two millennia has resulted in times when Karabakh was under the control of those who were “not native Karabakh residents” as they “had moved to the region from other places,” they also note that they were never Armenians (HAF, 2010). These rulers are noted to be the descendants of former Albanian generations, therefore the descendants of modern-day Azerbaijanis. Therefore it leads to reason, according to Azerbaijani historians, “it’s incorrect to justify the territorial claims of Armenian nationalists and to regard the said rulers as the followers of Armenian state structure” (2010).

Culturally, Azerbaijanis have traced a number of their literary greats, musicians, and also scientists to Karabakh, and it is believed they are buried on that land (Kuburas, 2011, p. 46). In addition to this, many cultural arts were developed in the region. Karabakh houses one of the most famous schools of mugham, a traditional Azerbaijani musical style, as well as being the birthplace of the tar, an Azerbaijani traditional instrument (Karabakh Foundation, 2015). The rug pattern known as Karabakh is a traditional Azerbaijani pattern originally produced within that region (2015). Furthermore, the official animal of Azerbaijan is the Karabakh horse, which is also the

official symbol of the Aghdam region of Karabakh, where many Azerbaijani internally displaced persons hail from (2015).

However, through the intrinsic detail of Azerbaijani cultural history it is important to note that, oddly, there is another narrative history that competes with it. Both Azerbaijan and Armenia have written extensive histories about their ancestors, origin stories, and cultural memory, both originating in Nagorno-Karabakh (Kuburas, 2011, p. 45). Consulting Armenian historical sources, one would learn that Armenians can trace their existence in Transcaucasia back almost two thousand years, with writings from ancient Greece and Iran mentioning their presence (Suny, 1990, p. 10). Furthermore according to Armenian historians, they were a distinct Christian population with their own language, separate from Christian Georgians as far back as the fourth century A.D. (p. 10). Not only that, but various researchers have noted that Armenian princes governed Karabakh, then under the Armenian name Artsakh, as recently as a few hundred years ago (p. 27).

This means that there are two separate histories within Karabakh, both sides believing their own unique narratives and using it to claim “historical legitimacy” to the land (Kuburas, 2011, p. 47). This has led to arguments of a primordial nature, tying Karabakh down to both Azerbaijan’s and Armenia’s ethnic identities, which has been discussed as very resistant to change (p. 45). Because ethnicity itself is likened to a person’s own DNA, the conflict is intractable with both sides refusing to be divided from Karabakh (p. 47). This may be why a number of political parties within Azerbaijan use slogans such as the Karabakh Liberation Organization’s (KLO’s), “No Azerbaijan

without Karabakh,” which Huseynov (2016) says represents “the concern of many Azerbaijanis that the loss of Karabakh signifies the disintegration of the country and the disappearance of the Azeri nation as a whole” (p. 26).

However, it is important to note that although there are two different official histories in play, this does not mean that Azerbaijan or Armenia are consciously inserting lies or dishonesty into their sacred histories, nor does it mean that there is a conscious effort amongst the population to twist history into a power grab (although a related concept referring to political elites will be discussed later in this chapter). On the other hand, it does mean that time is a construct much like social identity, and identity has a hand in shaping precisely which events and people within history are remembered and then carried forward to future generations. Just like with social identity, what groups value as important and defining vary from group to group, consistent with intergroup differentiation. Therefore, if groups can go to war over competing axiologies, then why not over competing histories? As Dennis Sandole (2002) explains, histories containing symbols, events and traditions related to national pride are handed down generation by generation, and these are “among the factors conducive to modern wars between nations and groups of nations” (p. 6).

These thoughts tie into George Herbert Mead’s (1929) theory of the symbolically reconstructed past. This theory speaks to the habit of individuals and groups in “redefining the meaning of past events in such a way that they have meaning in and utility for the present” (Maines, Katovich, & Sugrue, 1983, p. 163). Following this theory, it can be surmised that if each present is the reality of a reconstructed past, then

there can be as many “reconstructed and functional pasts” as there are specific events that can be found (p. 163). This means that both Armenia and Azerbaijan can take objective events from history and apply them to understand and give meaning to their individual presents, thereby creating two competing histories. In addition to this, groups can also use the past to allow them to orient goals and aspirations for their future (p. 163). Therefore, if the goal of both Armenia and Azerbaijan is to acquire Karabakh, their histories will legitimize their claim to that land. And those stories, events, battles, glories and traumas relevant to their struggle for Karabakh will be passed from generation to generation to ensure future goal orientation.

An example of competitive history in action can be found within the Heydar Aliyev Foundation’s retelling of Azerbaijani history. While the narrative follows Transcaucasia through time from over one million years ago to the present and describes the origins and great events in Azerbaijani history, there are also a number of asides regarding the lack of Armenian influence in the region. While for many it would be enough to trust a historian when he or she establishes history, the Foundation also inserted specific mentions that Armenians are not related to any of the ancient Transcaucasian ethnic groups, there were no geographic Armenian names at Karabakh’s national-territorial inception, and while not all rulers of Karabakh were natives of the region, they were certainly not Armenian at any point in time. These are odd asides to insert into a history having seemingly nothing to do with Armenia, only until one reads that Armenian history is the direct antithesis of Azerbaijan’s in regard to Karabakh, and

therefore historians must address the alleged incorrect histories of others in the power struggle for legitimization.

Further analysis of symbolically reconstructed past can be seen in Korostelina's (2017) assessment of historical narratives. The three functions of historical narrative, defining meaning of national identity, evaluative, and normative, can be seen through the competitive nature of Azerbaijan's presented history on the focus of Karabakh. National identity has been established through this history to be partially defined through Karabakh's history. On the evaluative front, one can see the opposition to Armenia's claims through their direct negation via historical presentation. And on the normative side, historical narrative has identified Armenian historical claims and its current administration over Karabakh as a problem of injustice, and in turn motivates Azerbaijan to continue to claim Karabakh as a point of national identity.

Pre-existing Ethnic Tension and Soviet Nation Building:

At the turn of the 20th century, even before the open hostility of territorial issues surrounding Karabakh itself took the spotlight, there was already tension brewing in Transcaucasia. These tensions became negative encounters that would not only remain in the collective memories of Azerbaijanis and Armenians alike, but also aid in the development of their ethnic and national identities, highlighting their differences and making their identities more salient. An encounter for the purposes of this study is a mechanism in human interaction that results in social boundary change, and it happens when two distinct groups enter the same social space and interact (Tilly, 2016, p. 138).

From these interactions, the groups gather data and meaning which impacts their relationship along the social boundary line (p. 138). In the case of Azerbaijan, many of the encounters experienced with Armenia at the beginning of the 20th century affected their relationship negatively.

As Transcaucasia entered the 1900's, according to Croissant (1998) "Pan-Turkism espoused the union of all Turkic peoples from the Balkans to western China and the promotion of national, linguistic and historical commonality among them," (p. 8). This new ideology stemmed from a growing ethno-nationalist sentiment in the Ottoman Empire where the people, including Ottoman Turks, were growing tired of the state of their government which eventually came to a climax in the 1908 Young Turk Revolution (Kifner, 2007). The development of this ideology among ethnic Azerbaijanis, a group closely culturally and linguistically related to ethnic Turkish peoples, fueled anti-Armenian sentiments due to the fact that Armenia itself was a geographic obstacle dividing the Ottoman Empire from the region of Azerbaijan (Croissant, 1998, p. 8). This ideology threatened Armenians, who began to view Azerbaijanis with suspicion and mistrust, seeing themselves potentially surrounded on both sides by Pan-Turkism and in danger of being engulfed (p. 9).

In February of 1905 at the news of an ethnic Azerbaijani man killed by an ethnic Armenian police officer in the course of duty, tensions came to a head and riots broke out in Baku, Azerbaijan's future capital (van der Leeuw, 1998, p. 148). Azerbaijani mobs took to the Armenian quarter of the city for over a month (p. 149). The violence spread, and by the time the riots ended, almost 3000 Armenians and Azerbaijanis were dead,

1,026 of the regions oil wells had been destroyed and almost 300 Armenian and Azerbaijani villages and settlements had been destroyed (p. 149). After this, violence between Armenians and Azerbaijanis calmed for the next few years. Yet, while Armenians and Azerbaijanis had no direct violence between them, anti-Armenian sentiment came to a head in the Ottoman Empire and in 1915 a mass expulsion and extermination of Armenians took place (Kifner, 2007). In 1915, historians report that there were two million Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire, yet only 400,000 remained in 1922, signifying the coupled displacement and death of approximately 1.5 million Armenians (2007).

After the 1917 Russian Revolution, both Armenia and Azerbaijan took their chances and declared themselves independent nations within days of each other, on May 29th and May 26th respectively (Croissant, 1998, p.14). Suddenly, the new nations found themselves in a competitive nation-building situation in which the claim over Karabakh was hotly disputed (Falco, 2018). Still enduring persecution from the Ottoman Turks, Armenians allied themselves with Bolshevik forces which had come into power in Russia after the Russian Revolution, and fought to take advantage of the Muslim population in Azerbaijan for Karabakh as well as their oil rich land (Croissant, 1998, p.14). It has also been thought that due to Azerbaijanis being so familiar with the Turkish peoples, that there was a revenge aspect to Armenia's aggression alongside the Bolshevik forces (p. 14). The resulting violence is known as the "March Days" in Azerbaijan, when thousands of Azerbaijanis and many Armenians and Bolsheviks died over the span of a few weeks, bringing inter-ethnic tensions to the fore over territorial and historical grievances (p. 14).

In mid-1920, the Eleventh Red Army entered the independent republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan and soon thereafter, they became Soviet Socialist Republics under the government of Moscow (van der Leeuw, 1998, p. 146). With the USSR being such an overbearing power in the region, the violence ceased almost immediately with a declaration by telegram from Moscow, “As of today the border disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan are declared resolved... Boundaries have no meaning among the families of Soviet peoples,” (Croissant, 1998, p. 19). Such a swift boundary and narrative shift might have been chaotic to the region. However, with the oppressive power of the USSR the nations had no choice but to fall in line. At this time, Karabakh was placed within the territory of the Azerbaijani SSR (Croissant, 1998, p. 19).

However, the Soviet Union’s style of nation building and developing ethnic pride set the stage for a resurgence of ethno-nationalist sentiment. Although the Soviet style of rule was anti-nationalist, the difference between how Leninism worked in theory and how it came to be in the real world was not without its paradoxes (Suny, 1990, p. 22). Lenin was passionate about all parts of the state being led by the Communist party, yet allowed the state to be divided into ethnic political units, providing territorial identity to different ethnic groups despite the fact that there was no political sovereignty to them (p. 22). This policy was known as *Korenizatsiya* (nativization), and this allowed non-Russian minorities such as Azerbaijanis and Armenians to conduct school in their native languages, use their own alphabets, and were even allowed local non-Russian governmental communist leaders (p. 22).

While the hope of Korenizatsiya was to unify all people under the Soviet umbrella, in reality this kept national ambitions alive and compounded the establishment of homogeneous regions within the state (Kuburas, 2011, p. 49). As Suny (1990) explained, “rather than a ‘melting pot’, the Soviet Union became the incubator of new nations” (p. 6). This issue was exacerbated under Stalin’s rule, as he used a “divide and conquer” approach to authority (Falco, 2018). This meant exploiting the struggle between ethnic groups with the goal of preventing the likelihood that they would combine to threaten central authority (2018).

As discussed earlier, Transcaucasia cannot be easily divided into borders or ethnic groups due to the amount of political and human shift throughout history. Therefore this ethno-cultural model of Korenizatsiya did not perform as intended. In mixed regions such as Karabakh, there was a majority Armenian population by the mid 1900’s, but was administrated by Azerbaijan. This caused ethnic sentiments to be aggravated and grievances grew as ethno-centric policies developed but did not take into account ethnic minorities (Kuburas, 2011, p. 53).

In 1985 a Soviet policy called Glasnost (openness) was implemented, which was intended to allow the Soviet states to openly debate much needed Soviet reforms (Croissant, 1998, p. 26). However, Glasnost did not just stimulate debate, it backfired in an unseen way with the resurgence of nationalistic grassroots organizations, and ethnic groups resurfacing their long simmering grievances over their borders and territories (p. 26). Along with Glasnost, Soviet states such as Armenia and Azerbaijan began to protest, sometimes violently (Kuburas, 2011, p. 53). After Armenia’s 1987 and 1988 back to back

petitions to Moscow seeking territorial sovereignty over Karabakh, for the first time in almost 70 years violence broke out again between the two peoples, this time in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait with a death toll of 36 Armenians (Croissant, 1998, p. 28).

Border changing events and growing nationalistic narrative occurred more rapidly from this point onward. Due to frustrations with the USSR's inability to handle the territorial dispute, in late 1989 the Armenian Supreme Soviet along with the National Council of Nagorno-Karabagh proclaimed a United Armenian Republic, including Karabakh (Croissant, 1998, p. 35). Pogroms, which are an instance of mob violence bent on persecution, broke out in Baku in outrage of this announcement by Armenia, claiming the lives of 50 Armenians (Chorbajian, 2001, p. 16). On the third day of pogrom, Soviet forces moved in to the city and ended the violence with the deaths of 150 Azerbaijani rioters on January 20th, 1990 (Chorbajian, 2001, p. 16). From there, a refugee crisis mounted as Armenians in Azerbaijan, as well as Azerbaijanis in Armenia fled to their respective home countries (Croissant, 1998, p. 32). Seven months later in August 1990, the Armenian SSR fully seceded from the USSR announcing itself as the Republic of Armenia and a sovereign nation (Walker, 1991, p. 66).

The fall of the Soviet Union in December 1991 ended any remaining restraining effect that Soviet rule had held on the escalating violence between the two former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, which now were two separate sovereign nations (Croissant, 1988, p. 77). And it wasn't just Armenia and Azerbaijan who were victims of these Soviet policies. After the dissolution of the USSR, the true ethno-nationalistic tension created by Soviet nation building policy had become clear. From 1991-1992,

there were 164 ethno-territorial conflicts within its former territory (Özkan, 2008, p. 573). In fact, out of 24 pairs of neighboring post-Soviet states, only two did not have a boundary disagreement. Those two pairs are Lithuania and Latvia, and Belarus and Russia (p. 573). However, one of the most lasting and violent territorial conflicts in this region still centers on the small region of Nagorno-Karabakh (Croissant, 1998, p. 3).

Trauma and Collective Memory:

Once the Soviet Union fell, Armenia and Azerbaijan were once again their own sovereign nations and nothing was holding them back from the struggle to claim the region of Karabakh. Unfortunately, sophisticated Soviet munitions were left in the nations and the situation quickly developed into direct war (Migdalovitz, 2011). Fighting broke out along their declared borders, public accusations and countercharges were made, and a violent land grab ensued (2011). The militaries did not only attack each other, but would enter villages and forcefully remove or kill those that were deemed to be on the wrong land, turning the war into a scene of military force against civilian populations (Chorbaijan, 2001, p. 16).

One of these missions was known as Operation Ring, in which the Azerbaijani military would surround Armenian settlements within Azerbaijan and then enter, round up all Armenian inhabitants and force them to leave (Chorbaijan, 2001, p. 16). The reigning slogan for this operation was, “No Armenians, no problem” (p. 16). The Armenian military would respond in kind, mounting surprise assaults against Azerbaijani populated villages in Karabakh and within Azerbaijani sovereign territory (Kuburas,

2011, p. 51). Throughout 1992 counteroffensive after counteroffensive was launched in the interest of reclaiming Karabakh and escalating in violence (Migdalovitz, 2011, p. 3). On February 26th, 1992, Armenian and Armenia aligned Karabakh forces attacked the majority Azerbaijani town of Khojaly, located within the Karabakh region (Kuburas, 2011, p. 51). This resulted in the deaths of approximately 600 men, women, and children as they attempted to flee, according to Azerbaijani sources (McGuinness, 2012).

The years of 1993 and 1994 were years of open hostilities and all-out war. Although many different parties attempted resolution including Iran, Russia and the United Nations, attempted cease-fires were ignored or even broken mere minutes after they went into effect (De Waal, 2003, 58). In total, up to 30,000 soldiers and civilians died and many more were displaced (BBC, 2016). The numbers stand at an approximate 250,000 Armenian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and 1.1 million Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs (Migdalovitz, 2011, p. 1). With the assistance of Russia, in May 1994 a ceasefire agreement was drafted between Armenia and Azerbaijan called the Bishkek protocol, and has been in effect ever since (Kuburas, 2011, p. 52). At the signing of the ceasefire, Azerbaijan had lost approximately 20% of its territory to Armenian military control, as well as the region of Karabakh (Cavanaugh, 2017).

Although open war had ended, no treaty has ever been signed and the threat of renewed violence is an ever-present shadow over both nations, making old wounds hard to heal and impacting younger generations as well. In the last twenty-five years, younger generations have been raised in the shadow of this loss. The conflict over Karabagh is kept alive, for example, in schools across the nation as the youth of Azerbaijan learn

about the conflict from the perspective of the loser (Carley, 1998). Due to an education in which they are exposed to the struggles of Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs, learning about those who died in the conflict and visiting monuments to the dead, a relative deprivation has been taken on by the nation's youngest. Growing up in an environment where they are constantly reminded of their people's losses and their incomplete homeland, they feel an inconsistency between where they are as a people and where they are as a nation, and where they feel they should be (Brush, 1996, p. 524). In essence, their aspirations of a completed homeland do not reflect their reality.

Reminders of war and loss in Azerbaijan are also contained in solemn monuments around the nation. Shehidler Khiyabani (Martyr's Lane) in Baku stands as a memorial to Azerbaijanis who died in the Baku pogrom in 1990 and in the war against Armenia (Cornell, 2011, p. 127). A large walking path is lined with black marble memorial tombs with the names and faces of each person enshrined. The walkway ends in an open-air mausoleum in which an eternal flame burns for the soldiers who died in the war with Armenia (p. 127). Each year on January 20th, the anniversary of the Russian military crackdown in Baku in 1990, children and soldiers from across Azerbaijan line up to place red flowers on each individual cenotaph, honoring their memories (Esslemont, 2010). And this is not just a tradition in Baku. In many towns and cities across Azerbaijan smaller versions of Martyr's Lane exist, all adorned with fresh flowers and remembrances (Cornell, 2011, p. 127).

These stone and flesh vessels of remembrance have become emotional reservoirs to the Azerbaijani people. As Volkan (1997) explains, "Building monuments after drastic

collective losses has its own special place in societal mourning; such actions are almost a psychological necessity. Structures made of stone or metal function as the group's linking objects. Their indestructibility makes them psychological containers that preserve and limit emotions" (p. 40). This kind of psychological and symbolic investment in these monuments, communities, and remembrance days function to make sure that the people can never forget what happened. Even more, "Azerbaijanis remembered the clashes in 1905, and the 'March Days' in Baku in 1918... they feared Armenian claims to what they hold to be Azerbaijani territory... and harboured deep-seated resentments toward Armenians whom they consider to have had unfair advantages over Azerbaijanis" (Suny, 1990, p. 29).

Leadership and Nationalism:

Due to Azerbaijan's deeply emotional reactions to the war over the years, the situation has become a psychocultural drama. These dramas, "are conflicts between groups over competing and apparently irresolvable claims that engage the central elements of each groups' historical experience and identity, and invokes the suspicions and fears of the opponent," (Ross, 2006, p. 303). Accordingly, this creates polarizing, non-negotiable issues between the conflicting parties. Because group leaders use their narrative ability as the speaker for the group, one can see rhetoric from Azerbaijan using history and ethnic and national pride to rally Azerbaijanis around the ideal that Karabakh should and eventually will be returned to Azerbaijan.

Looking at Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's words from an April 2018 statement, it is clear to see that he is still promoting all-or-nothing approaches 25 years after the ceasefire:

Ilham Aliyev, April 9, 2018

Nagorno-Karabakh is an ancient, historical Azerbaijani land, occupied by the aggressor state. As a result of this occupation more than one million Azerbaijanis have been subjected to ethnic cleansing, our lands are under occupation, our historical monuments and mosques have been destroyed by the Armenian vandals. All international organizations have adopted fair decisions and resolutions on this conflict based international law, and this conflict must be resolved solely within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. (Axar, 2018)

While not debating history, this statement exhibits socially reconstructed past, in the sense that in order to legitimize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, only events in which Azerbaijan is seen as a victim of Armenia as an aggressor state is presented. This stokes the emotions of the people, thereby perpetuating the ability for conflict mobilization. While reservoirs such as monuments, holidays and social groups like IDPs can also stoke the emotions of an ethnic group, something bigger happens when the cultural and political elite use leadership to perpetuate these narratives for collective nationalistic means.

Here we remember Volkan's (1997) ethnic tent narrative from the previous chapter, in which he explains that "the leaders must be able to shoulder, so to speak, the weight of

the canvas, responding to the special needs of the group,” (p. 28). By embodying the trauma of the Azerbaijani people and giving it voice on the most elite levels of society as well as on the international stage, Aliyev is holding up the tent with a pole made of the trauma and conflict of the Azerbaijani people, defining the conflict as one of the most crucial aspects of their identity. This in turn, makes threat narrative a defining aspect of the Azerbaijani psyche, and in turn provides Aliyev an enemy to protect his people against thereby solidifying his relationship to them.

One way the elite in a society are able to influence narrative is by acting as a prototype. According to Korostelina (2007), prototype is someone who represents the values of a group by serving an emotional function and sharing cohesive feelings within the group (p. 25). By playing the role of prototype, a leader with an enemy builds favorable comparison within the nation, making conflict righteous for the people and motivating everyone to continue the fight. By fostering favorable comparison, the leader prototype also gives the people common goals and values to fight for against the enemy. By acknowledging their struggles, leader empowers the people’s conflict mobility by establishing enemy images and threat narratives, which perpetuate the leader’s power and influence over the people.

Further evidence signifying that the Karabakh conflict is the essence of Azerbaijani public focus is evident in Azerbaijan in newspapers such as AzerNews. This newspaper has dedicated news sections titled “Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict” and “Armenian Aggression,” which only cover daily news on these topics (Azernews.az). There are also news websites which only cover the daily count of Armenian violations of the ceasefire,

which can happen according to Azerbaijani news sites, up to 30 times a day (<https://www.azernews.az/aggression/>). Aside from the news, cultural organizations such as the Heydar Aliyev Foundation have labeled sections of their history that coincides with Armenia under headers such as “Blood Memory,” “Armenian Aggression against Azerbaijan,” and “Armenian Terrorism”. While again not debating history, I want to call attention to the highlighting of these traumatic narratives in Azerbaijani history as well as the unrepentant negative affiliations to Armenia, which are significant indications of the tone chosen by those with the power of public narrative in Azerbaijan.

One form of narrative that is widely distributed in any society is news and current events via journalism. As part of this process “journalists, reporters, editors, and others media-content producers decide which materials are important; they select facts, insert them into cultural-interpretive frames, and bestow meaning upon them,” (Zandberg, Meyers, & Neiger, 2012, p. 66). According to Zandberg (2012), in looking into the past research of Harcup & O’Neill (2001) and Molotch & Lester (1974) he was able to conclude that the main task of journalists is to select events out of a “never-ending flow of occurrences” and give those events context and meaning to the audience they are presenting to (p. 68). Therefore it follows that “both journalistic work, and social memory are both closely embedded within processes of narration,” (p. 66).

Nossek and Berkowitz (2006) expand on this research by explaining that when a threat to the ingroup exists from an external source, that journalists will “switch to a cultural narrative that moves the public mind back toward the dominant cultural order,” and in doing so, creates a mythical narrative and draws upon actors who can fulfill

mythical roles, calling upon Mead's symbolically restructured past again. (p. 691-692). In the case of news journalism, myth is a symbolic creation of time that works to explain a group's past, present and future within a certain context (Maines, Katovich, & Sugrue, 1983, p. 164). In journalism these mythic narratives are formulaic, repeating cultural interpretations and providing "common central actors and predictable outcomes" to be acceptable, familiar, and reassuring to the audience despite the existence of threat (Nossek & Berkowitz, 2006, p. 693). In order to provide trustworthy and authoritative information, journalists will often reference or quote politicians and other elite figures of their culture, which becomes very important in this study of governmental narrative (Zandberg, 2010, p. 18).

Once these narratives of Azerbaijan as a victim and Armenia as an aggressor are seen on every level of society from daily journalism to the political elite, one can see just how salient Azerbaijani identity has the potential to become. In essence, negative projection onto Armenia has become a commonplace narrative from the top down in Azerbaijani society. Negative projection is the "externalization of the negative feelings and images," (Korostelina, 2007, p. 28). This keeps the social boundaries between Azerbaijan and Armenia very rigid, therefore keeping deep differentiation between the two peoples alive throughout multiple generations. Because it is much easier to blame another, "outsiders then can serve as objects for externalization, displacement, and projection of intense negative feelings," (Ross, 2006, p. 307).

This makes Armenia a Suitable Target of Externalization (STE) (Korostelina, 2007, p. 28) for any and all negative emotions regarding the ongoing conflict, and

ensures that Azerbaijani sacred spaces such as Martyr's Lane are ones of purity and goodness. This in turn has helped to foster resentment toward Armenia, and developed Azerbaijani resilience in keeping their aspirations toward a completed homeland alive. As discussed before, this type of stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and prejudice can lead to further identity saliency, which can lead to the delegitimization and dehumanization of the outgroup, in this case Armenia. If this is happening, then the conflict narrative is deeply ingrained in Azerbaijan, and much more resistant to change. However, research is needed to fully establish this.

This emotion based rhetoric from institutions of leadership, research, and journalism “takes into consideration the role of elites in framing the situation in a particular way to effect national consciousness,” which can be seen in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh (Kuburas, 2011, p. 45). By highlighting the ceasefire violations and bringing issues of the ceasefire to the fore every day, Azerbaijanis are forced to successively “re-experience the chosen trauma – either indirectly through recalled painful memories or directly through ‘repeat performances’” which “further reinforces the original sense of loss and the us-them distinction, increasing the likelihood that, via transference, current experiences of loss will be interpreted in the light, and as reflections, of the historical ones” (Sandole, 2002, p. 18). This conflict therefore contributes every day to the construction of an ethnonationalist ideology, reinforced by the violence that does still erupt now and again on the militarized border between the disputing nations (Kuburas, 2011, p. 52). Instead of finding a way forward, the Azerbaijani people are

trapped in a spiral of historical trauma that threatens to repeat itself through daily reinforcement of threat, which is in part perpetuated by the political elite.

Current State of the Conflict:

Since the Bishkek ceasefire in 1994, Armenia and Azerbaijan have maintained their positions in the conflict, leading to an intractable situation despite attempts at resolution. In 1995, world leaders met in Minsk, Belarus, and created the Minsk process under the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to establish confidence-building measures, hold negotiations, and develop a peacekeeping force (de Waal, 2010, p. 162). Since 1997, the three co-chairs have been France, Russia, and the United States (p. 162). The basis for negotiations are the “Madrid Principles,” proposed by the Minsk group and agreed upon at the time of proposal by both Armenia and Azerbaijan (Simão, 2016, p. 1). The Madrid Principles include the following actions: “the return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control, an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance, a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh, future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will, the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence, and international security guarantees that would also include a peacekeeping mission” (p. 1).

Despite this both nations have taken to different strategies for resolution, contributing to very little progress being made since the principles were established.

Armenia has engaged in development in the Karabakh region as well as built a friendly relationship with the de facto government within Karabakh, the Republic of Artsakh (de Waal, 2010, p. 160). Azerbaijan has worked to “isolate” the de facto Karabakh government, focuses on statements of international support for its territorial integrity, calls for the return of IDPs and refugees to occupied territories, and has engaged in military development (p. 160). There has yet to be a peacekeeping force on the ground (Simão, 2016, p. 2).

The stalemate and military buildup has become a significant point in recent years, since April 2016 when a four day military escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan led to over 100 deaths (Kramer, 2016). In addition to casualties, the Line of Contact shifted for the first time since the 1990’s as Azerbaijani forces regained control of a small part of its occupied territory (Simão, 2016, p. 2). This permanently changed the perception and the dynamic of the conflict: Armenia was no longer a complete victor and it was forced to reassess its political and diplomatic options, and Azerbaijan learned that the military was more effective than diplomacy (p. 2).

Conclusion:

In this chapter, we focused on Azerbaijan as a case study of the theory presented in Chapter 1. We discussed Azerbaijan’s competitive historical narrative and competitive nation building with Armenia, ethnic tension based upon political and empirical shift, the imposition of the Soviet Union and its manipulative forms of ethno-territorial development, the trauma experienced from all-out war and threat with Armenia, and

victimization narratives being perpetuated by the government for ethnonationalistic purposes.

Through all of this, it is important to note that the majority of research on Azerbaijan and the conflict over Karabakh took place in the 1990's and the first decade of the new millennium, with publications on the nation and the conflict dropping off dramatically after 2013. There are a number of reasons this could have happened. One reason is that the war had ended in ceasefire 19 years before the final book publications took place in 2013 and therefore the topic might have been relatively exhausted, or not enough new information was emerging at the time to continue heavy research. Further, other conflicts of a territorial nature were occurring in post-Soviet nations, with a violent flare up of the Georgia-Russia conflict over South Ossetia drawing focus away from Karabakh in 2008, as well as the Crimea conflict between Ukraine and Russia occurring in 2014 along with the alleged Russian and Ukrainian separatist occupation of eastern Ukraine (Gotev, 2016).

The reduction of focus on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict came at a critical time for Azerbaijan, however, as from 2011 to 2015 the nation underwent a series of authoritarian changes that are working to change the dynamic of the conflict and the direction of the nation itself. In truth a handful of scholarly journal articles continue to be published on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and the political direction of Azerbaijan such as "The Nagorno-Karabakh Redux" (Simão, 2016), "Historical narratives and post-conflict reconciliation: An experiment in Azerbaijan" (Radnitz, 2018), and "How autocracy impedes de-securitization, or why democracy matters: the case of Nagorno-

Karabakh in the eyes of Azerbaijanis” (Alieva and Aslanov, 2018). However research is not being conducted with the level of frequency it previously was, leaving a highly militarized ceasefire in a potential stasis of knowledge and understanding as time goes by. It is important if the conflict were to flare back up as it sometimes threatens to do, that researchers and practitioners are not struggling to answer the question “why” as they dive back into the conflict. Instead they should enter the environment with an understanding of current dynamics and trends in the conflict, and can instead take educated and strategic action based upon current research.

It is important to note that one can still easily gather information on the government of Azerbaijan, but the most easily accessible databases and articles are on websites such as Human Rights Watch, Transparency International, the Council of Foreign Relations, Istituto Affari Internazionali, and governmental sources such as the Congressional Research Service (CRS) or the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) World Factbook. The only issue with this is that these sources provide only broad overviews or are problem focused, meaning they report specifically on corruption, human rights violations, or democratization issues. More than just having broad overviews on governments and social issues from an organizational or governmental perspective, we need to understand the deeper and more complex levels of why things are the way they are, what the dynamics and driving factors of these issues are, why they are happening, and why they may or may not be resistant to change. Furthermore, it is important to understand how these issues impact and connect with the outside world and why these issues are relevant.

In the following chapters, I will present the methodology for my research on governmental narrative of conflict in Azerbaijan, as well as present the research results. Only then will we be able to see if the dynamics of the conflict and the potential for peace building practices has been impacted since research on the topic began its decline over five years ago.

Chapter 3

Purpose of Research and Methodology

Now that the theory surrounding the research has been established and a case study of Azerbaijan's history in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict implemented, it is important to detail the purpose and importance of this particular thesis research and the methodology behind it.

In response to the previous chapter, the research in this thesis will be centered on internal narratives within Azerbaijan in investigation of what the governmental narrative is, why it is what it is, and how it impacts the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and potential peace building processes. My hope is that this will shed more light on potential reasons for the Azerbaijani government's shift toward isolationism in a critical time when not only attention has lessened on the nation and the conflict, but also at a time the nation has made it harder for organizations and researchers to work in the nation to conduct broader studies on this topic.

In addition, with the rising number of territorial disputes in Eurasia it is important for the researchers and practitioners of these disputes to understand the history, conflict management models, and the results of third party efforts in former Soviet states in conflict, such as Armenia and Azerbaijan. This is because understanding the complexities of such a long standing dispute in the former Soviet states may yield constructive ideas

for how to develop other conflict management or transformation frameworks in these post-millennium, post-Soviet territorial disputes, or what could be done better in current and future disputes. It is important to note here that I would not suggest practitioners of other post-Soviet territorial disputes directly apply strategies used in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, but learn from it in order to create customized conflict management and transformation frameworks in their own conflicts of focus.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the current governmental narratives of conflict within Azerbaijan as they pertain to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Karabakh and the Azerbaijani occupied territories, in the interest of learning how this narrative might impact current and future peace building efforts between the nations. The research question at the heart of the thesis is: What is the prevalent national narrative created by the Azerbaijani government about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia, and how does it impact peace building efforts in Azerbaijan?

Assumptions:

Before beginning the research, I formed a number of assumptions based upon what I might learn from the resulting data. I expected that the newspaper analysis would reveal a nationalistic, pro-Azerbaijan narrative when addressing relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. I anticipated that narrative in the national newspaper could result in the presentation of non-negotiable national ideals to the public. In the case that newspaper narrative carried a nationalistic narrative from the government, I assumed that the general public of Azerbaijan would generally support the same views. I anticipated

that if nationalist newspaper narrative and high support for the government were proven by the research, social boundaries would also prove to be distinct in Azerbaijan toward Armenia and all supporters of Armenia, contributing to an isolationist or distrustful mindset from Azerbaijani.

A further assumption is that this potential nationalistic narrative leading to ingroup support and outgroup distrust, means that the recent closure of international civil society in Azerbaijan would be largely supported as well. Connected to this, I assumed that research might show that even if there was personal disagreement with the government, Azerbaijani citizens may feel unwilling to speak openly about their disagreement due to potentially high collective public support for their institutions, or not wanting to speak against collective ideals.

Whether or not data collected using the research methodology presented below proves the majority of assumptions, I am also making the final assumption that governmental narrative in Azerbaijan does have an impact on peace building processes. Depending on the effect of the narrative on the Azerbaijani people in the research, the impact on peace building processes would either be positive or negative in the analysis of data. If minimal or no impact is seen, I will also attempt to explain why.

Methodology:

This thesis project is phenomenological in nature, employing a flexible research design using mixed methods instrumentation via textual analysis and semi-structural

interviews with the goal of gathering data on the impact of Azerbaijani governmental narrative on conflict with Armenia, and its impact on potential peace processes.

The epistemology of this thesis is constructivist in nature, and throughout the analysis I establish a social constructivist approach. Michael Crotty (1998) identified three main assumptions for the social constructivist approach: (1) human beings construct meaning as they engage with the world around them, (2) humans make sense of the world through their social and historical perspectives, usually endowed by their culture, and (3) social interaction amongst humans is the root of the development of meaning (Creswell, 2009, p. 8-9). Therefore, this research relies upon the participants' views of the phenomenon being studied, and the narratives in the text of the newspapers. By focusing on how groups of people construct knowledge and produce meaning through their unique experiences and social interactions, we will begin to understand the history and culture that informs the research. Throughout the research and analysis, you will be able to see how the social constructivist perspective applies to Azerbaijan. All research results will be backed up with supporting theory, and the presented theory and research data are used to answer the research question.

The methodology for Azerbaijani newspaper narrative research employs textual analysis. The sampling method is as follows: For three months, from October to December 2018 I read Azerbaijani newspaper AzerNews, and gathered data on articles published specifically on the topic of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. I selected AzerNews for textual analysis as this newspaper reports daily on the conflict with Armenia, and has a division of their newspaper dedicated to this topic which is called

“Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict”. AzerNews writes their own articles in this section, and also publishes articles on the conflict from other Azerbaijani major news sources, Trend and Khalq Qazeti. From the pool of AzerNews articles on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, specific focus was given to articles which included political reports, governmental press statements, and quotes from Azerbaijani politicians and spokespeople, in order to highlight governmental narrative in the news media.

The final sample of articles analyzed within the three month research period was thirty-nine articles. Once these articles were collected, textual analysis was implemented using thematic coding. In the thematic coding process, I identified themes within the text based upon common and critical patterns of narrative and the frequency of topics. These themes were then broken down into various subthemes which support the main theme of that data. Newspaper analysis resulted in five data themes, each themes consisting of various supporting subthemes.

The methodology for interviews employed a semi-structural format, in which I engaged in formal interviews using open ended, discussion based questions. The sampling method is as follows: Interview respondents were selected using purposive and snowballing samples. The purposive criteria required that interview subjects be experts on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, and either be an Azerbaijani national living within Azerbaijan, or have relevant experience in Azerbaijan which would provide expert opinions on the topic of the conflict. Interview respondents in the resulting purposive sample were academics, governmental representatives, IDP community leaders, civil society heads, civil society partners, and peace activists. For the snowball sample, I asked

members of the purposive sample pool to refer or recommend me to further experts fitting the purposive criteria, thereby widening my interview pool. The final respondent pool resulted in twenty-four total interviews.

The majority of interviews took place in Baku, Azerbaijan in December 2018. A minority of interviews also took place in the Washington, D.C. area, or via video conferencing service Skype if we were not able to meet in person. I met with interview respondents in their offices, homes, or other agreed upon pre-determined location. I voice-recorded interviews using a handheld device, or took handwritten notes instead. Interviews lasted one hour on average, and consisted of eight questions. The interview questions are as follows:

1. Over the last 24 years of ceasefire with Armenia, how the Azerbaijani government's official actions and narrative on the conflict has impacted the goal of regaining Karabakh?
2. How would the act of Karabakh's reintegration into Azerbaijan impact ongoing conflict with Armenia?
3. Currently, what do you think is the most probable scenario for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict?
4. Are peace groups or peace movements amongst the Azerbaijani people commonly supported by the Azerbaijani government?
5. In terms of public self-expression, do you think that it is acceptable in Azerbaijan for people to publicly disagree with government decisions on the Karabakh conflict, or act in public protest or dissent? Why or why not?

6. What do you think is the biggest challenge to the Azerbaijani people, internally within Azerbaijan, to both pursuing an end to the Karabakh conflict and building transparency within the Azerbaijani government?
7. Do you think that the Azerbaijani government letting NGO's operate more freely, or for example bringing back programs such as the Peace Corps, would be helpful or unhelpful to the resolution of the conflict?
8. Should the Azerbaijani government engage with international actors, aside from the OSCE Minsk talks and Riga Eastern Partnership (EaP), in order to resolve the conflict with Armenia?

Once the interviews were completed, the resulting qualitative data was thematically coded. In this process, narrative patterns and common themes were transcribed, with key quotes highlighted, before being sorted into themes and various subthemes. Thematic analysis was performed for each question separately, resulting in all eight questions coded into their own respective themes, with their own supporting subthemes.

Objectivity and Validity:

Because I am a researcher who has personal ties to Azerbaijan, I consciously distanced myself from subjective thought and remained aware of intrinsic bias while conducting the research and analyzing the resulting data. I concentrated only on objective phenomena that could be gleaned from the data. Taking these actions were meant to

negate observer bias and observer error. The following are strategies used in order to maintain objectivity and validity.

In analyzing qualitative data, my task was to avoid incorrect description of the data, incorrect interpretation of the data, and improper theory application to the data. In response, I attempted triangulation of research strategy wherever possible. For example, in terms of theory application I attempted to analyze data through the synthesis of many theories from different areas of social science including social identity theory and its many branches, trauma theory, social boundary theory, and political theory. I used two different approaches for data collection, which were interviews and textual research. This allowed me to gather narrative data from two distinct sources and compare and contrast them for validity. In the execution of qualitative data analysis I conducted thematic coding and data reduction, in order to quantitatively compare results across all interview data received, to find patterns of similarity as well as outlying responses. This approach was taken in order to allow the narratives in the research to present themselves and therefore avoid any personal interpretation of the results. Along with the data reduction process, I used constant loop reduction in which I repeatedly checked the themes and clusters I had created using data reduction against the pool of collected data. I kept notes on the thematic coding and clustering process to describe my thought process and explain my resulting decisions. I also have an audit trail of all activities carried out over the course of the research, as well as raw data and details of the data analysis.

In the textual analysis, it is important to note that the articles selected for this research provided governmental quotes or press statements on the Armenia-Azerbaijan

conflict specifically, and were not filtered for any other content. Due to this, articles covered a wide range of topics on Armenia-Azerbaijan relations. In addition, selected articles are not indicative of the full range of domestic and international news being reported within Azerbaijan. Further, I did not fact check the articles, nor will I make statements on the validity of the Azerbaijani press. In the interest of this research it is important that I analyze what is presented in the news despite the potential existence of other competing narratives or news stories, and therefore I relay quotes and newspapers reports as they have been written without factual analysis.

In semi-structural interviews, I took on the role of interviewer and addressed respondents as interviewees. Interviews were conducted in a formal setting and were executed professionally. All interviewees were provided information before the interviews in an informed consent form, disclosing the purpose and goals of the research, as well as contact information, project information, and approval information from the Institutional Review Board. All participants were notified that the research would be made available to them upon completion. Confidentiality was ensured to all participants in the interest of fostering honest discussion and freedom in response during interviews, and to ensure that personal opinions shared during the process did not have a chance to impact participants in any way.

Ethical considerations:

In order to ethically conduct the research for this thesis, the methodology, along with ethical considerations and limitations of the research was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board.

For the ethical execution of interviews, participants were formally invited to interview via an informative written invitation, and were provided a consent form at the time of invitation. This consent form briefed each invitee on the research topic and research goals. Included in the consent form, was information on participant rights as a subject of the research. These rights include the right to cease participation in the study at any time, a guarantee of confidentiality, and knowledge of any risks included in the study. Included in confidentiality is a guarantee that names will not be released in research results nor recorded in available research notes.

Participants were also provided the consent form at the time of interview, and the form was discussed before any interviews began. Participants were asked if they understood the form and had any questions, and were also asked to give verbal consent to begin the interview. Additionally, I received individual approval from each participant to record their voice and their answers during interviews while ensuring their expectation of privacy and confidentiality. In the case that a participant did not give permission for me to record their voice, I took handwritten notes during the interview.

Limitations of the research:

Because I am one researcher and because this research took place over the span of only a few months, there are certain limitations to this research. One limitation is that I

was not able to interview a large sample of respondents. The interview pool consisted of twenty-four interviews amongst a wide range of experts within the Azerbaijani population and the social science fields. One further limitation experienced in interviews, is that I had a limited amount of time in Baku, Azerbaijan. Due to this, I was not able to travel outside of Baku to other towns and cities to meet with potential interview subjects, meaning that most interview participants in Azerbaijan lived or worked in the capital. As I was in Baku for a limited time, if an interview participant was not available during my time there I did conduct further interviews via the electronic conferencing medium, Skype. While this was a very helpful technology in allowing global access to participants, it negated the in-person setting intended for the interviews. One final limitation of interviews is that I am not conversational in Azerbaijani, the language spoken in Azerbaijan. To aid with this I have contacts in Baku who are fluent in English and Azerbaijani, and were able to translate during in-person interviews, if needed.

In the area of textual analysis, due to the few months I had to research I could not expand analysis to multiple newspapers in Azerbaijan. Therefore, the research focused on one major newspaper outlet in Azerbaijan. In addition, as I do not read Azerbaijani, contacts fluent in both Azerbaijani and English were critical in aiding with translations during textual research.

Organization of the research:

The research in this paper will be presented as follows. Chapter 4 will present the newspaper narrative data results in five thematic sections and their respective

subsections. Chapter 5 will present a thematic data breakdown of interview analysis, question by question. For each of the eight interview questions, I will present the data results broken down into thematic sections and their respective subsections. In Chapter 6, I will analyze the data results of newspaper and interview narrative in Chapters 4 and 5, compare and contrast the results of each chapter, and discuss major themes. Further, I will apply theory discussed in Chapter 1 to the analysis of results in Chapter 6, and attempt to answer the thesis' research question.

Chapter Four: Azerbaijani Newspaper Narrative Analysis

To gather the data results of the newspaper narrative research, from October to December 2018 I pinpointed thirty-nine articles on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which included political and press statements, and quotes from high level politicians and spokespeople of the Azerbaijani government. In reading news articles presenting Azerbaijani governmental narrative of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, I identified five main narrative themes of understanding how the Azerbaijani government influences narrative and collective memory in the nation: (1) the in-group (Azerbaijan) is favorable, (2) the out-group (Armenia) is unfavorable, (3) the out-group (Armenia) is to blame for the conflict, (4) the importance of national boundary values, and (5) the impact of chosen trauma.

The ingroup (Azerbaijan) is favorable:

This theme is supported by 13% of newspaper articles, and reflects the theory that the in-group looks upon itself favorably. To gather this data, I marked each time that an article referenced Azerbaijan's own actions or intentions, or positive aspects above those of Armenia. This theme constitutes three subthemes: (1) Azerbaijan is always ready for

constructive negotiations for settlement, (2) Armenians of occupied territories want to live in Azerbaijan, and (3) Azerbaijan plays a special role in regional development and security.

The first subtheme, Azerbaijan is always ready for constructive negotiations for settlement, is supported by 50% of articles in this theme and reflects articles that mention the Azerbaijani government's desire to participate in negotiations for the settlement of the conflict with Armenia in a constructive and positive way. An article quoted Hikmat Hajiyev, the Deputy Head of the Foreign Policy Department of the Azerbaijani Presidential Administration as saying, "Azerbaijan is always ready for constructive negotiations and contacts serving the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict," following with "This once again demonstrates Azerbaijan's commitment to the existing format," (Trend, 10/1/2018). A further reference to Hajiyev was made about two months later, when he said, "Azerbaijan once again demonstrated its constructive position and strong determination to resolve the conflict through negotiations" (Trend, 12/4/2018). Further, Azay Guliyev, Azerbaijani member of Parliament and Vice -President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly stated that "Baku is ready to support a joint decision that the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh will make about their future within the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, supported by international organizations" (Trend, 10/6/2018).

The second subtheme, Armenians of occupied territories want to live in Azerbaijan, was supported by 33% of articles and contains references in Azerbaijani newspapers that living conditions in Azerbaijan are much better and those living in the

occupied territories would like to abandon their lives under the Armenian government. Bayram Safarov, Chairman of the Azerbaijani Community of the Nagorno-Karabakh Region of the Azerbaijan Public Association, was quoted as saying, “Armenians living in occupied Nagorno-Karabakh want to live according to the laws of Azerbaijan, because Azerbaijan is a strong, developing country where social welfare is at a high level” (Kerimkhanov, AzerNews, 11/1/2018). And in an article written by journalist Abdul Kerimkhanov, he wrote, “If Armenian hostages will be released [by Azerbaijan], they are unlikely to stay in Armenia. Either they will run away to the western countries to ask for political asylum, or return back to Azerbaijani prison, because Azerbaijan, in contrast to the aggressor state of Armenia, is humane even in relation to prisoners of war” (AzerNews, 11/27/2018).

The third subtheme, Azerbaijan plays a special role in regional development and security, describes the positive role of Azerbaijan in the region. This subtheme is supported by 66% of articles. Ali Hasanov, the Azerbaijani President's Assistant for Public and Political Affairs, stated that "Despite aggression [of Armenia], today thanks to President Ilham Aliyev's policy, Azerbaijan has been able to ensure not only its dynamic development, but has become a country playing a special role in the economic and cultural integration of Europe and the Middle East, ensuring Europe's energy security," adding later, "Azerbaijan is remarkable for its activity in peacekeeping operations," (Abdullayev, Khalq Qazeti, 11/27/2018). Hajiyev was quoted on this topic as well, stating that “international peace and security issues are priority topics in the Agenda of the Non-Aligned Movement. Azerbaijan has strong will to contribute to the promotion of

these goals during its chairmanship. Azerbaijan today plays a role of global security platform where parties with completely different agendas find common ground." Hajiyev commented further with, "Azerbaijan pursues a transparent, predictable and independent foreign policy. It does not interfere with the internal affairs of any state, and offers regional cooperation opportunities by finding common grounds between its interests and interests of its partners." (Trend, 12/24/2018). United Kingdom Member of Parliament and Chairman of Europeans Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the South Caucasus, Sajjad Karim, was quoted in Azerbaijani newspapers as having said, "When I look around Europe today, with the growing scourge of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia plaguing our European Union societies, I think we as Europeans can learn from the tolerance and openness that unites Azerbaijani citizens with Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Zoroastrians" (Trend, 12/14/2018). Finally, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov was referenced in a statement that, "Azerbaijan firmly believes in the prosperous future of the Black Sea region and has no doubt that this future can only be built on the basis of good neighborhood, mutual respect, humanity and tolerance" (Trend, 12/14/2018).

Outgroup (Armenia) is unfavorable:

This theme was supported by 28% of newspaper articles, and reflects the theory that the ingroup looks upon the outgroup unfavorably. To gather this data, I noted each time an article referenced Armenia's actions or intentions. This theme constitutes six subthemes: (1) Armenian Prime Minister and Government is weak, (2) Armenian

government can't take care of its people, (3) Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan indifferent to the fate of his people (4) Armenia exploiting natural resources on occupied Azerbaijani land, (5) Armenian politicians are involved in international criminal organizations, and (6) Regional government in Karabakh is a "separatist," "illegal," "puppet regime"

The first subtheme, the Armenian Prime Minister and Government is weak, is supported by 27% of articles. This subtheme references articles that describe the state of the Armenian government as unstable. Yevgeny Mikhailov, a Russian political expert, was attributed the opinion in Azerbaijani newspapers that "Armenia is shaking again, and it looks like the country is on the eve of civil war," and "that having come to power on absolutely populist slogans, [Armenian Prime Minister] Nikol Pashinyan turned out to be completely unable to control the situation" (Nasibova, Trend, 10/4/2018). Further he is noted as saying, "The Armenian Prime Minister is reeling from side to side," and "velvet revolutions always devour their leaders" (Nasibova, Trend, 10/4/2018). Safarov was also quoted that "It might be easy to come to power, but keeping it yet an uneasy task. Especially for Nikol Pashinyan, who has not any experience in public administration." (Kerimkhanov, AzerNews, 11/1/2018). And Ehtiram Ashirli, Azerbaijani political analyst stated, "Armenia is in a state of crisis from a political, economic, cultural, military, as well as demographic points of view" (Trend, 11/1/2018).

The second subtheme, the Armenian government can't take care of its people, expresses the narrative in Azerbaijani newspapers that citizens in Armenia suffer under their government. This subtheme is supported by 45% of articles in this theme. Mikhailov

is quoted as saying, "He [Pashinyan] declares that he is supported by the people, but the very people will throw him." (Nasibova, Trend, 10/4/2018). Azerbaijani journalist Kerimkhanov writes that "Karabakh Armenians, tired of poverty, lawlessness and expectations of war, prefer to flee from Karabakh wherever they look" (AzerNews, 11/1/2018). Safarov is also quoted as saying, "regardless of who comes to power, the only way to save Armenia from social and economic problems is to abandon its aggressive policy" (Kerimkhanov, AzerNews, 11/1/2018). Kerimkhanov also wrote one week later relating to Pashinyan visiting Azerbaijani occupied territories for military inspections that "Parliament of a country had dissolved, there is no prime minister, but there is an acting person who is on vacation... And all this is against the background of growing social and economic problems, as well as a lack of confidence that someone will support Armenia on the path of democracy" (AzerNews, 11/8/2018). Hasanov can also be referenced on this topic in an article which states, "a military junta that is on the path of aggression will bring only misfortunes to its people, and Armenia can be cited as an example" (Abdullayev, Khalq Qazeti, 11/27/2018).

The third subtheme, Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan is indifferent to the fate of his people, is supported by 18% of articles in this theme. This subtheme compares the suffering of the people to his prestigious position, and his hesitancy to commit to a prisoner of war exchange with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani journalist Leman Mammadova wrote, "Acting Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, while sitting in his comfortable chair, doesn't seem to care much about his own citizens" (Mammadova, AzerNews, 11/22/2018). While Kerimkhanov wrote on that "Armenian acting Prime

Minister Nikol Pashinyan's position on many issues is far from the ideal, but his unwillingness to save his own citizens, about whom he should care first, is nothing but an egoism” (AzerNews, 11/27/2018).

The fourth subtheme, Armenia is exploiting natural resources on Azerbaijani land, details accounts in the news that Armenia is benefitting from natural resources in the territories it occupies militarily. This subtheme is supported by another 18% of articles in this theme. On this topic, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Leyla Abdullayeva stated that "Armenia is barbarously exploiting natural resources in the occupied Azerbaijani territories and is causing environmental damage to these lands” (Trend, 11/27/2018). Hajiyev was also quoted as saying, "exploitation of mineral resources of the occupied territories and their export without due diligence and transparency to OECD countries is yet another matter of serious concern" (Trend, 12/4/2018).

The fifth subtheme, Armenian politicians are involved in international criminal organizations, is supported by a further 18% of articles in this theme. This subtheme describes reports in Azerbaijani newspapers that Armenian politicians contribute to illegal activities abroad. Elshad Mirbashiroglu, head of Institute for Human Rights of the Azerbaijani National Academy of Sciences, was quotes as saying, “In general, both the Armenian diaspora organizations and the Armenian diplomatic corps openly contribute to the criminal activities of the invading Armenian state" and followed this up with, "Recently, the foreign press has been spreading information that the Armenian ambassadors in various countries have links with the criminal world," (Trend,

11/13/2018). Hasanov echoed the sentiment that Armenian politicians are dangerous by stating, "Armenia's criminal regime as a medieval usurper willing to enrich itself in an easier way - by occupying another county's lands - is now isolated from all the regional initiatives," (Abdullayev, Khalq Qazeti, 11/27/2018).

The sixth and final subtheme, Regional government in Karabakh is a "separatist," "illegal," "puppet regime," is supported by 64% of articles in this theme. This subtheme expresses the opinion in Azerbaijani newspapers that the regional government in Karabakh, which is allied with Armenia and calls itself the Republic of Artsakh, is illegitimate. Azerbaijani Minister of Parliament and Vice -President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Azay Guliyev "stressed that by continuing the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding areas, creating an illegal puppet regime there, the political leadership in Armenia must not forget that it will not achieve anything" (Trend, 10/6/2018). Kerimkhanov noted that Republic of Artsakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Masis Mailan is a "clown 'foreign minister'," and followed that "the so-called 'Karabakh freedom fighters' surround themselves with corrupt European parliamentarians, for whom honor and dignity are concepts that are found only in the pages of the works of great storytellers" (AzerNews, 11/1/2018). Mammadova wrote regarding the capture and trial of two Azerbaijani citizens in the territory of occupied Karabakh, "Guliyev and Asgarov were judged illegally by the unrecognized courts of the separatist regime in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh" (Mammadova, AzerNews, 11/22/2018). And an Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry statement notes that President of the Republic of Artsakh, Bako Sahakyan, "is a

representative of illegal regime formed in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan as a result of the use of military force” (Kerimkhanov, AzerNews, 11/28/2018).

Outgroup (Armenia) is to blame for the conflict:

This theme is supported by 28% of newspaper articles, and reflects the favorable comparison theory that in Azerbaijan, Armenia is a Suitable Target of Externalization (STE) for blame in the conflict between them. To gather this data, I marked each time that an article referenced Armenia’s perceived guilt for an aspect of the conflict. This theme constitutes five subthemes: (1) Armenia tries to disrupt peace processes, (2) Armenian statements and claims distort the conflict and mislead the international community, (3) Armenia violates norms and principles of international law (4) Armenian aggression keeps the conflict from peaceful resolution, and (5) Armenia will need to compromise.

The first subtheme, Armenia tries to disrupt peace processes, is supported by 45% of articles in this theme. This subtheme notes disruptive behavior by Armenia in the Azerbaijani quest for peace. Guliyev is quoted as saying, "after Pashinyan came to power, he pointedly turns a blind eye to the results achieved so far and refuses from the format of negotiations within the OSCE Minsk group," (Trend, 10/6/2018). Hajiyev backs up this claim by stating, “Armenia is in every way impeding the contact of the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh” (Trend, 10/13/2018). Mammadova also explained, “both Armenian and Azerbaijani citizens living in the frontline areas constantly experience fear and distress because of the conflict that cannot

find its decision for more than 30 years due to unconstructive position of Armenia," (Mammadova, AzerNews, 11/22/2018). Abdullayeva commented on this topic, statingx "If Pashinyan is interested in the settlement of the conflict he would not create obstacles to the negotiations," (Trend, 11/27/2018). Kerimkhanov echoes this sentiment by writing that "Azerbaijan tries to resolve the conflict as soon as possible, while the aggressor Armenia does the opposite by making every effort to preserve the status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh," (AzerNews, 12/28/2018). Ganjaliev was also noted as saying, "Despite the longstanding negotiations on the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan was offering positive proposals, however unfortunately, Armenia always reacted negatively to them," (Trend, 12/28/2018).

The second subtheme, Armenian statements and claims distort the conflict and mislead the international community, paints Armenia in a distrustful and dishonest light in Azerbaijani newspapers. This theme was supported by 27% of articles in this theme. Hajiyevev "noted that the leadership of Armenia resorts to various statements and puts forward claims that distort the true essence of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," saying that "Armenia is taking steps to deceive and mislead the international community," (Trend, 10/13/2018). The Foreign Ministry also released a statement that "Armenia should stop its unsuccessful attempts to mislead the international community," (Trend, 10/15/2018). To fight this pattern, Ganjaliyev was quoted with, "We intend to participate in debates with international organizations and be active on social networks. The Armenian side spreads slander trying to convince international

organizations. We will spread the truth through social networks and at international events," (Trend, 12/27/2018).

The third subtheme, Armenia violates the norms and principles of international law, is supported by 27% of the articles in this theme. This subtheme describes narrative in Azerbaijani newspapers that Armenia follows its own interests with disregard to its responsibilities. Guliyev was quoted as saying that "Armenia grossly violates the norms and principles of international law, the decisions of the UN security council and the UN General Assembly, the Helsinki Declaration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, adopted in 2015, continuing the illegal occupation of Azerbaijan's territories" (Trend, 10/25/2018). Kerimkhanov mentions how this behavior disadvantages Azerbaijan by stating, "Despite Baku's best efforts, peace in the occupied lands remains a mirage in the distance as Armenia refuses to comply with international law," (AzerNews, 11/1/2018). And Turkish Presidential Aid Yalcon Topcu is quoted in Azerbaijani newspapers on this topic with the statement that "By continuing occupation of Azerbaijani lands, Armenia is shamelessly violating international law," (Trend, 12/26/2018).

The fourth subtheme, Armenian aggression keeps the conflict from peaceful resolution, is supported by 63% of articles in this theme. This subtheme highlights narrative in Azerbaijani newspapers that Armenia is an aggressor state and not oriented toward acts of peace. Hajiyev, noted, "the reality is that the Armenian side occupied Azerbaijani territories and carried out military aggression against Azerbaijan," and then added, "Armenia should put an end to destructive actions in this direction and take constructive steps to resolve the conflict," (Trend, 10/13/2018). A statement by the

Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry is quoted in the newspaper with, “according to the language of the Helsinki Final Act the responsibility for use of force falls on Armenia, as this country continues its aggression against Azerbaijan and keeps Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions of Azerbaijan under military occupation,” (Trend, 10/15/2018). Kerimkhanov wrote, “the main reason for the failure of the OSCE's peacekeeping activities in the region is precisely the lack of recognition of the fact of direct aggression by the Republic of Armenia against Azerbaijan,” (AzerNews, 11/28/2018). And Hajiyeu again made a statement with the following advice for Armenia: "If Armenia's new government intends to build a civilized state and provide a decent living wage for the Armenian population, it must comply with Armenia's international commitments and withdraw its troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan as demanded by the four UN Security Council resolutions on this issue... Azerbaijani internally displaced persons should return to their homes and justice should be provided. Armenia should learn to live in peace with neighboring countries without military aggression and territorial claims and cease its self-isolation," (Trend, 12/4/2018).

The fifth and final subtheme, Armenia will need to compromise, describes the idea that it is Armenia's responsibility to acquiesce to Azerbaijan's demands for peaceful resolution of the conflict. This subtheme was supported by 9% of articles in this theme. Azerbaijani newspapers quoted former US Ambassador to Armenia, Richard Mills, as having said, “Armenia will have to make compromises with Azerbaijan for resolving the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict” (Abdullayev, Khalq Qazeti, 10/17/2018).

National Boundary Values:

This theme is supported by 38% of newspaper articles, and underscores the importance of Azerbaijani territorial integrity and political sovereignty as a priority of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. To gather this data, I marked each time that the article referenced Azerbaijan's territorial integrity or demands for Armenia to withdraw from Karabakh and the occupied territories. This theme constitutes six subthemes: (1) Withdrawal of Armenian troops will lead to political solution, (2) Armenia does not comply with requirements to withdraw or return territories, (3) Azerbaijan retains the right to restore territorial integrity, (4) Azerbaijan and Armenia are the only parties to the conflict, (5) International community strongly supports Azerbaijani Territorial integrity, and (6) Main reason for ceasefire violation is the illegal presence of Armenian troops in Azerbaijani territories.

The first subtheme, Withdrawal of Armenian troops will lead to political solution, is supported by 53% of articles in this theme. In this subtheme articles place the onus for peace on Armenia and notes that only through restoring Azerbaijani territorial integrity can a solution to the conflict be achieved. Hajiyev was quoted with "the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories in accordance with the requirements of the UN Security Council's resolutions will eliminate not only military risk, but there will also be no need for a ceasefire, and there will be comprehensive opportunities for political solution of the conflict. This will ensure peace, stability, and security in the region," (Trend, 10/1/2018). Mills was quoted in Azerbaijani media with the statement, "The

reality is that any settlement is going to require the return of some portion of the occupied territories,” (Abdullayev, Khalq Qazeti, 10/17/2018). Abdullayeva backed up these demands by stating, "Only withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijan's occupied territories and the change in the status quo created as a result of the occupation can open the way for political settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," (Trend, 10/29/2018). And Mammadyarov notes that “Occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan will never produce a political outcome desired by Armenia,” (Trend, 12/15/2018).

The second subtheme, Armenia does not comply with requirements to withdraw or return territories, follows narrative in Azerbaijani newspapers that Armenia has been asked to withdraw from Azerbaijani territories but continues to ignore those international demands. This subtheme is supported by 33% of articles in this theme. To this Hajiyev notes, “Armenia has not yet implemented four UN security Council resolutions on withdrawal of its armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding districts,” (Trend, 10/1/2018). Mammadyarov echoed this by writing, “the resolutions on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict of the UN Security Council adopted in 1993 have not yet been implemented,” (Trend, 11/5/2018). Further, Kerimkhanov wrote on November 28 that “Although the documents of the UN security council demand the immediate withdrawal of the forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the efforts made by the Minsk Group for 26 years have not yielded effective results due to belligerent position of the Republic of Armenia,” and again on December 28 repeated that “Armenia keeps ignoring four UN Security Council resolutions on withdrawal of its armed forces

from Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding regions,” (Azernews, 12/28/2018).

The third subtheme, Azerbaijan retains the right to restore territorial integrity, is supported by 27% of articles in this theme. This subtheme describes the sentiment in Azerbaijani newspapers that the nation will consider many options, including war, in preserving territorial integrity. Abdullayeva noted, “Azerbaijan, supporting the intensification of international efforts for soonest resolution of the conflict retains the right to restore its territorial integrity and sovereignty within the internationally recognized borders and the violated rights of its citizens,” (Trend, 10/29/2018). Kerimkhanov wrote further that “Azerbaijan at all levels has repeatedly stated that the whole region will be liberated, peacefully or militarily,” (AzerNews, 11/1/2018). And on the suggestion that Armenia continues to refuse to withdraw troops from the occupied territories, Ashirli stated, "Armenia will once again witness the power of the Azerbaijani army, which means the end for the occupier country," (Trend, 11/7/2018).

The fourth subtheme, Azerbaijan and Armenia are the only parties to the conflict, describes the resistance of Azerbaijan to acknowledge the Republic of Artsakh, which Armenia supports and wants included in peace negotiations. This subtheme is supported by 27% of articles in this theme. This is because Azerbaijan’s considers Karabakh, where the Republic of Artsakh resides, its own sovereign territory. Hajiyev supported the current setup of peace negotiations by stating, "This once again shows that the format of the negotiations remains unchanged, and negotiations are conducted only between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which are parties of the conflict," (Trend, 10/1/2018). Guliyev

supports this statement with, "There are two sides of the conflict - Armenia and Azerbaijan. This has been confirmed by the international community and OSCE," and follows up with the statement "the attempts of bringing the Nagorno-Karabakh separatists to the negotiating table are not only unacceptable but also dangerous," (Trend, 10/6/2018). Mammadyarov doubles down on the policy by making the statement: "First of all, there are documents. Its necessary to be familiar with the mandate of the OSCE Minsk group. This document clearly states that Armenia and Azerbaijan are parties to the conflict, and negotiations are ongoing between these two countries. As it comes for the Armenian community of Nagorno-Karabakh, they are an interested party here. If so, then the presence of the Azerbaijani community should be taken into account as well," (Trend, 10/25/2018).

The fifth subtheme, the international community strongly supports Azerbaijani territorial integrity, concerns statements in Azerbaijani newspapers reminding the community of policies and statements from the international community supporting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. This subtheme is supported by 40% of articles in this theme. Hajiyev made the statement in the newspapers that, "The international community strongly supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan as part of internationally recognized borders, the Azerbaijani positions in this direction are constantly being strengthened, and this is supported by the documents adopted by international organizations," (Trend, 10/13/2018). Kerimkhanov also wrote that, "Resolutions of the UN Security Council number 822, 853, 874, and 884 in connection with the aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan calls to ensure the territorial integrity,

sovereignty, and nonviolability of the borders of Azerbaijan,” (AzerNews, 11/28/2018). Oqtay Asadov, Speaker of the Azerbaijani Parliament, noted that “Azerbaijan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders have been unequivocally supported in the decisions and resolution on the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict adopted by the UN Security Council and other international organizations,” (Trend, 12/14/2018). United Kingdom Member of Parliament Sajjad Karim was quoted in Azerbaijani newspapers as saying that the “European parliament reiterated the European Union's support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders,” (Trend, 12/14/2018). And an appeal from The Congress of the Azerbaijani Community of the Nagorno-Karabakh Region Public Union quoted in the newspaper stated that “The world community and international organizations recognize Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and support fair settlement of the conflict in accordance with international norms,” (Zeynalova, Trend, 12/25/2018).

The sixth and final subtheme, the main reason for ceasefire violation is the illegal presence of Armenian troops in Azerbaijani territories, is supported by 6% of articles in this theme. This subtheme explains the opinion that there would be no ceasefire violations if Armenia were not on Azerbaijani land. Hajiyev was quoted as saying, “The Armenian side has always been responsible for the ceasefire violation and the aggravation of the situation,” (Trend, 10/1/2018).

The impact of chosen trauma:

This final theme of newspaper analysis was supported by 28% of newspaper articles, and notes the number of times that news articles highlighted statements or events that trigger traumatic memories and emotions against Armenia, or highlight the cultural and historical threat Armenia poses to Azerbaijan. This theme constitutes three subthemes: (1) Armenia commits crimes against humanity, (2) Azerbaijan experienced genocide at the hands of Armenia, and (3) IDPs live with hope of returning to occupied lands.

The first subtheme, Armenia commits crimes against humanity, mentions crimes that Armenia is alleged to have committed against Azerbaijan, except for genocide. This subtheme is supported by 45% of articles in this theme. Hajiyevev made the statement, "As part of the aggression policy of Armenia against Azerbaijan, numerous war crimes and criminal acts were committed against humanity, and this means gross violation of international humanitarian law" (Trend, 10/13/2018). Abdullayeva provides examples of such with the statements, "Armenia, grossly violating the obligations imposed on it by the Geneva conventions, continues to commit such unlawful acts as change of geographical names in Zangilan district, the looting of property there and burning of territories,... illegal resettlement of Armenian population, including the... plans of Armenia to build a new road... in order to create an additional connection between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh region clearly demonstrates the intentions of this aggressor country to annex the occupied Azerbaijani territories. UN Security Council 884 strongly condemned the occupation of the Zangilan district of Azerbaijan and expressed serious concern over the humanitarian emergency on Azerbaijan's southern frontier" (Trend, 10/29/2018). Khanlar

Valiyev, Azerbaijani military prosecutor reportedly declared that “Armenians are brutally torturing Azerbaijani prisoners and hostages” (Trend, 11/2/2018). Hasanov reported on that "An OSCE assessment mission confirmed that the ancient Azerbaijani religious and historical monuments were destroyed on these lands," (Abdullayev, Khalq Qazeti, 11/27/2018). And Hajiyev backed up those claims in the news with, "Armenia also destroys the centuries-old cultural heritage of Azerbaijani people in the seized lands. Some of them cannot be restored any longer," (Trend, 12/4/2018).

The second subtheme, Azerbaijan experienced genocide at the hands of Armenia, brings to the fore traumatic memories in Azerbaijani newspapers that the government has labeled as genocide. This subtheme is supported by 81% of articles in this theme. Russian Member of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and head of Russia-Azerbaijan Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group Dmitry Savelyev stated, “Every effort should be made to ensure that the Khojaly tragedy is recognized at all global platforms as the genocide of the Azerbaijani people,” (Abdullayev, Khalq Qazeti, 10/21/2018). Abdullayeva noted that "As a result of the aggression, the population of the Zangilan district consisting of 85 settlements was subjected to ethnic cleansing," (Trend, 10/29/2018). Valiyev reminded newspaper readers that “It was established that Armenian nationalists with particular cruelty killed thousands of Azerbaijanis only because of their national identity in Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent areas, that is, in the Azerbaijani lands” (Trend, 11/2/2018). Azerbaijani Member of Parliament Malahat Ibrahimgizi publicized the thought that, “It is necessary to make a film about the Khojaly genocide at the Hollywood level for the whole world to know about it,” (Trend, 11/6/2018).

Kerimkhanov also wrote, “unfortunately, co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group, pursuing such a policy based on discrimination, close their eyes to the violation of the rights of the Azerbaijani community of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan who were subjected to ethnic cleansing,” (AzerNews, 11/28/2018). The Congress of the Azerbaijani Community of the Nagorno-Karabakh Region Public Union made the statement that “[Armenian separatism] contributed to the policy of ethnic cleansing in these territories, and as a result, over one million Azerbaijanis became refugees and IDPs,” (Trend, 12/22/2018). And Ganjaliyev agreed with the statement by saying, “Armenia's military aggression led to the occupation of 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan - Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts. Armenia carried out a total ethnic cleansing of the Azerbaijani population in the occupied territories, including Nagorno-Karabakh. Conducting that policy culminated in ethnic cleansing with over one million Azerbaijanis becoming refugees and IDPs,” (Trend, 12/26/2018).

The third and final subtheme, IDPs live with hope of returning to occupied lands, reminds the newspaper reader that IDPs have not yet given up hope of regaining the occupied territories and region of Karabakh. This subtheme is supported by 22% of articles in this theme. Ashirli noted, “Azerbaijani citizens who became refugees and IDPs as a result of the Armenia-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict live with the hope of returning to their homeland,” and followed this with the quote, “The enemy should know that the people of Azerbaijan will never reconcile with the occupation,” (Trend, 11/7/2018). Mammadyarov was quoted in the newspaper as saying, “The Azerbaijani community of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of our country is ready to return to their

homes, and this aspect was again voiced in the recently released statement of the community,” (Zeynalova, Trend, 12/25/2018). And finally, Kerimkhanov wrote, “Azerbaijani internally displaced people still wait for the return to their native places. Regrettably, their desire remains unnoticed by the world community,” (AzerNews, 12/28/2018).

Conclusion:

In the next chapter, I will present results from interviews I conducted in Azerbaijan regarding governmental narratives of conflict in the nation, in order to get personal, first hand feedback on the research topic.

Chapter Five: Governmental Narratives of Conflict Interview Results

In this chapter, I will present data from interviews conducted for the purpose of the research. Interviews were comprised of eight questions to support the research question of this thesis: What is the prevalent national narrative created by the Azerbaijani government about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia, and how does it impact peace building efforts in Azerbaijan? The qualitative data that follows is based upon twenty-four interviews. In the following chapter, I will reveal interview results question by question, and conclude each question with a summary of that question's qualitative results. In the following chapter, I will provide full analysis of the data results.

Question 1: *Over the last 24 years of ceasefire with Armenia, how has the Azerbaijani government's official actions and narrative on the conflict impacted the goal of regaining Karabakh?*

This question was designed to evaluate how closely Azerbaijanis relate to the governmental narrative of the conflict, and asks them to reflect on how this narrative has functioned to resolve the conflict. This question yielded responses on the impact of Azerbaijani governmental narrative on the conflict that I broke down into three themes:

(1) External factors impacting narrative, (2) Internal factors impacting narrative, and (3) Armenian factors impacting narrative.

The first theme, external factors impacting narrative, was supported by 36% of respondents. Responses were divided into two subthemes, (1) Azerbaijan follows the position of the international community, and (2) third parties find advantage in the conflict.

The first subtheme, Azerbaijan follows the position of the international community, was supported by 73% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme details feedback that Azerbaijan is not in control of the conflict narrative because it is a product of the international community,. One respondent noted that it is the "firm position by the international community that occupation should end," while another explained, "Azerbaijan follows the policies of the UN." Another interview respondent echoed those thoughts by saying, "G7 countries believe that current status of occupation based on use of force should end," and another stated, "Azerbaijan doesn't have any demands that are beyond international norms and rules of behavior." Further, two respondents stated simply that, "Our position is supported by international law," and "International norms reflect our just position."

The second subtheme, third parties find advantage in the conflict, was supported by about 27% of respondents in the first theme. This subtheme details comments by interviewees that Azerbaijan's conflict narrative is manipulated or hijacked by other nations who might find advantage to ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. One responded is quoted as saying, "There are bigger players other than Azerbaijan and

Armenia. No matter our narrative other players are using it to their advantage.” Another said, “You have to look at this conflict through the lens of who is most interested in not solving the conflict.” Another referenced a December 10, 1991 Armenian referendum upheld by a handful of nations by stating, “Armenia’s claim to the land via referendum is pretend,” while another noted, “Azerbaijan doesn’t have much support,” from the international community.

The second theme, internal factors impacting narrative, was supported by approximately 24% of respondents. These responses were divided into three subthemes, (1) there is no benefit to our narrative but requests remain the same, (2) elongated ceasefire hurts Azerbaijan and (3) the Azerbaijani government is not interested in solving the conflict.

The first subtheme, there is no benefit to our narrative but requests remain the same, was supported by 47% of respondents in this theme, and describes the idea that it does not matter if the narrative contributes to conflict resolution. Because it is a just cause, and the narrative cannot change. One respondent explained, “As a citizen it’s very hard to say, ‘Let’s change the position,’ because it is a just position. There are no questions,” while another noted, “many things have been unsuccessful: the negotiation process, military action. But requests are legitimate.” One interviewee expressed the thought that, “these are our basic requests, whether or not they are beneficial,” while another expressed their commitment to the narrative with, “We see these last 25 years as lost years. We wish for peace more than anything else. It is worth it for us to continue to wait.” A respondent noted the deeply entrenched commitment to the government’s

determination to reclaim Karabakh and the occupied territories by explaining, “territorial integrity is the cornerstone of everything,” and another noted that the only reason governmental narratives “have not benefitted Azerbaijan is because they have not been fulfilled.”

The second subtheme, elongated ceasefire hurts Azerbaijan, was supported by 33% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme notes feedback that while the nation might be just in its cause and cannot change its narrative, the intractable conflict is not ideal for the citizens. One respondent noted that, “Azerbaijan was not planning to have the ceasefire last this long,” while another added, “Ceasefire is not very durable; not a solution.” In light of this, other respondents made statements such as, “So long as the conflict is a conflict, it takes attention away from other things that could be happening in the nation right now,” and that there is “financial strain on Azerbaijan in keeping relations with IDPs, building new settlements, making meetings for resolution, planning reintegration, etc.” One respondent noted that even though there is a ceasefire and Azerbaijan commits to the peace process, “despite talks, there have always been clashes along the border.”

The third subtheme, the Azerbaijani government is not interested in solving the conflict, expresses the view amongst a small group of respondents that Azerbaijan supports an intractable narrative because conflict benefits the government more than peace. This subtheme was supported by 20% of respondents in this theme. One respondent explained, “Azerbaijan has a clear enemy and 100 years of animosity. They don’t expect the conflict to end, and these demands are about regime stability.” Another

respondent noted that, “The conflict is a good form of social control,” while another simply stated, “I don’t believe the government is interested in solving the conflict.”

The third theme, Armenian factors impacting narrative, was supported by 21% of respondents in the interviews. This theme was divided into three subthemes: (1) requests have led to a stalemate between nations, (2) it is the responsibility of Armenia to respond to the demands, and (3) the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh representation is key.

The first subtheme, requests have led to a stalemate between nations, was supported by 38% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme details the opinion that even though Azerbaijan isn’t budging on its requests, neither has Armenia. One interviewee explained, “Stalemate happens from lack of compromise on both sides,” while another added, “The main issue is trust and confidence from both sides,” with another adding further, “These are maximal statements from the Azerbaijani side. So naturally Armenia will respond with a maximal statement from its side.” One respondent mentioned that due to this, “there has been no change in 25 years,” while another was more optimistic about the situation: “For Azerbaijan the requests are working. We haven’t lost anything,” since the ceasefire.

The second subtheme, it is the responsibility of Armenia to respond to the demands, represents the thoughts of the respondents that the intractability of the conflict rests with Armenia and was also supported by 38% of respondents in this theme. As one respondent explained, “It does not depend on the Azerbaijani government. It does not depend on us. We cannot go for further concessions. Further concession would require giving up Karabakh. But this is the cornerstone of our foreign policy: territorial integrity

of our territories.” Another respondent noted, “The future of communication of Armenia and Azerbaijan will be dependent on freeing the territories that they occupy. Then we can move on to negotiations.” One respondent made the point that the territorial issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan is “not a conflict,” but instead “aggression of Armenia toward Azerbaijan,” while another said, “Azerbaijan’s requests must be addressed before any other issues on the table.”

The third subtheme, the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh representation is key, was supported by 23% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme highlights what Azerbaijanis perceive as the unacceptable situation of the Republic of Artsakh in Karabakh, and Armenia’s narrative on the matter. One respondent noted, “Armenia wants the world to believe that the conflict is between Azerbaijan and Karabakh-Armenians. Azerbaijan wants to world to know that the conflict is between Armenia and Azerbaijan.” An interviewee explained further, “Karabakh needs Azerbaijani representation. They are still citizens, because they were forcibly removed,” while one respondent stated simply, “Stepanakert is historically Azerbaijani.”

Conclusion:

Based upon interview data from Question 1, the majority of respondents support Azerbaijan’s governmental narrative on the conflict and defend it. It is legitimized based on international statements and documents from a number of international organizations such as the United Nations and OSCE Minsk supporting Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity and requesting that Armenia withdraw from Azerbaijan’s occupied territories. Whether or

not these requests are binding, they reinforce the resolve of Azerbaijanis and their government. Due to this, they are less likely to opt for further compromise, as respondents noted above.

Many respondents connect the government of Azerbaijan's narrative to the natural state of things whether or not it will help resolve the conflict. It is also noted that the requests cannot change because the position is just. Due to respondent feedback that Azerbaijan's position is just and is supported by international authorities, many see the intractable nature of the conflict as Armenia's fault and it's responsibility to fix. In this sense the only reason that the conflict is not resolved, according to respondents, is because of the refusal of Armenia to give in to Azerbaijani demands. They believe that the ball is essentially in Armenia's court, and Azerbaijan believes it is worth it to continue to wait despite hardships.

Question 2: How would the act of Karabakh's reintegration into Azerbaijan impact ongoing conflict with Armenia?

This question was designed to break through the 25-year pattern of intractability and ask the interviewee to imagine that governmental narratives in Azerbaijan had worked (through any means, either peacefully or militarily), and Armenia agreed to Karabakh's reintegration into Azerbaijan along with the occupied territories. I wanted to know if these long endured wounds consistently relived through news and government narrative would be able to heal if Azerbaijan's requests were met. This question yielded

responses that I broke down into three themes: (1) negative results of reintegration, (2) positive results of reintegration, and (3) specific post-reintegration challenges.

The first theme, negative results of reintegration, was mentioned by 35% of respondents. Responses were divided into four subthemes, (1) it is an ethnic conflict so co-existence will remain a challenge, (2) reintegration will highlight challenges within Azerbaijan, (3) one side will lose and remain resentful, and (4) there is no solution within the dispute.

The first subtheme, it is an ethnic conflict so co-existence will remain a challenge, was supported by 44% of respondents in this theme. In this subtheme, respondents noted that while a political solution may be possible the issue of ethnic resentment will still exist between the groups. For example, one respondent noted, “sadly 25 years is a very long time; a quarter of a century. And views and attitudes can be hardened during that time,” while another said, “the things that we've had between us is difficult for both sides to forget and forgive.” Another voiced the concern that reintegration will bring Armenians and Azerbaijanis back together in areas like Karabakh with, “Is Armenia ready to back Azerbaijani's living in their cities? Are we ready to back Armenians living in our city?” One respondent looked to other ethnic conflicts resolved by political solutions by saying, “In Kosovo and Bosnia there are still problems between ethnic groups.” One interviewee explained the difference between a political solution and an emotional resolution with, “I will solve the conflict, but I will not be your friend. Maybe it will be economic relations. Maybe it will be political relations. But we wasted 25 years. No one will forget about the genocides. It will be 200 years and no one will forget.”

Later, the respondent added, “You can easily feel the hatred of the people.” Another respondent tackled narrative by answering, “Both countries have powerful propaganda against each other that they will need to change, and that will be challenging... Positive stories are missing. And we live on stories.”

The second subtheme, reintegration will highlight challenges within Azerbaijan, was supported by 12% of respondents in this theme. Feedback in this subtheme claimed that by having no external enemy, Azerbaijan will become restless internally. One respondent explained that if a solution to the Karabakh conflict was made and IDPs were no longer displaced, “1% of Azeri budget goes to IDPs, which is much more than the rest of the population. They might not want to lose that.” Another explained, “Reintegration will result in internal struggles in Azerbaijan, and no longer be about external conflict with Armenia,” while another agreed, “Peace would allow Azerbaijan more introspection, instead of having an external enemy.”

In the third subtheme, one side will lose and remain resentful, highlighted the thought that intractable conflicts are most likely win-lose situations, and therefore even if Azerbaijan “wins,” there still will be no peace. This subtheme was supported by 24% of respondents in this theme. One respondent said, “The territories are Armenia's success after years of claiming abuse, genocide, and being bullied. Getting back the territories will not be the end for Armenia, but we would be taking their only success.” Another respondent believes that military action is the only recourse for regaining Karabakh and the occupied territories, stating, “By means of war, it will be satisfactory for Azerbaijan but the conflict will not be resolved.” Finally, one respondent admitted that even if the

resolution were through peaceful means, that "one side has to compromise more than the other side."

The fourth and final subtheme, there is no solution within the dispute, explains that the question of imagining a reintegration with Karabakh is unrealistic for many of the following reasons. This subtheme was supported by 20% of respondents in this theme. One respondent said that reintegration is not possible because "there is lack of communications between the parties, and this lack of communications has lasted for decades. Nothing has been healed for decades." Another mentioned, "Both Armenia and Azerbaijan want peace. But they want their own version of peace. This is the issue." Highlighting another issue, one respondent explained, "There is a new generation of Azerbaijanis who have never seen Karabakh. And there is a new generation of Armenians who only know Karabakh. And they only have killings between them. Peace building has been marginalized on both sides. It will be difficult and challenging." One further reason was mentioned as, "regime stability is ensured via the continuation of the conflict." Finally, one respondent stated simply, "one side has to lose," while another explained, "You can solve the conflict, but you never can solve the problem between nations."

The second theme, positive results of reintegration, was mentioned by 37% of respondents. Responses were divided into four subthemes, (1) reintegration would lead to a normalization of relations between the nations, (2) reintegration would benefit the entire region, (3) all tensions would cease, and (4) the communities would build confidence.

The first subtheme, reintegration would lead to a normalization of relations between the nations, was supported by 43% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme expresses respondent beliefs that the reintegration of Karabakh would lead to a cessation of hostilities between the nations. One respondent noted that “We had these kinds of conflicts in the past, and we were still able to have friendships,” while another said, “Many families in Azerbaijan are mixed Armenian and Azerbaijani, so there are links that can be re-established.” One respondent stated, “I think we can create at least normal relations with Armenia... these nations did live for many years together and can go back to that.” And another explained, “Within 2 to 3 years of resolution, we will live as peaceful neighbors.” Finally, one respondent stated, “In the long term, we won’t have any problem.”

In the second subtheme, reintegration would benefit the entire region, respondents described the ways in which the reintegration of Karabakh could benefit Transcaucasia. This subtheme was supported by 30% of respondents in this theme. One interviewee described the idea, “We will begin trade between Armenia and Azerbaijan,” while another said, “We will rebuild infrastructure.” One looked on positive aspects for Armenia as well by saying, “Armenia would be free from isolation,” and another stated, “A more healthy assessment of facts in the conflict would result.”

In the third subtheme, all tensions would cease, respondents detail the opinion that reintegration with Karabakh would lead to a complete de-escalation of the conflict and even bring back a potential good will between the nations. This subtheme was supported by 26% of respondents in this theme. One respondent described the idea that “our feeling

of always being on guard would go away. This would help us calm down and begin to heal.” A second respondent said, “It is possible for Armenia and Azerbaijan to work together despite differences.” Further respondents noted that as long as demands are met, “there is no resentment toward Armenia,” and, “Azerbaijan is a very tolerant society,” as well as, “I don’t think people will have trouble living again with Armenians.” Another respondent drew a parallel to other nations that used to have conflict by explaining, “Real peace is possible, because we have seen real peace achieved between Germany and France, and other countries.”

The fourth subtheme, communities would build confidence, was supported by 8% of respondents in this theme. Respondents in this subtheme noted that Azerbaijan’s reintegration with Karabakh would lead to communities within Azerbaijan to gain self-esteem. One respondent noted that IDPs would be able to return home and fulfill their dreams of homeland, and another noted that due to the possibility of moving on and thinking about economic and infrastructure development, “we will build confidence.”

The third theme, specific post-reintegration challenges, was mentioned by 32% of respondents who noted that reintegration would be a positive thing but bring consequences that would need to be mitigated. Responses were divided into three subthemes, (1) rules enforced to prevent hate crimes and create community building, (2) governments and OSCE Minsk need to help prepare people for peace, and (3) Karabakh must be at the center of any solution between the nations.

The first subtheme, rules enforced to prevent hate crimes and create community building, was supported by 35% of respondents in this theme. Respondents in this

subtheme describe the concern that Armenians and Azerbaijanis living together in Karabakh would need peace and community building exercises to prevent conflict from arising between the people and build a sustainable environment. One respondent noted, “The governments of the people need to work with the communities, or there will be a high level of conflict in the community level if we were to start living together again.” Another respondent said, “In the short term, there will be an emotional process to work through,” and a third agreed that, “There are a lot of emotions. I don’t know if the people would be able to live together in the future. But I know we have in the past.” A few respondents were somewhat cynical of living together with Armenians as some explained, “Armenia would have trouble honoring our cultural rights within Karabakh,” and “without guaranteed protections there is a risk of ethnic cleansing if Azerbaijanis return.” A final respondent said that even if there is peace, stereotypes would never fade: “The Armenians will always hate Turkey, the Azerbaijanis will always be dumb shepherds.”

In the second subtheme, governments and OSCE Minsk need to help prepare people for peace, respondents discussed ideas for maintaining peace if Karabakh reintegrates into Azerbaijan. This subtheme was supported by 40% of respondents in this theme. One respondent explained, “We would need someone from the outside to make sure we are holding the peace on both sides,” while another explained, “Rebuilding trust is key.” A third respondent noted the social upheaval that could occur with a change in political borders by stating the need for “some peaceful campaigns to calm us down. Something on the grassroots level. Citizen to citizen making positive stories.” Another

respondent had the idea that “Civil society should be involved in the peace building process.” One further idea concerned “people that are unnecessarily brainwashed. There are people that will not understand the importance of the peace.” Further ideas concerned truth commissions or trials in the Hague to bring certain individuals or groups to justice on a political or diplomatic level to help channel emotions.

The third subtheme, Karabakh must be at the center of any solution between the nations, was supported by 25% of respondents. This subtheme details the opinion that a full social, political and economic solution should be applied to the Karabakh region in order for any reintegration to be successful. One respondent expressed the concern that “A lot of work would need to be done to create jobs for both [Armenian and Azerbaijani] populations in Karabakh.” A second respondent explained the roadblock, “Azerbaijan has consistently said, choose an autonomy in the world and we will replicate it. But what has happened from the Armenian side? Very, very little from what I have seen.” A third stated, “Only after IDPs and refugees return to Karabakh, can we decide on any kind of autonomy.” A fourth respondent noted that a solution in this region is so important because “If there was no Karabakh conflict, there would be no nationalism in Azerbaijan.”

Conclusion:

Question 2 revealed a wide range of ideas regarding reintegration, some positive but many reflected concerns. While a number of respondents noted they would be neighbors with Armenians again and foresaw economic and social development springing

from conflict resolution, for some there were caveats attached. These caveats were that good will would be shown to Armenia assuming that Azerbaijan's demands had been met and reintegration had taken place. Another is that some respondents would like to have third party oversight to protect against ethnic cleansing or having their cultural rights violated. A further request is having as well as a third parties help handle emotions and the potential for hate crimes from both groups. There would also need to be an effort, according to respondents, for the governments of both nations and for third parties such as OSCE Minsk to prepare their people for peace so the change in circumstance is not such a shock to people.

Others did not see a positive side, with many stating that border changes would create social upheaval, living together would illicit negative emotions from those not ready to forgive, and due to the fact that any solution could not possibly benefit both sides, one population would remain resentful. Others saw the thought experiment of Armenia giving in to Azerbaijani demands as useless, because to them there is not solution to the conflict. This reflects the Question 1 position that Azerbaijan's demands are not for purposes of resolution, but instead a just position that cannot be compromised even if it means it is not likely they will succeed in having their demands fulfilled. Overall, it is made clear that even in the event of Azerbaijani governmental narrative being a success, the conflict between nations would remain a challenge.

Question 3: Currently, what do you think is the most probable scenario for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict?

This question's intention is to help assess, based on the current governmental narrative of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, if attitudes of conflict resolution are more cooperative or uncooperative, given the hardline stance and strict demands of the Azerbaijani political elite. This question provided responses that I broke down into three themes: (1) cooperative strategies, (2) uncooperative strategies, and (3) no strategy will lead to conflict resolution.

The first theme, cooperative strategies, was supported by 23% of interview respondents. This theme is broken down into six subthemes: (1) joint agreement with Armenia as a free-trade economic area, (2) Azerbaijan is ready to provide autonomy to Karabakh, (3) fight radicalism and develop dialogue, (4) prepare communities to live in peace and compromise, (5) the new Armenian government is a hopeful change, and (6) Armenia returns some territories; keeps others.

The first subtheme, a joint agreement with Armenia as a free-trade economic area, was supported by 21% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme details the opportunity for both nations to work together to create an economic zone out of Karabakh. As one respondent explained, "create an economic zone in NK and people from both sides will move there and work in peace for jobs and security." Another explained, "Demilitarization, then bring in financial donors. Make them dependent on each other economically." A third responded, "Economics will trump politics," while another noted that resolution has a higher chance if "all social and economic needs are met in Karabakh."

The second subtheme, Azerbaijan is ready to provide autonomy to Karabakh, was supported by 21% of interview respondents in this theme. This subtheme denotes the idea that resolution entails Azerbaijan gaining Karabakh, but giving it a high level of autonomy. One respondent explained, “Azerbaijan is prepared to offer security and autonomy to Karabakh in participation with Armenia,” while another said, “Karabakh will return to Azerbaijan and have high level autonomy.” A third respondent agreed with the sentiment that Azerbaijan is committed to “establishing the highest autonomy of Karabakh.”

The third subtheme, fight radicalism and develop dialogue, was also supported by 21% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme describes feedback in which respondents discuss the need to build communication and reduce negative propaganda in both nations. One respondent explained, “We need to create grounds and platform for resolution. Starting with community based content on both sides just to speak and break down stereotypes.” Another described, “We need to break down propaganda on both sides and fight against radicals who think we are real enemies,” while another agreed, “We need to fight radicalism and prepare both societies for dialogue.” A fourth respondent noted narrative issues with, “Both nations have a similar narrative against each other and no nation makes an effort to bring the point of, 'Why can't we speak to each other?'" A final respondent noted, “We need dialogue, just talking to each other, to get to peace.”

The fourth subtheme, prepare communities to live in peace and compromise, was supported by 17% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme underscores the concern

that the governments of the two nations should work to open minds to the idea of peace instead of conflict if resolution is wanted. This is because, according to one respondent, “It is not easy for either government to have compromises, because the opposition will be able to rise up. They will call for demonstrations and cause the leaders to lose power.” Another respondent stated, “The two nations needs to prepare their societies for peace and to be ready for compromises,” while another echoed, “Societies need to be prepared for compromises.”

The fifth subtheme, the new Armenian government is a hopeful change, was supported by 13% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme reflects the opinion that the new Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, may change the course of the conflict by agreeing to compromise with Azerbaijan. As one respondent said, “Hopefully the new Armenian government will be fruitful to resolution,” while another expressed the hope of “the new Armenian government deciding to cooperate with Azerbaijan and international demands.”

The sixth subtheme, Armenia returns some territories, was supported by 8% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme expresses respondent feedback that some territories could be returned to Azerbaijan in exchange for Armenia keeping others. As one respondent explained, “occupied Azerbaijani territories from the war goes back to Azerbaijan, and Armenia keeps Karabakh,” while another said a solution could be, “Armenians returning a number of territories back to Azerbaijan, and then ask for a concession in return.”

The second theme, uncooperative strategies, was supported by 44% of interview respondents. This theme is broken down into three subthemes: (1) the military option, (2) third party participants forcing a decision, and (3) any resolution must include the principle of territorial integrity.

The first subtheme, the military option, was supported by 43% of interview respondents. This subtheme expresses the opinion that a likely way to resolve the conflict is through the use of Azerbaijani military force. As one respondent explained, "I do not think it is possible to solve the conflict by peace. If peace is possible, OK. But 26 years with no results through peace? War is not the best, but it is an option. Why are we buying all these weapons if we're not going to fight?" Another described the sentiment, "International powers are only motivated in working with us when we opt for war. Like in April 2016, everyone was talking with us and working with us. Now, again, it's nothing." A third respondent said there should be, "An offensive to make Armenia react. Eventually we will do what we can to preserve what we can," while one more respondent said, "Sooner or later there will be a military action to take back the territories or force a mediation." Further respondents noted, "Take back the territories by force, and then immediately bring in resources and money for development and peace building," and, "The military option is supported by the majority of the population."

The second subtheme, third party participants forcing a decision, was supported by 40% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme explains the opinion that third party mediators such as OCSE Minsk or the UN should act tougher on Armenia, and force the nation to return occupied lands. One respondent said, "the international community needs

to fulfill its responsibilities,” while another explained, “Global and regional powers are not working on this conflict as intensely as they are working on other conflicts,” and another stated the need for “having great powers step in to halt whatever is going on, and force Armenia into some sort of negotiating position.” A few ideas for how this would be done were voiced as, “Use international courts. Find justice in the Hague,” along with, “arbitration must be brought to the table and let them decide what must be done,” and, “nations could push a resolution using sanctions [against Armenia],” and finally, “we need to kick out the third party countries that are benefitting from the conflict.” One respondent acknowledged, “both sides will lose something but nevertheless we will have a decision.”

The third subtheme, any resolution must include the principle of territorial integrity, was supported by 18% of respondents in this theme and highlights the idea that resolution is not possible without Azerbaijan regaining Karabakh and its occupied territories. As one respondent stated, “The only possible compromise to satisfy both parties is Azerbaijan territorial integrity preserved even if high level of independence of NK.” Another interviewee said, “Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan all three will need to agree to the territorial integrity of the others, and promise to act in respect to each other.” Two further respondents explained, “All demands of Azerbaijan should be fulfilled and all territories returned for peaceful resolution,” and, “Non-negotiable to undermine Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity.”

The third theme, no strategy will lead to conflict resolution, was supported by 29% of interview respondents. This theme is broken down into three subthemes: (1) Armenia will never comply, (2) no resolution if Russia is involved, and (3) time is a tool.

The first subtheme, Armenia will never comply, was supported by half of respondents in this theme and represents feedback that talk of resolution is not fruitful, as Armenia will never cooperate or agree to Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. For example, a respondent noted, "Armenia would not be able to justify peace talks. They see keeping our lands as the first steps for a greater Armenia," while a second said, "There is no solution unless Armenia begins to comply with international demands." A third respondent stated, "I am pessimistic myself. I don't think there is a resolution coming up in the near future," while a fourth explained, "The resolution doesn't depend on Azerbaijan, it depends on Armenia and negotiators." Further respondents noted, "Armenia will not comply with international policies," and, "Armenia is being rewarded for not working toward resolution. There are arms from Russia and funding from USA," and finally, "None of our dreams will be realized. What is the middle? There is no compromise,"

The second subtheme, no resolution if Russia is involved, was supported by 28% of interview respondents in this theme. This subtheme expresses the opinion that the influence of Russia in the region both as a regional power and a member of OSCE Minsk is detrimental to conflict resolution. One respondent noted, "Friendly relations in the Caucasus are against Russia's interests," while another explained that peace would mean, "Russia would no longer need as many Russian military bases in Armenia." A third

respondent stated, "Russia created this conflict and it works for them for us to be in this conflict situation. Russia doesn't want the post-Soviet countries to be friends. To cooperate together; to build things, to help each other. For them, it is a way to control us and to make sure that we're always not in a great level of development where we don't need Russia. They want us to be dependent on them." One final respondent simply said, "There is no solution if Russia is involved in any way."

The third subtheme, time is a tool, was supported by 14% of respondents in this theme and represents the notion that although there is no solution at this time, patience can reveal what the future holds. As one respondent explained, "Time works for us. If we keep developing, in the next generation and the next generation, this feeling will stay and we will get our territory back." Another said, "The cost of your action should not be higher than the value of your gain. We have to be patient. We have to slow down. We don't have to be speedy. We are at a slope. We are managing the risky situations." A third respondent stated, "Things were terrible between Greeks and Turks. They couldn't speak; they couldn't marry. Somehow, the time solved it. Maybe we need another 50 years, to be honest," while another said that the "Azerbaijani government is being patient in the hope that the new Armenian government is much more constructive."

Conclusion:

In Question 3 there were many opinions on how the resolution of the conflict might come to pass. Some respondents noted cooperative strategies, yet many supported the military option or other uncooperative strategies. International courts were mentioned

again, as they were in Question 2, however this time not as a tool to manage emotions post resolution, but instead to force Armenia to acquiesce to Azerbaijani demands. It can also be seen that territorial integrity is a pre-requisite for peace, with the respondents noting that regaining Azerbaijani land was necessary for any agreement to be made.

Respondents noted again that it is not productive to think about resolution to the conflict, as it will never happen. Armenia will never comply according to some respondents, and third parties such as Russia have too much influence over the conflict and potentially benefit from it. We also saw that time is a tool, used to wait for the right political and emotional moments to reintegrate Karabakh and the occupied territories into Azerbaijan, whether through force or diplomacy. It was also learned that Azerbaijanis are aware of the pattern of passing the cause from generation to generation in the hopes that the conflict will one day be ripe for resolution and the fulfillment of the Azerbaijani governments demands.

Question 4: How are peace groups or peace movements amongst the Azerbaijani people supported, or not supported, by the Azerbaijani government?

This question was asked in order to assess feedback on Azerbaijani perceptions of peace. I hoped this question would express how governmental narratives of conflict in Azerbaijan was impacting, or not impacting, people's thoughts and expressions surrounding peace and conflict resolution. This question provided responses which are divided into two themes: (1) Azerbaijani views of peace, and (2) Government factors in peace movements.

The first theme, Azerbaijani views of peace, is supported by one third of interview respondents. This theme is broken down into seven subthemes: (1) no peace movements out of respect for IDPs, refugees, martyrs, and the military, (2) peace is weakness, (3) lack of faith in peace processes, (4) no interest in peace movements, (5) peace through military strength, (6) the people agree with the government on the conflict, and (7) conflict is too emotional for peace.

The first subtheme, no peace movements out of respect for IDPs, refugees, martyrs, and the military, was supported by 19% of respondents in this theme, and expresses the view that due to the memory of victims of the war and their families, in honor of military members currently serving, and out of respect for IDPs and refugees, people do not call for the end of the conflict. As one respondent explained, “Think about Khojaly. Think about our martyrs, think about those killed by sniper fire near the borders. This is still a boiling conflict.” Another explained, “We have one million refugees, and people want justice. Although I did not lose a close relative I can feel for those who did.” A third respondent stated, “First you lost your relatives. Second, you have to move from the place of your memories. Third, you’re not able to visit your parent’s graves. Fourth, your brother is in the military to defend our territory. There is not any situation with Armenia where you can say, ‘You know what? They were right.’ It just cannot be.” Further respondents noted, “Out of respect for IDPs people do not call for peace,” and, “Ethnic cleansing is involved which makes the conflict unique,” along with, “People support the military,” and, “The recent April 2016 conflict, losing 100 soldiers has refreshed the will to fight.”

The second subtheme, peace is weakness, is also supported by 19% of respondents in this theme and explains the view that Azerbaijan any sign of peaceful desire is softness and a sign of weakness. As one respondent explained, “We lost the war. We lost the territory. We're alone. Nobody cares about us. International community and international law does not work over here for 25 years. What else is left for us? There is nothing. And once we become softer, that will immediately be used against us.” Another said, “You cannot go with a flower and believe this will be a solution,” while another said, “If peace is about giving up something, then it’s not popular.” Further respondents noted, “Peace is more negativity rather than positivity,” and, “The softer you become, the worse for you it is,” as well as, “The softer we become, the Armenians become harder. It’s our weapon. Become hard as possible.” A final respondent stated, “We lost our territories when we were weak. We were disorganized. If this is what will happen to us when we are weak, then we cannot back down.”

The third subtheme, lack of faith in peace processes, was also supported by 19% of respondents in this theme and describes the view of respondents that over the last 25 years of ceasefire without a peace agreement, that conflict resolution or peace processes are not valuable. For example, a respondent noted, “People had more hope back in the 1990’s for peace and the peace building process... There is impatience; in the last 28 years no territory has been regained via peace.” A second respondent referenced the April 2016 conflict by saying that “only gains have been made via military means,” while another noted, “There are people who use peace movements for political gains.” Others made statements such as, “Peace is an illusion,” or asked, “What is peace?” A final

respondent explained that, “many peace activists stay silent, because if the people are not ready for peace, saying the wrong thing at the wrong time can hurt the peace process.”

The fourth subtheme, no interest in peace movements, was also supported by 19% of respondents in this theme and denotes the sentiment that there is no peace movement because there is no interest, and even if there is, no interest in forming an official peace group. As one respondent noted, “I have never seen or heard of a peace protest or public movement,” while another said, “There is no case for a peace movement. I have never observed it,” and another stated, “I haven't seen it. I cannot recall any peace initiative, per se. Nothing of significance.” A fourth respondent explained, “There are not enough people interested in a peace movement to form one,” and a fifth said, “There are many individual voices, but no peace groups.” Others shared the sentiment by stating, “There is not a big movement that you may see around,” and, “There is no peace movement. This is probably why it’s called a frozen conflict.”

The fifth subtheme, peace through military strength, was supported by 10% or respondents in this theme and explains the strategy that peace can come from shows of military might. For example, one respondent said, “The bigger the military, the more successful negotiation should be in Azerbaijan’s favor. It is a powerful bargaining chip.” Another explained, “The idea after the April 2016 war is, we fight and we gain territory. We have peace for 25 years and we gain nothing. The military can do a lot better than those who promise peace.” A third respondent noted, “The thought of war is always dominating, especially after the April war in 2016,” and a final respondent stated, “Azerbaijan does not deny a military option exists.”

The sixth subtheme, the people agree with the government on the conflict, was supported by 12% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme describes the idea that Azerbaijanis look to the government for direction on the conflict with Armenia, and currently a peace movement is not the priority. As one respondent explained, “Non-profit peace organizations are viewed as opposition because they are not sponsored by the government.” Another stated, “The government has a pretty justified position and most of us agree with the position.” A third respondent said, “Armenia is so vilified, Azerbaijanis would rather fight the war than blame the government for ongoing conflict.” And a fourth said simply, “People look to the government for direction.”

The seventh and final subtheme, the conflict is too emotional for peace, was supported by 12% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme shares the opinion of respondents who feel that the conflict is not ripe for transformation or resolution, as people are too emotional to forgive at this time. One respondent explained, “Some people have hatred against Armenians because of the emotions surrounding the conflict. So they will not speak with Armenians to make peace.” A second respondent said, “Being peaceful and speaking about making peace with Armenians, most people will not understand you.” A third noted that “when people have injustice in their life, they carry it with them.” Another stated, “If anything Azerbaijani society has been put upon for having lost the conflict. There is a deep sense of resentment, having been abandoned by the world,” while a fifth noted that due to the way Azerbaijan has been treated, that people do not want to “give up”. A final respondent explained that conflict

transformation is also an Armenian issue with, “even if we give up and say we are friends, they [Armenians] will push your hands away. This is the belief.”

The second theme, government factors in peace movements, was supported by 27% of interview respondents. This theme is broken down into four subthemes: (1) Azerbaijan is in favor of a peaceful resolution (2) the government is against peace movements, (3) there are no resources for peace movements, and (4) propaganda prevents peace movements.

The first subtheme, Azerbaijan is in favor of a peaceful resolution, was supported by 30% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme expresses the opinion of respondents that the government of Azerbaijan and its people want peace instead of conflict. As one respondent explained, “People naturally want peace. No one is saying we should destroy Armenia.” Further respondents stated, “Azerbaijan is pro-dialogue,” and, “Azerbaijan’s interest and official message is peace,” as well as, “Azerbaijan wants peaceful settlement,” along with, “the people are inclined toward peace.”

The second subtheme, the government is against peace movements, was also supported by 30% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme explains the notion that the government in Azerbaijan restricts peace movements, and is therefore why there could be a lack of an organized peace group. As one respondent explained, the “Government of Azerbaijan wants to execute its own policy and does not see peace protests as helpful,” while another stated, “The peace program and negotiations with Armenians; everything is monopolized by the government. And the government is taking a very hard stance.” A third respondent said, “Peace movements can be seen as a

destabilizing factor.” Two respondents noted the Azerbaijani President specifically, noting, “Ilham Aliev’s presidency is least welcoming of peace movements,” and, “Ilham Aliev monopolized the peace process and uses it as a tool to facilitate civil society crackdowns.” A final respondent noted, “The more controlled a society is, the less freedom peace groups have to operate.”

The third subtheme, there are no resources for peace movements, was supported by 22% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme describes the notion that even if people wanted to organize a peace movement, that resources are scarce. As one respondent stated, “Peace activists get burnt out because of lack of support. After a long time you get exhausted and you ask yourself, 'what am I even doing here?’” Another respondent noted, “Peace organizations are marginalized. It is difficult to work with people if you are seeking peace.” A third respondent said, “Peace building organizations are more or less marginalized in our society, and they are not popular,” and another stated, “I wish we would have better tools and better funding to fight for peace.”

The fourth subtheme, propaganda prevents peace movements, was supported by 17% of respondents in this theme and expresses the opinion that government propaganda turns minds away from peace processes as an option in the conflict. As one respondent explained, “Due to the role of everyday propaganda we do not automatically think of peace,” while another said, “Young people living under propaganda don't even know about peace initiatives.” Supporting this idea, a third respondent noted, “Younger people who have never had a positive moment or thought about Armenians have no need for peace,” and another said, “When you say in Azerbaijan that you want peace, right now,

as things are, it means that you are betraying the national interest. And you are seen as a coward.

Conclusion:

Question 4's view that peace is weakness supports rhetoric by the Azerbaijani government and the consistent repetitive narrative in the newspaper. This hardened behavior could be a defense mechanism of a wary government which believes, based upon respondent feedback, that it cannot trust its allied third parties, has international support that is not being enforced, is in conflict with a nation holding onto twenty percent of its land, and is afraid to lose more. Having lost so much and with no guarantee of support from others, uncompromising rhetoric and intractable demands may be the only way, in Azerbaijan's eyes, to maintain the status quo much less get back its occupied territories. This mindset from Azerbaijan might also explain why it says it is in favor of peace and participates in the Minsk process for a peaceful resolution, yet respondents do not hesitate to admit they will fall back on the military option.

An important note to make about this question is that respondents usually took peace to mean giving up on their demands and allowing Armenia to keep all territories in exchange for a peaceful coexistence and the end of the troubling ceasefire. This perspective of peace may be why peace movements are seen as unwelcome in the nation, and why there is a lack of resources and interest within the nation to pursue avenues of peace. A number of respondents also mentioned that the government does not favor peace movements due to their potential to destabilize the goals and narratives of the

government. Nonetheless, government support is high in this question in terms of remaining hard and uncompromising over discussions of peace. Due to this, it is reported that many peace seekers suffer burnout due to the marginalization of peace in Azerbaijani society and end up finding the cause futile.

Question 5: In terms of public self-expression, do you think that it is acceptable in Azerbaijan for people to publicly disagree with government decisions on the Karabakh conflict, or act in public protest or dissent? Why or why not?

This question asked for feedback on how comfortable or uncomfortable Azerbaijanis are with challenging governmental narratives or in expressing displeasure with any government decisions or operations on the conflict with Armenia. This question provided responses, which are divided into two themes: (1) Azerbaijani views of dissent, and (2) government influences views of critical public expression.

The first theme, Azerbaijani views of dissent, was supported by 29% of interview respondents. This theme is broken down into four subthemes: (1) protests are only for the support of IDPs, the military, and Karabakh (2) the government of Azerbaijan is not perfect but supported, (3) Azerbaijanis stand in solidarity with the government, and (4) dissent is not public.

The first subtheme, protests are only for the support of IDPs, the military, and Karabakh, was supported by 43% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme discusses feedback that the only demonstrations seen in Baku are actually in support of refugees, IDPs and the military or in support of the territorial integrity of Karabakh. As one

respondent explained, “Nationalist groups will protest sometimes to pressure the government to get back Karabakh,” and another explained, “If you ask anyone on the street what the biggest issue in the country is, the majority will say Karabakh.” Two respondents noted Azerbaijanis advocating for the military, one stating, “A major point where people have protested is military corruption.” Further respondents were concerned with IDPs, stating, “People will criticize the government over the treatment of IDPs,” along with, “Some IDPs will protest about issues in their community, but they do not suffer consequences.” Others explained why the people sometimes become impatient with the government, saying, “We want to back our IDPs. We want to back the preservation of our territory,” and “We were humiliated and expelled from Karabakh. We were separated from the graves of our families.”

The second subtheme, the government of Azerbaijan is not perfect but supported, was supported by 24% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme represents the notion that Azerbaijanis admit their government is not perfect, but it is agreed that they are on the right track by standing by their principles and trying its best. As one respondent explained, “People challenge the government to find a resolution,” while another said, “People want Azerbaijan to be tougher, but it is doing its best.” A third respondent noted, “The Azerbaijani government feels constant pressure from the people to resolve the conflict.” A fourth explained, “The image of government is not good in Azerbaijani society. Sometimes the government is lazy. But their job is not so easy.” A final respondent stated, “You can judge the government for human rights and other things. But [former President Heydar] Aliyev, without him, we would be in a much worse position.

He stopped the war. We would have lost much more. It was a game of survival for the leader of our nation.”

The third subtheme, Azerbaijanis stand in solidarity with the government, was supported by 19% of respondents in this theme and describes the notion that government dissent does not exist because the majority of people support government narrative and policy. Respondents in this subtheme noted that, "the people support the government pursuing policies that will end the war," and, "the majority view supports the government." Another noted, "its a matter of justice. And that's why the government has perfectly utilized this discontent in the fight against Armenia," while another noted that "only a marginal group of people would say that they don't want to continue with the current process anymore."

The fourth subtheme, dissent is not public, was supported by 14% of interview respondents in this theme. This subtheme expresses the view of respondents that dissent of the government exists, but it is not shared in public. Respondents in this subtheme said, “In private, much is tolerated,” along with, "dissenting views exist, but it is not the majority view,” and, “the Azerbaijani population is not aggressive.”

The second theme, government influences views of critical public expression, was supported by 26% of respondents. This theme is broken down into six subthemes: (1) demonstrations are allowed but restricted (2) propaganda prevents dissent, (3) there used to be protest but not anymore, (4) media does not cover public protest, (5) free or critical expression is not welcome in Azerbaijan, and (6) public protest is dangerous.

In the first subtheme, demonstrations are allowed but restricted, respondents expressed the opinion that if people want to protest or show public dissent they may, but only in certain ways allowed by the government. This subtheme was supported by 26% of respondents in this theme. As one respondent explained, "there have been organized protests, but organized events are incredibly restricted." A second respondent said, "There is one space in a stadium that opposition politicians are allowed to gather and rally," while another agreed that, "There is one place far from the city center where you can protest. It is not easy to get there and many people do not participate." Regarding rallies in regard to elections, respondents noted, "Opposition is obliged to do anything they want on the far side of town. Halfway to the airport, you know." And another stated, "Rallies and protests are allowed sometimes during elections, but elections are rigged anyway."

In the second subtheme, propaganda prevents dissent, respondents revealed that one of the reasons there is not much government dissent is due to government propaganda. This subtheme was supported by 19% of respondents in this theme. For example, respondents stated, "In Azerbaijan there is strong pro-government propaganda," and, "The pro-government propaganda and narrative is strong here." Further respondents noted, "After a decade of one way storytelling, there is only one narrative the people are hearing," along with, "The younger generation is more aggressive. Even though they did not experience the war, due to growing up with propaganda they are ready to fight Armenians." One further respondent noted that due to propaganda "those outside of government have been so marginalized. They don't have a lot of traction"

The third subtheme, there used to be protest but not anymore, was supported by 11% of respondents in this theme and shares feedback that government dissent used to be an acceptable thing, but not within the last five to six years. One respondent explained, "The time of big protests was left in the mid 2000's. Protests against living conditions, for jobs, anything in society." A second respondent said, "Any kind of protests or big movements stopped after 2014." And a third noted, "There have been demonstrations back in the 1990's, but starting from 2013 there have been no big demonstrations."

The fourth subtheme, media does not cover public protest, was supported by 7% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme expresses the opinion of respondents that when there is public dissent, people do not hear of it because it is not covered by the news media. As one respondent explained simply, "the media does not cover public protest," while another stated that "even when it does happen, they don't show it on TV."

The fifth subtheme, free or critical expression is not welcome in Azerbaijan, was also supported by 11% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme describes feedback in which respondents noted that even if there was a want to protest, that the popular opinion in the nation as well as the government looks down on that kind of behavior. As one respondent explained, "Any kind of mass protest is not really appreciated in this country; by this government." Another stated that "many statements for peace and against war on social media are openly shamed by the public. There are many examples of this."

The sixth subtheme, public protest is dangerous, was supported by 26% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme expresses the opinion that people are cautious of voicing public dissent or joining a public protest, as the government or police might

act against one or one's family. One respondent explained, "People are scared to join those movements. People have lots to lose like, a job, a family member, or getting arrested. So protesting against government is not that popular." Another respondent stated, "People believe that if they protest, they or their families would be in danger," while another said, "Protest organizers will be arrested, so there are really no protests now," as well as another stating, "If the demonstration is not approved by the government then you will see harsh reaction by the police." Regarding politics or academics, respondents explained, "The government has in the past cracked down on opposition political leaders due to any critical views of the Aliyev governments or historical policy," and, "The government has worked to discredit those who bring critical views or research on the government." A final respondent noted, "It is very uncertain in Azerbaijan. Today you are expression yourself and its ok. Tomorrow its not and you are in jail."

Conclusion:

According to respondents in Question 5, protest is usually in support of government causes such as returning the IDPs to occupied territories and making sure the state of the military is acceptable, because they are impatient for progress after 25 years. Therefore, protest does not happen to counter the government or disagree with it. In addition, the conflict with Armenia is such a priority that some respondents noted Azerbaijanis are willing to overlook governmental issues such as its human rights record, governmental corruption or "laziness" in order to support the cause. However, people still feel comfortable expressing dissent of the government in conversation with family or

friends. This feedback ties into metacontrast, in which ingroups will minimize conflicts and differences within the group for the sake of group cohesion or in the accomplishment of a priority goal, while at the same time maximizing differences with the outgroup it is in competition with, in this case, Armenia.

Although respondents noted high support for the government, they also provided reasons there may be a lack of open disagreement with the Azerbaijani government. Propaganda was noted as a way the government reduces dissent within the nation, as well as making public protest difficult to accomplish. Even if a protest is approved and takes place, respondents noted that Azerbaijani media does not cover the events. Further, some respondents noted that one can be arrested for protesting without government approval, and that retribution against protestors is known to happen.

Question 6: What do you think is the biggest challenge to the Azerbaijani people, if you see a challenge, to both pursuing an end to the Karabakh conflict and building transparency within the Azerbaijani government?

This question is important based on the feedback from previous questions. This is because it asks respondents to think on their previous feedback on governmental narrative and actions, and explain what the biggest challenge in Azerbaijan is, if the respondent sees one. This question's feedback is broken down into three themes: (1) challenges external to Azerbaijan, (2) internal governmental challenges, and (3) internal civilian challenges.

The first theme, challenges external to Azerbaijan, was supported by 47% of interview respondents. This theme reveals the opinion that the biggest challenges to Azerbaijan remain external threats to the nation. This theme is broken down into four subthemes: (1) Russian presence and influence, (2) Armenia is the biggest challenge, (3) Azerbaijan needs support from the international community, and (4) Azerbaijan needs to preserve its territory.

The first subtheme, Russian presence and influence, was supported by 32% of respondents in this theme and explains the opinion that Russia is the biggest challenge to Azerbaijan. As one respondent explained, "The biggest challenge is the presence of Russia in the region." Others noted, "Russia controls the conflict as well as the solution," as well as, "We are not the 'backyard of Russia'," and that there is "relative deprivation due to mistreatment by Russia." Others explained that, "Russia has influenced the failure of past peace agreements that were close to signing," along with, "Russia sells arms to Armenia and Azerbaijan," and, "The interests of Russia has a lot of leverage in the region. A lot happens or doesn't happen because of Russia's influence. It is in Russia's best interest to keep the status quo."

The second subtheme, Armenia is the biggest challenge, was also supported by 32% of responses in this theme. This subtheme expresses the concern of respondents that Armenia is the biggest challenge to Azerbaijan overall. Respondents explained for this subtheme that, "we are doing as much as possible but do not feel that from the other side," and, "Armenia is unable to propose any kind of solution," along with, "Armenia is not cooperating." Further, respondents noted that "Armenia's resistance to negotiation is

the biggest threat to the region," as well as, "Because of Armenian diaspora, Azerbaijan cannot win the favor of the international community," and, "Armenia changes the demographic balance in Karabakh and destroys Azerbaijan's historical legacies." One final respondent explained, "If we take out the Armenian narrative from the territories, there is a lot more we could do with peace building."

The third subtheme, Azerbaijan needs support from the international community, was supported by 25% of interview respondents in this theme. This subtheme highlights responses supporting the thought that the international community needs to pay more attention to the conflict and take it seriously, as well as listen to and respect Azerbaijan's situation. As one respondent explained, a major problem is the "international community not implementing international law." Another explained, "The international community recognizes our territorial integrity, but there aren't any sanctions or anything." Further respondents noted, "People in Azerbaijan feel unfairly treated and abandoned by the West," and, "Western nations should understand the importance of Azerbaijan," along with, "Starting with Obama administration, we lost strategic significance to the United States. Now we don't even exist to the Trump administration."

The fourth subtheme, Azerbaijan needs to preserve its territory, was supported by 12% of interview respondents in this theme. This subtheme notes that the foreign policy of Azerbaijan concerning the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is the most challenging priority, as the potential loss of Karabakh and occupied territories are a threat to its future. Respondents in this subtheme stated, "If Azerbaijan loses Karabakh, it means it cannot retain its statehood. A nation without territorial integrity has no authority," as well

as, "There is relative deprivation from loss of land by Armenia," and, "There is a new generation of kids who grew up in different towns in Azerbaijan. They don't have the connection to the occupied lands. They feel attached to new places."

The second theme, internal governmental challenges, was supported by 17% of interview respondents. This theme discusses the opinion of respondents that the biggest challenges to Azerbaijan are issues that the Azerbaijani government needs to take care of. This theme is broken down into four subthemes: (1) the government is afraid to do anything the people would not support, (2) the government of Azerbaijan needs to prepare citizens for peace, (3) the government does not want a solution, and (4) economic challenges.

The first subtheme, the government is afraid to do anything the people would not support, is supported by 38% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme describes the idea that a major challenge for the Azerbaijani government is it being trapped by its own strict, no-compromises narrative. As one respondent noted, "The government needs to learn that anything less than they're demanding isn't a defeat," while another explained, "Nobody who has political ambition would like to make a mistake on the Karabakh conflict. It is very sacred. No one can touch it negatively." A third added to this thought by saying, "The Azerbaijani government seeks to perpetuate the conflict to secure regime stability."

The second subtheme, the government of Azerbaijan needs to prepare citizens for peace, was supported by 15% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme explains the challenge of the government needing to prepare Azerbaijanis for peace instead of

continued conflict or war. One respondent explained, “You cannot come to a decision without permission from your population. The nations here [Armenia and Azerbaijan] transfer responsibility to their populations. The governments say, ‘We cannot come to solution, my people are victims.’ They do not prepare their populations for peace or for compromise.” Further respondents said, "The Azerbaijani government risks making unpopular decisions by moving forward with resolution,” and, "Azerbaijani and Armenian populations need to be prepared for peace."

The third subtheme, the government does not want a solution, was also supported by 15% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme expresses the opinion of respondents that the biggest challenge for the government in Azerbaijan is its reported desire to continue the conflict and not seek resolution. The respondents in this subtheme stated, "The government needs to want a peaceful resolution to end the conflict," and, "I think maybe for the government its better if the conflict doesn't get resolved. Its a good way to keep people in control."

The fourth subtheme, economic challenges, reveals the notion that the Azerbaijani government’s policy toward economics is the biggest challenge to the nation and was supported by 31% of respondents in this theme. Respondents in this subtheme explained that, "Diplomatic and economic ties in the region are impossible without resolution,” along with, "The oil boom contributed to a disconnect between government and society,” as well as, "Economic and social situation is getting worse due to lower oil production which may force the government to become more open,” and, "Lack of economic

opportunities between Azerbaijan and Armenia. We need to open boundaries to create economic opportunities in the region."

The third theme, internal civilian challenges, was supported by 29% of respondents. This theme expresses the opinion that the biggest challenges to Azerbaijan are certain roadblocks to the development of the Azerbaijani people. This theme is broken down into four subthemes: (1) the need for open civil society, (2) issues of democratization, (3) Azerbaijani people are not ready to forgive, and (4) governmental propaganda and censorship.

The first subtheme, the need for open civil society, was supported by 29% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme expresses the opinion of respondents that the biggest challenge for the people of Azerbaijan is the lack of an open civil society in the nation, meaning a variety of NGOs, research institutions and other social and civil organizations from a variety of sources, both national and international. Respondents in this subtheme noted that the "remobilization of civil society will help with transparency," and that due to lack of civil society there is "insufficient development of civic identity." Another respondent said, "If civil society could come together and work together for a solution we could very easily come to a solution. But the government wants to monopolize this solution." A few more respondents explained the restriction of civil society in Azerbaijan within the last six or seven years by stating, "Civil society did very many things for Azerbaijan. But now they are stopped and the people are alone," and, "There are some situations that I am ashamed of. For example the arrest of my friends in civil society."

The second subtheme, issues of democratization, was supported by 24% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme explains the opinion of respondents that democratization in society would help the people economically, institutionally, and help with transparency issues. As one respondent claimed, "Government corruption in Azerbaijan keeps a lot of development from taking place, which discourages Karabakh from wanting to join Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan must redesign itself as a multicultural, multiethnic, democratic society, and make Karabakh beg to be part of the Azerbaijani experiment." Another stated, "Some western countries respect us because of our oil. I know this. And the reason they don't support us as much as we would expect them to, is because we don't have as many democratic values as they want us to." Further respondents noted, "We have a lot of institutional problems. We have a lot of people jailed. We have a lot of people who are misrepresented. We have problems with democracy," and, "Democratization and liberalization will provide more government transparency. Now it is more and authoritarian government," as well as the specific challenge, "We are sandwiched between Russian and Iran. What kind of democracy is expected of us?"

The third subtheme, Azerbaijani people are not ready to forgive, was supported by 33% of respondents in this category. This subtheme reveals the idea that the biggest challenge for the Azerbaijani people in gaining governmental transparency and resolving the conflict with Armenia is their own emotions. Respondents in this subtheme explained, "The Azeri people are still very emotional about the conflict and dealing with their memories and the loss of their homes," and that a specific challenge is "overcoming the

massacres. Khojaly is a big stain on our memories. Trying to convince someone from Karabakh that Armenians are good." Another respondent said, "As a population we are not ready to move forward. We are not ready to recognize Armenia as neighbors. For our minds, it's very hard because we are victims. So are Armenians, but we lost more than Armenians. Why do we need to compromise? Armenia needs to compromise. This is sitting in our minds."

The fourth subtheme, governmental propaganda and censorship, was supported by 33% of respondents in this category and reflects opinions that describe those two topics as the biggest challenge to the Azerbaijani people in terms of transparency and conflict resolution. One respondent explained that propaganda is used because "the government doesn't really want people to forget this [the war]. We still need to have this memory be alive so that we have this image of the external enemies. This is always a good thing for politicians." A second respondent explained, "The media is controlled, so other who might have alternative views cannot raise their opinions or alternate views for solution." Further respondents said that the "government censorship of social media, TV and press," is a key challenge, and that "working with younger people to build critical thinking skills and resist propaganda," was necessary. Expanding on this, one respondent explained, "The youth don't know Armenians. They don't know them like the older people do. Azerbaijani elders know that Armenians are humans. The youth do not know. They know only an enemy. It is a great radical position."

Conclusion:

The response that external threats are the biggest threat to Azerbaijan follows the governmental narrative we saw in newspapers that Armenian aggression, territorial integrity, and abusive third parties remain themes of consistent concern for the Azerbaijani people. Feedback in this theme reached a point in which respondents admitted that Azerbaijan as a nation would be a failed state if Karabakh and the occupied territories could not be reintegrated, making the conflict a perceived matter of life or death for the nation itself. This makes the conflict seem primordial in nature, as if the land were tied into the DNA of the people and the legitimacy of the nation itself.

Respondents opened up to this question, bringing serious concerns forward about challenges the Azerbaijani government faces concerning the potential resolution of the conflict and interacting with its people. The concern was brought up again that the people need to be prepared for peace. However, challenges to this concern were noted, such as the government being afraid to discuss anything other than success with its people, and the potential situation that the government does not want a solution.

Societal challenges for the Azerbaijani people were noted to be developing a civil society presence in the nation, working on democratizing the government, fighting governmental propaganda, and coming to terms with the emotions in society surrounding the conflict. Economic challenges were also mentioned in themes one and two, highlighting an undercurrent of concern for jobs and development aside from politics and conflict.

Question 7: Although there are NGOs and public organizations within Azerbaijan, do you think that the Azerbaijani government letting NGOs operate more freely, or for example bringing back programs such as the Peace Corps, would be helpful or unhelpful to the resolution of the conflict?

Within the last seven years in Azerbaijan, there has been a crackdown in the nation on civil society, and international organizations within Azerbaijani are very scarce (Human Rights Watch, 2018). This question moves away from governmental narrative in Azerbaijan, but does so to discover if respondents would value sources outside of Azerbaijani governmental institutions and news sources, as narrative or informational authority. The example in this question are NGOs. This question also measures the willingness of respondents to agree or disagree with the Azerbaijani government's official decisions and narrative on civil society. This question's feedback is divided into two themes: (1) international NGOs are beneficial, and (2) international NGOs are unbeneficial.

The first theme, international NGOs are beneficial, was supported by about 40% of respondents. This theme represents the opinion that NGOs benefitted the Azerbaijani people and that the crackdown on civil society in Azerbaijan was a loss to the nation. The theme was divided into two subthemes, (1) NGOs were helpful, and (2) losing NGOs hurt Azerbaijan.

In the first subtheme, NGOs were helpful, respondents noted that NGOs did more good than bad for Azerbaijan. This subtheme is supported by 59% of respondents in this theme. As one respondent explained, "Social mobility in Azerbaijan doesn't exist, so

NGOs were helpful to certain populations." Another said, "Peace corps representatives would leave Azerbaijan and go to the next country and the next country as messengers of Azerbaijani reality. They soaked up our country and they were our representatives abroad. They really were." One other respondent explained the benefits that civil society brought to Azerbaijanis, such as making them "more open minded and providing more opportunities to attend international events where we might see Armenians as well and get exposure to them. They used to provide trainings on interacting with different cultures and how to deal with conflict. And they would bring resources to the country, like jobs." Others had feedback such as, "Of course it would be more beneficial to have those foreign organizations coming back.

In the second subtheme, losing NGOs hurt Azerbaijan, respondents reported that the crackdown on civil society hurt Azerbaijan more than any negative consequences of having international NGOs within the nation. This subtheme was supported by 41% of respondents in this theme. For example, one respondent explained, "The organizations focused on human development, which could have helped the populace shift toward a more tolerant mindset," while another said, "The loss of NGOs have damaged our critical thinking skills and leadership and development opportunities." A third respondent noted, "We lost our chance to integrate in the international community. I don't know how the Azerbaijani government will compensate for this," and another stated, "It was a chance for Azerbaijan to communicate its reality worldwide." Two more respondents reflected, "I think the government misunderstands the value of international NGOs," and, "This is the biggest loss we've had in Azerbaijan since the war."

The second theme, international NGOs are unbeneficial, was supported by about 60% of respondents. This theme represents the opinion that NGOs did not benefit the Azerbaijani people and the nation is better off without non-government sponsored civil society. This theme is broken down into five subthemes, (1) NGOs were not very helpful, (2) Azerbaijan distrusts international NGOs, (3) NGOs bring foreign influence, (4) NGOs don't serve Azerbaijani needs, and (5) Azerbaijan is better without NGOs.

The first subtheme, NGOs were not very helpful, is supported by 30% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme describes feedback from respondents who said that civil society, especially international organizations, did not benefit Azerbaijan as a whole. One respondent noted, "From a development perspective, the changes NGOs brought were marginal compared to the economic and infrastructural development Azerbaijan was gaining from the oil economy." Another said, "Azerbaijan was developing enough on its own that it didn't need foreign NGOs anymore." Further respondents explained, "From the perspective of conflict, I don't think there was any value added," as well as, "NGOs have acted as a bridge between the nations before, but they had no power," along with, "International NGOs were never about peace, but just a symbol of interaction with the West," and finally, "Their influence in society is minimal.

The second subtheme, Azerbaijan distrusts international NGOs, is supported by 27% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme underscores feedback that international organizations in particular are seen with suspicion in Azerbaijan. One respondent explained this with, "The government would see people talking to Armenians, making connections, trying to get Azerbaijanis involved with Armenians, and become suspicious.

Now many of our NGO leaders have been jailed." Another tried to explain the suspicion as, "If you keep this American organization, they're brainwashing our kids, and these kids will revolt against the government." A third respondent stated, "The KGB operating in Azerbaijan considered the NGOs dangerous, and influenced the government that they needed to go." Further respondents said, "Some of us that work with NGOs for peace are seen as traitors," and, "The government thinks that civil society is a threat," and, "This process with the NGOs is showing weakness. It is making us softer." One further respondent voiced the concern, "Peace is suspicious to government and people. We cannot prepare society for peaceful resolution because we cannot work with our society."

The third subtheme, NGOs bring foreign influence, was supported by 16% of respondents in this theme, and highlights responses with the concern that international organizations brought unhelpful and unwelcome influences. Respondents in this subtheme stated, "Some organizations were so big and so politicized. No matter how good their mission, there is an international influence and bias in their work," and, "After revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, there was a fear that NGOs bring international political influence." Further respondents said, "We have legitimate reasons not to trust western democracy," as well as, "The NGOs might be serving the interests of other countries."

The fourth subtheme, NGOs don't serve Azerbaijani needs, was supported by 19% of respondents in this theme and describes the idea that civil society organizations have priorities of their own, and those priorities do not always match with what Azerbaijan needs or wants. Respondents in this subtheme explained, "NGOs of peace

organizations were not trusted because they had an agenda of peace and nothing else,” along with, "Azerbaijan needs NGOs that will not try to alter the focus of the conflict,” and, "It is highly unrealistic for an international NGO to serve Azerbaijan alone,” as well as, "Any NGOs in Azerbaijan should serve the interests of the nation alone.”

The fifth subtheme, Azerbaijan is better without NGOs, was supported by 12% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme expresses sentiments that Azerbaijan is stronger and more focused without civil society. One respondent in this subtheme noted, "Azerbaijan is not interested in the international western values and points of view being developed, so it is developing its own programs with leadership and volunteer opportunities with Azerbaijani values." Two others said, "Azerbaijan is in a better position and more developed than it was with international NGOs,” and, "Peace corps, USAID or other NGOs couldn't internally balance Azerbaijan more that Azerbaijan's own institutions could."

Conclusion:

Question 7 highlighted opinions of NGOs not represented by the Azerbaijani government. While forty percent of respondents found international NGOs to have been beneficial to the nation and its people, more than half said international NGOs were unbeneficial or not noteworthy. A number of respondents noted that Azerbaijan is better off without international NGOs. Also, some NGOs were considered with suspicion for reportedly bringing unwelcome foreign influences, having ulterior motives outside of Azerbaijan's interests, and perhaps potentially destabilizing the nation. Some respondents

stated that foreign NGOs were mediocre at best, and agree with the Azerbaijani government that consolidating all developmental and social organizations into civil society groups under the government or its sponsors was best for the nation.

Question 8: Should the Azerbaijani government engage with international actors, aside from the OSCE Minsk talks and Riga Eastern Partnership (EaP), in order to resolve the conflict with Armenia?

This question addresses another outside influence on Azerbaijan, and that is third party mediating groups. This question is intended to gauge narratives of the Azerbaijani government toward the peace process and the third party partners in the negotiation processes of the conflict. This question is also intended to gauge the sentiment in Azerbaijan on the performance of third party mediators after 25 years of little to no results. Respondents focused on OSCE Minsk almost exclusively. This question's feedback is broken down into four themes: (1) issues with the Minsk co-chairs, (2) Challenges to OSCE Minsk process, (3) the issue is between the conflict parties, and (4) the Minsk talks must succeed.

The first theme, issues with the Minsk co-chairs, was supported by 30% of interview respondents. This theme details a number of issues with the construction of the Minsk process and with the co-chairs themselves. This theme is broken down into five subthemes, (1) co-chairs do not care about a solution, (2) co-chairs are a bad

combination, (3) problems with Russia, (4) problems with France, and (5) problems with the United States.

The first subtheme, co-chairs do not care about a solution, was supported by 28% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme details the opinion that it is in the co-chairs' interests to keep the conflict going, or they are disinterested in the conflict as a whole. One respondent explained this by saying, "The co-chairs are getting paid for bringing resolution. Positions were created for them because of this conflict. They don't do their best. They like keeping some work to do. It is better for them to keep the conflict." Another stated, "I feel like all these countries are looking at this as a job. As funding opportunities. As travel opportunities. And then they can go home and forget about it." And a third noted, "It is not an effective organization. It's just for show. Negotiations for negotiations. No solutions. A place for a government to speak." A fourth said, "The international community has done a great job being outspoken on the territorial integrity of Georgia and Ukraine. But when it comes to the Karabakh conflict, they are not showing that kind of determination to protect territorial integrity principle. So Azerbaijan feels a bit betrayed. They say they support the territorial integrity principle, but they do not defend it like they do for Georgian and Ukraine."

The second subtheme, co-chairs are a bad combination, was supported by 14% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme explains the thoughts of respondents that Russia, France, and the United States are not able to work well together, or experience bias while mediating the conflict. Respondents in this subtheme explained, "The Minsk group is not unified, the dynamic of co-chairs is unbalanced," and, "The co-chairs are

from nations that don't support resolution in the conflict," as well as, "The co-chair nations have some of the largest and most active Armenian diaspora in the world. Why are these three nations the co-chairs? While this triad remains, I do not have faith in the Minsk process." A fourth respondent stated, "There is no common strategy. The co-chairs have no agreements among themselves. They do not propose suggestions or give feedback. Sometimes Russia will make one approach, and sometimes France will do another thing. The co-chairs also show some bias towards the parties in conflict."

The third subtheme, problems with Russia, was supported by 31% of respondents in this theme and discusses the opinion that Russia is not a good choice for a co-chair, is biased, and harmful to conflict resolution. Respondents who provided feedback on this topic explained, "Russia sells military equipment and it has military bases in Armenia. So it is not appropriate to have Russia as part of this group," and, "Russia provides military assistance to Armenia, but is co-chair of Minsk," along with, "Russia believes the Caucasus should be part of Russia, so they are not able to be objective," as well as, "Russia has interests in the conflict, so that member state will never do its best to solve the conflict." Other stated, "No peace brings Russians a better situation than peace. With the selling of weapons and many other things," and, "Russia has influence over Azerbaijan, and it doesn't want Western influence in the Caucasus."

The fourth subtheme, problems with France, was supported by 17% of respondents in this theme and explains respondent opinion that France is not a good choice for a co-chair, is biased, and harmful to conflict resolution. One respondent explained, "France is not very politically correct to be involved. There are a lot of

Armenians in France. They have a law that if you do not recognize Armenian genocide, there was a legal implication for you. So such a strong support for Armenia, you can see clearly that there is a bias.” Others noted, "France provides social support to Armenia, but is co-chair of Minsk,” and, "France has a huge Armenian lobby, so it is challenging for them to think objectively."

The fifth subtheme, problems with the United States, was supported by 10% of respondents in this theme and describes feedback that the United States is not a good choice for a co-chair, is biased, and harmful to conflict resolution. Respondents made statements in this subtheme such as, "The U.S. provides financial aid to Armenia, but is co-chair of Minsk," and, "the U.S. favors Armenia as well,” and, “The United States changes a lot with the changes of the government.” Many respondents in this subtheme also mentioned U.S. Congressional Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act. This Section of the Freedom Support Act (1992) states, “United States assistance under this or any other Act... may not be provided to the Government of Azerbaijan until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.” This Section has since been waived, however this Congressional action has damaged the reputation of the United States in the eyes of Azerbaijanis.

The second theme, challenges to the Minsk process, was supported by 25% of interview respondents. This theme showcases feedback about the specific challenges the OCSE Minsk group faces, which makes it powerless to find a solution. This theme is

supported by approximately forty percent of respondents, and is broken down into four subthemes, (1) the Minsk process is not helpful, (2) mediation is not powerful enough, (3) Minsk has an impossible task, and (4) the Minsk group is not assertive enough.

The first subtheme, the Minsk process is not helpful, was supported by 47% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme describes respondent feedback that since the OSCE Minsk group was created in 1992, it has not been productive at all. Respondents in this subtheme stated, "the Minsk approach has not been useful for 25 years," as well as, "Minsk hasn't been necessarily helpful," and, "We lost our hope to the Minsk group long ago," along with, "The Minsk process has been dead-ended for years and years and years and years and years." Further respondents noted, "The co-chairs are always repeating themselves and having the same meetings over many years with no progress," and, "OSCE now is just a platform for meetings, but no one has many expectations or respect for them."

The second subtheme, mediation is not powerful enough, was supported by 38% of respondents in this theme. This subtheme discusses thoughts that the format of negotiations, mediation, is a poor choice for this particular conflict. One respondent stated that, "They mediate. They cannot propose anything. But we cannot do it between ourselves. We need someone to get us to negotiate," while another explained, "OSCE doesn't have any leverage. It can't make pressure. It can't make any parties come to the negotiating table." Others noted, "the Minsk group has no power," and, "the Minsk process creates framework, but doesn't enforce or act," and, "People blame Minsk. But they are mediators, not arbitrators."

The third subtheme, Minsk has an impossible task, was supported by 19% of respondents in this theme and explains the sentiment that due to the intractable demands of Armenia and Azerbaijan, nothing Minsk does will be helpful to conflict resolution. One respondent in this subtheme noted, "It is impossible for the international community when two nations have the same demands." A second said, "Both sides cannot be satisfied because they have maximized their positions. That is why OSCE can't do anything." And a third stated, "The difficult part is that the parties have opposite positions and they cannot make pressure to either side to make concessions."

The fourth subtheme, the Minsk group is not assertive enough, is supported by 13% of respondents in this theme and details the opinion that Minsk could solve the conflict if it would use its combined influence to push a resolution. Respondents in this subtheme gave feedback such as, "Minsk needs to be more assertive," and, "Co-chairs will not pressure Armenia to comply with international demands."

The third theme, the issue is between the conflict parties, is supported by 24% of respondents on this question and highlights feedback that both Armenia and Azerbaijan are the reason that the Minsk process has stalled. This theme is divided into two subthemes, (1) Armenia is the problem in the Minsk process, and (2) it is Azerbaijan and Armenia's responsibility to take advantage of Minsk.

The first subtheme, Armenia is the problem in the Minsk process, was supported by 56% of respondents in this theme and underscores mentions that the reason the Minsk process is not productive is due to Armenia being uncooperative. Respondents in this subtheme explained, "Minsk must change the position of Armenia," and, "the Armenian

diaspora is a big influence abroad,” as well as, "The Azerbaijani government and people mistrust Minsk because the co-chairs support Armenia in certain ways." Another respondents said, “Armenia will keep Karabakh for 125 years and hope that Azerbaijan will forget about it. They will drag the negotiations on forever.” A final respondent stated, "The aggressor in this conflict is Armenia. Without Armenia, the stalemate would not be the stalemate it is."

The second subtheme, it is Azerbaijan and Armenia's responsibility to take advantage of Minsk, was supported by 44% of respondents in this theme and explains the opinion that Minsk is simply a vehicle for negotiations, and Armenia and Azerbaijan need to take advantage of it. Respondents in this subtheme expressed the idea that, "The talks will last forever unless Armenia and Azerbaijan take advantage of the framework," and, "At the end of the day it's the two nations who need to come together to make a decision." Another respondent said, "Armenia and Azerbaijan don't understand the mediation part of the Minsk group." A fourth stated, “People don't realize the value of mediation. It's not the solution, it's the problem solving mechanism. People expect Minsk to come in and solve the problem. This is not the process." A final respondent said, “At the end of the day, if they're not ready, no one can force the nations to come to a decision.”

The fourth theme, the Minsk talks must succeed, was supported by 24% of respondents. This theme focuses on feedback that the OSCE Minsk group is Armenia and Azerbaijan's best bet for resolution, and therefore should be maintained despite its flaws.

This theme is divided into two subthemes, (1) there is no option other than Minsk, and (2) the Minsk process is important.

The first subtheme, there is no option other than Minsk, was supported by half of all respondents in this theme, and expresses the opinion of respondents that there is no other process than Minsk available to them at this time, and therefore it must be utilized. As one respondent noted, "If Minsk group cannot be helpful, then no other groups could be helpful." Other respondents echoed this sentiment, stating, "What other format remains? I can't tell you," and, "I'm not sure what alternative process there would be."

The second subtheme, the Minsk process is important, was also mentioned by half of respondents in this theme. This subtheme explains the opinion of respondents that even though the process isn't perfect, it is better than alternatives such as war or nothing at all. Respondents in this subtheme stated, "It's better to talk than shoot," as well as, "It is good to have these powers behind the scenes to keep things stable." Others explained, "OSCE is not a conflict resolution mechanism. It's more of a nurse to make sure it doesn't get worse," and "On a pure, rational level they're doing a great job. But you have to have someone help manage the emotions of the issue."

Conclusion:

In Question 8, the majority of respondents revealed that the Minsk process is too flawed to operate successfully. Not only is there concern about the makeup of the co-chairs and their ability to work together, according to respondents there are also individual issues with each co-chair within OCSE Minsk. Reportedly, there is also a

reported imbalance in how the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is prioritized versus other conflicts of a similar nature, such as the Georgia-Russia conflict over South Ossetia, and the Ukraine-Russia conflict over Crimea and the Donbas region.

Additionally, despite these flaws respondents are not sure if any other resources or third party groups are available to them. Therefore, there is a feeling of hopelessness around the Minsk process. It is important to note that while a small number of respondents explained that one of the reasons Minsk was not working is due to maximal demands from the nations, the majority of respondents found fault for Minsk's lack of success being the co-chairs, the mediation format, or Armenia. Even more, a number of respondents wanted Minsk to take a harsher stance in forcing Armenia to comply with international documents supporting Azerbaijani territorial integrity.

Chapter Six: Analysis of Results and Applied Theory

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section has three sub-sections of analysis. The first sub-section analyzes the results of the newspaper narrative from Chapter 4, and the next subsection analyzes the interview results from Chapter 5. The third subsection will compare and contrast the resulting data of these two research methods. In the second section, I will apply theory presented in Chapter 1 to the research results. The theory has been broken down into three sub-sections of analysis. The first subsection will analyze the research data in terms of Social Identity Theory and ingroup bias. The second subsection will analyze the research data in terms of government leadership, trauma narrative, and how these factors have influenced the collective axiology within Azerbaijan. The third subsection will apply theory in the discussion of how the research results indicate an impact in Azerbaijan on conflict resolution practices. It is in this third sub-section that I will fully answer the research question of this thesis.

Section One: Analysis of Research Data

Newspaper Narrative and Analysis:

The analysis of data from thirty-nine newspaper articles published between October and December 2018 are as follows. Azerbaijan did not reference itself often over

the course of the three months of study, with only 17% of articles describing itself or its positions. These positions are related to Azerbaijan's role in constructive negotiations, security and development, having international support for territorial integrity, and being a place Karabakh-Armenians and Armenian prisoners of war would rather be over Armenia or Karabakh. Despite the relatively low percentage of self-reference, it is overwhelmingly positive in nature. This denotes a strong sense of favorable comparison, supporting Tajfel and Turner's research on Social Identity theory. However, the few overall mentions Azerbaijani journalists make to their nation could signal that there is not much need to reinforce this narrative, nor perpetuate it in the quest for positive self-esteem. This could indicate that Azerbaijanis are already comfortable with their self-perception, and do not need a repetitive journalistic narrative on these topics.

Two areas that might contribute to Azerbaijan's security with its self-perception is its consistent defense of territorial integrity and its role as a victim in the journalistic narrative. These two ideas act as a sword and shield for Azerbaijan, territorial integrity as a sword to attack Armenia's position on the conflict, and its victimization as a shield to legitimize the fight against Armenia and shelter the nation from any potential guilt. These two themes were referenced by a number of articles, making them primary areas of concern for the Azerbaijani people. These topics are made all the more pressing when presented by the press as the priorities of the political elite in Azerbaijan.

Other repetitive narratives in Azerbaijani newspapers were on the topic of genocide, cultural destruction, and the plight of IDPs. This consistent revisiting of the past's most traumatic chapters in Azerbaijani history is an example of time collapse.

Again, this is “the interpretations, fantasies, and feelings about a past shared trauma” in future generations (Volkan, 1997, p. 35). By replaying this trauma over and over in the present, journalists and the governmental representatives being quoted are maintaining goal motivation by consistently reminding Azerbaijanis of their loss and keeping traumatic feelings alive throughout generations, contributing to transgenerational transmission, which is “when an older person unconsciously externalizes his traumatized self onto a developing child’s personality. A child then becomes a reservoir for the unwanted, troublesome parts of an older generation,” (Volkan, 1997, p. 43).

On the other hand Armenia is referenced far more than Azerbaijan is, being reported on in 72% of articles on the conflict. References to Armenia are overwhelmingly negative, which is in stark contrast to references to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani topics of report on Armenia were the government being weak, not being able to take care of its people, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan being indifferent to his people, exploiting natural resources on Azerbaijani occupied land, being involved in criminal organizations, disrupting peace processes, violating international law, misleading the international community, being responsible for the ongoing nature of the conflict, being responsible for any ceasefire violations, ignoring international requirements to withdraw Armenia’s military, committing crimes against humanity, committing genocide, and supporting an illegal regime in Karabakh.

Further, The Republic of Artsakh was mentioned in 11% of Azerbaijani newspaper articles on the conflict. These references were also negative, with the regional government being labeled as separatist, illegal, and a puppet regime. The president, Bako

Sahakvan, and foreign ministers are labeled clowns in Azerbaijani newsprint, and European representatives who have met with Artsakh politicians or visited the region have been described as having no honor or dignity.

In viewing these results, it can be seen that Azerbaijani journalism is an example of ingroup favoritism. Based upon how Azerbaijani journalists reference their own nation and its actions as pure, and also references Armenia and its actions as misleading and aggressive, one can see how social differentiation in terms of ingroup favoritism has worked to maximize the differences between the two nations via polar opposite projection. In this binary system, distinctions are highlighted between the inexplicably violent and uncaring Armenia and innocent victim Azerbaijan in journalistic narrative. Interestingly, these narratives within the articles studied presented facts based on quotes or documents from Azerbaijani politicians, Azerbaijani government representatives, or Azerbaijani allies, which supports the idea that ingroup dominant narrative will support the ingroup and delegitimize the outgroup.

Due to this analysis, one can see how Armenia has become a Suitable Target for Externalization (STE). Through newspaper narrative, Armenia has become an object of blame for the events of the past, events of the present, and a predictable and comfortable object of blame for the future. Examples of Armenia as a STE can be found in the descriptors Azerbaijani government representatives and journalists use to describe Armenia. These descriptors are “barbarous,” “egoism,” “medieval usurper,” “aggressor,” “shameless,” “belligerent,” “brutal,” and “cruel”. Descriptors used alongside representatives of the Republic of Artsakh were, “puppet,” “clown,” and “so-called,” and

in reference to European representatives that speak with the Republic as “corrupt,” with one line stating “honor and dignity are concepts that are found only in the pages of the works of great storytellers”. Therefore, despite content that may be factual, negative bias does find its way into Azerbaijani journalism and can work to sway opinion in subjective ways, such as public name-calling, negative attribution, or public shaming. This narrative of Armenia as morally delinquent and worthy of blame allows Azerbaijan to externalize all negative feelings from the conflict onto the outgroup, and allows their conscience to remain unburdened of guilt or blame in terms of war and conflict, in essence reserving all positive emotions for the ingroup.

In the case of Azerbaijan, the consistent narratives of victimization and strong resolve from leaders and news sources further delegitimizes any narrative from Armenia by naming them aggressors, dehumanizes them by removing their moral agency, as well as legitimizes Azerbaijan’s actions as ones of self-defense and basic human decency, and hallows their past as well as their aspirations for the future. In every sense, this has become a conflict between the sacred and the profane. When the stakes are this high, the deep rooted binary system of good and bad makes it extremely easy to support any system that favors the goals of the ingroup, which in the case of Azerbaijani reinforces a system of support for government institutions and leadership who take a hard line on the outgroup. At this point, we see the narrative system in Azerbaijan creating high levels of ethnonationalism. As we have already discussed, ethnonationalistic governments are more prone to developing prejudices, exhibiting high levels of identity saliency and high axiological balance, and makes conflict escalation much easier (Volkan, 1997, p. 23).

Overall, Azerbaijani newspaper narrative fulfills the four mechanisms of normative historical narrative, which helps to establish national identity (Korostelina, 2017, p. 172). Normative narrative is the third function of historical narrative, along with the meaning of national identity, and evaluation of historical narrative (p. 172). The normative function helps establish social boundaries, defines national power and authority, and legitimizes group decisions and activities both in the present and in planning for the future (p. 173). This normative function consists of four main mechanisms that help with the development of all of these social processes.

The first of these four mechanisms is recognition, which is using historical narrative in order to identify problems in society associated with an aggressive outgroup in the past (Korostelina, 2017, p. 186). Newspaper narrative in Azerbaijan does this by repeating traumatic events of the past, and reminding readers of Armenia's past actions against Azerbaijan. The second normative mechanism is assessment, which is framing the problems identified as injustices within the historical narrative (p. 186). Within Azerbaijani newspapers, this can be seen in the narrative pointing to miscarriages of justice in Armenia not following international demands to withdraw from occupied lands, and the injustice of not being held accountable for genocide and crimes against humanity. The third normative mechanism is connotation, which is the establishment of national identity from historical narrative, which promotes meaning, motivation, and agency (p. 186). The narrative within newspapers defines the priority goals of the Azerbaijani government and the major threats to the Azerbaijani people, motivating them to be resilient in the face of Armenian aggression. And the fourth normative mechanism is

prescription, which defines the strategies and plans for group action based upon historical narrative (p. 186). This mechanism can be seen as newspapers quote government representatives threaten the use of the military, note that Azerbaijan will never back down, or that IDP's will never forget their land. Due to these functions and mechanisms of narrative forming national identity, one can see how governmentally driven newspaper narrative can work to influence the group's biases and goals in the conflict with Armenia.

Summary:

Azerbaijan's self-reference in newspapers was overwhelmingly positive, denoting a strong sense of favorable comparison. The two top areas of concern for Azerbaijan within newspapers were the issue of territorial integrity, and Azerbaijan's reported victimhood by the government of Armenia. Following these concerns, newspaper reference to Armenia and the government in Karabakh is overwhelmingly negative in Azerbaijani newspapers. Armenia and Karabakh were the focus of the vast majority of articles on the conflict, and covered their crimes against humanity, violations of international law, and other immoral or unethical practices as reported using quotes from Azerbaijani political leaders.

Common narrative themes within Azerbaijani articles on the conflict denote ingroup favoritism, based upon how Azerbaijani journalists reference their own nation and its actions as pure, yet references Armenia and its actions as aggressive. This has led to a binary narrative system in newspapers in which Azerbaijan is always good, and Armenia is always bad. In light of this Armenia has become a STE, with Azerbaijani

newspapers becoming comfortable with negative labels and name calling against Armenian and Karabakhi policies and politicians. Further, collective traumas are replayed by Azerbaijani newspapers consistently, keeping past pains and struggles alive in the present day and making it harder for the Azerbaijani people to heal. These theoretical functions fulfill the four mechanisms of the normative function of historical narrative, those being recognition, assessment, connotation, and prescription.

Interview Narrative and Analysis:

The interview results also yielded valuable data. Some data corresponded with newspaper narrative, and some diverged from it. Based upon respondent feedback there was backing across all interview questions for the Azerbaijani government, the military, IDP's and refugees, and territorial integrity, which weaved a narrative of Azerbaijani governmental and social support throughout each conversation. The most discussed topics from the interviews were governmental support, strong support for the military, IDPs and refugees, territorial integrity, and Armenia's burden of blame.

On the topic of governmental support, a majority of respondents agreed with the Azerbaijani government in its actions and decisions on the conflict with Armenia. These respondents said they would stand by the government even if there were other topics in Azerbaijan they were concerned about. These internal concerns were related to economics, propaganda, freedom of expression, and opportunities for social development among other issues.

Strong support for the military, IDP's and refugees was another topic that was a theme throughout interviews. A majority of respondents mentioned these groups over the course of interviews, all mentions being supportive in nature and signifying they are honored members of society. Examples of support include respondents noting that protesting or demonstrating in Azerbaijan is on behalf of the military or IDPs and refugees, or protesting for the swift return of Karabakh. Therefore, protest and demonstration in Azerbaijan is described as an act of social support instead of an act of governmental dissent. In addition, the military, IDP's and refugees were noted by many respondents as a reason that peace was not supported in Azerbaijan. This is because respondents feel a responsibility to this population, and want to see IDPs succeed in returning to their homelands, and see the military succeed in its defense of Azerbaijan. Due to the reported suffering and sacrifice of these populations peace is not appropriate, according to respondents, and nor is compromise.

The issue of territorial integrity is also reported as a high priority in Azerbaijan, with topics on territorial reintegration, conflict resolution, negotiation, and third party support all dealing heavily with territorial integrity. Respondents returned to this topic throughout interviews, noting that territorial integrity is a key principle in Azerbaijani foreign policy, national values and historical ideals, making it a non-negotiable aspect of the conflict.

In addition, the opinion that Armenia is to blame for the conflict and the continuation of the conflict was mentioned across many interviews. It is also important to note that no respondents made mention of Azerbaijan being a party of blame in the

conflict. A number of comments were made throughout interviews that Azerbaijan might need to compromise or take more advantage of the OSCE Minsk negotiation process, yet respondents overwhelmingly agreed that no matter what action Azerbaijan takes, it is the responsibility of Armenia to respond to Azerbaijan's demands to end the conflict.

One further topic that weaved a narrative thread throughout interviews was propaganda. This topic was mentioned by a minority of respondents, however this topic was still mentioned periodically across a number of questions. The concern regarding anti-Armenian, pro-Azerbaijani, or pro-conflict propaganda is the opinion amongst respondents that it creates radicalized mindsets, inhibits discussion on peace or dialogue, socially marginalizes opposition within Azerbaijan, inhibits critical thinking, and targets youth who have become sponges for the messages being disseminated.

Aside from interview narratives that stretched across entire conversations, there were also a number of topics that were consistently mentioned on certain questions across the respondent pool. The following topics are those, which respondents independently stressed on certain questions creating a discernable pattern in the data results.

The first topic deals with third party mediation and conflict resolution formats. This topic expresses the concern that the current mediation format is not right for the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and that the current leaders of the mediation, the OSCE Minsk co-chairs of Russia, France, and the United States, are not a good combination. Feedback expresses the concern that the nations making up the Minsk co-chairmanship are not nations that can work together well, and that each individual nation is biased against Azerbaijan, or for Armenia in some way. Further responses regarding the format

of negotiations detail concerns such as needing a negotiation style that would provide more pressure to solve the situation such as arbitration, or using international court systems.

Another topic reported by respondents is that there is no solution to the conflict. Even if many respondents entertained the thought of reconciliation and reintegration, a number noted that their true belief is that there will not be any resolution to the conflict, at least not in their lifetimes. Looking into interview data, this is mainly due to the opinion that Armenia will never give up the territories or withdraw its military, Azerbaijan will never compromise, third party negotiating formats are not forceful enough, or third parties such as Minsk co-chairs have a beneficial interest in keeping the conflict unresolved. There was also feedback, although limited, that the nations of Armenia and Azerbaijan have found the conflict beneficial for social control and regime stability and therefore neither would make a move to end the conflict.

A third topic reported by many respondents is that peace is weakness, and would mean loss to Armenia. Popular words respondents associated with peace are “weakness,” “softness,” and “giving up.” Respondents also described peace itself as unconstructive, an “illusion,” “negative,” and “not popular.” This view on peace resulted in reported lack of faith in peace processes, and also responses explaining that the conflict is still too emotionally charged to think about peace. In addition, peace was reported as not being popular due to a desire to not give up on those who have made a military sacrifice, the current military, and IDPs and refugees. Others also noted that peace could come through

military means. This would be a way, according to respondents, to secure peace without backing down, looking weak, or compromising.

A fourth topic that created a pattern across interview data results is that the Azerbaijani government is a threat to free expression. I was both appreciative and concerned to receive this feedback. Hopefully, this feedback to me about their lack of ability to express themselves meant I was trusted as an interviewer. However as interviews were taking place in Baku I was concerned that perhaps some respondents were holding back for that same reason. Either way, the fact that a number of respondents independently reported this issue in interviews makes it an important topic to cover. Specific issues noted in this category are that the government makes it difficult to get approval for a public protest or demonstration, the demonstration site is not easy to access, the demonstration site is not near the city center, news media does not cover public protests or demonstrations, it is not unusual for protest and demonstration organizers to be arrested, and people who participate in protests or demonstrations fear government retribution such as losing a job, the arrest of oneself or a family member, or harassment by police. Respondents also noted that those who speak out against the conflict or the government can be marginalized by society.

Opinions on reintegration of Karabakh and occupied territories were both positive and negative. While a number of respondents said that reintegration would be a positive thing, stating that all tensions toward Armenia from Azerbaijan would cease, good will would be re-established over time, and that Azerbaijanis would welcome having Armenian neighbors, almost an equal number noted that reintegration would be a

negative thing. This was due to respondent opinion that if Azerbaijan won, Armenia would be bitter and resentful, which could cause further conflict. In addition, some respondents explained that they did not want to speak to or be friends with Armenians, and that resolution would be political only and not personal in nature. A number noted that they were not comfortable living side by side with Armenians out of fear of revenge acts, and some even noted that Armenians could be in danger from emotional Azerbaijanis as well.

One final popular interview topic were opinions on cooperative vs uncooperative strategy for conflict resolution. Respondents who expressed interest in cooperative strategies were a minority, noting strategies such as creating a joint-economic area within Karabakh that both Armenia and Azerbaijan could benefit from, Azerbaijan providing high autonomy to residents of Karabakh, fighting propaganda and radicalism, governments and third parties preparing the people for peace and compromise, and Armenia returning some territories and Karabakh, but keeping others. The majority of respondents who supported the uncooperative approach expressed interest in strategy based on forcing a decision or concession from Armenia. Uncooperative strategies include Minsk forcing a decision from Armenia and Azerbaijan, using international courts, or the military option, which includes either taking back all occupied land by force or using military threat or action to force Armenia into negotiations that will yield results.

Summary:

Interview results largely supported the Azerbaijani government as well as political policies on the conflict with Armenia. The most discussed topics amongst respondents were support for the military, support for IPDs and refugees, the importance of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, and Armenia's burden of blame for the lasting conflict. However, interview respondents also expressed concerns about the level and manner of anti-Armenian or pro-conflict propaganda in Azerbaijani society. One further concern is the opinion that the Azerbaijani government is a threat to free expression, making public protest difficult and marginalizing peace organizations.

Common ideas regarding conflict resolution in interviews, were that the current mediation format with OSCE Minsk was not right for the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, the Minsk co-chairs were not a good fit for the conflict resolution process, that there may not be a viable solution to the conflict, that peace is weakness, and that peace building and peace movements are seen with suspicion. Regarding conflict resolution strategy, the majority of respondents supported uncooperative strategies, including using military force to reclaim Karabakh or international courts to force Armenia into arbitration.

Opinions on the reintegration of Karabakh were both positive and negative. Some respondents noted that all tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan would cease, while others explained that it would be difficult for the two peoples to live together again despite any form of political peace or reunion with Karabakh. Even if respondents had a positive outlook on reintegration, they still expressed a want for third party peacekeeping oversight in Karabakh to maintain stability.

Similarities and Differences in Research Method Results:

In looking at both newspaper narrative and respondent feedback from interviews, there were a number of categories in which narrative was similar. Both interview respondents and newspaper media shared support for the government, the priority of territorial integrity, that this principle must be included in any resolution between Armenia and Azerbaijan, declarations that the international community is in support of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, and that the burden of blame for the conflict and its ongoing status rests with Armenia.

However, there were also a number of differences between newspaper and interview data. It was clear to see that newspaper narrative followed a certain path and covered certain topics with almost redundant detail. Newspapers took to quoting the same government representatives on similar topics, all in support of Azerbaijan or for the admonishment of Armenia or the Republic of Artsakh. This created a clear pattern of information presentation in the interest of protagonistic self-representation, and the delegitimization of the other.

In interviews, I found that individual respondents still agreed with and even mirrored the overall governmental narrative as presented by the press, but there was room to deviate from that narrative as well. Even when describing their support for the government, some respondents would note that on the other hand there are issues within Azerbaijan such as economic concerns, fear of government and police backlash in cases of dissent, and feelings of shame over the jailing of people in civil society. Opinions were also voiced about how the government could handle negotiations better, handle the

conflict differently, or re-open a culture of civil society. However, it is important to note that for a handful of these respondents who were open to discussing injustices or imbalances within their nation, they still seemed willing to overlook these issues in the current moment in the interest of supporting the nation's cause of regaining occupied territories, returning IDP's and refugees to their homelands, and retaking Karabakh.

Section Two: Application of Theory

Social Identity Theory and Ingroup Bias:

In data gathered from both newspaper articles and interviews, it can be seen how Social Identity Theory applies to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Narratives in Azerbaijan describe the distinction between the ingroup (Azerbaijan) and the outgroup (Armenia). Azerbaijan's narrative history, conflict narrative, political narrative, and the narrative on militarized border between the nations serve to clearly define the meaning of Azerbaijani group membership and position in the conflict over Karabakh and the occupied territories. Ingroup and outgroup memberships, to revisit Hogg (1995), represent common characteristics, attributes, and values which have a shared emotional significance (p. 260).

Attributes of ingroup can feature a congruous trait such as having a common fate and loyalty to the ingroup (Tajfel, 1974, p. 72). Based upon interview feedback, Azerbaijani group membership in terms of the conflict displays features such as support for Azerbaijani histories, support for Azerbaijani territorial integrity, support for government demands against Armenia, support for Azerbaijani IDP's, refugees, and the

military. At the same time, the image of Armenia is presented in the terms of outgroup threat, including a sense of victimization and loss due to the 1988-1994 war with Armenia, and a sense that Karabakh is the most significant existential threat to the nation of Azerbaijan, meaning a fate without Karabakh threatens the legitimacy of the nation itself. These values, characteristics, and fates have created a basis for “we-ness” (Volkan, 1997, p. 91), or ingroup membership, which has led to a more collective nature in Azerbaijani thoughts and actions on the conflict. These values, characteristics, and fates have also been developed in opposition to Armenian realities of the conflict, and therefore the social boundary lines between them are rooted on the narrative of victimization and threat.

This oppositional narrative pattern can be seen in both newspaper articles and interview results and is indicative of differentiation, a natural part of social categorization in which social boundaries are established and sharpened through constant compare and contrast between ingroup and outgroup (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, p. 260). Over time this consistent compare and contrast morphs into patterns of simplified complex ideas, for example symbols or narratives (Korostelina and Rothbart, 2006, p. 35). As Karabakh has been an actively embattled region since the most recent Azerbaijani independence in 1991, this could be one of the base motivators behind Karabakh becoming an important symbol for Azerbaijan’s history, a symbol of Azerbaijani territorial integrity, and a symbol of the dream for a completed ethnic and national homeland. In addition, social comparison could be a base mechanism behind the repetitive narrative within Azerbaijani

newspapers, and similar repetitive themes from interviews, consistently ingraining the differences between the two into the collective memory.

As mentioned above, social boundary has become quite dense between Armenians and Azerbaijanis due to negative interactions along social boundary lines, establishing ingroup and outgroup relations based on rivalry and conflict. This means that comparison between Armenia and Azerbaijan is based on favorable comparison and unbalanced generalized collective axiology. Because collective identity pulls from social comparison, in the case of Azerbaijan, collective identity is building off of negative comparisons with Armenia. This can be seen from a handful of interview respondents who noted that, even if Azerbaijan accomplished its goals by regaining all territory and a political settlement was achieved between the nations, there would still be concerns about Armenians and Azerbaijanis living together again. There was also feedback stating that no political solution could convince certain respondents to be friends with or speak to Armenians. This means that even beyond resolution, there could still be ethnic discrimination or tension between the two groups; something that interview respondents noted. This shows the risk of this collective identity built on negative perceptions of Armenians persisting, as if it is ingrained in culture itself, and could last long after a resolution is achieved. Due to this, even when the rivalry and conflict are in the past the dense social boundaries could remain, meaning consequences far past this particular conflict's resolution.

According to Social Identity Theory, one reason groups will compare and differentiate with other groups is to enhance and ingrain a positive self-esteem in the

ingroup (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, 260). Self-esteem building and preservation can be actively seen in Azerbaijani newspaper articles on the conflict, which describe Azerbaijani accomplishments such as security and development, and willingness to do whatever it takes to make a positive impact at the negotiating table. In addition, Azerbaijan highlights quotes of support from representatives of other nations such as Russia, the United States, and Turkey, as well as describes the international support it has on priority goals like territorial integrity.

On the other hand, Azerbaijani newspaper articles act as a vehicle for placing blame on others, especially its main rival Armenia, for the current state of the conflict. To do this, newspaper articles describe in detail the negative aspects of Armenia, its government, and its supporters. Through the constant repetition of this narrative in news media with a heavy emphasis on quoting government representatives and making the narrative authoritative in nature, Azerbaijan is ingraining the idea that Azerbaijan is good and does good things, and Armenia is bad and does bad things. This is an example of a fundamental attribution error in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Referring back to Chapter 1, this refers to the ingroup underestimating the situational pressures on the actions of an outgroup, and instead overestimated the disposition of the outgroup as responsible for its own behavior (Pettigrew, 1979, p. 464). This means that an outgroup in conflict with the ingroup could be seen as fundamentally evil in disposition, simply because its fundamental actions in conflict work against the ingroup. In newspapers, Armenia is never given the benefit of the doubt and its motivations never analyzed, instead given a role made to take responsibility for the conflict and its perpetuation. In

addition, it is seen as responsible for all negative events and outcomes in Karabakh and the occupied territories. Fundamental attribution error can also be used to avoid negative self-attribution and therefore protect ingroup self-esteem (p. 464). This can be seen in newspaper narrative in which Azerbaijan is the nation working toward security, development, and negotiations.

One thing that can be established from this fundamental attribution error is that the Azerbaijani government has fostered ingroup favoritism. In referencing Turner (Terry & White, 1979), ingroup favoritism does not just result in ingroups favoring themselves over the outgroup, but does so even in cases where the group reaches beyond available evidence to do so (p. 187). While newspapers in Azerbaijan may report accurate information on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, the fact that only negative information is reported on Armenia and its allies is indicative of looking only to show information that would foster ingroup favoritism. In addition, it is important to note that the majority of sources on Armenia in Azerbaijani newsprint are from Azerbaijani authorities. This is not to say that Azerbaijani politicians are misleading, but it is interesting to see that the only available evidence Armenia's enemy has on Armenia, as reported by the press, is incriminating. As I did not evaluate the accuracy of reported facts in Azerbaijani newsprint on the conflict, nor speak to many journalists in my time in Baku, this would be an area for further study. However there are signs to suggest that Azerbaijani newsprint reaches beyond available evidence to only publish material that would foster ingroup favoritism on behalf of Azerbaijan.

Due to the existence of ingroup favoritism within Azerbaijan, I propose that this condition has led to a negative bias against Armenia. According to Turner (Brown and Tajfel, 1979), there are four major conditions in which ingroup favoritism can lead to bias, ones that we can apply to the research results (p. 191). The first condition for outgroup bias is that individuals must define their self-concept per their ingroup membership. Within Azerbaijan there are clear definitions of Azerbaijani self-concept, including its definition of territory and the honoring of groups such as the Azerbaijani military, and IDPs and refugees. This self-concept is largely collective, per interview results and newspaper narrative.

The second condition for outgroup bias is that intergroup competition must be salient in nature. Because ingroup concept in Azerbaijan has been partially created as oppositional to Armenian ingroup concept, contact along the social boundary between these groups activates identity values and traits that are salient in nature. An example of salient identity activation would be values of territorial integrity versus self-determination, or the roles of victim and aggressor. The third condition for outgroup bias also fits into this example, which is that the outgroup also has a salient identity and is a relevant comparison to the ingroup. Armenia and Azerbaijan have common yet incompatible territorial goals, making one a relevant comparison to the other as long as the competition exists.

The fourth and final condition of outgroup bias is that there is some ambiguity in the “comparative dimensions” between the groups, meaning that bias comparisons are not always clean cut or clearly obvious to others. An example of this condition is that

Armenia and Azerbaijan are close in culture and history, as some interview respondents have noted. However, this particular conflict has ignited competition between the nations which has led them to highlight differences between each other. This means that there are crucial differences to Azerbaijanis and Armenians due to the conflict, such as the inherent value differential between territorial integrity and self-determination in each nation, which may not be immediately clear or valuable to others. Due to these four factors operating together to perpetuate rivalry, highlight differences, and define oppositional group concepts, I conclude that a negative bias has been created in Azerbaijan against Armenians, aided by internal narratives of enemy and threat from government and newspaper print.

Due to the Social Identity Theory mechanisms of categorization, differentiation, favorable comparison, and ingroup bias based on a relationship of territorial and historic rivalry, intergroup competition has resulted. Due to ingroup solidarity being reinforced via the emphasis of an enemy outgroup in Azerbaijan, negative perceptions and feelings are overwhelmingly spent on the outgroup. This has resulted in cases of metacontrast, in which intergroup differences are minimized and intragroup differences are maximized in order to reduce intergroup friction and feature similarities, while highlighting its distinction from outside groups (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, p. 261). An example of this comes from interviews, in which respondents reported being aware of and even upset about a number of things within Azerbaijani society, but being able to overlook them issues until the conflict with Armenia is resolved. These are issues such as lack of freedom of expression, economic issues, and wanted social development improvements.

Therefore, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict may not just be perpetuating conflict between nations, but also sweeping intergroup conflict in Azerbaijan under the rug.

A few concerns about this were mentioned in interviews. A minority of respondents explained that the reason Azerbaijan was having trouble resolving the conflict is actually that the government does not want to resolve it. This is because, according to respondents, the population of Azerbaijan is easier to control if they can be distracted by a conflict and threatened by an enemy. This makes the central government a protector and an advocate via first order positioning, and able to sweep “lesser” issues away by pushing foreign threat narrative, controlling media output, restricting civil society access to the people, and restricting freedom of expression. While a majority of Azerbaijanis did not agree with that view, other opinions did surface such as the Azerbaijani government being hesitant to resolve the conflict quickly as it is afraid of the people after spreading a no-compromise narrative, and that a solution to the conflict would mean that Azerbaijan would turn introspective for the first time in a long time.

When metacontrast involving favoritism, bias, and competition impacts a group on the ethnic and national level, this can lead the ingroup to reject the outgroup while favoring their own ingroup (Bar-Tal, 1990, p. 73). This means that ingroup favoritism leading to bias can cause one to see “one’s own group (the ingroup) as virtuous and superior, one’s own standards of value as universal, and outgroups as contemptible and inferior” (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006, p. 926). Within Azerbaijani newspaper articles this can be seen through reporting that Armenia has destroyed Azerbaijan’s cultural landmarks, committed genocide against Azerbaijan, tortured Azerbaijani prisoners, and

exploited Azerbaijan's cultural resources among other things, making all associations with that group profane. In reference to its own nation, articles will reference Azerbaijan's right to Karabakh with mentions of the graves of ancestors, ancient mosques and cultural achievements, thereby hallowing the ground in that region. In addition articles reference honored groups such as IDPs, refugees, the military, and the families of soldiers lost in action, and calls for defining events of Azerbaijani victimization by Armenia to be memorialized through film, making Azerbaijani people, lands, and struggles honored or almost sacred.

In result of metacontrast, ingroups are more likely to have uncooperative relations with outgroups (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006, p. 926). One can see the popularity of uncooperative measures in dealing with Armenia in interview results and newspapers, with narratives describing the military option, for Armenia to obey international requests to return Azerbaijani territories, for arbitration or international criminal court processes, and for OSCE Minsk to force Armenia into negotiation or decision. Overall, this negative intergroup competition, has split the environment into polarities. Therefore, it has become very easy for people to discern who the enemy is and who is an ally. As Korostelina (2007) mentioned, this can spiral into conflicts between diametrically opposed concepts like the "sacred and profane" (p. 35).

Yet how did it come to be that Azerbaijani newspaper articles on the conflict became so biased and binary, and how did it come to be that interview respondents followed suit in a number of key ways? This has to do with first order positioning and dominant narrative by those in power influencing the collective axiology of the group.

Summary:

Applying Social Identity Theory to the Conflict, one can see how the newspapers and interviews have established a narrative of ingroup (Azerbaijan) versus outgroup (Armenia). Azerbaijani collective values of support for territorial integrity, the government, IDPs, refugees, and the military, a shared sense of victimization in the conflict with Armenia, and shared collective traumas stemming from the conflict have created a sense of “we-ness” among Azerbaijanis, establishing clear social boundary lines between Azerbaijanis and Armenians. Over time, repetitive narrative on these topics from newspapers, government statements, and published histories have ingrained the conflict into the collective memory of the Azerbaijanis. Using these narratives as a tool for social comparison, Azerbaijanis have differentiated themselves from Armenians to the point of binary consideration: Azerbaijan is good and Armenia is bad.

Due to this, blame is routinely placed on Armenia for the current state of the conflict and for the previous history of the conflict, allowing Azerbaijan to leave itself largely free of blame for the war and resulting years of stalemate. This kind of social comparison in which positives are reserved for the ingroup and negatives are reserved for the outgroup has resulted in ingroup favoritism within Azerbaijan, and likewise to negative bias against Armenia. Because the two nations are in conflict over Karabakh and seven other occupied territories, these comparisons have become competitive in nature with both nations attempting to prove why it deserves Karabakh over the other. In the

narrative from newspapers, one can see that uncooperative relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia is the result of this conflict and competition.

One result internal to Azerbaijan, which stems from this international conflict was reported by interview respondents who noted that a number of internal social and economic issues are unlikely to be addressed or reformed as long as the conflict with Armenia is taking precedent. Due to metacontrast, where ingroup differences are minimized and outgroup differences are maximized, “lesser” conflict may be glossed over or avoided by the ingroup while “larger” and more pressing conflicts with outgroup are dealt with. This could be a reason why Azerbaijanis report a struggle in finding the platforms or resources to address a number of reported internal issues.

Leadership and Trauma Narrative shape Collective Axiology:

It is one thing to discuss the ways in which the theory presented in this thesis applies to group psychology and conflict in Azerbaijan. However, allow me to return to the research question of this paper, which is: What is the prevalent national narrative created by the Azerbaijani government about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia, and how does it impact peace building efforts in Azerbaijan? In the following pages I will discuss how this group psychology came to be as the result of Azerbaijani governmental narratives, before moving on to how peace building efforts might be impacted.

As explained in Chapter 1, governments and their leaders are able to use determinant judgments to strengthen group cohesion and create support for the nation

(Cobb, 2013, p. 36). Determinant judgments are the promotion of a dominant narrative that will accomplish this goal (p. 36). In the case of Azerbaijan, the dominant narrative in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is that Azerbaijan is a victim whose territory is occupied by Armenia, which is a dishonest aggressor state. This dominant narrative can be seen in Azerbaijani newspaper articles, which print quotes from Azerbaijani government leaders. Over time with consistent repetition, it has become an ingrained national ideology.

This governmental narrative is backed up by histories from government-affiliated groups such as the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and Karabakh Foundation, which publishes an Azerbaijani Karabakh history while also actively dismissing Armenian claims to the region. In addition, government statements supporting Azerbaijan's territorial integrity to Karabakh and delegitimizing any Armenian claims are released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Congress of the Azerbaijani Community of the Nagorno-Karabakh Region Public Union. Many times, newspapers quote these government statements in articles supportive of Azerbaijan, and critical of Armenia. Therefore it is clear that the dominant narrative in Azerbaijan is established and perpetuated by the government, its partners, and the newspapers that report on governmental narrative.

One may think it odd that newsprint might be listed as a source of governmental narrative, as the newspapers are only quoting governmental representatives. However, the fact that the Azerbaijani newspaper studied as part of this research happened to report on the conflict with the government itself as its main source, and actively discredited sources outside of the government which reported alternate views or empathetic views to

Armenia or its allies makes it a prime example of government dominant narrative news reporting. This is indicative of Rom Harre's (2009) "first order positioning" theory by the Azerbaijani government and newsprint, which is the promotion of one narrative over all others, legitimizing their own narrative while delegitimizing others (Cobb, 2013, p. 61).

Alongside first order positioning, these results support Zandberg's (2010) assertion that newspapers play a role in narrating the past in an arrangement that can justify present activities (p. 7). In addition, journalists "serve as a platform for socio-cultural struggle and, as such, they can grant authority to society's storytellers" (p. 7). In this case the storytellers are the political elite of Azerbaijan. We can see the government's narrative authority through the telling and retelling of topics of political priority, such as territorial integrity, Armenian threat, and concerns for security. These governmental priorities are given weight through the consistent reminders of past traumas, such as Armenian crimes against humanity and genocide against Azerbaijanis, along with stories of IDP and refugee resilience.

Further, Zandberg asserts that trauma theory (for example Volkan's chosen trauma, transgenerational transmission, and time collapse) can impact journalism in striking ways. He explains that journalists who tackle trauma can affect "how different authoritative voices confront trauma in different ways by representing and constructing different discourses," (Zandberg, 2010, p. 18). These discourses are often "compulsively rehearsed" in journalistic narratives, and trauma can be "acted out" until there is no differentiation between the past, present, and future of the issue (p. 19).

Trauma theory could also be an essential parts of Mead's theory of time, although it was developed years after his death. Here we revisit the concept of the restructured past which is "redefining the meaning of past events in such a way that they have meaning in and utility for the present" (Maines, Katovich, & Sugrue, 1983, p. 163). This can be applied to Azerbaijani journalism's event prioritizing, which has shaped the group narrative and retelling of history in Azerbaijan for generations to come. As this happens, Sandole (2002) references Volkan by saying that these traumas "can become part of the 'heavy hand of the past' determining one's identity which, together with a hypothesized 'need for an enemy'... bifurcate the world into ingroups ('us') and outgroups ('them'), with 'them' being the ones who violated 'us' at some point in time, or at frequent points in time, the likelihood being that they will do so again" (p. 18). Therefore, through the eyes of Azerbaijani newspapers we can see the struggles of the past inform the present, and then shape a future containing threat and distrust that can lead once more into conflict. According to Sandole, this is part of what makes identity conflicts so intractable. What he calls "deep-rooted historical memories of assault and loss among different ethnic identity groups" is always ready to reignite under the proper circumstance (2002, p. 11).

This idea leads to another type of time experience Mead hypothesized. This type of time is known as a mythical past, and it refers simply to a symbolic creation of time used to manipulate social relationships (Maines, Katovich, & Sugrue, 1983, p. 164). In order to create and establish advantage in a certain situation, these mythical pasts are purposefully presented the way they are in order to shape behavior or shift perception of another (p. 164). "They are created, used, and accepted as one interest group is favored

over another. The use of mythical pasts, therefore, implies asymmetry. It elevates one identifiable group over another, and denies certain equivalences between the groups” (p. 168). Therefore, mythical past exists as a tool to manipulate or retain advantage in a power dynamic. This dynamic can be seen in the narrative of the morally correct Azerbaijan, and the morally corrupt Armenia.

One of the reasons the dynamic narrative of the Azerbaijani government is so important is because it is maximal and uncompromising. When uncompromising and uncooperative views make their way into a people’s narrative syntax or “system of meaning,” this can have an impact on the overall reinforcement of plots, themes, and characters in the group (Cobb, 2013, p. 67). Because narratives are used to build moral constructs, they become integral parts of a group’s culture and memory (p. 22). Inserting oppositional, rigid views into a group’s culture, or for example into their national identity can affect the conflict mobilization potential of the group. This is because, as established in Chapter 1, components of national identity tie heavily into shared values and characteristics, social categorization, self-esteem development and reinforcement, metacontrast, group narrative, collective axiology and balance, national boundary, binary value systems, and intergroup competition. Therefore, when something like national history becomes competitive, national territory becomes contested, and national narrative becomes a balance between legitimizing self and delegitimizing other, ethnonationalism can rear its head and work against cooperative, non-zero-sum strategies.

One important social function that is impacted by these maximal narratives making their way into Azerbaijan’s culture is its normative positioning. Korostelina

(2007) explained in Chapter 1 that these are “moral obligations, rights, duties, and expectations that guide individuals,” as they and their groups develop in their quest for positive self-identity. (p. 34). Because these obligations, duties, and rights help individuals orient themselves within society and because they are often attached to some form of government, these shared norms and guiding principles can become part of the collective axiology of a society and nation.

As a reminder from Korostelina and Rothbart (2006), collective axiology is a value system that packs up all of the norms, taboos, appropriate actions, necessary tasks, societal values, commitments, and worldviews into criteria for evaluating ingroup and outgroup membership (p. 4). To create a collective axiology, a group draws upon its narrative history and uses categories of right and wrong to shape the group’s collective “obligations, expectations, requirements, demands, and rights” (Korostelina, 2013, p. 39). There are four main criteria necessary for shaping a collective axiology, which we can apply data from newspaper and interviews to (Korostelina and Rothbart, 2006, p.47).

The first criteria for creation of a collective axiology is consensus amongst the ingroup on the perception of the outgroup and its behaviors. When considering Azerbaijan’s collective axiology on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, it has been made clear by newspaper content and interview feedback that the social boundary between Armenians and Azerbaijanis is very dense and refined. This means differentiation is at its peak and the consensus amongst the Azerbaijani population based upon research data is that is that Armenia is the aggressor and the enemy to the Azerbaijani people.

The second criteria for creation of a collective axiology is consistent stability of ingroup attitudes, values, and behavior. In comparing the similarities between newspaper narrative and interview narrative, the consistency can be seen. Repeating from above, some of these commonalities are shared views of support for the government, the priority of territorial integrity overall in the conflict, declarations that the international community is in support of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, and that the burden of blame for the conflict and its ongoing status rests with Armenia.

The third criteria for creation of a collective axiology is ingroup resistance to change their ideas and beliefs about the outgroup. In interviews, some respondents noted that even if political circumstances change and the nations come to a settlement, their negative feeling toward Armenians would never change. In addition, the narrative histories of Azerbaijan as expressed by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and Karabakh Foundation specifically address and reject Armenian views of history, noting that they are aware of alternate versions of histories but cannot accept them. Third, despite twenty five years of the same narrative on the conflict, a majority of respondents note that no matter what happens their requests and demands toward Armenia cannot change. This shows an uncompromising set of beliefs on the conflict and in regard to Armenians.

The fourth criteria for creation of a collective axiology is the ingroup's range of differentiation from outgroups via categorization. This fourth criteria is very clear to see, in that Azerbaijanis have differentiated themselves from Armenians to the point that this is a conflict between the sacred (Azerbaijan) and profane (Armenia).

Due to these criteria, we can answer one portion of the research question: What is the prevalent national narrative created by the Azerbaijani government about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia? As we put the research and analysis together, we can see that the prevalent national narrative is an uncompromising mixture of ingroup support and outgroup discrimination, which has affected the unbalanced generalized collective axiology of Azerbaijanis. This makes them susceptible to bias, ethnocentrism, and uncooperative mindsets and behavior in terms of the conflict with Armenia. However the question remains, how does this impact potential peace building efforts in Azerbaijan?

Summary:

This section looks at how governments influence their people's collective axiology through narrative. Government leaders in Azerbaijan use determinant judgements to promote the dominant narrative that Azerbaijan is a victim whose territory is occupied by aggressor state Armenia. This dominant narrative is used to strengthen group cohesion in Azerbaijan, and create more support for the government. The Azerbaijani government perpetuates this dominant narrative via the publishing of Azerbaijani Karabakh histories through government supported cultural organizations, releasing political statements from various government ministries and unions, and through newspapers which quote these political statements and other politicians as their only source. These sources of information for the Azerbaijani people are also used to delegitimize Armenian claims to Karabakh, essentially providing one, single acceptable

narrative in terms of Karabakh, the occupied territories, and Armenia. This promotion of one dominant narrative over all others is known as first order positioning.

Another topic that is also part of the government of Azerbaijan's first order positioning are the traumas that Azerbaijanis have experienced due to conflict. Newspaper articles, and the politicians quoted in the articles, often reiterate reported Armenian crimes against humanity and acts of genocide, as motivators to continue the struggle against Armenia. This consistent recalling of past traumas has led to a mythical reimagining of the past, in which only traumas are focused on in order to shape behavior and shift perception of Azerbaijanis in the conflict with Armenia. This adds to the binary system of the conflict, which reinforces the narrative of morally correct Azerbaijan, and morally corrupt Armenia.

This binary system has encouraged the Azerbaijani government's narrative to become uncompromising, ultimately working against cooperative strategies and working toward zero-sum modes of thought. This dominant narrative and constant reminder of inflicted trauma has impacted Azerbaijanis' collective axiology, which encourages them to draw upon their narrative history to shape their worldviews, norms, and societal values. In the conflict with Armenia, this Azerbaijani collective axiology looks upon Armenia negatively, disallowing cooperative behavior with that nation and leading to support for zero-sum tactics such as the military option and forced arbitration, as seen in interview responses.

Impact on Conflict Resolution Practices:

One important aspect of a collective axiology is that it has different levels of generality. Groups which are more homogenous and committed to their value and belief systems, as Azerbaijan is, can be more resistant to change (Korostelina, 2013, p. 39). Therefore as established in Chapter 1, when high collective axiology is added to social competition, conflict escalation is more likely to take place.

Conflict escalation can often times take the form of hostility, which many interview respondents supported in the military option and in discussions of force being a better option than peace. According to Brewer (1999), hostility is commonly borne out of five different categories: moral superiority, perceived threat, common goals, social comparison, and power politics, which we can now apply to the research (p. 435).

The first category for engaging in hostility stems from moral superiority. In regard to newspaper data, it can be seen that there is a sense of moral superiority of Azerbaijan over Armenia when it is reported that Azerbaijan is committed to security, development, peace, and other positive topics. On the other hand Armenia is reported to support criminal regimes, have politicians that are members of criminal organizations, act to mislead the international community, tries to break down peace processes, and has an unrepentant history of genocide and crimes against humanity. Interview results also indicate a moral difference in Armenians and Azerbaijanis, with some respondents noting that they would be uncomfortable with Armenians living in their cities, speaking with Armenians, or considering one a friend.

The second category for engaging in hostility is perceived threat. This category is active in the minds of interview respondents, who noted that peace is weakness. Those in

this subtheme were concerned that Armenia would take advantage of Azerbaijan any chance it got, stating that any hint of softness would result in a risk of total loss for them. Further, some interview respondents noted that if Armenians and Azerbaijanis were to ever live together again they would request third party oversight to protect against hate crimes or ethnic cleansing. Azerbaijani newspapers also make consistent reference to the victimization of Azerbaijan by Armenia, keeping threat narratives alive by retelling stories of genocide and ceasefire violations, even labeling Armenia an “aggressor nation”.

The third category for engaging in hostility is common goals. This category is one of the main reasons for the conflict as the common goal for both nations (aside from other territorial disputes such as Armenia’s occupation of seven Azerbaijani regions) is the territorial governance of the Karabakh region. The initial 1988-1994 war over Karabakh ended in the ceasefire, which has yet to be resolved as of 2019. This fierce and uncompromising competition over the region has kept the borders militarized and both nations ready to jump back into war, as was seen during the April 2016 offensive.

The fourth category for engaging in hostility is favorable social comparison. Because Azerbaijanis and Armenians share some common history and culture in a number of areas, as stated by interview respondents, this category is similar to the collective axiology criteria of differentiation. In order to preserve ingroup positive self-esteem, the conflict’s binary system has created the sacred (Azerbaijan) and profane (Armenia) to stress that the two groups aren’t anything alike despite history and culture. This can be backed up by newspaper results in which positive characteristics are always

reserved for Azerbaijan, and negative characteristics are always reserved for Armenia and its allies, creating a very distinct differentiation between the two nations.

The fifth category for engaging in hostility is power politics. Repeating from Brewer (1999) in Chapter 1, power politics happens when political entities deliberately manipulate narratives of outgroup threat in the interest of securing or maintaining political power (p. 437). While research in this thesis cannot conclude that Azerbaijan's government is manipulating narratives in the interest of maintaining political power, it has been concluded above that the government is indeed manipulating narrative, stoking ethnonationalism amongst Azerbaijanis, and bolstering bias against Armenia in ways that will perpetuate conflict attitudes.

Due to all five categories for capacity for hostility being fulfilled, one can see the conflict spiral that Azerbaijanis are trapped in due to governmental narratives of conflict. This pattern of competition joined with moral superiority, perceived threat, common goals, social comparison, and power politics, is enough for Azerbaijan to not only devalue and delegitimize but also dehumanize Armenians to the point in which hostility is not only acceptable, but justified.

Reviewing Bar-Tal (1990) from Chapter 1, delegitimization is a group process in which outgroups are morally excluded from ingroup consideration (p. 65). There are five distinct features that lead to delegitimization: the use of salient identity traits for categorization, the denial of the outgroup's humanity, the rejection, contempt, fear or disgust of the outgroup, the knowledge that the outgroup can endanger one's ingroup (competitive threat), and the justification of harming the outgroup due to its perceived

subhuman nature (p. 72). All of these features are fulfilled in Brewer's five categories for hostility and Korostelina and Rothbart's criteria for shaping collective axiology.

However, because violent conflict is more likely to break out in times of delegitimization, it is important to note these features as well when considering a group's capacity for hostility (p. 74).

One feature of delegitimization in particular, the justification of harming the outgroup due to its perceived subhuman nature, leads to dehumanization.

Dehumanization is the process of "labeling a group as inhuman by characterizing members as different from the human race" (Bar-Tal, 1990, p. 65). There are four mental processes groups use to dehumanize another, which can also be applied to the Armenia-Azerbaijani conflict. The first is trait characterization, in which the unfavorable traits ascribed to an outgroup by a competitive ingroup are labeled as unacceptable, such as using the label of "aggressor" (p. 66). This can be seen in Azerbaijani newspaper articles as well as in quoted rhetoric from Azerbaijani political representatives. The second is outcasting, which is another form of social categorization in which members of the outgroup are excluded from the environment of the ingroup as their qualities transgress on the positive aspects of the ingroup (p. 66). This is represented by some interview respondents not being sure if they could welcome Armenians back into the community, even after a hypothetical resolution. The third process is use of political labels upon the outgroup, signifying that they are a threat to the ingroup's institutional systems and basic social values (p. 66). This can be seen in newspaper articles reporting Armenian crimes against humanity and other moral shortfalls, as well as in interview feedback that there is

no way Armenia could be seen as correct in terms of the conflict. And the fourth process is group comparison, through which negative names are associated with the outgroup “such as ‘vandals’ or ‘huns’” (p. 67). In newspaper articles, the Armenian and Artsakh government and representatives were labelled “clown,” “puppet,” “barbarous,” “medieval usurper,” “corrupt,” or “aggressor”.

In estimating how Azerbaijani governmental narratives of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict impacts peace building efforts in Azerbaijan, I will look to Korostelina’s (2011) 4-C Model for Conflict Analysis, which presents four stages of identity based conflict, from light to heavy conflict (p. 102). In Chapter 1, we reviewed the stages of Comparison, Competition, Confrontation, and Counteraction. Based upon the research yielded from studying Azerbaijani newspaper articles on the conflict as well as interviewing experts on the conflict, I assess that this conflict is at the most heavy Counteraction level. In review, Counteraction happens once groups become antagonistic (p. 104). When this occurs, things such as security and threat become primary concerns, and differentiation highlights the group’s values and worldviews in opposing ways, as we have seen in this chapter (p. 104).

However, there is a lot more to it. These negative perceptions in the Counteraction stage have become ingrained within Azerbaijan’s collective axiology, mirroring the adoption of beliefs and attitudes we see in interview respondents from repetitive governmental narratives in histories and newspapers. In a binary framework such as Azerbaijan’s, moral superiority develops, exclusion of the outgroup takes place, dehumanization occurs, and violence becomes acceptable (Korostelina, 2007, p. 105).

When the ideal that an outgroup threatens the very existence of the ingroup develops, this can cause the ingroup to react violently at any provocation. Because conflict mobilization attitudes seem to be high amongst interview respondents, and because of interview responses denoting that Azerbaijan could not exist without Karabakh, I consider this conflict to be at the highest level of identity conflict, in which violence and escalation is not out of the question, and attitudes and beliefs hard to change.

In conclusion, the research data have led me to believe that the more uncompromising Azerbaijani identity has become based upon governmental narratives of the conflict, the more willing it has become to engage in conflict behavior. Although the positive narrative of the government in reference to its own desires is to have their refugees and IDPs return to their homelands, to engage in productive negotiations with Armenia, and to contribute to security and development in the region, its negative narrative on Armenia perpetuates a mindset amongst the population that compromise and peace are losing concepts, that loss is unacceptable, and that the nation cannot survive without Karabakh. Included in this mix are newspapers that repeat traumatic events to keep the pain of the conflict alive, creating an emotional prison for Azerbaijanis and leading to feedback that the conflict might still be too painful to move forward from. This paired with unquestionable support toward the military and support for the military option makes a recipe ripe for escalation, not resolution. Due to these results, I believe that the governmental narrative of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict impacts potential peace building efforts negatively in Azerbaijan.

Summary:

Groups which are more homogenous and committed to their value and belief systems, as Azerbaijan has been shown to be, can be more resistant to change based upon studies on collective axiology. Therefore, when a group has a high level of axiological generality and experiences competition from another group, conflict escalation is more likely to take place than compromise. This conflict escalation can take the form of hostility, which a number of interview respondents supported in interviews with the military option. Hostility takes place due to five factors, which are moral superiority, perceived threat, competition over common goals, maintaining favorable social comparison, and using power politics. In the case of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, the research shows that these five factors have been fulfilled via influence from Azerbaijani government narrative.

By fulfilling the criteria for hostility and conflict escalation, and including the previously established delegitimization of Armenia, dehumanization is possible. Dehumanization happens when hostility is not only possible, but can be justified. The criteria for dehumanization is also fulfilled by the data results of the research. When comparing these criteria for dehumanization, delegitimization, high collective axiological generality, conflict escalation, and hostility to Korostelina's Model for Conflict Analysis, using the advancing conflict stages of Comparison, Competition, Confrontation, and Counteraction, it was concluded that the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, from the perspective of research on Azerbaijan, is at the fourth and most heavy Counteraction level.

Due to these results (and the results of the sub-sections above), it appears that the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is in an uncooperative, zero-sum, counteractive stage. In addition, social conflict attitudes and collective axiologies suggest that it would be more likely for the conflict to escalate instead of de-escalate at this time. Therefore, it has been concluded that the governmental narrative of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict impacts potential peace building efforts in Azerbaijan negatively.

Conclusion

The key findings of this research show that the governmental narrative within Azerbaijan on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Karabakh and the occupied territories negatively impacts potential peace building processes. This is due to a number of factors, which have resulted from one dominant Azerbaijani government endorsed narrative on the conflict. A number of these factors are: using competitive histories to delegitimize Armenian historical claims to Karabakh, disseminating uncompromising governmental rhetoric via newspapers, delegitimizing and demoralizing the Armenian government and residents of Karabakh, disseminating pro-Azerbaijan and anti-Armenian propaganda, restricting the presence of international civil society, and marginalizing non-governmental opinions on the conflict by restricting peace movements and protests, censoring media coverage of dissent, and punishing those who express governmental dissent.

These actions by the government of Azerbaijan have helped foster ingroup favoritism in Azerbaijan, which has led to ingroup bias, ethnocentrism, and even discrimination against Armenians. Concern amongst interview respondents include propaganda leading to “brain washing” and “radicalism,” and younger generations which are influenced by negative messages and traumatic memories. According to some respondents, because Azerbaijanis under 25 may have never met an Armenian they lack

the ability to humanize them, and therefore have ingrained feelings of rejection and offense toward Armenians. Others were affected as well, resulting in comments from some interview respondents that even if the conflict were resolved in the favor of Azerbaijan, they still would not want to interact with Armenians in any interpersonal way. National and cultural values such as territorial integrity are seen as non-compromisable within Azerbaijan, with government and journalistic narrative supporting these views, and therefore negotiation on this topic is not currently tolerated. In light of this non-compromise, non-negotiable mindset, peace and peace building processes are looked upon with suspicion, and free public expression of peace, or anti-war sentiment is viewed as unpatriotic or unsupportive to the cause of territorial integrity.

Lack of success in negotiations with international groups such as OSCE Minsk has led to general disinterest in or dismissal of peace processes amongst the Azerbaijani population, with some respondents noting that there was overall lack of faith in peace processes. Because Azerbaijan has been able to gain back some territory via military operations in April 2016, the respondent pool does not deny the possibility of supporting the military option over continuing a 25-year-old peace process which has yielded no tangible results for Azerbaijan.

Due to these many factors, I have concluded that the approaches to peace building processes should be revised in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, and conflict management practices (OSCE oversight and the Bishkek Protocol) should be maintained. An eye should be kept on this conflict however, as both Azerbaijani newspaper narrative and interview respondents noted support for military escalation, meaning this conflict is more

likely to devolve back into full scale war instead of evolving into strategies of peace; at least at this time.

There are areas of further research that I propose based upon the results seen in this thesis. The main focus of continued research, in my opinion, should follow the concerns of a handful of interview respondents and look into developing tolerance and resilience within Azerbaijani society. The study would focus on how to prepare society for compromise and peace, build resilience after experiencing deep-seated trauma and loss, developing constructive ways to channel negative emotions, provide training and education on the myriad options for peace processes available to Azerbaijan and Armenia, work to lessen negative propaganda and being wary of its effects on younger generations, build critical thinking skills and provide more than one option for news and knowledge surrounding the conflict, address concerns with the OSCE Minsk process and co-chairs, and re-evaluate policies around civil society in Azerbaijan.

One further research study which should also occur, is a replica of this study with the focus being government narratives on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict in Armenia. It is imperative that both parties of the conflict be studied, as just understanding one nation's complex and unique narrative is only half of the puzzle. In order for a peaceful resolution in this conflict to take place, both nations must not only be willing, but fully ready. This can only happen if the governments and the people of both nations are at a place where it is not only acceptable to hypothesize about true peace without marginalization, but speak of it on realistic and action-based terms. This means that there will most likely be years of internal work within Azerbaijan and also within Armenia,

with each nation working independently and introspectively to change conflict narrative and build resilience. Only then would both nations be able to consider addressing each other constructively, and enable a process of finding perceived common ground that can lead to conflict resolution, which is what both nations claim to desire.

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