

“The impact of international and regional developments on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process”

A one-day conference organized by the Russian and Eurasian Studies Centre, St Antony’s College, Oxford and LINKS (Dialogue-Analysis-Research).

Oxford University,
Tuesday, 11 November 2014.

Summary of Proceedings

This event was organised in the framework of the EPNK Partnership



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and funded by the European Union.



Summary of Proceedings

- 1) Around sixty academics, diplomats, politicians, analysts and NGO activists gathered at Oxford University on Tuesday, 11 November 2014. Coming from the South Caucasus and wider Europe, they discussed “the impact of international and regional developments on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process”. The meeting was organized by the Russian and Eurasian Studies Centre (RESC) at St Antony’s College, Oxford, and LINKS (Dialogue-Analysis-Research). It took place within the framework of the EPNK process, supported by the European Union. A program of proceedings and a list of participants are enclosed as Appendix A and B of this summary.
- 2) **Professor Dan Healey**, (Director of RESC) welcomed participants on behalf of the organizers. He thanked the people who helped put the event together, and the European Union for providing funding within the framework of the EPNK initiative. Professor Healey remarked on the symbolism of the fact that the event was being held on Remembrance Day, and invited participants to stand for a two minutes silence in memory of those killed in conflict.
- 3) **Dennis Sammut** (LINKS and Oxford University) also welcomed participants and explained the objectives of the meeting. He said the conference was intended to focus attention on the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at a time when the international community is dealing with a number of other crises. Better understanding and analysis of the conflict and genuine dialogue between different stakeholders is necessary to resolve the conflict, said Sammut. He added that since the ceasefire agreement of 1994, the Karabakh conflict has simmered on at a low intensity. Some question why we need to focus on it at all, since the number of people killed is small compared to other global conflicts. Yet this is a very narrow approach, said Sammut. He said the Karabakh conflict, directly or indirectly, negatively affects the life of millions of people. It threatens the peace and stability of the whole Caucasus region, and the risk of violence escalating is now higher than it has been over the last two decades.
Sammut said understanding the nature of the conflict is of critical importance, though noting that this may sound presumptuous in the presence of so many people who experienced this conflict first hand, and live daily by its consequences. Yet, said Sammut, even people who have been experiencing the conflict on a daily basis have to ask themselves: “What are we dealing with here? How can we frame this conflict and its dimensions? How does it fit in the complicated mix of regional and international factors and developments? Do we actually understand how the nature of this conflict has changed over the years or are we trying to resolve a conflict that does not exist anymore?” Sammut said that the conference should contribute to a robust analysis of the situation. A number of “sacred cows” have emerged in the negotiating process, that for one or other of the sides are considered untouchable. The negotiating format itself – the OSCE Minsk process – has indeed become the most sacred of sacred cows, but there are others, he said. There are problems in the use of discourse. How many sides are there to the conflict: two, three or four? Is this a conflict between the two communities of Karabakh? Can one speak of a Nagorno-Karabakh Republic as a side to the conflict? Around these sacred cows and disputes over terminology, taboos have emerged that need to be challenged. However this needs to be done through open dialogue, said Sammut, highlighting this conference’s inclusivity. Different stakeholders from different constituencies were present. Whilst this conference was not unique or unprecedented, this kind of broad participation is still rare. Dennis Sammut said the dialogue required participants to listen as carefully as they speak, and was hopeful participants will do both with an open mind. Such dialogue has been the hallmark of the

EPNK partnership that for the last five years has provided a framework for civil society work on the Karabakh conflict with the support of the European Union. Sammut said this is a dynamic framework where partners often have different views on strategy and implementation, but it is based on mutual respect and solidarity, and a unanimous commitment to a peaceful solution of a conflict. Sammut then introduced the theme of the first panel: **“An elusive peace: The quest to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict,”** and the two panelists, **Dr Walter Kemp** of the International Peace Institute in Vienna, and **Ambassador Herbet Salber**, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Conflict in Georgia.

- 4) **Dr. Walter Kemp** started by saying he considered it very fitting that the meeting coincided with Remembrance Day, especially in the year the world marks the centenary of the start of World War I. He referred to two best-selling books that have come out to coincide with this anniversary: *The Sleepwalkers* by Christopher Clark, and Margaret MacMillan’s, *The War That Ended Peace*. The speaker noted that in Macmillan’s book, she criticizes the leaders of 1914 for their failure of imagination and a lack of courage in standing up to those who said war is the only way. These failures eventually drew Europe into a devastating war. Her book ends by saying “there are always choices”. Walter Kemp asked if all parties involved in the Karabakh conflict understand the implications of their actions: after more than 20 years of demonizing the other side, who has the courage to say that there is an alternative to the conflict? Kemp also said that this needs to be done before it is too late, for as one of the Minsk Group mediators had told him recently, “we have never been so close to peace, and to war, at the same time”.
- 5) Walter Kemp also said Europe is currently facing its deepest crisis since the Cold War. Russia has been trying to pull key states like Ukraine and Georgia into its sphere of influence. From a western perspective, these developments have been interpreted as justification for NATO enlargement. The countries of the South Caucasus sit along the quasi-tectonic boundary between east and west. Why should they be forced to choose? Is it possible that they should be able to benefit from both? Furthermore, most principles included in the Helsinki Final Act have been violated. In many ways the Minsk process now offers a rare opportunity for major players to work together, and can be the entry point for far bigger discussions on a pan-European plan. What if the presidents of the three Minsk Group Co-Chair countries sat down together with the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan and tried to hammer out a deal, or called for a regional peace conference, with Georgia, the Black Sea countries, Iran and others participating? Kemp said he had recently participated in a meeting looking at lessons for today from 1814 and 1914. Even if it sounds somewhat simplistic, the impression was that in 1814 leaders came around the table to be architects, and more or less created a century of peace. In 1914, they sleepwalked into a global war. Do leaders today want to be architects or sleepwalkers? Can the mood be improved at the OSCE Ministerial meeting in Basel on the 4th and 5th of December? Kemp reminded the audience in Oxford that August 2015 will mark 40 years since the Helsinki Final Act, another anniversary providing much food for thought.
- 6) Kemp said the Karabakh conflict cannot be looked at or resolved in isolation. Resolution would open up co-operation in energy, trade, tourism, transportation and other spheres. It would also turn the region into a key hub between north and south, east and west, and the Caspian and Black Sea, as well as contributing to a rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey. The speaker said the international community needs to make more emphatically the case that settlement is more attractive than the status quo, and better explain the opportunity costs. The Lund recommendations of 1999 could act as an inspiration, showing that a solution does not necessarily mean splitting up states. We

can escape the endless, fruitless discussion of self-determination and territorial integrity, and explain the vast range of possibilities that allow self-determination without breaking up the state, and not only in the context of Nagorno-Karabakh. We can also learn from Scotland and Catalonia. It is not necessarily an all or nothing calculation.

- 7) Walter Kemp suggested that the start of a proper peace process around the Karabakh conflict will add a sense of urgency, but there are still questions as to what that peace process will look like. Kemp said the focus should be on power sharing and good governance, not just on political or emotional slogans. The question of security guarantees also becomes more pertinent since the Ukraine crisis, which has shown the failure of guarantees, such as the one given to Ukraine in Budapest in 1994. Kemp said there were a number of other questions that require further consideration: What should be the role of the international community in a future peace operation? What is the role of OSCE? In the short term, how could tensions be reduced along the line of contact? How can distances between track 1 and track 2 be shrunk, to make better use of confidence building measures? How can contacts between people be increased? How can we encourage reconciliation? Walter Kemp concluded by saying that a new narrative was needed to generate ideas which help parties choose the path of peace.
- 8) **Ambassador Herbert Salber**, the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the South Caucasus and the conflict in Georgia opened his intervention with some personal reflections. He said he had first become familiar with the conflict when he joined the German Delegation to the OSCE in Vienna as Deputy Head in 1996 where on Thursday mornings at the Permanent Council he regularly witnessed long verbal exchanges between Armenia and Azerbaijan, during which there were often moments of confrontation. He left Vienna in 2000 and returned in 2006 as Head of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, now again attending the meetings although in a different capacity. It was sad to observe, he said, that almost nothing had happened in between, and the confrontational exchanges continued. Now 20 years after the ceasefire in 1994, one could therefore justifiably ask if there are any prospects for a settlement, or even limited progress?
- 9) Ambassador Salber said that the position of the European Union towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is clear-cut. The EU fully supports the activities of the Minsk Group and does not try to replace or undermine these efforts. What the EU is doing should be in complementarity with the work of the Minsk Group. At the same time, the EU aims at staying fully informed, and the EUSR frequently meets the leadership on both sides to this end. Ambassador Salber noted that he seeks opportunities to become more involved in the process, including by getting access to Nagorno-Karabakh. He said that he very much hoped he could visit Nagorno-Karabakh in the future. The representative of the EU should be able to see what is happening in Nagorno-Karabakh with his own eyes. Such visits to Nagorno-Karabakh would not have any status implications nor by any means suggest EU recognition of the entity.
- 10) The EU has much to offer in the process of resolving the conflict, Salber said, especially in the field of confidence-building. The EU is in itself an outstanding example of confidence-building. It is a major guarantor of peace in Europe and in the world. Why does the EU want to be informed so closely about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict? For two simple reasons: This conflict exists in the EU neighbourhood. The area is very close to us. Historically, geographically and culturally there are strong European links to the region. Second, if one day a solution is found, many eyes will be on Brussels to contribute in terms of financial support and security arrangements. Salber said that to start getting closer to resolving the conflict, the parties must themselves mobilise sufficient political will. The international community can only assist and encourage. The

decision to move towards peace must come from the parties. Ambassador Salber emphasised that important stakeholders, in particular Russia, must do more to encourage the two parties. He said that he had read very carefully the statements on the Kremlin website after the August meeting in Sochi between President Putin and the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Putin referred to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as inherited from the past and a legacy of the break-down of the Soviet Union implying that Moscow has a special responsibility. Salber said that he thought this responsibility exists, and that Moscow has a very specific role to play here.

- 11) Ambassador Salber said that the way the parties are dealing with the conflict and its resolution was not very helpful. In the Madrid meeting of the OSCE in 2007, there was largely agreement on the Basic Principles for a settlement, and we all know what these principles are about. However, in order to move forward, a policy of small, pragmatic steps on practical matters was needed. Such steps might then help in finding a breakthrough to a bigger settlement. Ambassador Salber said that he hoped the EU could help shifting the logic of conflict resolution with regard to Nagorno-Karabakh to a more pragmatic approach. It would open up for an important avenue to reaching a lasting solution. However, he acknowledged that it could be difficult even to reach agreement on smaller steps.
- 12) The discussion following the presentations of Dr Kemp and Ambassador Salber focussed mainly on the small steps approach as outlined by the EUSR. Ambassador Ibrahim referred to the recent meeting between the two presidents in Paris and wondered if the move, from the discussion on principles to that of a more tangible legal framework in the form of a comprehensive peace agreement, could also be seen as a pragmatic step. Ara Margarian said that a comprehensive peace agreement could not be considered a small step and wondered if Ambassador Salber could give examples of small steps that could help the peace process move forward. In reply, Ambassador Salber said that a comprehensive peace agreement was the highest level of pragmatic steps possible and while the sides, indeed, should strive at moving forward towards a peace plan, smaller and less ambitious steps might have a better chance of being realised in the short term. By small steps he meant the whole tool box that could be imagined under the headline of "confidence-building measures", as they have been applied in other conflict situations in Europe and beyond. Such measures would certainly need to be focused on people-to-people contacts and could include projects and activities, for example, in the fields of transport, economy, trade, etc, although he would not put forward specific proposals at this stage. He emphasised that the support by the sides was essential for such measures to work. As a concrete example of a measure being equally beneficial for the sides, the EUSR mentioned the mechanism proposed by the Minsk Group Co-Chair, and agreed by the Presidents at the Paris meeting on 27 October, based on which information on persons missing during the armed conflict could be exchanged. Walter Kemp said that there was a risk that if embarking on a number of small measures outside the parameters of a bigger plan one would end up going in circles, or even help entrench the status quo. This was perhaps one of the lessons learnt from the experience of South Ossetia before 2008. There had to be a master plan for otherwise a series of small unresolved conflicts rubbing against each other could well create a spiral that would get out of control. Concluding the discussion, Dennis Sammut said that the opening panel had helped to bring out the wider dimension of the conflict. It was important that the conflict be approached with a solid sense of realism, but two prerequisites are clearly identifiable: more determination by the local leaders to push forward for a resolution of the conflict and more imagination on the part of the international community in terms of how it can contribute to such a resolution.

- 13) **Professor Roy Allison** (Oxford University) introduced the second panel, on the theme of “**Regional Shifts and Developments – the Russia-Armenia, Turkey-Azerbaijan nexus, and prospects for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.**” The speakers on the panel were **Richard Giragosian** (Director, Regional Studies Centre, Yerevan), **Ambassador Khazar Ibrahim** (Head of Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO) and **Amanda Paul** (Senior Analyst, European Policy Centre, Brussels). Roy Allison said the wider CIS context, in which the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict sits, has never been as unsettled as it is now. Therefore, carefully considering this dimension of the conflict is important.
- 14) **Richard Giragosian** started his remarks by saying now is not the time for propaganda. The Oxford location encouraged participants to engage in the power of ideas, and elevate the discourse, and look at regional shifts and developments. Giragosian said that the post-Crimea and post-Ukraine context is simultaneously old and new. There remains scepticism of western commitment to security challenges, but appreciation of the new resolve to stand up in the face of Russian aggression. It is not so much the reality that matters as the perception of that reality. Secondly, according to Giragosian, the most important new regional shift is the so-called Eurasian Economic Union. Giragosian said he remains sceptical about this project, arguing that the Russian president is trying to resurrect a new Iron Curtain, safeguarding Russian influence throughout the “near abroad, a policy strangely counter-productive to Russian interests. Putin is very good at making enemies, and losing allies and friends, causing difficulties for the “near abroad” project, which is coercive in comparison to the European Union model. Richard Giragosian said the Russian position is one of weakness and desperation, not strength or strategy. He gave as an example the August meeting between the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders in Sochi, after the outbreak of the most serious clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the last two decades. On this occasion Putin assumed the role of headmaster, summoning misbehaving pupils into his office. It was, according to the speaker, a unilateral assertion of Russian supremacy. However, after Sochi, it was back to business as usual. The Armenian president went on vacation, and the president of Azerbaijan went back to doing photo ops. However the perception on the ground was that Russia had the upper hand, yet another sign of western weakness. In reality, Putin’s two days of meetings were rather ineffective. Only on the second day was Nagorno-Karabakh discussed, bringing a temporary halt to fighting, but the longer term outcome was limited. In response to Putin’s overtures Secretary of State Kerry met with the two presidents in Newport, Wales, on the margins of the NATO Summit. Later, the two Presidents met President Hollande in France.
- 15) Richard Giragosian said pre-existing developments (before Crimea and Ukraine) bubbled over and became most apparent in August. An arms race had been well under way for several years. Azerbaijan’s surging defence budget requires Armenia to keep pace. For the first time in many years, we see serious procurement of modern weapons, especially by Azerbaijan, and much more willingness to use them. Giragosian said the reasons why this was happening needed to be better understood, and there was a need to understand and accept Azerbaijan’s frustration at the lack of any progress whatsoever from the peace process. Azerbaijan needs to find a graceful way to let go of Nagorno-Karabakh and save face. On the other hand, Armenia has a psychological issue. Nagorno-Karabakh is, for Armenia, an important victory for the underdog after several thousand years of defeat. It is hard to climb down from that.
- 16) Richard Giragosian said all sides to the conflict have increasingly become prisoners of their own rhetoric and presidential palaces. The situation is also an indictment of civil society. It needs to come up with ideas and give the leadership space to operate. There

is also the risk of war by accident in which all sides stumble in and trigger the involvement of powerful vested actors such as Turkey, Russia and Iran. Giragosian said the OSCE Minsk group has seen too much “Minsk” and far too little “group”. There has been disinformation because of a lack of information. Twelve people in the whole world know what is going on. This makes it almost impossible to build a constituency for peace.

- 17) Richard Giragosian said at the same time there were five positive trends. (a) Not all regional shifts are negative, with the Armenia-Turkey normalization being a case in point. It is not reconciliation, but a first step towards it. There is political will on both sides. This is based on Armenia’s lack of preconditions, and a Turkish recalculation of its own national interest. (b) Western engagement with Iran offers tremendous opportunity. (c) A combination of conflict fatigue and political transition is underway. The current Armenian president is the last remaining member of a powerful political elite. There was a new recognition of the limits of authoritarian governments, and a fear following the Maidan situation. (d) The Europeans have learned important lessons from the attempted move towards an Eastern Partnership and Association Agreements. They now understood the need for a larger, more effective communications strategy to defend European ideals. (e) Russian policies are counter-productive and will hurt and hinder Russian interests over the long term, even if Russia is best positioned to benefit from the status quo in the short term.
- 18) Richard Giragosian concluded by saying more status-neutral engagement was needed, as well as the crucially missing ingredient of political will. There was a need to learn from the conflicts in Israel-Palestine and Northern Ireland, which saw progress in their resolution when all parties sat around the same table. Nagorno-Karabakh needs to be invited to the table, and it should not be assumed that Nagorno-Karabakh will automatically agree if Armenia and Azerbaijan come to an agreement.
- 19) **Ambassador Khazar Ibrahim** said a number of anniversaries and their symbolism had already been discussed. The conference also coincided with the 21st anniversary of the last United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution on the Karabakh conflict, adopted in November 1993. He quoted several paragraphs from that resolution, emphasising the call for Armenian forces to withdraw from Azerbaijani territory. Ibrahim said since that time, one could observe two shifts and one development. At the regional level, in 1993 the region was effectively isolated from the international community and the world. Today, Azerbaijan has constructed energy pipelines and roads that connect it to Europe and further afield. In contrast, Armenia is only co-operating with Iran. The second shift is internal. Ibrahim said in 1993 the GDP of Azerbaijan was around USD 3bn, while today it is USD 75bn. Armenia’s GDP was around USD 1bn in 1993, while today it is USD 10bn. In addition to these two shifts, there is also an important global development. In Europe, we are seeing geo-political rivalry and unconventional problems. No region, including the South Caucasus, can be immune from them. All these factors create the new context in which the Karabakh conflict exists.
- 20) Ambassador Khazar Ibrahim said a resolution of the Karabakh conflict will definitely better equip the region to face today’s global challenges. But what should be done, and what could a conflict resolution look like? The speaker said the simple answer was in the UNSC resolution he mentioned earlier. This resolution, from November 12 1993, has clear provisions. It states that regional peace and security is undermined by the conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. Secondly it gives a clear solution: unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces from Azerbaijani territory. Ambassador

Ibrahim said this is where the process must start. After that there will be many more opportunities that can unite the region, helping its people face global challenges.

- 21) **Amanda Paul** began her remarks by saying there were some ingredients that were necessary for any conflict resolution to succeed: political will, the avoidance of maximalist goals, positive international involvement, and a constructive political climate. In Cyprus, conflict has continued for forty years and there is still no peace deal in sight. However you can now travel easily across the island, and it hardly feels at all as though there is a conflict. In contrast, in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, there are still simmering hatreds. It is clear there is a long way to go before a conflict resolution is possible. Indeed, the region is currently caught in a panic. Developments internally and externally are not at all conducive to peace. On the contrary the situation is very volatile, and security threats are everywhere. The three large neighbours, Russia, Iran and Turkey, have influence in the region but have not played a positive role in resolving the Karabakh conflict. Russia, to the north, considers itself a Caucasian country. Turkey, to the west, has the potential to play a very positive role, perhaps working together with the EU. But this is not being done because Turkey is on a democratic backslide, which has made relations with western allies more difficult. Iran is obsessed with security, and is becoming increasingly nervous about Russia's activities close to its borders. All these three countries have influence in the Karabakh conflict, but have never played a positive role. Some have neglected it, while some have punched below their weight. We like to say Russia is a 'zero-sum game' player, but it is not the only country with this mentality towards this conflict. The end result is that Nagorno-Karabakh today is a key element in the bridge of instability stretching from the Caspian Region to the Black Sea. Amanda Paul said while she agrees that Russia is weak, Russia does not act as though it is weak, but rather as if it is extremely powerful. In fact it is the west that acts from a perceived sense of weakness, something which needs to change. In Ukraine, we see holes in the EU strategy with regards to sanctions on Russia. In fact the west is far stronger than Russia, something it needs to remember. Ukraine has made a difficult situation in the South Caucasus much worse. The whole region has been affected negatively. The credibility and relevance of the Minsk Group has eroded further. The Ukraine crisis has resulted in an erosion of trust in international treaties and international institutions, by both Russia and the west that will be very difficult to rebuild. Paul highlighted how this has impacted on the Karabakh conflict and its settlement. Firstly there has been an entrenchment in the position of all parties involved in the conflict, making concessions difficult and unlikely. Secondly, there is now a reduced space for peace. Third, given the weak response of the west in Ukraine, there is very little chance to challenge Russia's supremacy in the South Caucasus. The role of outside powers has actually been reduced as consequence of ongoing developments.
- 22) With reference to the two countries involved in the Karabakh conflict, Amanda Paul said Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union was harmful to regional security. It implies a strong Russian impact on Armenian foreign policy. Russia uses Karabakh to dominate through a divide-and-rule tactic. On the other hand Azerbaijan has become more disillusioned with the EU. This has happened because of the imprisonment of civil society activists, and serious concerns about the situation in the field of governance. Azerbaijan has not appreciated EU criticism on this topic. Azerbaijan is also upset because the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova was officially acknowledged by the West, but no similar commitment was made to Azerbaijan. We are possibly moving to a position where relations between Azerbaijan and the EU are based on just business and energy. That is not a beneficial relationship. It will shrink the EU's capacity to help resolve the conflict, which is already

small. The situation has strengthened the alliance between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia. It is very interdependent, with all three countries having benefitted in some respect. This is good news for all of them, although not for Armenia. Turkey cannot have a serious role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process. The process of normalization between Armenia and Turkey has been undermined because relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey have strengthened. Turkey will not do anything in the region that will threaten its relationship with Russia. Concluding her comments, Amanda Paul said the only way we are going to move forward with Russia is by revisiting the idea of a common European house because, ultimately, Russia is not going anywhere, the current antagonistic situation is not sustainable. Secondly, we need to get back to discussing a new security architecture in the Eurasian region. The atmosphere at present is not conducive to this, but at some point relations with Russia will need to be normalised. The future role of the OSCE also needs to be revisited.

- 23) Before opening the floor for questions and comments, Professor Roy Allison pointed out that in the last few days, at Valdai, President Putin actually spoke at a session, entitled, "New Rules or No Rules." There was no reference to common rules, which are perceived by Russia as discredited or only implemented selectively. Senior Russian officials have been calling for a grand conference on security, where they want to call current international agreements into question.
- 24) The discussion that followed first focused on the relevance of the UNSC resolutions. Masis Mayilian said the Security Council resolutions adopted in 1993 were not legally binding documents. They were politically documents, which he characterised as "recommendations". Mayilyan said if Azerbaijan wants to implement them, it can start by opening borders, communication links and transport links in the region, since these issues were also contained in the resolutions. He said the problem of territories was not the main problem, as the conflict existed before the problem of territories arose. Ara Margarian said the UNSC resolutions were binding, but only in their entirety. One cannot take the text of the resolution and pick and choose one article or item. These resolutions were adopted as a result of the conflict escalating; they do not blame one side or the other. The first point is condemning all violence. One cannot pick and choose, it is not constructive to put blame on Armenia or Nagorno-Karabakh or Azerbaijan alone. Each party has its share of the blame. Every time Azerbaijan blames Armenia for not implementing UNSC resolutions, this shows it does not have a genuine approach. These resolutions were not exclusively addressed to Armenia; only one part was. Implementing these resolutions is not just Armenia's responsibility. The same argument can be made regarding the principles of conflict resolution. The Madrid Principles are a package of set principles. There are no precedents between them. Margarian said a number of speakers said the leaders lack political courage. If we have the courage to accept these principles as a core component of conflict resolution, we can do so without favouring one side or the other. In reply, Khazar Ibrahim said the resolutions mention withdrawal first. If a withdrawal takes place, communications can be opened afterwards. He argued the Helsinki Final Act speaks about self-determination within the context of territorial integrity.
- 25) A number of questions and comments discussed the role of the large regional neighbours to the South Caucasus countries. On Russia, Walter Kemp and Marina Nagai disagreed with Richard Giragosian, who described Russia as weak. Kemp said even if Russia is weak, there was a lack of leadership in the EU, US and UN, making Russia stronger than ten years ago. Marina Nagai cautioned against characterising Russia as weak, especially in the context of the South Caucasus, and particularly as far as popular perception in the region goes. After Ukraine, Putin is seen by some as the leader who

delivers, and stands up for his people. In this situation, the West does look weaker. The meetings of the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan with Kerry and Hollande seem like a catch-up game, and not one the West is winning. Elvan Hacıfendieoglu said Turkey is working toward stability and peace in the region. It is not true that Turkey is unwilling to normalize relations with Armenia. Turkey is part of the broader Caucasus region, and it is wrong to draw simplistic conclusions from its actions. Alan Parfait asked why Iran has a contribution to make in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict. Richard Giragosian said that despite Russia's short-term bluff and bluster, in the medium to long term its reliance on coercion and pressure will produce diminishing returns. Even pro-Russian Armenia is no longer pro-Putin.

- 26) In reply to a question by Marina Nagai about civil society and its role in the region, Richard Giragosian said, having been to Baku in June, he became more appreciative of the space in which Armenian civil society operates, as opposed to its counterpart in Azerbaijan where civil society has become an endangered species. With regards to normalization between Armenia and Turkey, civil society supports the government. That needs to be replicated in the Armenia-Azerbaijan context too. Bringing in Nagorno-Karabakh in the negotiations in this regard will be very important. Giragosian said there was a need to challenge narrative and stereotypes. He is sick of some of the statements coming out of the leadership on both sides. People should demand better. Developments in Iran are of course positive. Iran is important for Armenia, and a normalisation of relations may create new opportunities, although the current Iranian administration is more interested in Azerbaijan than Armenia. The problem was not Washington but Moscow, and how much or how little the Russians will allow Armenia to deepen its relations with Iran.
- 27) After lunch, participants reconvened for a third panel on the topic "*Confrontation, entanglement and engagement: 'The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and the failures of negotiations, the dangers of conflict and the opportunities for peace'*". The Chair, **Dennis Sammut** (LINKS and Oxford University) introduced the speakers: **Dr Sabine Freizer** (Atlantic Council Eurasia Centre, Washington DC), **Mr Masis Mayilian** (Public Council for Foreign and Security Policy, Stepanakert) and **Avaz Hasanov** (Society for Humanitarian Research, Baku).
- 28) **Sabine Freizer** noted that twenty years have passed without much progress in resolving the Karabakh conflict. While this year marked the 20th anniversary of the ceasefire, this summer, incidents on the line of contact resulted in the highest number of deaths in a single year since that ceasefire came into operation. The conflict is getting hotter, the number of accidents greater, and the room for mistakes smaller. The Ukraine crisis has made the situation even more difficult. Freizer said a recent statement by the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chair, in which it was said that a settlement will not be possible without a basis of trust and understanding, was significant. In the past, the co-Chair had viewed the value of people-to-people contacts sceptically, instead emphasising elite-level contacts. This statement was useful, highlighting the importance of track two and track three dialogues in support of the track one process. Work at the civil society level has shown that some progress is possible.
- 29) Sabine Freizer said the OSCE Minsk co-Chair have offered ways to move the process forward. The basic principles that have been made public, the six so-called Madrid principles, have already been agreed upon. It is now important to put a dot on that "i" and begin working on a comprehensive peace agreement. Freizer said this will not be done in a Dayton-type settlement, with a lot of behind the scene arms twisting, but through extensive negotiations. These negotiations must be comprehensive, involving the wider layers of society. At that point there is a broad range of issues that can be put

on the table to benefit all sides. Discussions on these wider technical issues should not be dominated by people in the foreign ministries, but should be dealt with by line ministries, academics and technical and professional people. Freizer cited the example of Kosovo and Serbia, where great progress was made because they sat and tackled technical issues with technical experts, and only those that were agreed upon were then brought to the political table. Some of these issues may be controversial, but they need to be discussed. Experts need to work on a range of questions, from the meaning of “interim status” to how to tackle fires in the region.

- 30) Sabine Freizer spoke about the undermining of civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan and said this was now clearly an obstacle to improved negotiations. The situation is much worse in Azerbaijan, but even in Armenia organizations espousing Western views, especially women’s issues, have found themselves under attack, with comments such as “Armenia is not the place to discuss women’s rights” and “Armenia is not the place to discuss LGBTQ rights”. There is a feeling that within civil society they are under pressure. In Azerbaijan, the situation for civil society has been deteriorating since the arrest of Rauf Merkadirov in March. Civil society in Azerbaijan now works in fear, making their contribution to the peace process more difficult.
- 31) The situation in Crimea has also had a negative effect on the prospects for conflict resolution in Nagorno Karabakh. Russia violated the principles of territorial integrity enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. Azerbaijan voted against Russia in the UNGA, declaring Russian actions in Crimea wrong and arguing the international community should support territorial integrity. However, Baku has been very disappointed by the lack of support from the international community to protect its own territorial integrity and implement UN resolutions. In Crimea we have seen the right to self-determination completely undermined, with an illegitimate referendum organized in a few days without debate or understanding. This has thrown into question whether referendums are possible for resolving issues of self-determination. However, Scotland gives us hope. If a referendum was to happen, it should be done as it was in Scotland. In Crimea, Russia has also violated the Budapest memorandum, which guarantees Ukraine’s independence and territorial integrity. How can Armenia be asked to sign up to security guarantees when they have seen these violated so easily?
- 32) In conclusion, Freizer said the prospects for peace become more distant as the gap widens between public statements and the positions of the sides,. A new ambiguity has developed about the Helsinki Final Act and what it means, which does not help current efforts to solve the Karabakh conflict.
- 33) **Masis Mayilian** started by highlighting past mistakes and unsuccessful decisions , which have led to a deepening of the conflict, generating obstacles which make, a resolution less likely. A fundamental error has been ignoring the right of Nagorno-Karabakh citizens to self-determination. This legal right was first ignored by the central authorities in Moscow and the government of Soviet Azerbaijan, and by international powers after the collapse of the Soviet Union,. Before this Moscow and Baku tried to suppress the democratic movement in Karabakh, using repression and trying to intimidate people. With the creation of independent states in the region, the international community had the opportunity to direct the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to a peaceful conclusion. However, on December 16, 1991, the European Community decided to only recognize as independent states those territories which had the status of “Union Republics” in the USSR. The proclamation of independence by the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), within the same legal framework and at the same as Armenia, Azerbaijan and other former Soviet republics, was ignored. This selective recognition of newly independent states created the conditions for military operations to start against

- the self-declared NKR, with devastating consequences for the entire region. The decision made by Brussels was perceived by Baku as a call to action. It seemed to Azerbaijan that it was given a *carte blanche* to solve the conflict militarily.
- 34) Mayilian said isolating NKR representatives from the negotiating process was, and remains, another mistake. Until 1997, NKR representatives participated in the negotiations as one of three involved parties. The status of Karabakh as a party to the conflict was fixed in previous OSCE documents. Thanks to the full participation of the NKR in negotiations, the war ended in May 1994 with a ceasefire agreement achieved. The current incomplete and distorted negotiation format reduces the effectiveness of the settlement process.
 - 35) Masis Mayilian highlighted the “arms race” as one of the main threats to peace at present, with billions of dollars being spent each year on modern weaponry. The further militarization of the region, without effective international arms control, may have tragic consequences for all parties to the conflict as well as the neighbouring states. This is exacerbated by the lack of effective mechanisms to ensure the supervision of the ceasefire by local and international observers. Mayilian said Azerbaijan’s policy of not rejecting the use of force in settling political disputes is a threat to regional security. Mayilian also mentioned other threats including the clampdown on civil society activists in Azerbaijan, the lack of trust between the sides in the conflict, an “outdated approach to conflict resolution”, the stand-off between Russia and the west, and instability in the wider Middle East.
 - 36) Masis Mayilian said opportunities for the future must first be found by correcting past mistakes. Maintaining and strengthening the ceasefire is a necessary precondition for implementing peacebuilding initiatives. The current OSCE-led supervision of the ceasefire is necessary but insufficient. On the other hand, the signed commitment of the parties to refrain from using force to resolve political problems has huge peacebuilding potential, and can open a wide scope of opportunities to peacefully transform the conflict. The speaker said Azerbaijani recognition of the NKR’s right to exist, and international recognition of the right of NKR citizens to self-determination, will reduce the chances of war and create equal opportunities for all parties to actively promote peaceful dialogue. Mayilian said building confidence between parties can play a serious role in increasing the efficiency of the talks and reducing tensions in the region. There is a huge list of possible confidence-building measures, including trans-border cooperation, which requires the political will of all parties. International political and material support is needed to sustain and develop dialogue at the society level. This problem has become even more relevant following the arrests and repression of civil activists and independent journalists in Azerbaijan.
 - 37) In conclusion, Masis Mayilian said at the moment only international mediators’ proposals are on the negotiating table, and the affected parties have not presented their own proposals. Elaborating appropriate indigenous proposals to peacefully settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and publishing them, will help society understand the sides’ positions and contribute to the track one process.
 - 38) **Avaz Hassanov** started by looking at the incidents on the front line in August. He said his organisation runs projects in villages on the front line, and when the fighting started there was panic. For four days he was receiving emotional phone calls as the fighting raged. People were trying to build stone walls with their hands to defend themselves. These people felt defenceless and helpless. It is these people we must keep constantly in mind when discussing these conflicts, not vague political phrases and statements.
 - 39) More communication between Armenians and Azerbaijanis is needed, said Hassanov. He gave some practical examples of how NGOs from opposite sides have co-operated

with each other as a result of meetings and good communication, introducing a level of trust. The governments must start trusting their own people more to be able to benefit from the resources of their own societies, and trust in their ability to come up with ideas for the future. Having a space to discuss and learn is very useful and important. He mentioned his own visits to Karabakh and to Armenia in 2000. In Karabakh he went to the market, and it was important for him to hear what people had to say, not only the experts. It was important to use the knowledge and ideas of the people who had been affected by the conflict.

- 40) Hassanov criticised the lack of systematic steps on the official and sometimes political level. At the official level leaders meet with prominent figures, for instance the president of Russia, but these are externally-driven meetings for public consumption rather than real negotiations. Within societies there is no discussion of the tangible issues under negotiation, simply because we do not know what the positions of the sides are.
- 41) Hassanov said Azerbaijan has good financial resources, but it must keep in mind that it cannot buy peace-builders. Both sides must allow space for peacebuilding to develop. There were, at the moment, many problems between the government and civil society in Azerbaijan. He said he himself was under pressure, his bank account had been frozen, but he had not stopped his work. He felt this situation could not continue for long, and so has decided that even if he loses his organisation, his bank account and a lot of time, he will wait. Avaz Hassanov said he wants to believe in his government and his society. He and others have no choice since this is their life, their country and their region, and their children's future depended on this.
- 42) The first set of questions and comments focused on the role of civil society. Murad Nasibeyli said there was a need for greater civil society engagement, but before that the message to send to the presidents was that they needed to have the courage to move the peace process forward, which depends on a wider public discussion within their respective countries and a greater role for civil society. He called for more resources for developing research projects which outline future co-operation. Orkhan Akbarov said he has had many dealings with Armenians and Armenian NGOs, and has not had any pressure from the Azerbaijani government. It could be that those who were under pressure had done something wrong that was unrelated to their contacts with Armenians. Avaz Hassanov said the problems between government and civil society in Azerbaijan increased after the Ukraine crisis. We have also seen an increased Russian influence in the country, and the Azerbaijani government has become more nervous.
- 43) Some participants also commented on the term "self-determination". Orkhan Agbarov said before 1989, 22% of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh was Azerbaijani, and now there was no one left. There had been a policy of ethnic cleansing. Masis Mayilian agreed it is very bad when a government commits ethnic cleansing, but this is what happened in Azerbaijan in 1991. As for Karabakh's independence, conditions were created for the Azerbaijanis to participate in a referendum, but this was ignored. The last Azerbaijanis left in 1992. They resettled in other areas of Azerbaijan. Mayilian insisted that for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh the territory was their motherland and they had the right of self-determination.
- 44) Another set of questions and comments focused on the peace process and what it would look like. Sabine Freizer said speaking from a strictly personal viewpoint, the peace process could develop around the six principles already in place, and can be broken down into six topics and left for discussion at the expert level. This needs to include a lot of people who would start taking ownership of the process, and would require a lot of working groups at the technical level. The political discussion can resume later. One political question that needs to be resolved at the outset is when and how to bring in

- representatives of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Freizer said we may be quite close to moving to more detailed discussions and recently this had also been proposed by the Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE. At the moment the Azerbaijanis were more in favour of this and the Armenians more hesitant, but there needs to be an agreement on the basic principles first before discussions can move to a more technical level.
- 45) The fourth and final panel of the conference was chaired by **Professor Neil Macfarlane** (Oxford University, International Relations Department) and focused on the theme *“Prospects for resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict”*. Professor Macfarlane introduced the panellists, **Dr Laurence Broers** (Caucasus Program Associate, Conciliation Resources, London), **Orkhan Akbarov**, (Council of Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku), **Richard Giragosian** (Director, Regional Studies Centre, Yerevan) and **Craig Oliphant** (Saferworld, London).
- 46) **Dr Laurence Broers** said 2014 had provided plenty of opportunities to discuss the failures of conflict resolution. Often when discussing the South Caucasus one hears references to the “bad neighbourhood” or “bad geo-political winds”. Events in Ukraine have boosted this perception, increasing the problem of seeing events in the Caucasus through a distorting curved mirror. There is an underlying illusion that conflict resolution and confidence-building is possible without liberalising society, and without the genuine input of civil society. This has subverted past efforts at conflict resolution. Broers said these elements are increasingly absent in Armenia and Azerbaijan today, so the essential building blocks – inspired leadership, room for manoeuvre, a vibrant civil society - are all absent.
- 47) Broers spoke of two dynamics in the process: attrition and accretion. The attrition of civil society implied the conflict resolution process is being monopolised by the state and government. In Azerbaijan the situation is coming to a point where there will no longer be non-state interlocutors accepted by Armenians, even if it is clear that peace requires these individuals. The displacement of civil society by the militarisation agenda and the lack of criticism of the occupation within Armenian society has allowed a process of accretion, or what Broers called mission creep, undermining the legitimacy of the Armenian position. Across all these societies we see stagnation in governance and civil society happening simultaneously, with a failure to place the peace process in the context of its political and societal surroundings. A peace process cannot be separated from the polity of its surroundings. It cannot be an appendage or a prosthetic, but has to be organised as part of the body politic. Therefore as long as the style of leadership and the elitist and militaristic views within the governments in Armenia and Azerbaijan are not questioned, a comprehensive peace will be unattainable.
- 48) Laurence Broers said the “Madrid Principles” have now been around longer than any other peace proposal in the Karabakh peace process. There is almost certainly no better set of ideas, yet the parties are not moving towards facilitating them. He highlighted the irony that confidence building measures are typically rejected as naïve and unfeasible, and yet are more modest than some of the “Madrid Principles” being discussed at the highest levels all these years. There is also a gap between what societies say is practical, and what elites say is doable, and a vicious circle of securitisation. From one side we hear that as long as lands are occupied we cannot talk about democracy, and from the other side we hear that democracy is a luxury as long as our neighbour threatens war. Broers said the line of contact had become the line of conflict, and we have seen this year the great danger of sleepwalking into conflict. Broers mentioned some practical steps that needed to be taken to avoid this: widening the mandate of the OSCE Minsk Process, increasing the lines of communication between the front line and defence

- ministries in the two capitals, and re-establishing a minimum level of early warning infrastructure and back channels to prevent accidental escalation.
- 49) Laurence Broers said over recent years there have been huge dysfunctions built into the way the sides manage the conflict. We now have serious disparities between the ideas that are meant to underpin the peace proposals, and the realities on the ground and within the societies that are supposed to accept these ideas. We need to go back to a situation where governments see civil society as their partners, with the onus on civil society actors themselves also to craft a viable relationship. Transformation on the ground needs to be understood and appreciated, such as the changing human geography of the region. Societies need to be part of the equation, it is wrong to assume there is some elite fix that could solve the conflict in isolation.
- 50) **Orkhan Akbarov** welcomed the opportunity to have a dialogue with Armenian counterparts in the framework of the conference. Akbarov said UN Security Council Resolutions define Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territory as illegal. These resolutions were also echoed by other international institutions such as the European Parliament. The international community is unanimous in supporting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Armenia has not been in a hurry to implement the decisions of the UN Security Council to withdraw from Azerbaijani occupied territory. There are seven Azerbaijani provinces that are currently under Armenian occupation in addition to Nagorno-Karabakh itself, which does not even have a border with Armenia.
- 51) Akbarov said that at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki on 28 March 1992, at the same meeting where the Minsk group was established, the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh were recognized and allowed to the table. He said he believes dialogue in this format can be extremely positive. Dialogue between Armenian and Azerbaijani communities is possible, and Armenia should be interested in it too. Azerbaijan has long been ready for this. There was an attempt to hold such a meeting in Germany, but the Armenians did not attend. The situation has not changed to this day and dialogue has still not taken place. Akbarov said the people of the South Caucasus lived side-by-side peacefully as neighbours for centuries. To achieve peace it was necessary to restore confidence between the people, and it was necessary to make every effort for the dialogue to take place. Azerbaijan's position remains unchanged, and is based on respect for international norms. Legal issues should be solved in the legal field. A military solution is unacceptable. Orkhan Akbarov said the Azerbaijani President was committed to a solution based on respect for international law, and Azerbaijan excludes the possibility of using force even though ethnic cleansing was carried out against Azerbaijanis. In Nagorno Karabakh in 1823, Azeris were 78% of the population. How did this change? Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh marked the 150th anniversary of their resettlement there in 1978. However, the memorial was changed 10 years later, and the mention of "150 years" immediately disappeared. Now there are no Azerbaijanis at all living in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan is willing to work for peace, and is asking only for peace and dialogue.
- 52) **Richard Giragosian** said there are no prospects for resolving the conflict at present. Assessing the situation on the ground, he said it was unrealistic to expect a diplomatic breakthrough. The two sides remain too far apart. They look at the situation through polarized approaches. There was a dangerous trend within Armenia, where the discourse was becoming more hard-line. In Armenia the position had been that the occupied parts of Azerbaijan were maintained as bargaining chips to be returned, but they are now being treated as liberated territories. It is official Armenian policy that they will be returned, but this creeping position is an obstacle. Meanwhile, Azerbaijani diplomatic strategy is neither diplomatic nor strategic, it was maximalist. Giragosian said the Minsk

group is engaged in diplomatic work with no mention of status. They have been focused on keeping the peace process alive and preventing war. Having said that, one year ago, the presidents had an unexpectedly successful meeting in Vienna. They had a face-to-face private meeting for 90 minutes. This was greeted with surprise, and was considered to have exceeded expectations. However the fact that two presidents spoke alone for 90 minutes was heralded as a success shows how far away we are from actually resolving the conflict.

- 53) Giragosian said in the meantime there are other things that can be done, including re-articulating the dividends of peace to the societies. People are not told enough what the benefits of peace and compromise would be. The Minsk Group should explain this to the general public. There is a need for people to talk to each other, not past each other, and to listen better. There is a need to explore new avenues. For this, more research is needed. Giragosian said unfortunately the process has lost civil society in Azerbaijan, as they are in jail. The speaker said it was necessary to deconstruct the demonization of the other side, and elevate the level of discourse. Giragosian mentioned a meeting held on 3 November in Helsinki attended by two diplomats who were previously representing the sides in the negotiations, and where it was possible to criticise both sides. Giragosian said it was necessary to give international monitors on the line of contact more power and resources, and to create simple back-channel routes of communication. The full Minsk Group should also be reconvened, before some countries forget they are members of it.
- 54) Richard Giragosian ended his presentation with five concrete recommendations for external actors, to challenge not only the status quo, but also each other and the process:
 - (a) A physical office for the OSCE Minsk Group in the conflict zone, with status-neutral engagement that does not take sides.
 - (b) Confidence building measures, now, not after the return of the occupied territories. This can also be done unilaterally. Armenians have little need for snipers on the front line. They could easily withdraw them as a gesture of good will, especially since it is not militarily difficult to re-deploy them.
 - (c) The international community should not apply a false parity where it does not exist. Bad behaviour should no longer be tolerated, and rules should be enforced.
 - (d) There needs to be better opportunities for Yerevan, Baku and Nagorno-Karabakh to come together in the same way that Turkey and Armenia are coming together outside the public glare.
 - (e) Civil society, as the agent for change, needs to be empowered. Armenians should be able to visit Baku, and Azerbaijan should take the opportunity to show off their new wealth. There is a need for more people-to-people contact, because the process is running out of ideas and time, and people are running out of patience.
- 55) **Craig Oliphant** said wanted to underline the dangers of the clampdown on civil society in Azerbaijan. Crimea has made an already intractable situation all the more difficult. It has been a defining moment for Europe and the wider region. The implications add to an already worrying view that there might be a military solution rather than a political one. We need to be concerned with mutual insecurity. The region is more a region on paper than in reality.
- 56) Oliphant said that the region's lack of security has implications for the wider European context. Energy security and transit corridors make it essential that we ensure security in this area. We need to stay firmly of the mindset that this region still needs security attention. However, security and the Caucasus do not sit easily together. Three-tenths of the population are either refugees or displaced. Unresolved conflicts, closed borders, and military conflicts have stunted development in the region. Opportunity costs are huge. The region has definitely made economic progress, but GDP in Armenia is now only one-third of that in Turkey. Armenia and Georgia combined are four times poorer

than Estonia. Azerbaijan is wealthier, but if you go outside Baku you still see poverty. This impact is massive and affects everything, making the South Caucasus less of a region and more group of blockaded areas. The speaker said the security situation in the Karabakh context has led to frustration and pent-up grievances that continue to build. In these kind of contexts, it becomes easier for one side to demonize the other.

- 57) On the risks resulting from the current situation Craig Oliphant said the lines on the map have not changed since 1994, but the situation on the line of contact has become much more serious, and the security risks should not be underestimated. There is a very thin international effort to monitor the ceasefire, and in human terms, the capacity of that international effort must be expanded. All sides are in a bear trap. Oliphant said the international community should be saying ever more resolutely to the Armenian side that you cannot ignore the seven territories you have occupied, not liberated, or that half a million Azeris have been displaced from occupied territories as well as thousands from Nagorno-Karabakh. The best guarantee of Armenian security is to give up the occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh. We understand why this is difficult without binding security guarantees.
- 58) The Minsk co-chairs cannot want a peace settlement more than the actors themselves. There is a need to underscore the benefits of peace for the entire region. Craig Oliphant said confidence-building measures absolutely must come first. You need back channels, invested political will, sherpas, and appointed point-people. The speaker said that there is a surreal situation around the conflict that needs to be addressed. There is a need for further engagement on track two initiatives, and a need to widen the work beyond the usual suspects. One possibility is to work more with local communities close to the international border. This is a sensitive area, but the situation on the international border has now started reflecting the situation on the line of contact. Communication between track one and two processes also needs to be improved.
- 59) Craig Oliphant said that from a regional perspective, Turkey can and should do more. As for the Russian side, they are limited by their own commitments on the issue. There is not enough political will. We need to encourage the regional actors, Turkey, Russia and Iran to step up to the plate and see it is in their interests to get involved. Progress needs a defined timetable. A return to the use of force is not an option, and would only exacerbate problems and undermine regional stability. Honesty and frankness is the basis on which this is going to move forward.
- 60) **Professor Neil MacFarlane** thanked the panellists for their presentations, and noted the emphasis on the lack of political will to move towards a resolution. However Macfarlane questioned the way in which political will – or its absence – is used as an explanation, noting instead that the absence of political will is itself something to be explained. He also raised the issue of the difficulty of convincing international policy makers to engage in a more active way when that would require the reallocation of resources to an area they might not see as strategically useful. Following up on this point, Walter Kemp said there are many other problems in the world right now. The international presence is very thin. The emperor has barely any clothes, but the fig leaf is the OSCE Minsk group. He wondered what would happen if the international community threatened to leave or take even bolder steps, like dissolving the Minsk Group, and whether this would focus people's minds a bit more.
- 61) Laurence Broers responded to the point about political will, highlighting that there was no domestic political incentive to move towards resolving the conflict. Broers stressed that the leaders' priorities are not to solve the conflict, but to stay in power. He described the governments as neo-patrimonial regimes that legitimate their rule through allocating resources in return for loyalty. They depend heavily on symbolic politics, and the

symbolic politics of conflict that can define a society. If you take that away, you remove this formula of elite legitimacy, and there would be a need to reconfigure the relationship between elite and society. Broers said there have been half-hearted attempts by the Minsk group to get local government to take control. However, if that happened, elites would lose much of the reflected glory that they currently enjoy in much-publicised meetings with Minsk Group co-Chair countries, which happen to be three global powers and three members of the United Nations Security Council. There was therefore a need for a new way in which states could define themselves and their legitimacy.

- 62) Commenting on the issue of status, Ambassador Salber said that a status neutral engagement is almost impossible. Even if you cross a checkpoint, you may implicitly be perceived as recognising the entity beyond it. There needs to be more work on status issues so people can be more relaxed about them. This requires the willingness and engagement of all involved. He cited the example of Kosovo, where however neutral one was, one was not always understood as neutral. Craig Oliphant said this was a very good illustration of where political will was needed. There should be a readiness to maintain a constructive ambiguity, since it opens all sorts of important possibilities. In the case of Northern Ireland the underpinning of the process by the EU was an absolutely essential element. Political will at this stage was not needed to secure a final agreement but to enable a constructive ambiguity to develop. The positive gloss on the passive approach is “do no harm”. The negative is being complicit in creating a comfort zone. Emphasizing the responsibilities of the regional players would be the most conducive approach.
- 63) Commenting on the question of incentives and disincentives, Craig Oliphant said at one stage, around the time of the Key West talks, the international community did have the political will to push for a solution, but 5 months later 9/11 happened. Nagorno-Karabakh moved down the list of international importance.
- 64) Muhammed Muradov said any peace had to be based on justice, because an unjust peace will sow the seeds of more conflict in the future. A zero-sum game was not a solution. Autonomy for Armenians in Karabakh was possible, and the best solution for both sides. Both governments should understand that they should make life better for Armenians, while also respecting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The two nations lived together peacefully during Soviet time and can do so again. The current problems arise from geopolitical concerns. Muradov said civil society should come together and discuss the technical aspects of resolving the conflict, and including civil society can provide the stimulus to move the peace process forward.
- 65) Murad Nasibeyli said the process of resolving the conflict could only be achieved through a process of democratisation. He called for more civil society engagement since it needs to guarantee that narratives are not exploited by governments. Nasibeyli questioned the comment that Azerbaijan’s foreign policy was neither diplomatic nor strategic. Richard Giragosian said that Azerbaijani policy was maximalist and leaves no room for concessions. There is a need to change this dynamic, and try and create a situation where concession becomes normal. He said he rejected the concept of the conflict mentality as legitimacy. Moderates needed to replace militants.
- 66) Responding to the assertion that all of Azerbaijani civil society was in prison, Orkhan Akbarov said he was also an NGO representative. For him civil society was not a handful of activists. Over 100,000 Azerbaijanis who hail from Nagorno-Karabakh and who have been displaced are also civil society. Just because some people have been jailed in Azerbaijan, does not mean work has to stop. It is very hard to explain to ordinary people from Nagorno-Karabakh exactly what is going on with the peace process. These people are asking if the problem is going to go on for another twenty years. Most people think

it is possible to live together again. We have the experience of life in Nagorno-Karabakh before the conflict. The people from Nagorno-Karabakh just want to be able to return. They want dialogue. Akbarov said there should be negotiations, even if at first there is no agreement, until a solution is finally reached. On his part, Avaz Hassanov agreed that for the Azerbaijanis displaced by the conflict, the important part is not to be part of the political discussion but to be able to live together, to visit friends in Armenia, to visit Karabakh. His own experience of working on this issue for many years suggests this was possible. Craig Oliphant said Avaz Hassanov's comments are a reminder that the conflict is mainly about the people, and civil society needed to be involved

- 67) Ara Margarian said Turkey never showed enough interest to be constructively engaged in resolving the conflict. All its actions are biased and one-sided, giving grounds for Armenia to reject Turkey as an honest and regional player in the conflict. Iran on the other hand is always neutral, but Turkey always has a clearly one-sided approach. Referring again to UN Security Council resolutions, Margarian said they were not sent from heaven, but were agreed upon through hard fought effort on the ground. Just pointing out that Armenia is the one not abiding with them is not fair.
- 68) Polad Mammedov said the UNSC resolutions were a response to a changing situation on the ground, and were certainly not motivated by an Azerbaijani occupation of Armenia. Mammedov said although he very much appreciate the importance of civil society and communities to bringing about a lasting peace, one should not over-estimate the power of civil society. Civil society has an auxiliary role to play, but societies must be shaped by political leaders. He said the international reaction to events in Ukraine shows the international system has a selective approach, having failed to respond in the same way in the case of Karabakh and Azerbaijani occupied lands.
- 69) Marina Nagai raised the risks posed by internal instability. She said in many Arab states and in Ukraine, conflict was precipitated by internal instability. In the context of Karabakh the idea that the leaders are ahead of their societies is laughable, but equally laughable is the idea that societies are ahead of their leaders. There were questions to be asked not only about the political will, but also about popular will. In reply Richard Giragosian said that he is worried about instability in Georgia, and the fingerprints of Moscow on the situation in Tbilisi. Armenia has survived a 1999 terrorist attack on parliament and a forced presidential resignation. At the moment, the biggest worry in Armenia is economic instability. Laurence Broers said extremist rhetoric in the region is often rehearsed. People are given scripts of what they have to say, so one should not read extremist narratives at face value.
- 70) In his concluding remarks, **Dennis Sammut** said the objectives of the conference had been achieved thanks to the high quality of interventions of panellists and participants, and the positive atmosphere that prevailed throughout the event. There are clearly many different understandings of what the conflict is, and what needs to be done to bring about its resolution. It was important to take all views into account. Dennis Sammut said he has organised many meetings connected with the Karabakh conflict. Sometimes people walked out of these meetings, and on other occasions others who were not invited tried to come in. However in this conference he could see a certain new maturity in the way the issue was being discussed, and the importance of this should not be underestimated. The current situation calls for no great joy, but there are some very important developments in the way people are thinking about, and discussing, these issues. We need to be a bit more understanding about the difficulty for people to think outside the box. For those from the region it is not so easy to do this. He thanked all participants, the volunteers from Oxford University who had helped with organising the conference, and everyone else who contributed to its success, and declared the meeting closed.

“The impact of international and regional developments on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process.”

A one-day conference organised by LINKS and the Russia and Eurasia Studies Centre, St Antony’s College, Oxford University.

Pavilion Room, St Antony’s College, Oxford – Tuesday, 11 November 2014.

Programme

10.15: Coffee and Registration (*Besse Building, Ground Floor Foyer*)

10.45: Welcome (*Pavillion Room, Gateway Building, 4th Floor*).

Professor Dan Healey, Director, Russia and Eurasia Studies Centre, St Antony’s College, Oxford University.

10.50: Panel 1: An elusive peace: The quest to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Chair: Dennis Sammut (LINKS and Oxford University)

Dr Walter Kemp, (International Peace Institute, Vienna); Ambassador Herbert Salber, (European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Conflict in Georgia).

Discussion

11.45 Panel 2 - Regional Shifts and Developments - The Russia-Armenia, Turkey-Azerbaijan nexus, and prospects for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Chair: Professor Roy Allison (RESC, Oxford University)

Panellists: Richard Giragosian (Regional Studies Centre Yerevan), Ambassador Khazar Ibrahim (Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to NATO), Amanda Paul (European Policy Centre, Brussels).

Discussion

13.00: Lunch (*Buttery, Besse Building Ground Floor*)

14.00: Panel 3 – Confrontation, entanglement and engagement: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and the failures of negotiations, the dangers of conflict and the opportunities for peace.

Chair: Dennis Sammut (LINKS and Oxford University).

Dr Sabine Freizer (Atlantic Council Eurasia Centre, Washington DC); Avaz Hasanov (Society for Humanitarian Research, Baku); Masis Mayilyan (Public Council for Foreign and Security Policy, Stepanakert).

Discussion

15.30: Coffee Break (Foyer, Besse Building, Ground Floor).

16.00: Panel 4 - Prospects for resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Chair: Professor Neil Macfarlane (International Relations Department, Oxford University).

Dr Laurence Broers (Caucasus Program Associate, Conciliation Resources, London); Orkhan Akbarov, (Council of Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku); Richard Giragosian (Director, Regional Studies Centre, Yerevan); Craig Oliphant (Saferworld, London).

Discussion

17.45: Concluding remarks

18.00: Reception (Combined Common Room, Besse Building Second Floor)

**“The impact of international and regional developments
on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process.”**

**A one-day conference organised by the Russian and Eurasian Studies Centre, St
Antony's College,
at Oxford University on Tuesday, 11 November 2014.**

List of Participants

Akbarov Orkhan	Council of Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku
Allison Roy, Professor	Oxford University
Atoyán Tigran	Oxford University
Avetisyan Sos	Oxford University
Behrendt Marc	EPNK
Blackman David	Oxford University
Boston Janet	John Smith Memorial Trust, London
Broers Laurence	Conciliation Resources, London
Cadioli Giovanni	Oxford University
Clayton Philip	Oxford
Clogg Rachel	Conciliation Resources, London
Cohen Jonathan	Conciliation Resources, London
Cristescu Roxana	Crises Management Initiative, Helsinki
d'Urso Joseph	LINKS, London
Filipova Rumena	Oxford University
Foregeron Marie-Charlotte	Crisis Management Initiative, Helsinki
Freizer Sabine	Atlantic Council, Washington DC
Galeziak Piotr	Oxford University
Ghazaryan Sergei	National Assembly of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert
Giragosian Richard	Regional Studies Centre, Yerevan
Grabowska Julia	Oxford University
Granroth Agnes	EPNK
Haciefendieoglu Elvan	Embassy of Turkey, London
Hassanov Avaz	Society for Humanitarian Research, Baku
Hayoz Nicolas, Professor	University of Freiburg
Healey Dan, Professor	Oxford University
Ibrahim Khazar, Ambassador	Head of Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO
Ismayilov Orkhan	Azertag, Baku
Jovani Carles	University of Valencia
Kemp Walter	International Peace Institute, Vienna
Levitskiy Andrey	Oxford University
Macfarlane Neil, Professor	Oxford University
Mammedov Polad	Embassy of Azerbaijan, London
Margarian Ara	Embassy of Armenia, London
Mayilian Masis	Public Council for Foreign and Security Policy, Stepanakert
Mcless Ola	Oxford University
McParland Molly	Oxford University
Muradov Mahammed	Civil society activist, Baku
Nagai Marina	International Alert, London
Nassibeyli Murad	Nagorno-Karabakh Community in Baku

Nickel Hannah	Oxford University
Oliphant Craig	Safer World, London
Parfitt Alan	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London
Paul Amanda	European Policy Centre, Brussels
Ramage Richard	RESC, St Antony's College, Oxford
Salber Herbet, Ambassador	European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus
Sammut Dennis	LINKS and Oxford University
Sander Paul	Oxford University
Sargsyan Anna Hess	Center for Security Studies, ETH, Zürich
Schoefield Judith	International Alert, London
Stepanov Sergei	Embassy of the Russian Federation
Tamkin Emily	Oxford University
te Kloeze Wouter	St Antony's College, Oxford
Teague Elizabeth	St Antony's College, Oxford.
Trier Tom	Office of the EUSR for the South Caucasus, Brussels
Warkentin Alexandra	Oxford University
Williams Nathasha	International Alert, London
Wilmers Leyla	International Alert, London
Wober Siegfried	Conciliation Resources, London
Zimmerer Gabor	Oxford University

About the organisers of the conference

The Russian and Eurasian Studies Centre at St Antony's College, Oxford University.

The Russian and Eurasian Studies Centre was launched in 2003 to carry forward the work of the internationally renowned Russian and East European Studies Centre, established in 1953. The Centre is a major component of research on Russia, Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia at Oxford University. Its former students occupy very prominent positions in academia, politics, the higher reaches of journalism, the civil service and international financial institutions.

The Centre organises seminars, addressed by visiting speakers, which have been weekly in term-time throughout the past fifty years. They have drawn in the most outstanding scholars in the field who come to Oxford both from the countries which are the object of study and from Western Europe, North America, Australia and elsewhere.

LINKS (Dialogue-Analysis-Research)

LINKS was established in London in July 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit, think tank, working on areas of conflict and conflict prevention, governance, global security and international relations. Its main areas of expertise and interests are •The Caucasus and Central Asian Regions; •The European Union's Relations with its Eastern and Southern neighbourhood; •The foreign and regional policies of Turkey, Iran and Russia; •The Gulf region and its future role in the world; and Relations between the West and the Muslim world.

Over nearly two decades it has implemented a wide range of activities in support of its basic aims: the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the promotion of democracy in societies in transition, working most of the time through innovative, ground breaking projects. Around 500 events in more than 30 countries were organised For further information please contact LINKS at Adam House, 7-10 Adam Street, London WC2N 6AA t: +44 2075209308; f: +44 2075209309. www.links-dar.org

EPNK: The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh

EPNK is funded by the European Union and builds on previous work that our five member organisations carried out in this field and region, individually or in groups. The five member organisations are: Conciliation Resources (based in the UK), Crisis Management Initiative (Finland), International Alert (lead agency, UK), the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (Sweden) and LINKS (UK). We work closely with multiple local partners across the region.

EPNK activities started in 2010. Our activities focus on the following key themes: Dialogue, Research & analysis, Film & media, Inclusivity & participation and Training & capacity building. More information is available on www.epnk.org