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HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND POLITICS:  
THE CASE OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH

S. Neil MacFarlane and Larry Minear

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PREFACE

Humanitarian and development activities always have been highly political in nature, although practitioners and their underwriters minimize their political aspects. Yet complex emergencies—the special genre of political-cum-military, cum-humanitarian post-Cold War crises—have highlighted the inherently political nature of such interventions, making it impossible to view humanitarian action in a political vacuum.

That is certainly the case with respect to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, where politics at every level has had an impact on civilian populations in that territory and the rest of Azerbaijan and in Armenia. The conflict has reflected tensions between the Russian Federation and the West over political influence in the Transcaucasus region and economic access to energy sources since the weakening of the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s. Other regional powers, notably Turkey and Iran, have also had strong political interests. “In this part of the world,” a humanitarian aid official told the research team, “life itself is political.”

The realities of international politics also were reflected in the activities of the humanitarian organizations that sought to render assistance and protection. Allocations of international aid took their cues from diaspora politics in the United States, which produced generous and disproportionate sums for Armenia and a restrictive approach to Azerbaijan.

Politics even intruded into research on humanitarian issues. Apparently in retaliation for views expressed in earlier writings, the Armenian government denied entry to a colleague who, while visiting the region for an international organization, would have conducted supplementary interviews for the current study.

In the cockpit of the conflict itself, political animosities crystallized as ethnic cleansing, which will complicate the rebuilding of societies along multiethnic lines. The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh also was accentuated by the political and economic problems of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and other republics of the former Soviet Union during their transition from command economies to whatever the future will hold.

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Overlaying the “no war but no peace” situation that has existed in Nagorno-Karabakh since a May 1994 cease-fire is yet another political issue: how to break the diplomatic impasse and enable durable economic and social reconstruction to proceed. In the interim, the needs of over a million refugees and internally displaced persons and the economic development of the entire region hang in the balance. The fact that not two but three parties are directly involved—Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, and Azerbaijan—accentuates the political challenge.

This case study analyzes the interplay between humanitarian action and politics in these various dimensions. It draws on the regional expertise of S. Neil MacFarlane, a political scientist and long-term student of the Caucasus, and the humanitarian expertise of Larry Minear, co-director of the Humanitarianism and War Project and its principal researcher. Last year, the two joined with Stephen S. Shenfield to produce a case study of the linkages between humanitarian action and peacekeeping activities conflicts in Georgia. The present review builds upon and extends last year’s work. It also offers instructive comparisons with a third case study on the former Soviet Union published earlier this year, *War and Humanitarian Action in Chechnya*, by Greg Hansen and Robert Seely, as Watson Institute Occasional Paper # 26.

This case study, as with all the case studies carried out by the project, is based largely on interviews with those directly involved in the conflict. The research was conducted in the Caucasus in May 1996, where members of the team visited Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan. Research there and in Georgia was preceded and followed by interviews in New York, Washington, Geneva, and Vienna. A list of the more than 100 persons interviewed is found in appendix III. Because our principal readership is made up largely of humanitarian practitioners rather than Caucasus cognoscenti, we have included several maps, a chronology related to the war (appendix I), and an annotated bibliography (appendix II). Appendix IV provides additional information about the authors of the study and about the Humanitarianism and War Project.

What we said about last year’s Georgia review applies to this year’s study of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: “The

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experience...is particularly rich because of the existence of three conflicts, the depth and multifaceted nature of international involvement, and the high stakes of the outcomes to Russia and the Newly Independent States—and of course to the international community as well.”

We wish to thank those who have played a role in making this study possible. Our visit to the region was informed and facilitated by diplomats from Armenia and Azerbaijan. We are also indebted to Save the Children/U.S. for assisting the researchers in the Caucasus and to the Armenian Assembly of America, which provided background briefings and assistance. We also wish to acknowledge our colleagues at the Watson Institute who have assisted in the preparation of the manuscript and in other ways: Deana Arsenian, Fred Fullerton, Amy M. Langlais, Margareta Levitsky, Suzanne Miller, George L. Potter, and Nancy Hamlin Soukup. The labors of Lacha Tchantouridze, a research assistant at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, and Jerry Maldonado, an intern at the Watson Institute, are also appreciated.

This study continues our collaboration with George Khutsishvili, director of the International Centre for Conflict and Negotiation in Tblisi, whose assistance is once again gratefully acknowledged. It also has had assistance from Aram Ohanian of Yerevan, Elkhan Mekhtiev and Iskander Bayramov of Baku, and Nora Dudwick, an anthropologist knowledgeable about the region.

As with all project publications, we are pleased to make this work available to the international community and welcome comments and reactions. The feedback we receive plays a role in shaping our ongoing activities and in informing our efforts to disseminate our findings and recommendations more widely. Additional copies of this work and information about our other publications may be downloaded directly from our website at [http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson\\_Institute/H\\_W](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson_Institute/H_W).

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December 1996





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study reviews the intersection between politics and humanitarian action in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Approaching humanitarian action as including both assistance and protection, as well as emergency aid and reconstruction inputs, the study analyzes the intrusion of political agendas into humanitarian responses to the conflict and assesses the damages of the resulting politicization of activities.

The paper examines the differing humanitarian challenges in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh in the years 1988–1996. Although the focus is on the needs generated by this conflict, these are set in the broader context of the transition to post-Soviet economic and political arrangements. In each of the three jurisdictions, political factors undercut effective humanitarian action by the United Nations, governments, and private relief groups. Politicized humanitarian action in turn impeded diplomatic efforts to make permanent the 1994 cease-fire, mount a peacekeeping operation, and establish a durable peace.

As other studies in this series have demonstrated, politics can be a positive, rather than a negative, force. Instead of declaring some populations off-limits, politics can accelerate efforts to meet basic human needs. Rather than distorting aid allocations, politics can express international solidarity with those in distress. For its part, humanitarian action can contribute to the processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation as well as reconstruction. The study therefore recommends ways of protecting the integrity of humanitarian principles and fostering effective humanitarian activities in highly politicized circumstances.



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## ACRONYMS

AAA	Armenian Assembly of America
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AID	Agency for International Development (U.S.)
AIOC	Azerbaijan International Operating Company
ARC	American Red Cross
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CLAU	Caucasus Logistics Advisory Unit (WFP)
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
DPA	Department of Political Affairs (UN)
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
EU	European Union
FTC	Feed the Children
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HLPG	High Level Planning Group (OSCE)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISAR	Institute on American-Soviet Relations
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NAR	Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic
NATO	North American Treaty Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NIS	Newly Independent States
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
POW	Prisoner of War
SC-US	Save the Children/U.S.
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the CIS (EU)
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
UN	United Nations

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UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPA	UN Department of Political Affairs (the predecessor of DHA)
UNDRO	United Nations Disaster Relief Office
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WFP	World Food Programme

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This is a study of humanitarian action in Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>1</sup> War over Nagorno-Karabakh began in 1989. By 1994, when a cease-fire was declared, it had resulted in some 25,000 deaths, a population exchange of more than 500,000 persons between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the internal displacement of some 600,000 Azerbaijanis from territories occupied by Nagorno-Karabakh forces.<sup>2</sup> Although refugees were integrated into host communities, internally displaced persons (IDPs) remained in camps and other temporary shelters mainly in Azerbaijan, awaiting a political settlement allowing their return. In the meantime, the physical destruction of infrastructure and property both in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the occupied territories was enormous, creating a massive task of reconstruction for both local inhabitants and the international community.

The situation of refugees and displaced persons in the region was a single element within a larger crisis involving the collapse of the Soviet economy and the transition to a market-based system. War and economics were intimately linked in all three Transcaucasian jurisdictions. In Armenia, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh resulted in blockades imposed by both Azerbaijan and Turkey. Coupled with the disruption of infrastructural links through Georgia produced by the civil conflict in Abkhazia and the general collapse of law and order throughout Georgia, the blockades produced a nationwide humanitarian emergency in Armenia.

In Azerbaijan, the continuing conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh diverted both resources and attention from the task of economic recovery to security issues. The lack of military success was one factor among several causing substantial political instability in Azerbaijan, impeding efforts to develop a coherent recovery strategy. The failure to settle the war also inhibited the flow of foreign investment into Azerbaijan's energy sector—its best hope for economic normalization. The war created additional problems for the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic (NAR), a portion of Azerbaijan cut off

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from the mainland by a corridor of Armenian territory (see map 1).

In Nagorno-Karabakh, the war severed the local economy from sources of industrial inputs and severed economic links to the rest of Azerbaijan. The very high proportion of Nagorno-Karabakh's able-bodied male population serving in the armed forces further constrained economic recovery. Nagorno-Karabakh's status as a constituent part of Azerbaijan in rebellion and the international community's approach to the matter of domestic jurisdiction greatly impeded responses to the humanitarian situation. Lack of international involvement in the effort to address Nagorno-Karabakh's humanitarian needs may have complicated the search for a political settlement to the conflict (see chapters 3, 4, and 5).

Active hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh ended with a cease-fire in May 1994, which has held ever since. Some progress was made on a political settlement, but other obstacles were sufficiently strong to prevent the conclusion of an agreement permitting the deployment of peacekeeping forces planned by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the return of the displaced, and the beginning of the process of reconstruction.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its humanitarian consequences have been chosen for study for numerous reasons. First, particularities of humanitarian activity in the Newly Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union need to be better understood. This terrain, uncharted until recently by international governmental and nongovernmental actors, offers a new scene of engagement and poses specific challenges. In this respect, the present study is a continuation of our recent work on humanitarian action in the Republic of Georgia.<sup>3</sup>

Second, and the more overtly political aspect of mediation and conflict resolution, the case is an example of the devolution of responsibility for conflict resolution from the United Nations to regional organizations. Has the leadership exercised at the regional level and the division of labor with universal institutions proved effective?

Finally, in the case of the United States and a number of other providers of bilateral assistance, a review of the Nagorno-Karabakh experience offers a good vehicle for assessing the

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ways in which domestic politics, especially the activity of diaspora groups, affects foreign policy in general and humanitarian responses in particular.

In fact, the basic theme of the study is the politicization of humanitarian action. By politicization, we mean the infusion of political considerations into the contours and conduct of humanitarian activities. The study examines the effects of the perceived political agendas of various substate, state, and interstate actors on efforts to assist and protect civilians affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In our judgment, political currents native to the region have been joined by the domestic and international political considerations of the donor and other outside states to distort and deflect efforts to provide assistance based solely on need.

For the purpose of this study and of the Humanitarianism and War Project as a whole, humanitarian action is approached within the framework of international humanitarian law: such action is grounded in the right of persons in need to have access to succor and of impartial aid organizations to provide such assistance. Humanitarian assistance is provided in response to such need, not to advance certain political or other extraneous agendas.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of humanitarian action is viewed as including both the protection of human rights and the provision of assistance. Assistance itself is defined broadly to include emergency relief, such as food, medicine, and shelter, as well as support for rehabilitation and reconstruction. Rehabilitation inputs may take the form of the income-generating and infrastructural activities that provide a bridge between urgent relief and sustained development. Moreover, because an end to the humanitarian consequences of war requires a resolution of the conflict itself, we link humanitarian action with the process of political settlement and the actors playing a role in that process.

The study begins with an analysis of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, with particular attention to its origins and the phases of the humanitarian crisis it produced. We then review humanitarian activity in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh itself, including the role of politics in structuring the humanitarian response. The process of conflict

Map 1: The Political Geography of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict







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resolution and the role of state and international actors is then analyzed. Finally, we offer a number of recommendations to those involved.

The study is based on a thorough review of the secondary literature on Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh. We also have examined the program documents of international governmental organizations, bilateral aid agencies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the response to the humanitarian emergency, as well as the public documents of the UN and the OSCE. Against this backdrop, we interviewed more than 100 officials from the widest possible range of perspectives: diplomats and other government officials from the region and beyond; aid officials from inter-governmental, national, and NGO groups; and refugees and others directly affected by the conflict. (See Appendix III.) Interviews took place in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Washington, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Nagorno-Karabakh between December 1995 and November 1996.

Finally, a note on orthography and names is necessary. The word "Azeri" is used to refer to groups of Azeri ethnicity, as distinct from other ethnic groups in Azerbaijan such as the Armenians, Kurds, or Talysh. The word "Azerbaijani" is used in reference to the government of Azerbaijan and its agents, as well as to the populace of the country as a whole. Distinction between the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia and those of the self-styled Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh is maintained by reference to the latter as Karabakh Armenian forces.

Armenians and Azeris frequently have different names for single places (for example, what is Stepanakert to Armenians is Xankāndi to Azeris). When the names are the same, the endings frequently differ (e.g., Shusha versus Shushi). Because the choice of names and spellings can be interpreted as a political statement in this highly charged atmosphere, clarification of our approach is desirable. We use those spellings and names that are common in western writing on the subject, to avoid the confusion that might otherwise arise.

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## CHAPTER 2

### THE SETTING

#### **Demographic and Economic Background**

The events surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict involve two states—Armenia and Azerbaijan—and two substate jurisdictions—Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan, an autonomous republic within Azerbaijan but separated from it by a corridor of Armenian territory. The size and population of the four jurisdictions are presented in figure 1; their locations are shown on map 1.

The population totals and percentages are derived from the 1989 Soviet census. There have been substantial changes since then. The flight of Azeris from Armenia to Azerbaijan and of Armenians in the opposite direction affected the figures in column 4. Because in each instance the uprooted population constituted the largest minority in the republic where they originally lived, their departure increased the titular majority share of the population. These two flows did not, however, alter substantially the figures in column 3 for Armenia and Azerbaijan because the exchange of populations was roughly equivalent. However, most reports suggest a substantial emigration (up to one million) of Armenians from the Republic of Armenia since 1991 as a result of the extremely difficult living conditions created by the energy blockade and the collapse of the country's economy.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, the expulsion of the Azeri minority population (around 40,000 people or 22 percent of the total), as well as the departure of Karabakh Armenian refugees at the height of hostilities, reduced the area's overall population substantially with no immediate compensating inflow. In 1994, Human Rights Watch cited estimates of the region's population ranging from 100,000 to 160,000.<sup>1</sup> The population has increased since then because of the durable cease-fire, and reconstruction activities of the Karabakh government and NGOs have allowed some return. There are also reports that limited numbers of Armenians from Abkhazia have settled in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Figure 1: The Southern Transcaucasus in Figures<sup>2</sup>

Jurisdiction	Territory (square km)	Population (1989)	Percent Titular Population
Armenia	29,800	3,304,000	94% (Armenian)
Azerbaijan	86,600	7,020,000	83% (Armenian)
Nagorno- Karabakh	1,700	185,000	75% (Azeri)
Nakhichevan	3,398	295,061	95.5% (Azeri)

Little information is available on the current demographic character of Nakhichevan. Refugee-related decline in population is presumed to be limited because the region was less affected by direct hostilities. However, a substantial number of residents have emigrated out of the region seeking work in Turkey and elsewhere.

During the Soviet era, Azerbaijan was one of the less developed republics, with *per capita* income and consumption well below the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) average. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) human development index (HDI), Azerbaijan ranks tenth out of the 15 republics, despite the existence of a substantial energy sector. The economy and the standard of living suffered markedly after independence as a result of the collapse of the Soviet command economy and a deterioration in regional trade relations. Six years of civil conflict and associated displacement of population have absorbed much of the resources and the attention of the state. The republic experienced marked inflation, dramatic falls in production (including the energy sector) and real income, and the near or total collapse of public services and the welfare safety net. Azerbaijan's national income in 1994 was approximately the same as in 1970 and half of what it had been in 1988.<sup>3</sup>

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Despite a much poorer resource base than Azerbaijan, Armenia did better in the Soviet era. It had a reasonably well-developed industrial structure and one of the higher standards of education in the union. Armenia's economic situation, however, was seriously affected by a series of disasters:

- a substantial flow of refugees from Azerbaijan in 1988;
- in the same year, a devastating earthquake in and around Gumri (the former Leninakan), killing an estimated 25,000 people and rendering half a million others homeless;
- the imposition of an energy and general economic blockade by Azerbaijan, bringing Armenia's industrial economy to a virtual halt by 1991;
- the collapse of trade with the rest of the former USSR in 1991–1992; and
- the continued disruption of infrastructural links through Georgia to Russia and the Black Sea, resulting from civil war and instability in Georgia.

These events resulted in massive declines in output (56 percent decline in Gross Domestic Product [GDP] from 1989 to 1993), substantial inflation (peaking at over 10,000 percent in 1993), extensive unemployment, a crisis in the health and education systems, and a massive decline in the general standard of living, as in the case of Azerbaijan.

In both states, the combination of these factors led to a humanitarian emergency in 1992–1994. In the Armenian case, structural adjustment proceeded quickly and efficiently with most economic indicators stabilized and the country's Gross National Product (GNP) returned to positive growth by 1995.<sup>4</sup> However, because the country's baseline had shrunk so drastically in the previous years, little economic expansion was needed to affect the aggregate statistics. In Azerbaijan, a drag on economic recovery was exercised by the refugee and IDP burden, as well as the government's very halting approach to economic reform and structural adjustment and the delays in the international consortium's startup of oil production.

The extent of the crisis was perhaps greatest in 1990–1992 in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia experienced the intense impact of the energy blockade, coupled with the impact

Map 2: Areas Occupied by Nagorno-Karabakh Armed Forces 1992-1994





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of economic transition and the difficulties of absorbing refugees from Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh was cut off from secure sources of supply and energy and was a battleground for the opposing forces. In 1992–1993, the crisis in Azerbaijan grew more severe as a result of the displacements of Azeris first from Karabakh and then from Karabakh’s surrounding districts (see map 2). From this, an IDP problem was created of an entirely different scale than the population displacement in Armenia, as discussed in chapter 3.

### **Origins of the Conflict**

The most obvious long-term causes of the conflict originate in the early twentieth century, although an historically older argument exists about the claims to Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>5</sup> Relations between the Azeri and Armenian communities had been exacerbated by Armenian’s concern over the Azeri’s association with Turkey and, consequently, with the genocide inflicted on Armenians by the Ottoman government during World War I. After the Russian Revolution, the newly independent states of Armenia and Azerbaijan fought over Karabakh, as did local Azeri and Armenian populations. Fighting ended with the imposition of Soviet control over Armenia and Azerbaijan by the 11th Red Army in 1920.

The subsequent territorial disposition by the Caucasian Bureau of the Bolshevik Party, which awarded both Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan, was considered unjust by Armenians. The Azerbaijani side took a similar view of the allocation of the district of Zangezur to Armenia. The manner in which the borders were drawn did much to exacerbate interethnic relations within the region and to set the stage for conflict. In fact, some analysts have concluded that “with hindsight, the distribution of territory appears to have been intended to amplify disputes rather than avoid them.”<sup>6</sup>

The Soviet era also left a clear perception of grievance on the part of Karabakh Armenians, who felt that they received an inadequate share of infrastructural and other capital investment from the authorities in Baku. They interpreted this as discrimination and as part of an effort ultimately to erode Armenian demographic preponderance in the area, presumably to



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extinguish its autonomy. The substantial shrink of the Armenian minority in Nakhichevan was often cited as an indication of the future awaiting Karabakh Armenians.

The incipient dispute remained dormant, however, until the end of the Soviet era in 1988–1991—the two communities coexisting in Nagorno-Karabakh. The more proximate causes of the conflict erupted during the Gorbachev years when, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, more open political expression cleared the way for renewed ethnic conflicts, and the uncertainties associated with economic reform generated significant popular and elite insecurity. Notably, as central power decayed in the USSR, the position of elites in minority jurisdictions was increasingly vulnerable in the face of growing majority nationalism in many republics.

In the more open conditions of the Gorbachev years, a serious struggle for power between Baku and Stepanakert took shape. The result in Nagorno-Karabakh was the emergence of demands for the transfer of authority over the region from Azerbaijan to Armenia. These demands culminated in the passage of a resolution to this effect by the Nagorno-Karabakh Supreme Soviet on February 20, 1988.

From this point forward, the situation in Armenia and in Azerbaijan, including Nagorno-Karabakh itself, deteriorated dramatically. In Armenia, news of the resolution prompted week-long massive demonstrations in Yerevan in support of the Karabakh request. The Karabakh cause became the focal point of the opposition movement with the formation of the Karabakh Committee, the precursor to the Armenian National Movement, which was voted into office after the collapse of communist authority. (For a chronology of these events, see appendix I.)

The Nagorno-Karabakh resolution and Armenia's reaction, coupled with reports of the death of two Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh, produced anti-Armenian rioting a week later in Sumgait, a major industrial center on the Caspian coast north of Baku. In March 1988, the USSR Supreme Soviet rejected Nagorno-Karabakh's request for transfer of jurisdiction and in mid-June the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan concurred. Two days later, the Supreme Soviet of Armenia, by contrast, voted to accept Nagorno-Karabakh's request for

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accession to Armenia and in mid-July Nagorno-Karabakh's Soviet voted to secede from Azerbaijan.

Renewed clashes followed in Stepanakert in September 1988, accompanied by a partial exodus of the city's Azeri population. In November, Armenians were expelled *en masse* from Azerbaijan and vice versa. At the very moment when the Armenian government and popular organizations in Armenia, such as the Karabakh Committee, were attempting to deal with this influx, Armenia was struck by the earthquake mentioned earlier.

The deterioration of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh led the USSR to impose direct control over the region in January 1989 while seeking ways to defuse the crisis. Resistance from Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh provoked the deployment of armored units in May to put down a series of general strikes. Clashes with Soviet authorities continued, however, as did violence between the Azeri and Armenian populations in the region. Soviet efforts to define a settlement failed. Direct rule ended in November 1989, with jurisdiction over Nagorno-Karabakh handed back to Azerbaijan.

The Nagorno-Karabakh dispute had created the Popular Front of Azerbaijan, a mass political movement that soon became the most powerful force in Azerbaijan's domestic politics. Resolutely opposed to any compromise on the Karabakh issue, the Popular Front had gained sufficient strength by November 1989 to impose a rail blockade on Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, cutting critical supplies of fuel to both. By late 1989, the Popular Front was mounting mass demonstrations against the communist government in Baku, which were accompanied by further violence against the remaining Armenian population in early and mid-January 1990.<sup>7</sup> Although anti-Armenian violence had largely subsided by the third week of January, it nonetheless provided a pretext for intervention by Soviet troops seeking to suppress the Popular Front. On January 20, they invaded Baku, attacking Popular Front demonstrators and killing at least 160.

The suppression of demonstrations in Baku hardened Azeri public opinion against the USSR and its pliant local leadership, contributing substantially to the growing desire for independence. Another result of the January events was

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the exile of the remaining Armenians in Baku. By the end of January 1990, Azerbaijan had no more Armenian communities, except in Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas to its north. The disruption of energy supplies to Armenia dramatically accelerated the republic's economic decline and deepened hardship for the population as a whole.

The Soviet government simultaneously deployed some 17,000 troops to Nagorno-Karabakh and the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia, declaring a state of emergency to deal with the deteriorating situation. Despite tightening Soviet military control over roads and settlements in Nagorno-Karabakh, demonstrations in support of independence and/or unification with Armenia continued, as well as sporadic violence between Armenian and Azeri populations and attacks on police and military authorities. Prospects for resolving the conflict, already slim, deteriorated dramatically when at the end of April 1991 a joint Soviet/Azerbaijani military and police operation began in areas adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Ostensibly a passport checking exercise, Operation Ring's real purpose was to clear Armenians out of approximately 24 villages on the periphery of Nagorno-Karabakh. It involved the arrest and detention of hundreds of Armenian men and the deportation of thousands from their homes, involving violence and a systematic violation of human rights.<sup>8</sup> Where resistance occurred, as at Getashen (Chaikend), many civilians died under indiscriminate fire from Azerbaijani forces. Not surprisingly, violence continued to escalate through the year with large numbers of civilian hostages taken from both sides.

The August 1991 coup in Moscow accelerated the region's descent into war. Armenia and Azerbaijan both declared independence in late August and September. Armenian-armed paramilitaries operating in the Nagorno-Karabakh region coalesced into a Karabakh Army. The Popular Front made similar efforts to bring together Azeri militias in the region. The Armenian and Azeri populations of Nagorno-Karabakh completed their withdrawal into ethnically homogeneous zones, with Armenian villagers in the predominantly Azeri Shusha region fleeing or being cleared from their villages by Soviet troops.

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Later in the autumn of 1991, Azerbaijani forces began the systematic shelling of Stepanakert from positions within villages on the heights around the city and notably from the city of Shusha. Indiscriminate artillery exchanges also occurred in the Hadrut and Askeran regions. Stepanakert's power supply was cut. Shelling from Shusha was more or less continuous by the end of the year.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Soviet Interior Ministry Forces withdrew from the region, removing whatever restraining effect they had exercised over the parties. There remained, however, a significant ex-Soviet (now Russian) military presence in proximity to the conflict: the 127th Division of the Russian Army at Gumri in Armenia; the 104th Airborne Division in Gandzha in central Azerbaijan; and the 366th Motor Rifle Regiment in Stepanakert itself. Discipline within these units decayed rapidly with the collapse of the USSR, and they came to serve as weapons entrepôts and sources of manpower for all sides in the conflict, as discussed below. One result was a massive increase in the quantity and quality of weaponry available to the parties.

The tide turned in favor of the Karabakh Armenians in early 1992. Forces in Stepanakert began to break the Azerbaijani ring around the city with an attack on Khojali in February. It is accepted almost universally that this assault resulted in atrocities against Azeri civilians caught in the encirclement. At least 200 were killed.<sup>9</sup> At this time, the 366th Motor Rifle Division was in the process of withdrawing from Stepanakert, leaving its equipment (including about 80 tanks and heavy military vehicles) to the Karabakh forces. Some reports indicate that personnel from the 366th took part in the Khojali operation.<sup>10</sup>

Soon after the seizure of Khojali, Karabakh forces attacked and took Shusha (May 12, 1992) and drove from there to the border with Azerbaijan at Lachin. They left behind totally destroyed Azeri settlements, including Lachin. The offensive generated several tens of thousands of Azeri IDPs, many of whom wound up in Baku and Sumgait in dwellings vacated by Armenians. By June 1992, a corridor from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia had been cleared across intervening territory of Azerbaijan. These events coincided with a series of

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coups and countercoups in Baku that culminated in the election of Popular Front leader Abulfaz Elchibey as president of Azerbaijan in June 1992.

The military initiative shifted back to Azerbaijan during the summer. In late June, Azerbaijani forces began an offensive in the north, capturing Armenian-controlled areas of the Shahumian District on the northern border of Nagorno-Karabakh and then taking the bulk of Nagorno-Karabakh's Mardakert District, largely destroying the city of Mardakert in the process. This produced a further 40,000 Armenian IDPs who remained in Nagorno-Karabakh and refugees who fled to Armenia. The offensive was accompanied and followed by severe air and artillery bombardment of the entire region.<sup>11</sup>

Nagorno-Karabakh forces returned to the offensive in early 1993, retaking much of Mardakert and capturing the hydroelectric facilities on the Sarsang Reservoir, which restored a reliable source of power to Stepanakert. Many civilians returned to Mardakert after the offensive. Their villages, however, were largely destroyed, and they encountered a considerable mine hazard, resulting in a large number of casualties.

The offensive also cut communications between the Kelbajar region of northwestern Azerbaijan and the rest of the country. Kelbajar—inhabited by a mixed population of some 60,000 Azeris and Kurds—was surrounded on three sides by the Armenian border on the west, Nagorno-Karabakh on the east, and Karabakh forces holding Lachin to the south. Kelbajar's only exit was across the Murov Mountains to the north. At the end of March, Karabakh forces attacked the region and seized it within a week. In a pattern to become familiar elsewhere, civilian installations and houses were targeted, and small numbers of civilians were killed or taken hostage, presumably as a means of intimidating others into flight. Karabakh forces on the whole did not interfere with the exodus of the population north across the mountains into Daskesan and Khanlar, which added significantly to the humanitarian problem in north-central Azerbaijan.

These events were followed immediately by a third Karabakh operation; this one directed southwards toward Fizuli, Jebrail, and Zangelan. The offensive halted at the end of

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April 1993 with 15 villages captured and depopulated. A large portion of these regions' populations fled at this time, creating a new wave of IDPs directed south into Iran and east into southeastern districts of Azerbaijan. After a lull produced by the joint OSCE, Russian, Turkish, and American effort at mediation described below, Karabakh forces resumed operations in the northeast by retaking the city of Mardakert on June 28. Responding to waves of displaced persons, humanitarian activities in Azerbaijan began on a large scale, with most agencies arriving from mid-1993 to early 1994.

These events created a new political crisis in Baku, culminating in the overthrow of Elchibey and his eventual replacement by Geidar Aliev, a former Soviet politburo member and secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. Nagorno-Karabakh forces took advantage of the chaos in Baku to attack Agdam, a city of 50,000 on Nagorno-Karabakh's eastern border. The city fell on July 23, 1993; its inhabitants again being forcibly displaced. The city then was looted and burned systematically. Human Rights Watch reported extensive hostage taking during this operation as well.<sup>12</sup> The action in Agdam added approximately 50,000 to the IDP population, most of them settling temporarily in camps in central Azerbaijan.

In August, the focus again shifted southward toward the Iranian border. By October 1993, Karabakh forces had taken Qubately, Jebrail, Zangelan, and Fizuli and, as a result, controlled the entire area between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and Iran. This operation advanced in two phases, punctuated by a counterattack in Jebrail led by Afghan mercenaries serving with the Azerbaijan armed forces. These regions were systematically depopulated of 210,000 inhabitants, many of whom sought temporary refuge in Iran. They were subsequently moved on to camps erected hastily in southern and central Azerbaijan initially established by the Iranian, Turkish, and Saudi Red Crescent Societies. Once again, settlements in the area were stripped and burned methodically. Residents of Nagorno-Karabakh used the removed building materials to reconstruct their own villages destroyed by the Azerbaijanis.

The final major phase of hostilities involved an Azerbaijani offensive from December 1993 to February 1994. Fighting

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initially was concentrated on the eastern edge of the Fizuli District and then extended the entire length of the front. Azerbaijani forces made significant gains in the Fizuli and Agdam districts, advanced toward Mardakert, and broke through the Murov Mountains into Kelbajar. This brought a substantial increase in the external involvement on behalf of Karabakh. Ultimately, the Azerbaijani offensive was pushed back, although they retained some of their gains in Fizuli. There were few humanitarian consequences associated with this phase of the struggle because few were living in the affected territory by that time.

The last active hostilities began in April 1994 in the Agdam and Mardakert regions. They resulted in greater Karabakh gains in Mardakert, as well as limited forward movement in the Terter and Shahumian districts to the north and northeast of Nagorno-Karabakh. These actions reportedly displaced 50,000 more persons.

Active hostilities ended with a Russian-brokered cease-fire on May 16, 1994. At that time, Karabakh forces held all of Nagorno-Karabakh, with the exception of small portions of the Martuni and Mardakert districts. In addition, they fully controlled the Kelbajar, Lachin, Qubately, Zangelan, and Jeybrail districts in entirety, and significant portions of the Fizuli, Terter, and Agdam districts. These districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh, together constituting some 17–20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory, had been depopulated and, reportedly, mined. In short, Nagorno-Karabakh forces had achieved a more or less complete victory, displacing approximately 600,000 Azeris, who were added to the some 200,000 Azeris fleeing Armenia as refugees.

Little progress was made toward a political settlement after the cease-fire. A sustainable balance on the battlefield had been attained. Neither side had the confidence to make the concessions necessary for settlement. As a senior OSCE staffer noted, "there was no immediate prospect of movement, since both sides seemed satisfied with the *status quo*."

However, the way the Nagorno-Karabakh forces prosecuted the war left some hope for eventual reconciliation. They were more interested in taking territory than in attacking the population, which they encouraged (sometimes rather

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brutally) to flee. The massive atrocities characteristic of, for example, the war in Bosnia did not occur. As a result, the level of acrimony toward Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians among Azeri IDPs seemed rather low. In the words of one leader interviewed by the research team: “Armenians themselves are suffering from this war. Armenian mothers too have lost sons...Even after everything—the war, the displacement, the suffering—we are ready to forgive Armenia.” The absence of intense recrimination may enhance prospects for resettlement and reconstruction.

The war caused some 25,000 deaths and the uprooting of some 1,250,000–1,500,000 refugees and IDPs. Approximate figures include 350,000–400,000 refugees in Armenia; 600,000–650,000 IDPs and 200,000 refugees in Azerbaijan; and 15,000 IDPs in Nagorno-Karabakh. Roughly 20 percent of the land area of Azerbaijan was depopulated, and all of the settlements in Nagorno-Karabakh were damaged to varying degrees by the war.

There were three principal theaters of humanitarian action. In Armenia, the needs both of refugees from Azerbaijan and of victims of the 1988 earthquake were paramount. In Nagorno-Karabakh, much of the housing and infrastructure received extensive damage by the war, the entire Azeri population was evicted, and a substantial portion of the Armenian majority was displaced either to Armenia or within Nagorno-Karabakh itself. In Azerbaijan, the major humanitarian problem was the sizable IDP populations from Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied territories surrounding it. These events occurred simultaneously with a massive economic contraction in Armenia and Azerbaijan, in large part a product of the Soviet economic collapse, but in both countries dramatically exacerbated by the war and the failure to find a mutually acceptable political settlement to it.

### **The Regional Context of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict**

The dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh was set in a complex regional context. The socio-economic crisis and its humanitarian implications were profoundly exacerbated by instability



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in the region as a whole. It is difficult to envisage a full normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani-Karabakh relations without a resolution of the region's other conflicts, notably those in Georgia and Chechnya.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan were critically dependent on infrastructural links through Georgia and the Northern Caucasus, which were themselves affected by conflict. As indicated on map 3, the railroad from Russia through Abkhazia to Georgia was one of two principal rail links between Russia and the two republics. Traffic along it was interrupted by the conflict in Abkhazia and by the Russian blockade of that region. The conflict and blockade also partially severed economic links between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Russia, historically their principal market.

The war in Chechnya brought closer Russian control over rail and other traffic between Russia and Azerbaijan along the Caspian Sea coast, including the occasional closure of these links. Along with the rise of banditry in the Northern Caucasus, such closures further disrupted regular trade flows. Humanitarian assistance to both countries traveled near or through zones of instability in southern Georgia, subjecting it to periodic disruption and loss.

Instability related to Nagorno-Karabakh had an impact on Armenia's and Azerbaijan's neighbor, Georgia. At times, the conflict spilled over in the form of hostage taking between Azeri and Armenian communities in Georgia and cross-border criminal activity. The natural gas pipeline from Russia to Armenia, which passes through Azeri-populated areas of south-central Georgia, was repeatedly sabotaged, as well as road and rail bridges from central and western Georgia to Armenia. More generally, the conflict contributed to the sense of instability and risk that inhibited investment in recovery throughout the region.

In this setting, an overall humanitarian strategy is difficult to develop without first considering humanitarian needs in isolation from the overall dynamic of conflict in the Transcaucasus. Likewise, it is difficult to envisage settlements to particular regional conflicts in the absence of regionwide normalization.

Map 3: Infrastructure of the Transcaucasus





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## International Dimensions

The course of the conflict and the humanitarian response to it have been strongly influenced by the involvement of international actors (both states and international organizations) from outside the region. A product of a particular confluence of geopolitical factors, international involvement took the form principally of military, diplomatic, and humanitarian interventions.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, like others in the region, emerged from a specific regional and international context that had significant effects on its evolution and eventual outcome. When the conflict began, the Transcaucasus region was part of the USSR; it is now part of what Russians refer to as the "near abroad." The existence of Nagorno-Karabakh as a politically organized enclave within Azerbaijan was itself a legacy of the Soviet experience, as well as the substantial quantity of weaponry in the region that fueled the conflict for six years. So, finally, with the Russian forces still in Armenia and previously in Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, they played a fundamental role in the development of the conflict.

Russia made clear in both declaratory statements and in its regional behavior that it was unwilling to write off its influence in the area and was in fact working to restore it.<sup>13</sup> Four major strategic interests were at stake. The first was the importance of the southern Caucasus to Russian control over North Caucasian subjects of its federation, such as Chechnya.

A second interest was containing the influence in the region of contiguous actors, such as Turkey and Iran, with long histories of troubled relations with Russia. Since 1453, a tripolar contest for control among the three states has been waged. Russia won the contest in the nineteenth century by extending its control down what are now the southern borders of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Russia's control in this century was interrupted only by the brief independence of the region's states between 1918 and 1920 (1921 in the case of Georgia). The authority of the Soviet Union was unchallenged in the region until the late 1980s, when it began to collapse.

The emergence in the early 1990s of newly independent and conspicuously weak states in the Caucasus raised the

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possibility of a renewal of the tripolar contest.<sup>14</sup> The initial responses of Iran to the collapse of Soviet control in the Caucasus and, more strongly, of Turkey suggested that they sought to take advantage of Russian weakness. And, although constrained by lack of resources and by their concern not to jeopardize their valued economic and technological exchange relationships with Russia itself, they appeared to be displacing Russia in the regional economy.<sup>15</sup>

A third strategic interest for Russia lies in the area of energy. Russia had a stake in controlling and profiting from the extraction and the transshipment of Azerbaijan's energy reserves. A fourth interest was the fact that external defenses of the Russian Federation sit not along Russia's borders with the other post-Soviet republics but along the borders of the former Soviet Union. Consequently, Russia perceived an interest in reestablishing effective border control and resuscitating air defense networks along the Georgian and Armenian borders with Turkey and along Armenia's and Azerbaijan's borders with Iran.

In addition to the external determinants of Russian foreign policy in the Transcaucasus, there were important domestic issues. Russia's relations with the other newly independent republics were intricately connected to the internal struggle between conservatives and moderates in Russian domestic politics. Russia's status in the region and its overall international relations became a *cause célèbre* for those seeking to undermine the moderate reformist strategies of the Russian government. It thus became more assertive in its relations with the other newly independent states for these domestic reasons.

This assertiveness was evident in at least four areas. The first was military policy. Russia sought to legitimize its military presence in the region through basing agreements with Armenia and Georgia and pressured Azerbaijan to reintroduce Russian forces into its territory. Second, Russia attempted (successfully in Georgia and Armenia, less so in Azerbaijan) to establish joint control of the external borders of the former Soviet Union through the agreed deployment of Russian border troops. Third, Russia used its control over pipeline infrastructure and the legal ambiguities associated with undersea

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energy resources in the Caspian Basin to extract a larger share of Azerbaijan's energy potential and to obstruct development of alternate routes for Azerbaijan's energy exports. The fourth area concerned Russian approaches to regional conflict, which will be discussed further below.

Russia manipulated the conflict in Abkhazia quite effectively to secure the compliance of Georgia regarding membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as well as to extract agreement on military base and economic arrangements. In essence, the Russians demonstrated through their involvement in Abkhazia that they could bring Georgia to the edge of complete defeat and internal chaos, leaving the Georgians with little alternative to capitulation on matters of importance to Russia. The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and the resulting instability in Armenia also had that effect.<sup>16</sup>

The real "hold-out" against the restoration of effective Russian control of the region was Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan resisted collective agreements on air defense and border control and refused Russian forces to be stationed on its territory. It actively sought international public and private cooperation to break the Russian monopoly on export of its energy and opposed the Russian position on Caspian Sea resources. At times, such as during the presidency of Abulfaz Elchibey, it sought to create a close security relationship with Turkey as a counterbalance.

One of Russia's principal levers to extract Azerbaijani compliance with its regional agenda was the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Continuation of the war prevented reconstruction and impeded stabilization in Azerbaijan, as well as obstructed the development of alternatives to continuing infrastructural dependence on Russia. As a Western diplomat in Yerevan suggested: "Russia has no interest in conflict resolution; it gains from the continuation of the conflict." A senior OSCE diplomat also noted the unhelpfulness of Russia in Nagorno-Karabakh, but held out some hope of Russia recognizing its long-range interest in a stable prosperous Caucasus. "Throwing oil on the fire is not sensible," he observed.

Both Turkey and Iran appeared to understand the risks associated with a direct challenge to Russia in the region and appeared more concerned about each other than about Russia.

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Turkey's major motivations related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were in part cultural, resting on the linguistic and ethnic affinity; in part a matter of domestic politics (and notably widespread public and elite sympathy for Azerbaijan); in part a reflection of its conflicted historical relations with Armenians; and in part a matter of strategic interest. In the latter respect, Azerbaijan was an important source of energy in its own right and a means of limiting Russian influence in proximity to the Turkish border; it was also the gateway to Central Asia, a major focus of Turkish foreign policy.

In the case of Iran, religious affinity with Azerbaijan did not appear to play a significant role toward Armenia. Far more Azeris live in Iran than in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Iranians are very sensitive about the possibility of assertion of minority political identity. Azerbaijan enjoys close cultural and political relations with Turkey (Iran's traditional rival in the Transcaucasian region). Popular Front leaders expressed a desire for the reunification of northern and southern (Iranian) Azerbaijan. All these interrelationships impeded the development of close relations with Azerbaijan and favored a tilt toward Armenia. Iran's valued relationship with Russia also pushed it in this direction. Iranian sensitivities to its own minority problems were clear in the rapid resettlement of Azeri refugees back into the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The final actor to be considered here is the United States, which had three concerns. First, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, like others in the post-Soviet region in which Russia involved itself, was part and parcel of the broader issue of how the United States should balance relations with the non-Russian NIS and the Russian Federation. The United States had a perceived interest in seeing the non-Russian republics develop as independent members of international society, which were open to the West. It was clear, however, that Russia claimed a *droit de regard* in this region. Policies aimed at strengthening the other republics risked alienating Russia, toward whom Washington had an entire agenda of vital interests (including strategic and conventional arms reduction, nuclear non-proliferation, and Russian cooperation in the United Nations context). Consequently, the United States was caught in a dilemma in its relations with the NIS.

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Second, the United States had a special interest in diversifying its sources of energy supply and to that end a number of major U.S. multinational energy firms were involved in an effort to exploit Azerbaijan's energy potential.

Third, U.S. policy in the region and toward the conflict was influenced by the solidarity of the Armenian-American community—a formidable power in U.S. domestic politics—with Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. U.S. policy toward the conflict involved a continuing effort, often unsuccessful, to balance these contending forces.

### *Military Intervention*

The political stakes for actors both inside and outside the region favored military involvement in the conflict itself. Although Armenia was not, and (at least since the 1920s) never had been, at war with Azerbaijan, it has played a substantial role in sustaining Nagorno-Karabakh. The Armenian government was very reluctant to discuss its military assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh, but there is sufficient evidence to suggest that both Armenian volunteers (either from the diaspora or from Armenia itself) and the army of the Republic of Armenia played a critical role at various stages of the war, particularly during the Azerbaijani offensive of December 1993 to February 1994. On the basis of interviews with Armenian conscripts and other personnel and on actual observation of busloads of Armenian soldiers crossing into the Lachin Corridor from Goris in April 1994, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki concluded:

While Armenia has supported Karabakh forces since the beginning of the conflict, evidence gathered by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki establishes the involvement of the Armenian Army as part of its assigned duties in the conflict, especially since December 1993.<sup>17</sup>

The Human Rights Watch team also reported that the 1993 Kelbajar offensive made by the Nagorno-Karabakh Army was supported by Armenian artillery from the Vardenis area.<sup>18</sup>



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Russian Federation units were also involved. In January of 1994, for example, Azerbaijani units captured a convoy of trucks from the 127th Division of the Russian Army based at Gumri. Their prisoners included soldiers who were Armenian citizens serving in this Russian unit.<sup>19</sup> The alleged involvement of the 366th Motor Rifle Regiment in the attack on Khojali has already been discussed. The quantity of heavy weaponry in the Karabakh Armed Forces indicated substantial arms transfer from Russian-controlled army stores either directly or indirectly through Armenian hands. Interviews carried out for this study with international personnel who visited Nagorno-Karabakh indicated that certain parts of the occupied territories near to Iran had been closed to them and that they had seen trucks with Russian Army markings entering this area. In short, there is little doubt of covert Russian military support of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Russia also affected the balance on the Azerbaijani side. Equipment abandoned by the 104th Airborne Division in Gandzha in 1993 represented a substantial windfall for Azerbaijan. The partial disposition of military assets of the Soviet army in May 1992 also fueled the conflict. The two events together greatly enhanced Azerbaijan's combat air and armor capability.

In addition, many Russians served on both sides of the conflict. In fact, when the 366th withdrew from Stepanakert, several of its battalion commanders defected to the Karabakh side and remained behind. A noted Russian analyst of the Karabakh question summarized Russia's role in 1995:

At its early stages, the conflict pushed the republics further away from Moscow and was accompanied by movements for national independence. Now it links them to Moscow as one of the main sources of weapons and one of the sources of soldiers for both sides. If it were not for the war, the Russian Army could not have stayed in Armenia and could not have hoped to return to Azerbaijan. We wouldn't have had any income from Baku oil; Azerbaijan wouldn't have joined the CIS, etc. It looks as if

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Russian authorities are guided by the traditional concept of foreign policy that implies 'expanding spheres of influence.' With such a notion of national interests, they do not want the conflict to stop.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, both Turkey and Afghanistan were involved militarily in the dispute. Afghan *mujahedeen* served in the Azerbaijani counteroffensive in Fizuli. Turkish volunteers trained Azerbaijani units, and, according to unconfirmed reports, some Turkish personnel participated in military action. The extent to which this reflects Turkish government policy is unclear, although a number of the volunteers were retired military officers. In short, the conflict served as something of a magnet, attracting many of the region's major military players.

#### *Efforts at Mediation*

International actors also were involved in diplomatic efforts to mediate a settlement to the conflict. Proceeding at both the individual and multilateral levels, these activities date back to the first days of the conflict. The first attempt at mediation was a joint undertaking by Presidents Yeltsin of the Russian Federation and Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan in September 1991. The two sought an agreement to end the blockades, exchange prisoners, and reopen lines of communication as a basis for movement toward a broader settlement. Nagorno-Karabakh's declaration of independence in the same month (confirmed by referendum later in the year) set the initiative back, as well as the still unexplained November 1991 crash of two helicopters carrying Russian and Azerbaijani officers and parliamentarians involved in the talks. Matters also were complicated by Azerbaijan's refusal to accept Nagorno-Karabakh representatives as parties to the negotiations and by Armenia's insistence that it could not speak for Karabakh.

The 1991 initiative did nonetheless produce an agreement on reopening communications between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nakhichevan, and for a time the trains did run. However,

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this partial success was accompanied by the imposition of a full blockade on Azerbaijan's supply of gas to Armenia on November 12, 1991, just in time for winter. Turkey involved itself as a neutral third-party mediator at this time, but Armenia for good reason doubted Turkey's impartiality and the initiative died on the vine.

Iran was the next candidate, with Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati beginning shuttle diplomacy in the region during February 1992. Ultimately, he secured an agreement resulting in peace talks between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan. In May, the two presidents met in Teheran and signed an agreement on a cease-fire to take effect within a week as a basis for a subsequent agreement on the end to the economic blockade of Armenia, the acceptance of international observers into the area, an exchange of prisoners, and the return of refugees. A day after the signing, the Karabakh Armenians took the offensive, attacking Shusha, and then moving toward the western border of Nagorno-Karabakh, driving Azerbaijani forces and the local Azeri population ahead of them in disarray. This ended the Iranian initiative.

The United Nations itself explored the possibility of mediation. In February 1992, the secretary-general sent a special envoy, Cyrus Vance, to meet with the parties. In May, an interagency mission visited the region at the request of the secretary-general and with the blessing of the Security Council. Made up of representatives of the Department of Political Affairs and the UN's humanitarian agencies, the mission explored both diplomatic and assistance roles. Given the continuation of the conflict and the needs of the civilian population, the group sought to review the potential contributions of the United Nations on both fronts, and, in the words of one of the team, "to sensitize the parties to UN interests and capacities." Although the mission's report was never released, it is known that the group recommended the United Nations take an active diplomatic and humanitarian role. As it turned out, the United Nations deferred to the OSCE on the diplomatic front while focusing its humanitarian efforts in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The mission succeeded in visiting Nagorno-Karabakh, where it reportedly found the humanitarian situation "absolutely shocking and appalling." The delegation

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represented the first and last UN presence in Nagorno-Karabakh since the start of the war.

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, now OSCE) had been involved formally on the diplomatic front since March 1992. From then on, the organization took the lead in mediation of the conflict, largely under the auspices of the Minsk Group and with the blessing of the UN's secretariat and Security Council. The group was established to set an agenda for a conference at Minsk to resolve political aspects of the conflict. In 1993, the CSCE formulated a substantial plan for a cease-fire in the context of joint Turkish, Russian, and U.S. mediation.

The proposal involved the withdrawal of Karabakh forces from Kelbajar, an end to the energy blockade of Armenia, a 60-day cease-fire, and the continuation of peace talks. Five hundred OSCE observers were to monitor the cease-fire as a means of reassuring the Karabakh side. In this context, Azerbaijan declared a unilateral cease-fire in late May 1993; the Karabakh side accepted the plan in June 1993 but sought to defer implementation for a month. In the meantime, and with substantial political disarray in Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh forces seized the opportunity to attack Agdam, and the mediation effort rapidly unraveled.

Matters were complicated by the fact that Russia, a member of the Minsk Group, also was pursuing an independent track to mediate the dispute. The Russians had no better luck than the Minsk Group in bringing the parties to peace, but they did manage to negotiate a durable cease-fire in May 1994.<sup>21</sup> The OSCE and Russian tracks were brought back together at the December 1994 Budapest OSCE summit, which designated Russia as a co-chair of the Minsk group and authorized the deployment of an OSCE peacekeeping force once a preliminary agreement was reached. No such force was deployed, for reasons well-summarized by Piotr Switalski, former senior diplomatic advisor to the secretary-general of the OSCE:

No peacekeeping element has been present so far in Nagorno-Karabakh. The absence of lasting and effective cease-fires [prior to May 1994], the failure to reach an agreement on

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follow-up measures, and other elements which, in the final analysis, [reflect] the deficit of the necessary political will over the period of the last two years, prevented the dispatch of peacekeeping missions.<sup>22</sup>

Initially, negotiations were complicated by Azerbaijan's unwillingness to accept Nagorno-Karabakh as a party and by its insistence that Karabakh Azeris also be present at the talks. These issues gradually receded into the background, paling before the two major obstacles to agreement: control over the Lachin Corridor and Shusha, and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh in the final agreement. In 1994–1995, the Minsk Group tried to move the process along by focusing on conditions that would allow OSCE deployment in the first instance and by tackling the issue of status at the Minsk Conference in a later phase. The Karabakh Armenians objected because they viewed their presence in the occupied territories as a bargaining chip on the issue of the status of the territory and a security guarantee against Azerbaijan. The balance then shifted to a package deal on all outstanding issues, making the Minsk Conference essentially a ratification of prior agreements. Progress remained stalled, however, by Azerbaijani unwillingness to define the terms of the autonomy it would offer Nagorno-Karabakh.

In the meantime, the OSCE established a High Level Military Planning Group (HLPG) to plan for deployment. The group prepared an elaborate concept document, setting out the range of options for a peacekeeping force. By late 1996, however, there was no evidence of movement toward a partial or complete agreement among the parties, despite the appointment of a personal representative of the chairman-in-office to the parties in late 1995.

In early 1996, the Russians and Americans revived mediatory efforts, hoping to produce a joint statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in time for the April 1996 Clinton-Yeltsin meeting in Moscow. Once again, however, this foundered on the issues of Lachin, Shusha, and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Electoral politics in Russia and the United States then took over, pushing Nagorno-Karabakh to a back burner

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crowded with issues to be deferred until after the Russian Federation elections in July and the U.S. elections in November. Many observers agree with the view of a leading Stepanakert official that "if Russia and the U[nited] S[tates]. decided to resolve the problem, then it could be resolved." The two country's incompatible sets of interests, however, along with the complications emanating from their domestic politics, have precluded thus far such an outcome.

### *International Humanitarian Involvement*

The principal subject of this study and of the following chapter in particular is humanitarian action, the third aspect of international involvement. Until 1993, humanitarian action in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was sporadic, as it was elsewhere in the Transcaucasus. Substantial international humanitarian action was initiated in 1988 at the time of the Armenian earthquake. Once that crisis passed, most humanitarian agencies left or reduced the scale of their involvement.

No international effort addressed the humanitarian problems created by the exchange of population between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1988–1989. In fact, there was little international humanitarian presence in the region during the early phases of the war. The intergovernmental and bilateral aid communities also failed to respond at the height of the humanitarian crisis in Armenia that resulted from the energy blockade in 1990–1993. The same was true when the emergency in Karabakh reached its peak in 1991–1992 because of the military situation, the economic blockade of the region, and the lack of overland access to Armenia. As one Nagorno-Karabakh official stated: "Nagorno-Karabakh found itself outside the USSR, outside Azerbaijan, and outside Armenia. As a result, it was ignored." To a limited extent, the growing activities of Armenian diaspora organizations compensated for this neglect.

The quickening of international humanitarian action in 1993–1994 reflected several factors. First, an international response was made easier by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, which paved the way for expanded direct access to the region from the outside world. The deepening of the plight of

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civilians throughout the southern Caucasus, resulting from heightened civil unrest and military activity, elevated the visibility of the crisis and the humanitarian stakes. The catalytic factor in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh was the forced displacement first of Azeris from Karabakh (1991–1992), and then, in conjunction with the Karabakh offensive, an opened corridor to Armenia from the Lachin area. The cleansing of Kelbajar in early 1993, followed by further offensives in southern and eastern Nagorno-Karabakh, as described above, produced several hundred thousand more IDPs fleeing into Iran and northwestern, central, and southeastern Azerbaijan, which profoundly altered the scale of humanitarian need.

The first UN emergency appeal for the Caucasus (1994) spotlighted the existence of over one million internally displaced persons in the Transcaucasian region as a whole, the result of ethnic cleansing both in and around Karabakh and in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Among these more or less simultaneous and substantial displacements associated with the Karabakh conflict, this was by far the most severe. Azerbaijan, in considerable chaos at the time and already stretched by the absorption of the first wave of refugees from Armenia, was simply not in a position to handle this new burden.

Four sets of international humanitarian actors responded to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: the organizations of the UN system; individual bilateral donors and also European governments working through the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO); NGOs, including Armenian diaspora groups; and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Their activities, which form the subject of chapter 3, were affected in varying degrees by the prevailing politicization of humanitarian approaches to the conflict. UN organizations provided roughly equal quantities of assistance to persons in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The largest single bilateral program, by the United States, heavily favored Armenia, while European governments took a more even-handed, needs-based approach, in part to offset the imbalance created by the United States.

For their part, NGO activities reflected their respective funding sources. NGOs utilized resources provided by UN

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organizations to mount activities largely according to need. They used U.S. government resources for a myriad of projects in Armenia; their activities in Azerbaijan were necessarily fewer and more circumscribed. Diaspora-funded NGO activities deepened the prevailing asymmetry in international aid, reflecting the absence of a politically active Azeri diaspora. The ICRC allocated resources throughout the region provided by governments according to its own assessment of need.

The humanitarian activities of all four categories of actors were conspicuous by their relative absence in Nagorno-Karabakh itself. Only the ICRC and a small number of ECHO- and privately funded international NGOs were active. Contributions from Armenian diaspora organizations, channeled through the Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh authorities, somewhat offset the inadequacy of other international funding to the enclave.

Thus the contours, scale, and timing of the world's humanitarian response to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were shaped by the very forces—political, geopolitical, social, and economic—that found expression in the conflict itself.



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## CHAPTER 3

### HUMANITARIAN ACTION

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh created humanitarian challenges in the political jurisdictions of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh itself. These challenges all involved the needs of persons uprooted or otherwise affected by the conflict, although they were of varying scale and evolved according to different timetables. The humanitarian agenda, therefore, was set in a broader political context ranging well beyond the Karabakh conflict and including the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the transition to market-oriented economies in the NIS.

The international community responded differently to the challenges, although some of the same outside institutions were active in each of the three jurisdictions. In each instance, political factors played a major role in shaping the contours and details of the response. This chapter reviews the humanitarian challenge, the responses, and the interplay of humanitarian and political factors in each of the three jurisdictions.

#### **Armenia**

##### *The Humanitarian Challenge*

In the late 1980s, Armenia had an estimated population of some 3.7 million, or less than half of the Armenians in the world.<sup>1</sup> About 500,000 lived in Azerbaijan, some 130,000 in Nagorno-Karabakh, where Armenians comprised a majority of the population of 170,000. As a result of the Karabakh conflict, Armenia by 1994 contained some 300,000 refugees and another 77,000 persons displaced from their homes in the conflict zones within Armenia.<sup>2</sup> Refugees and displaced persons in need of assistance made up more than 10 percent of the population resident in Armenia.

Soon after the first wave of refugees began to cross from Azerbaijan into Armenia, Armenia was hit by another major humanitarian crisis: an earthquake on December 7, 1988, that leveled a number of cities and villages in the northwest. The

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disaster claimed some 25,000 lives; an estimated one-quarter million others lost their homes. Among those made homeless by the earthquake were many newly arrived refugees displaced a second time within one year. Despite a massive and prompt international response, more than seven years later some 37,500 families remain in need of shelter assistance, most of them still living in containers and other make-shift housing.

The earthquake was followed by a massive shift in the region's geopolitical tectonic plates: the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Armenia, which depended on other Soviet republics for energy supplies as well as markets for its products, faced economic collapse. Its vulnerability was accentuated by a rail blockade imposed by Azerbaijan in 1989, followed by a more complete blockade that included energy shipments in 1991. Turkey joined in April 1993 with a blockade on the transshipment of humanitarian supplies. The blockades cut off crucial inputs to industry and deepened the country's economic crisis, increasing the suffering of the population now deprived of heat and electricity for long periods of time. The closure of supply routes through Turkey, moreover, greatly complicated the delivery of humanitarian assistance, diverting it through dilapidated ports in Georgia and areas prone to banditry and sabotage.

The humanitarian challenge at the time of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was thus multidimensional. In fact, the various crises interacted with and reinforced each other. Political tensions also interfered with the international response to the earthquake. The economic dislocation following the break-up of the Soviet Union impeded the Armenian government's effort to provide for its citizens. The earthquake and the Karabakh conflict created populations with special needs, overstressing the capacity of the state.

Constraints on water resources illustrate the interlocking nature of the humanitarian and political-economic crises. Agencies such as Oxfam-UK, which had developed expertise in enhancing the potability of water in emergency and development settings in Africa, confronted a new challenge. In the Caucasus, the task was not to make the water potable, as it had been in refugee camps in eastern Zaire. It was rather to create an entire water delivery infrastructure to replace a now

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defunct Soviet-era water delivery infrastructure. “Nothing the state used to support,” noted one observer, “functions here any longer.” Humanitarian actors whose traditional mandates were limited to the specific needs of particular “target groups” were soon drawn into much larger problems faced by broader segments of the population.

The humanitarian challenge in Armenia was particularly severe for several reasons. First, the governmental structures that normally responded were themselves incapacitated. Such structures within Armenia were in transition and largely without resources. Those elsewhere in the former Soviet Union that might have provided assistance were no longer obliged to do so. Despite these handicaps, Armenia had the best economic performance of any of the former Soviet republics in 1995, and represented “the first country of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to reverse the economic downturn.”<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, as Prime Minister Hrant Bagratian conceded: “Although the ultimate goal of the reforms is the improvement of the well-being of people, the social conditions of people were aggravated during the transition period.”<sup>4</sup>

Second, many of the aid organizations answering the call had little prior knowledge of or involvement with the former Soviet Union. Although a number of agencies had assisted following the 1988 earthquake, many who responded to the Karabakh conflict were coming to the region for the first time. As in the crises in Georgia, unfamiliarity with language, logistics, politics, and economics represented a major constraint.<sup>5</sup> Disentangling the various strands of the humanitarian crisis—earthquake, war, blockade, economic transition—was a complex task, even for the most seasoned experts.

Third, the humanitarian challenges, however dramatic, were essentially derivative. They were rooted in the broader systemic problems of war and economic transition. Even the earthquake, a natural rather than a man-made disaster, elicited responses that were buffeted quickly by political crosscurrents. The needs of the so-called “transition victims” could not be met apart from fundamental changes in the functioning of the economy. Even for those whose dislocation was caused primarily by conflict, there was widespread consensus among aid providers that “humanitarian assistance

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cannot be significantly diminished unless durable political solutions are found.”<sup>6</sup>

As of 1996, international humanitarian activity in Armenia focused on nearly 400,000 people: earthquake victims without adequate shelter; persons displaced from their homes outside or within Armenia by the Karabakh conflict who needed to be integrated into the economy; and vulnerable groups, such as pensioners, the disabled (a category much expanded by earthquake, war, and mine casualties), single parent families (mainly war-widows), and children with special needs.<sup>7</sup> The problems of the refugees were particularly acute because they had lost their extended family and community support networks—a powerful factor in the Transcaucasus.

In addition, certain categories of refugees from Azerbaijan such as those displaced from Shahumian, had problems adjusting to urban life in Armenia, given their predominantly rural background. Unlike earlier groups of Armenians displaced from Baku and Sumgait, whom the Armenian government did not expect to return to their home districts, the new Armenian citizenship law did not extend rights to those from Karabakh and Shahumian. Many refugees from Baku and Sumgait who were granted citizenship did not speak Armenian and experienced language discrimination as a result.

In the human rights field, Armenia shared with Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh a widespread hostage problem more than just the issue of treatment and exchange of prisoners of war. Civilians were held for exchange by all three participants in the hostilities, in clear violation of the laws of war. Much of this activity, especially during the earlier phases of the war, appeared to be private rather than governmental, with hostages held by certain families for exchange for relatives held by other sides. Although such activity was concentrated in the area of hostilities, the search for hostages ranged beyond the borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, extending into Georgia and Ukraine among other republics. The suppression of opposition political movements (e.g., the Dashnak sutium) and the manipulation of elections in 1995 and 1996 raised concerns about political rights within Armenia.

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### *The Humanitarian Response*

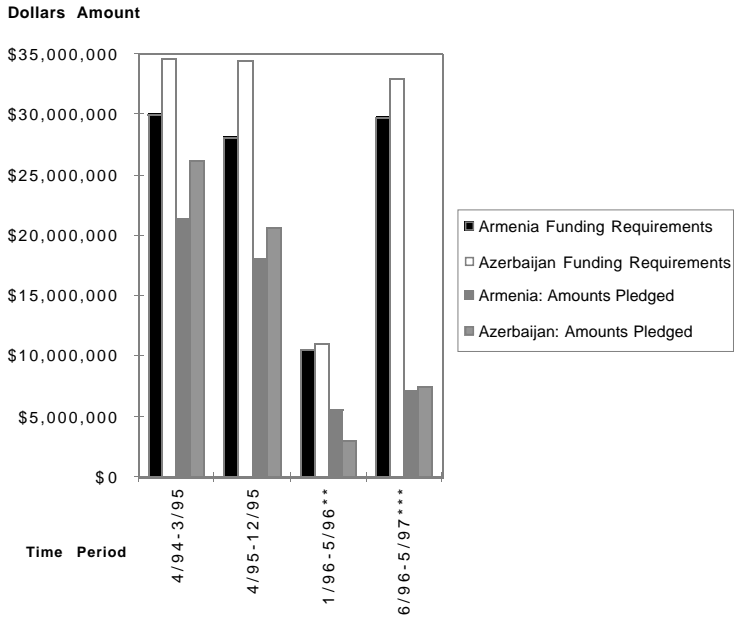
The major players responding to the challenge were the organizations of the UN system, the European Union (EU), bilateral donor government aid agencies, NGOs, and the ICRC. A tally in mid-1996 listed 47 institutions involved in international humanitarian and development assistance: 9 UN and other intergovernmental organizations, 1 bilateral government agency, 36 NGOs, and the ICRC. This number was lower than the 61 institutions that had been on the scene a year earlier.<sup>8</sup> The resources generated by UN consolidated appeals that were at their disposal during 1994–1996 are shown on figure 2.

The largest single government to donate aid to Armenia was the United States, which earmarked \$85 million for programs by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) there. Additional funding from other government sources, including the Departments of State and Agriculture, raised the total to \$141.4 million in the fiscal year beginning October 1, 1994, and an estimated \$144.2 million the following year. U.S. assistance to the people of Armenia, calculated on a per capita basis, was second only to what it provided to Israel.

Aid to Armenia reflected the influence of a strong diaspora lobby, which achieved all of its legislative priorities in 1995. These included securing \$85 million for Armenia within a shrinking overall foreign aid budget; reducing aid to Turkey; introducing a “humanitarian aid corridor” provision requiring a cut-off in U.S. aid to Turkey if it continued to prevent humanitarian assistance from reaching Armenia;<sup>9</sup> and establishing a \$15 million regional Transcaucasus Enterprise Fund.

Armenia also relied on funds contributed privately by the Armenian diaspora around the world. These were channeled through organizations such as the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, the Fund for Armenian Relief, and the Armenian General Benevolent Union. Relief also took the form of remittances to relatives in Armenia from Russia, Europe, and the Americas. Beyond the organizations identified in the above surveys were indigenous Armenian NGOs, of which some 800 were registered with the authorities as of 1996.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 2: United Nations Consolidated Appeals associated with the Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh



\* Data includes unexpended funds from previous appeals and excludes modest funds for regional Caucasus-wide programs.

\*\* Figures as of 4/29/96.

\*\*\* Figures as of 6/28/96.

Source: UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs

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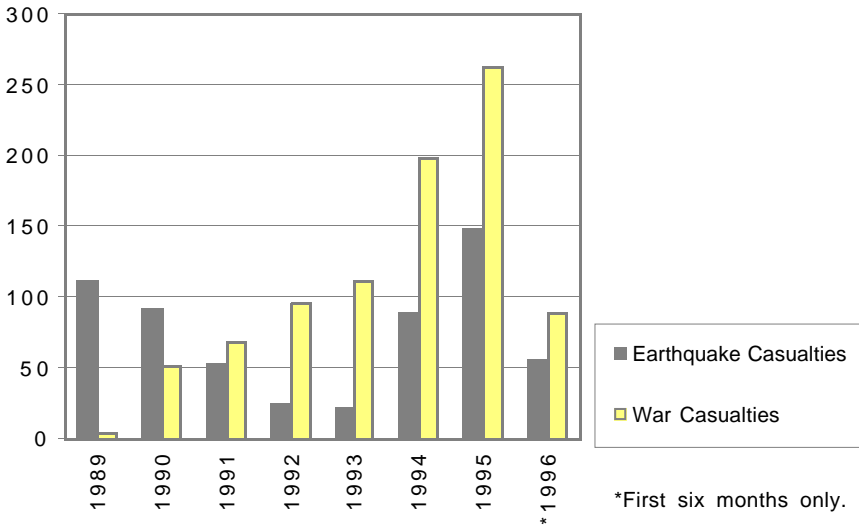
The response to conflict-specific needs waxed and then waned during the years 1988–1996, as illustrated by the experience of one NGO. The World Rehabilitation Fund, a U.S.-based agency specializing in prosthetics, began its program in Armenia in 1989 with funds from the diaspora and, eventually, from AID. During the past seven years, it fashioned some 2,214 limbs and braces for earthquake and war victims, the latter from Armenian areas bordering Azerbaijan and from Nagorno-Karabakh itself. As figure 3 indicates, earthquake victims, which made up the preponderance of the NGO's clientele in 1989, came to represent a diminishing proportion of those served by the agency in each subsequent year as the number of war victims increased. In fact, if the patients who returned in 1994 for the refitting of prosthetic devices were excluded, the shift would be even more dramatic. That the war victims were served in late 1994 and thereafter, the agency observes, reflected the fact that "anti-personnel land mines know no cease-fire."

The activities of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund followed a similar pattern. Founded in 1992, its initial programs were directed toward earthquake victims. In subsequent years, quake victims received less than one-fifth of available resources. Priority shifted to those imperiled by the severe winters of 1992 and 1993 and otherwise affected by the conflict.

A similar evolution was evident in international food assistance. The World Food Programme (WFP), which opened its office in Armenia in October 1993 and began food distribution through NGOs in June 1994, gave a priority from the outset to supplementary food assistance for victims of conflict, with limited help going to specific vulnerable groups among the nondisplaced population. In 1996, however, it noted that "economic structural adjustment is placing considerable strain on the poorest in Armenia."<sup>11</sup> During 1996, WFP planned to dispense with any special preference for conflict-related distress, basing allocations solely on need wherever it existed throughout the Armenian population.

While becoming more inclusive, humanitarian activities also focused more on rehabilitation. WFP's initial activities in Armenia were largely emergency-oriented; by 1996 it was directing resources toward small-scale community-based food

Figure 3: World Rehabilitation Fund/AID Prosthetic-Orthotic Project, Armenia



Data supplied by World Relief Fund.



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for work activities. These were designed to “support the shift from humanitarian assistance to development providing an incentive to mobilize the urban as well as the rural unemployed and under-employed in undertaking productive activities and to curb further deterioration of infrastructure.”<sup>12</sup>

Other international agencies such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and a wide range of NGOs also were stressing self-reliant development. Most agreed with one leading Armenian journalist who noted in mid-1996 that “there is no humanitarian emergency any longer,” although some aid activities were based still on short-term relief.<sup>13</sup> In fact, UN officials pointed out that the emergency phase was essentially over by 1994, although an activity profile might have suggested otherwise. As early as November 1994, the agencies convened a special meeting to discuss the “directions of humanitarian assistance and transition to development.” This session reflected not only their maturing understanding of the situation but also the preferences of the Armenian government, which, by 1995, was strongly advocating a shift toward developmental programming.

By most accounts, the evolving humanitarian response in Armenia has been comparatively well coordinated, thanks to the presence of three sets of strong actors: the host government, NGOs, and the UN. On the government side, the Foreign Aid Coordination Center within the Ministry of the Economy has played an active role, although various ministries, including the Ministry of Social Protection, Employment, Migration, and Refugees, also have been involved. Committed as a matter of policy to the full integration of refugees from Azerbaijan (excluding those from Nagorno-Karabakh), the government has sought to maximize the use of aid resources accordingly. In November 1995, parliament passed a law allowing these refugees to apply for Armenian citizenship.<sup>14</sup>

NGO activities also have been well coordinated. An umbrella grant from AID to Save the Children/U.S. (SC-US) has orchestrated the work of seven U.S. NGOs.<sup>15</sup> The Armenian Assembly of America (AAA), which has been active in Armenia since 1989, was directed by President Ter Petrosyan to coordinate NGO humanitarian activities and has continued to

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do so. The work of UN organizations has been coordinated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) coordinator—also the representative of UNHCR in Armenia—with the assistance of a DHA humanitarian affairs officer. DHA officials are members, along with the AAA, of the Humanitarian Assistance Commission, a government body that regularly brings together all three sets of actors. There are also coordinating bodies in various areas, including food aid and health.

As a result of the coordinating efforts of the host government, NGOs, and the UN, problems of orchestrating an effective relief effort similar to those in other major crises—and in Azerbaijan—did not surface in Armenia.

## **Azerbaijan**

### *The Humanitarian Challenge*

The experience in Azerbaijan counters that described in Armenia. Like Armenia, Azerbaijan has confronted the problems of the Karabakh conflict while itself in a state of political and economic transition. Like Armenia, Azerbaijan has received international assistance, although in lesser amounts and with fewer results. Like Armenia, Azerbaijan remains at war, but is less able to proceed with reconstruction and development without a durable political settlement to the conflict. One crucial difference was that Azerbaijan, unlike Armenia, experienced civil war on its own territory.

The population of Azerbaijan in the mid-1990s was about 7.4 million, twice that of Armenia. Whereas refugees and IDPs in Armenia comprised about one-tenth of the total population of the country, those groups in Azerbaijan numbered approximately 900,000; that is, they were larger in both absolute and relative terms. The IDP population comprised the former inhabitants of Azeri villages in Karabakh, and, more important, of the territories occupied during the conflict by Karabakh Armenian forces. The refugee population was primarily composed of Azeris who had fled Armenia, although augmented by refugees from other countries, notably 50,000 Meshketian Turks whose repatriation to Georgia had been prevented by Georgian authorities.

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In contrast to the economy of Armenia, which shows some evidence of recovery after several years of precipitous decline, Azerbaijan continues its steep decline. Where Armenia led the NIS in macroeconomic indicators, Azerbaijan's GDP "decreased by an estimated 17 percent in 1995, the worst performance of all CIS member countries."<sup>16</sup> During the 1989–1994 period, its GDP declined by about 50 percent. Unemployment was estimated conservatively at between one-quarter and one-third of the work force. "All economic indicators are in decline," a senior government official lamented in March 1996. "All of our resources are expended on feeding and sheltering refugees rather than being devoted, as we had hoped, to our own economic development post-independence."

Despite the lament, the plight of IDPs and refugees was not a major preoccupation of the authorities. One international aid official noted that he was not at all convinced that government officials were seized seriously with the humanitarian crisis, except to the extent that it threatened political stability. The situation of refugees ranked, in his view, well behind the issues of energy development and the politics of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. In fact, government policy in a number of respects constituted an impediment to improving the situation of IDPs still resident in camps and in temporary accommodation three years later. The government explicitly discouraged income-generation activities that might encourage such persons to stay rather than return to their native districts after the conflict. Government officials were reluctant to make land available for cultivation by IDPs so that they might achieve a degree of self-sufficiency in food. Nor was there much urgency in the government's effort to organize and coordinate the humanitarian response.

As in Armenia, the conflict overlaid and exacerbated major structural economic problems. Agricultural production had begun a downward trajectory in the mid-1980s, well in advance of the Karabakh conflict. Production suffered further with the loss of markets in the former Soviet Union for crops such as cotton and silk, wine, and tea. As a result of the conflict, some of the country's more fertile and better irrigated areas were lost to agricultural production. A revitalized agricultural sector would require accelerated privatization of land and

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availability of affordable inputs and a political solution to the conflict (followed by a demining program) that would reopen lands to productive use. Legislation encouraging private ownership was not passed until mid-1996.

A comparison between two villages in northwestern Azerbaijan and northeastern Armenia offers an intriguing example of how differently the same conflicts affect these two countries. Both were served by AID-funded projects undertaken jointly by the American Red Cross and the ICRC and managed from Baku and Yerevan respectively. Both Armenian pastoralists, who grazed their livestock along and across the border, and Azerbaijani farmers and villagers were affected by the conflict. The Armenians appear to have suffered more because of being cut off from markets for their produce in Azerbaijan and injuries to people and livestock from mines and sniping.

Aid activities were begun in 1994 in Armenia and in 1995 on the Azerbaijan side of the border. The Armenian populations involved rebounded more quickly, in part because the transition to a market economy and the private ownership of land has moved more slowly in Azerbaijan, said aid officials. Greater resilience and determination may have played a role, as well as the earlier start-up of aid work in Armenia.

The health of the general population of Azerbaijan, refugees and others alike, was hardly robust, as confirmed by a spate of studies carried out in 1995–1996 by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), UNICEF, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and others. The World Bank in early 1996 estimated that some 20 percent of the population were extremely poor; others set the percentages considerably higher for this indicator or another. The latest UN Consolidated Appeal concluded:

The figures vary but it is unquestionable that the number of vulnerable persons is high and will probably grow, at least in the short term as a result of the transition to a market economy. Certain groups will not be able to reap the benefits of the transition to the new

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system and will require protection against its painful effects.<sup>17</sup>

Once again, the circumstances of those displaced by the conflict, however special and compelling, blend into the difficulties experienced by the population as a whole. As with Armenian refugees, the disruption of social networks and the lack of proper housing made the displaced population's situation that much more severe.

Unlike "the victims of the transition" to a market economy, many of those affected by the conflict were housed in refugee camps along the Iranian border. Some "doubled up" with relatives in urban centers such as Baku and Sumgait, a practice that afforded accommodations preferable to the camps but created problems in relief distribution by the agencies.<sup>18</sup> Still others, an estimated 30,000–45,000 as of mid-1996, had returned to areas of southwestern Azerbaijan not occupied by Karabakh forces. The fact that their home areas were still occupied or (in the case of the latter group) substantially destroyed rendered them in constant need of food and shelter assistance. Reflecting the acute housing shortage for the displaced since the beginning of the conflict, humanitarian organizations placed a premium on shelter and related assistance for those without it.

In the NAR, a landlocked area bordering on Turkey, Iran, and Armenia and separated from Azerbaijan by Armenian territory, various indicators suggested more extreme poverty and greater need than in "mainland" Azerbaijan. Some analysts placed unemployment at 80 percent or more. In consequence, many breadwinners migrated to Turkey for work. The needs of the 1,200 refugees in the NAR were relatively modest in comparison with those of the much larger local population.

In a broader sense, however, much of the hardship in the NAR was related to the Karabakh conflict. The area was subject to sporadic artillery fire, particularly in the north, making delivery of humanitarian assistance problematic. Consumer goods were more expensive with the rail line to Baku cut and commerce to and from Armenia severed. Energy came from Iran and Turkey in the absence of Armenian sources. People felt more isolated given their inability to travel outside

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the NAR. But again, the collapse of collective farming and the inability of the Azerbaijani government to deliver services confirmed that systemic factors unrelated to the conflict were at work.

In the realm of human rights, there was no evidence in Azerbaijan of intimidation of refugees and IDPs and hence no specific need for international protection of the displaced. The problem of minority group rights—so evident, for example, in Georgia—was largely absent in Azerbaijan because its largest minority had been expelled or was living in areas outside government control. The country did experience the problems of hostage taking and Prisoner of War (POW) treatment mentioned in the discussion of Armenia. In addition, there were important violations of individual civil and political rights. The government of Azerbaijan imprisoned many opponents of the current government for varying lengths of time with little attention to standard rules of due process.

### *The Humanitarian Response*

Many of the international institutions active in Armenia were involved in Azerbaijan as well, supplemented by aid groups from Muslim countries (e.g., the Turkish, Iranian, and Saudi Red Crescent Societies). A 1996 tally found 11 UN and other intergovernmental organizations, a single bilateral government agency, 42 NGOs, and the ICRC, for a total of 55 institutions.<sup>19</sup> A much less developed private sector limited the number of local NGOs, although some were beginning to emerge. The contrast with the situation in Armenia, where hundreds of local NGOs were registering with the authorities and scores were receiving resources and training from international sources, was telling.

International assistance available for activities by the agencies is shown on figure 2. The amounts requested for Azerbaijan during the period April 1994–May 1997 (\$113.1 million) exceeded those requested for Armenia (\$98.5 million) by a modest amount. The amounts received were also slightly higher (\$57.4 million as opposed to \$52.1 million). However, the numbers of those in Azerbaijan affected by the conflict were more than double those in Armenia. Moreover, the impact of

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the economic transition was more wide-ranging and serious. This is not to minimize the extent of the suffering in Armenia, particularly during the winters of 1992–1993 and 1993–1994 when conditions were unusually cold and humanitarian activities still in their infancy, or to ignore the potential of oil and other resources available in Azerbaijan. However, the simple fact was, and remains, that the extent of humanitarian need was greater in Azerbaijan and the capacity of local authorities to service it lower.

The percentage of funds provided against funds requested in UN consolidated appeals was marginally higher for Armenia (53 percent) than for Azerbaijan (51 percent). Some officials suggest that absent the factor of “oil and cotton politics,” the percentage for Azerbaijan would have been lower still. Private funding showed an even larger imbalance. The Azeri diaspora, which numbers about one million (excluding the Azeri community in Iran), is widely dispersed and less prosperous and less well-organized than its Armenian counterpart. Although they, too, have sent remittances to relatives in Azerbaijan, the total receipts are thought to have been significantly lower than those received in Armenia. Moreover, the Azeri diaspora has been far less focused and successful in influencing the policies of their host governments toward the conflict and related human needs. The U.S. government provided \$9 million to Azerbaijan for the year beginning October 1, 1994, and \$4 million for the following year; comparable U.S. aid to Armenia exceeded \$140 million in each year.

Humanitarian activities, however, in Azerbaijan enjoyed one advantage: in contributions from international oil corporations. Major energy companies negotiating agreements with Baku for oil exploration, production, and export agreements have funded aid activities, both individually and as a consortium. Beginning in 1992, AMOCO underwrote immunization activities carried out by AmeriCares in the NAR. UNOCAL assisted medical programs by Relief International. Kvaerner, a Norwegian oil company, aided three tuberculosis sanitarium for children in Baku.<sup>20</sup> In addition to individual companies providing grants, resources more recently have been provided by the 11-member consortium Azerbaijan International

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Operating Company (AIOC), including a large grant to an Israeli NGO to rehabilitate a hospital in Baku. In early 1996, Mobil funded activities to assist children in orphanages and other institutions through SC-US.

The total dollar value of corporate contributions is not known. Individual grants by individual oil corporations appear to fall in the range of \$10,000–\$100,000 per year; the consortium grant mentioned was about \$5 million. Taken together, however, the resources do not approximate government and private humanitarian support favoring Armenia. Nevertheless, one knowledgeable observer of corporate underwriting in Azerbaijan noted that “a little bit of money goes a long way if administered well. That’s why the oil companies can make a difference.”<sup>21</sup>

Traditional international assistance to Azerbaijan also has been heavily conditional, as well as less generous. Activities funded by AID have been governed by restrictions imposed under Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, enacted in 1992. These prohibit assistance “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 blockages and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.”<sup>22</sup>

“907,” as the provision is known, has had a direct impact on activities funded by Washington in Azerbaijan. In implementing the legislation, the U.S. government established ground rules that prevented assistance from being channeled to or through, or otherwise benefiting, the Azerbaijani government or from supporting activities not of an urgent humanitarian nature, strictly defined. These specifications created major obstacles in a country where the private sector was in its infancy and the government still the major player.

AID-funded activities through an umbrella grant administered by SC-US and channeled to six U.S. NGOs.<sup>23</sup> SC-US’s Baku office had greater responsibility for decisions regarding the utilization of AID funds within the country, which, due to political considerations, had no AID mission in Azerbaijan. Oversight responsibility for AID programs in Azerbaijan was lodged in its regional office in Yerevan. However, given the political sensitivities involved, political and economic officers



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in the U.S. embassy in Baku regularly made aid decisions, an area in which they had no particular expertise.

Proponents of Section 907 maintain that its intent was not to interfere with humanitarian action, as long as such activities were conducted through private rather than governmental intermediaries. The ground rules, however, prevented Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) from using AID funds to build greenhouses for IDPs living on government-owned land. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) was unable to repair the roof of a leaking government-owned warehouse in which its own AID-funded relief supplies were stored.

The rules also impeded efforts by the agencies to strengthen the Azerbaijani government's capacity to play a more constructive assistance role itself. Relief International was forced to mount medical activities for refugees and IDPs in complete isolation from government health outreach services. One U.S. relief agency received a reprimand from its own government for translating medical instructions for use by government health workers. NGOs were particularly irritated that on monitoring visits to Baku to ensure that the Azerbaijani government was not benefiting from AID projects, AID officials themselves stayed in government-owned hotels.

Criticism of the restrictiveness of the legislation eventually led to congressional clarification of 907's intent, and the issuance in October 1996 of AID guidelines designed to address the impediments discussed above. Supporters of 907 argued that the problem from the outset was not the intent of the language of the law but restrictive interpretations by State Department lawyers and bureaucratic politics within the executive branch. State Department officials countered that if this had been the case, 907 proponents exhibited "gross ignorance of the situation on the ground." The department's lawyers, they indicated, had done their utmost to make the ground rules flexible. Whatever the case, the impacts in the field were clear: 907 had significantly complicated the delivery of humanitarian assistance and undercut its effectiveness.

The provision also affected the perceptions of the Azerbaijan authorities. "907 draws NGOs into the political debate," observed one private agency official. "It's an idiotic,

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politics-driven measure which cuts off our nose to spite our face," said another. "We're obliged to keep the Azerbaijan government at a distance, creating a feeling of resentment among local officials." A UN official less directly involved concurred. "The expenditure of every dollar of U.S. humanitarian aid in Azerbaijan rubs the nose of the government into the ground." "Every Azeri over two and a half months," exclaimed one U.S. official with exasperation, "has heard of '907.'" In his judgment, the stringent conditionality, rather than the imbalance in U.S. assistance levels themselves, represented the real irritant in U.S. relations with Azerbaijan and a significant obstacle in U.S. efforts to broker an end to the conflict.

The EU sought to keep its distance from the U.S. position and the animosity it generated. In fact, EU assistance levels to Azerbaijan and Karabakh reflected a conscious effort to offset U.S.-created imbalances. European aid, however, also introduced bureaucratic politics in the form of tensions between DG8, the directorate within which humanitarian programs managed by ECHO are housed, and DG1, the directorate for external political relations and economic cooperation.

NGOs receiving humanitarian assistance funds from ECHO had difficulty supporting projects that moved beyond hand-outs to self-help activities; these were perceived as encroaching on the turf of DG1. Oxfam-UK designed a project to provide wool to IDPs, from whom it would buy finished clothing for distribution among the needy population. Because such an activity moved beyond relief into reconstruction, ECHO funded a proposal that ostensibly involved no "production" but only the purchase and distribution of relief items, understanding nonetheless that income generation activities would be supported. The ECHO mandate was for action in emergencies, whereas bridging and income generation were post-emergency activities that were DG1's responsibility. The inability of EU relief funds to support much needed transitional activities violated a fundamental rule of effective humanitarian and development action: to facilitate self-help efforts.

Despite constraints affecting the levels and uses of international assistance in Azerbaijan, certain sectors became quite

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dependent on outside resources. According to some estimates, 95 percent of the country's medicines, medical equipment, and supplies were channeled through humanitarian organizations.<sup>24</sup> Freer from political constraints than U.S. NGOs, some intergovernmental organizations worked more closely with the host authorities than U.S. policy permitted. UNICEF's Kuba Health Reform Project involved district-level improvements in the existing governmental health system, with an eye to replicating such changes at the national level. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has launched a major effort at capacity-building among organizations involved in planning and managing international assistance. Rejected by AID, ADRA's greenhouse project for 2,000 refugee families received funds from UNHCR.

The evolution of programming in Azerbaijan has advanced less far in Armenia, as evident in programs managed by the same organizations active in both locations. SC-US is still engaged primarily in short-term relief activities in Azerbaijan; while in Armenia—and for that matter, Georgia—the shift to reconstruction, income-generation, and “bridging” activities is under way. Even in Armenia, however, the largest amount of SC-US funding is committed to earthquake-related needs, followed in scale by conflict-generated needs, and only lastly by needs related to the transition to a post-Soviet economy.

A number of international aid organizations have begun income-generating projects, including home gardens, small-scale livestock production, micro-enterprises, crafts, and medical technology laboratories. Those not receiving U.S. government funding were freer in this respect than those that do. However, as of mid-1996, more conflict-specific activities remained in Azerbaijan than in Armenia. UNICEF had projects for refugees and IDPs in education and psycho-social assistance. UNHCR, whose activities continued to target similar groups, described 1995 as “a year of transition from emergency to post-emergency humanitarian assistance,” during which seeds, tools, livestock, and housing aid were provided.<sup>25</sup>

The WFP, which began activities in Azerbaijan in late 1994, continues to provide emergency assistance to refugees and IDPs, many of whom, after at least three years of displacement,

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have exhausted their coping capacity. At the same time, WFP acknowledges the claims of vulnerable groups whose Soviet-era social safety net is no longer present. All of its activities involved emergency food relief, where needs vastly exceeded resources; unlike Armenia, none involved food for work projects. That said, WFP officials in May 1996 were expressing the view that “humanitarian problems are increasingly unrelated to the conflict.”

Coordination has proved a major problem in Azerbaijan, in part because the three actors providing leadership to humanitarian efforts in Armenia—the state, NGOs, and the UN—have been less strong. By all accounts, the government is less dynamic, lacks organization to deal with the various humanitarian challenges, and is less oriented toward the expectations and needs of international donors. The government’s coordinating efforts for aid operations are managed by the Working Group of the Republic Commission for International Humanitarian and Technical Assistance. The full commission plays a broader policy role.

The Working Group was, in theory, the key institution responsible for government coordination of the relief effort. Yet its personnel, largely comprised of mathematicians, physicists, historians, and journalists, had little relevant management or field experience. The group also lacked clear lines of responsibility within the government on issues relating to humanitarian activities. No body of regulations governed the activities of the agencies. Moreover, the group had little clout in dealing with other government bodies. All of these problems had very practical consequences. As one agency official noted:

NGOs were supposed to get phones at 50 percent of the normal rate. Instead it was 100 percent plus a bribe. Who were you supposed to talk to about this? What about banking? What about visas? None of this had been worked out in the Working Group.

Most international personnel, particularly those engaged in strengthening the government’s effectiveness, have found the authorities used assistance ineffectively and corruptly.

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Although reliable data is difficult to find, the general impression was that, although the problem of “leakage” existed in both countries, it was more severe in Azerbaijan. Problems also were evident in government outreach to the district level, where, despite the presence of some energetic and well-intentioned officials, corruption was probably worse. Corruption was facilitated by the disorganization and lack of political clout of government institutions responsible for interfacing with humanitarian organizations. One NGO official noted that when an aid agency applied for a vehicle license it was assessed a \$500 fee. When aid officials appealed, they received support from the deputy prime minister responsible for the Commission on Humanitarian and Technical Assistance, who wrote on their behalf to the licensing authority. However, the letter was ignored and the agency had to pay the original assessment.

A further indication of government indifference was its approach to complaints of violence against NGO personnel distributing food in the camps. In the most notable instance, two personnel from a U.S. NGO were assaulted and seriously injured in 1996 by non-IDPs who had entered the camps to obtain food. The authorities refused to provide protection for distributions within the camps, with the result that the NGO moved its distribution out of the camp to nearby towns. Months later, despite appeals by the NGO, there had been no arrests and, apparently, no investigation. With funding decreasing and violence increasing, the NGO terminated food distribution activities altogether in favor of quick impact income-generation projects for small businesses.

The common assessment of the government was conveyed by a diplomat who spoke with a mixture of bafflement and anger of its “extraordinary willingness to ignore the sufferings of its fellow citizens.” Another observer noted that in the area of international resources stewardship, “Azerbaijan has made no effort to be even marginally credible with respect to Western norms and expectations.” Several seasoned NGO officials stated that this was the most difficult environment in which they had ever worked.

For their part, UN organizations, too, appeared less cohesive and dynamic, in part because of weak lines of authority

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within the UN family in Azerbaijan. Although DHA was present and exercised a coordinating function, interagency meetings were irregular, and individual agencies and staffs tended to go their own way. Some effective sectoral coordination was evident, for example in food assistance matters, but representatives of the various agencies involved were critical of their counterparts' efforts at monitoring. One indication of the lack of concerted action was the array of detailed studies noted earlier, some overlapping and some undertaken oblivious to similar work in progress.

Coordination in the NGO sector was also less than impressive, despite the solid performance of individual agencies. In Armenia, SC-US administered an umbrella AID grant on behalf of six NGOs.<sup>26</sup> However, the restrictions imposed by the U.S. government on the use of aid resources undercut NGO effectiveness, concentrating agency attention on the cumbersome process rather than on the programmatic challenges at hand. As one NGO official stated: "AID hadn't really turned the process over to SC-US. SC-US was simply a new layer of bureaucracy, slowing things down."

Despite sectoral coordination meetings involving the UN, NGOs, and government, aid activities lacked direction and dynamism. The relative absence of international organizations in the NAR, the country's poorest area, also suggested weaknesses in country-wide coordination.

## **Nagorno-Karabakh**

### *The Humanitarian Challenge*

Unlike Armenia and especially Azerbaijan, where there was almost an embarrassment of data documenting the severity of the socio-economic situation, the needs of people in Nagorno-Karabakh were not widely known. Opinions among international officials about the extent of the need ranged widely from the eminently manageable to the nearly catastrophic. One representative of a large governmental aid organization, interviewed in May 1996, frankly conceded that he had "no idea" of the seriousness of the situation. Others asked

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that whatever information was learned by the research team be shared with them at once.

Discussions with the Karabakh authorities provided a picture from the government's perspective of the nature and extent of the need. According to these sources, all of Nagorno-Karabakh had come under fire during the war. The humanitarian situation was at its worst in 1989–1992 when the region was blockaded effectively and the bread ration dropped for a time to 100 grams per day.<sup>27</sup> Starvation was then a real threat, as a result of disrupted agricultural activity associated with the war and land mines. According to estimates of the State Refugee Committee in Nagorno-Karabakh, some 65,000 Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians were displaced during the war. Most left the region for Armenia. In addition, some 40,000 Azeris were expelled from Nagorno-Karabakh. In short, approximately 55 percent of the population were forced to migrate from their homes, and approximately 50 percent of the region's total population left Nagorno-Karabakh altogether.

The war had a significant effect on production. The electricity grid and phone system of the region was largely destroyed. Industry was running at 25–40 percent of capacity in 1996, as a result of physical damage, lack of access to inputs, and also male conscription at that time. Considerable arable land, particularly in the Mardakert region, was mined and difficult to farm. Mines were also a serious impediment to economic normalization, as well as an extreme hazard to the population. By May 1996, over 270 minefields had been identified and mapped in the interior of Karabakh. These contained approximately 40,000 mines, of which only about 2 percent had been cleared. The number of mine casualties in the region (dead and injured) was around 200 per year. In proportion to the total population, the casualty rate was as great as that in Cambodia and Afghanistan.

The humanitarian consequences of the war were felt strongly by families of the war dead and war injured, the parents of adult children killed in the war, and large families with many mouths to feed. Other vulnerable groups included the elderly and institutionalized population. According to Nagorno-Karabakh officials, there were no official estimates

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on persons in these affected groups, although reliable data existed at the local level in the offices of the Ministry of Social Security. The government ran special programs such as food, health, and housing for vulnerable groups. Officials noted that these were inadequate to meet the substantial need.

The government was handicapped in its response by the attitude of the international community. One official noted that the government developed over 300 targeted humanitarian assistance programs but little funding was found for them. "It's easy to compile programs," he said, "the problem is to finance them." Matters were not helped, in his view, by the fact that because UN and U.S. government assistance for Karabakh was included in aid to Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh's declaration of independence had not been recognized internationally. In addition, Nagorno-Karabakh had little, if any, access to international financing to mount reconstruction and recovery programs. The Armenian government was the only available government lender, which in the past year had loaned 4.5 billion drams to finance the Nagorno-Karabakh budget.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the material damage inflicted by the conflict, there were also serious psychological consequences, particularly among children for whom war was the norm. Severe war-related psychological trauma (sleep disorders, bed-wetting, depression, learning disabilities) were evident among children, particularly those who experienced the continuous bombardment of 1991–1992 or whose homes had been destroyed in hostilities. One official commented that the average six-year old could tear down and reassemble an AK-47 with his eyes shut, but that most youth knew nothing of work. The challenge, he said, was to reorient youth toward education and production.

Since the cease-fire in May 1994, there has been significant improvement in the humanitarian situation. Far more clearly than elsewhere in Azerbaijan, the focus of the government had shifted to recovery, reconstruction, and resettlement. Many refugees had returned from Armenia to resettle in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Lachin Corridor of Armenian refugees, their ranks augmented by ethnic Armenians from other parts of Azerbaijan. Estimates of these involved were in the 30,000-



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45,000 range. According to government officials and international aid personnel, there had been no settlement elsewhere in the occupied territories. Returnees to Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as Armenian refugees from elsewhere (e.g., Abkhazia and other parts of Azerbaijan), received full citizenship rights.

In contrast, displaced Azeris have not returned to Nagorno-Karabakh. When asked about the government's attitude toward the resettlement of Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh, officials accepted the idea in principle but evinced no enthusiasm about the possibility. Noting that their places largely had been taken by Armenians evicted from their homes elsewhere in Azerbaijan, one official doubted that they could be or would be evicted. The return of Azeris to Nagorno-Karabakh, he suggested, should await the return of Armenians to Baku and Sumgait (an unlikely event) and then be approached on a one-for-one basis. At the same time, some of those who fled Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas, interviewed in camps in Azerbaijan, indicated a willingness and interest to return, if security could be guaranteed.

By mid-1996, the government and some international organizations were assisting with resettlement in Nagorno-Karabakh. Reconstruction of damaged and destroyed buildings in Stepanakert itself was largely complete. The electricity grid and telephone network had been restored to service. The government was providing rudimentary assistance to those resettling in abandoned Armenian and Azeri villages in the region. It gave priority to restoring telephone, electrical, and water services to villages, reopening schools, and repairing roofs of reoccupied buildings. In areas near the frontier where additional settlement incentives were necessary, the government also provided a cow and sometimes sheep and chickens.

In economic development, agriculture, industry, and health were the priority sectors. Agricultural productivity already is starting its post-conflict rebound: some 5,000 tons of grain were exported in 1995 to Armenia. In the health arena, an operating system of local polyclinics has been restored, with no real shortage of qualified local personnel to service them. Yet, there were ongoing problems in this sector. Medical facilities remained seriously underequipped, particularly in the area of diagnostics. There was no ultrasound equipment in

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the region and only one functioning gastroscope. In addition, serious gaps remained in the local prosthetics program. Because the war disabled had to travel to Yerevan for treatment and government subsidies did not cover the expense, many abandoned the therapy.

On a positive note, the immunization program covered the entire population. Although there was some incidence of malaria, one international aid worker said that it was endemic to southern Nagorno-Karabakh and not a cause for serious concern. There was no incidence of diphtheria. Intestinal diseases had virtually disappeared. In contrast, tuberculosis was a growing problem. Aid workers displayed little concern about the overall nutritional situation of the population, but acknowledged it was a serious problem for vulnerable groups. When asked about the significance of micronutrient deficiency in the population, one person commented: "This is an agricultural country. The food mix contains the necessary nutrients, and there is no shortage of food."

The government also had made significant progress in infrastructural reconstruction. Beyond the restoration of telephone and electricity service mentioned above, an extensive program of road repair and construction is underway from Stepanakert through Lachin to Goris in the Republic of Armenia. The latter was funded by the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, the largest Armenian NGO.

In short, a detailed inventory of need must await a serious needs assessment. Although major problems remain in certain sectors (e.g., tuberculosis, the needs of the war disabled and of pensioners), the humanitarian emergency in Nagorno-Karabakh largely has been overcome. Resettlement and reconstruction are underway, although much remains to be done. Economic activity is growing, particularly in agriculture, with the region nearing food self-sufficiency. The key challenge lies primarily in the areas of income generation and bridging assistance. Indeed, Nagorno-Karabakh appears to be in far better condition than Azerbaijan from a humanitarian perspective. Certainly the situation contrasted sharply with "absolutely shocking and appalling" conditions that the UN mission had encountered four years earlier.

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*The Humanitarian Response*

Such substantial progress on the humanitarian front, ironically, is not attributable to the efforts of the international humanitarian community. The most striking aspect of the international humanitarian response to the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh was its timidity. As already noted, no UN mission has visited the region since 1992 to assess the extent of need. International agencies were largely unaware of the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh in mid-1996, two years after the cease-fire.

Nagorno-Karabakh was *terra incognita* because its humanitarian needs fell through the political cracks. Objections raised by the government of Azerbaijan were sufficient to deter the United Nations from carrying out even the most basic needs assessment missions. The United Nations viewed Nagorno-Karabakh as part of its member state, Azerbaijan, and would not proceed without the latter's permission. Azerbaijan, still claiming sovereignty over territory lost in the conflict, would not grant the United Nations access. In response to a query in mid-1996 about whether any UN official or delegation had ever visited Nagorno-Karabakh, a Nagorno-Karabakh government spokesperson replied tartly, "Of course not."<sup>29</sup>

Some within the United Nations actively sought for several years to find a way to allow an assessment mission to proceed, acknowledging that no provision of international law gave the United Nations the right to do so in an occupied territory without the consent of the internationally recognized authority. In support of mounting such a mission, they cited a Security Council resolution which, even in advance of the May 1994 cease-fire, had underscored "the urgency of the implementation by the parties of confidence-building measures...in particular in the humanitarian field...[The Council called] upon all parties to prevent suffering of the civilian populations affected by the armed conflict."<sup>30</sup>

Countering interest expressed by UN staff in Yerevan to push ahead with such a mission, UN officials in Baku insisted that a mission be mounted from Azerbaijan, which

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they conceded was politically unlikely. Indeed, Baku authorities rejected the idea, as expected, arguing that it would endanger the peace process, and it should wait until a peace agreement clarified issues of sovereignty. Once the planned OSCE peacekeeping force was on the ground, they suggested, an assessment mission would have a better chance of success. As of mid-1996, the United Nations had not pressed the point further.

None of the four consolidated appeals for the Caucasus launched by the United Nations contained any description of, or appeal for funds for, needs in Nagorno-Karabakh. The most recent interagency needs assessment mission, carried out in early 1996 as the basis for the final appeal, did not set foot in the area, although some informal discussions were held with aid agencies operating in Nagorno-Karabakh. The omission of needs in Nagorno-Karabakh from the "United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the Caucasus" makes the document's title inaccurate and even misleading.<sup>31</sup>

In September 1996, a UNHCR-DHA mission was dispatched to Armenia and Azerbaijan to review Nagorno-Karabakh needs with Azerbaijani and Armenian authorities. However, the mission did not travel to Nagorno-Karabakh itself, although it did meet with Nagorno-Karabakh representatives in Yerevan. In high-level meetings in both Yerevan and Baku, the mission sought to lay the groundwork for an eventual UN needs assessment in Nagorno-Karabakh. Its failure to produce an agreement underscored the cost in humanitarian terms of the continuing political impasse.

Reflecting these political constraints, the humanitarian response in Nagorno-Karabakh featured none of the throng of actors engaged in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The international organizations involved were limited to the ICRC and a number of NGOs, including Christian Solidarity, Halo Trust, MSF-Holland, Equilibre, the Armenian Apostolic Church Union, the Helsinki Citizens Assembly, the Armenian Refugee Committee, and the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund. Although the details are skimpy, the scale of the response fell short of the scale of funding mobilized by the consolidated appeals for Armenia and Azerbaijan. One senior Nagorno-Karabakh official estimated that the aggregate level of humanitarian

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assistance received between January and May 1996 was 49 million drams (about \$190,000), excluding the assistance of the ICRC.

Most intergovernmental and bilateral donors, taking their cues from the United Nations, provided no assistance at all. The EU, however, underwrote some NGO activities with grants from ECHO. British parliamentarian Caroline (Baroness) Cox, who by May 1996 had made 29 visits to the area under the auspices of Christian Solidarity International, is credited with working effectively to offset EU member state reluctance to risk antagonizing the Azerbaijani authorities by sponsoring humanitarian work in Nagorno-Karabakh. Some Nagorno-Karabakh officials, however, noted that the laudable efforts of Christian Solidarity could not compensate for the larger deficit in assistance. Speaking of Christian Solidarity's distribution of chocolate bars, one official commented, "Once you eat them, they are gone."<sup>32</sup>

Among traditional aid organizations, the ICRC was the most active. During 1993–1995, it provided some 90,000 Nagorno-Karabakh inhabitants with food and medicine. In 1996, food distribution was substantially curtailed, reflecting its judgment that sufficient food was available locally. Distribution shifted accordingly to pensioners and those in remote areas. Because the easing of food shortages and the region's stability permitted a shift toward bridging activities, the ICRC turned to the import of construction materials and the rehabilitation of destroyed villages. The program involved reconstruction of water supplies in 19 villages. The ICRC also launched a seed program in these villages, geared toward self-sufficiency. To minimize the political impact of its aid, the ICRC as a matter of policy refused to provide assistance to settlers in the occupied territories. The ICRC also assisted in the main military hospital in Stepanakert and nine front-line military hospitals, including at least one located in the occupied territories.

The other major area of ICRC activity was arranging the exchange of POWs and hostages. In mid-1996, the ICRC had completed the liberation of all detainees it had visited.<sup>33</sup> It intended to continue with this aspect of its activities, given the existence of numerous unregistered prisoners. The ultimate

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objectives were to secure the liberation of all those detained during the conflict and to account for the thousands of disappeared persons on all sides.

Also prominent among international organizations was MSF-France, which arrived in March 1992 during the conflict when Nagorno-Karabakh's medical infrastructure was being destroyed. Its immediate focus was the distribution of drugs and medical equipment from a central warehouse in Stepanakert. Although initially concentrating on the city itself, the geographical scope of activities expanded during the war to embrace the entire region. The cease-fire also allowed MSF the opportunity to work on the reconstruction of the region's medical infrastructure, which they approached using a hub and spokes pattern (*en forme d'étoile*). Peripheral clinics received supplies from a central warehousing facility in Stepanakert. MSF also organized a psychological program for children suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. The medical emergency over, it planned to leave Nagorno-Karabakh by the end of 1996 when existing and requisitioned supplies had been used up.

Another key organization was Halo Trust, which Nagorno-Karabakh authorities credited with having played essential roles in organizing the demining effort and training local personnel to complete the operation after their departure. Also involved in Karabakh on a very small scale was Equilibre, which, according to government officials, ran a five-ton truck into Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia once a month with food items. The activities of MSF and Equilibre were funded by ECHO and Halo from private sources. According to sources familiar with Halo's activities in Nagorno-Karabakh, the agency was planning to conclude work in 1996.

The relatively insubstantial quality of NGO activity in Nagorno-Karabakh did not go unnoticed on the part of government officials interviewed. One senior official complained that Nagorno-Karabakh had received little aid from intergovernmental humanitarian agencies, commenting bitterly that its share of budgeted allocations of UN and U.S. government funding went to Azerbaijan. He noted also that Nagorno-Karabakh authorities had requested assistance from SC-US,

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only to be told that Nagorno-Karabakh was not within their program.

Armenian organizations with diaspora and government funding played a far larger role in Nagorno-Karabakh than traditional international and nongovernmental assistance providers. The key player was the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, the largest indigenous Armenian NGO, which during the period 1992–1995 expended more than \$4.6 million on economic and humanitarian programs in Nagorno-Karabakh. Drawing upon resources from affiliates in 22 nations, the fund made major contributions of a quasigovernmental nature. It was heavily involved in sectors, such as utilities, e.g., the high-tension transmission line from Shusha to Karmir Shuka, and the power substations on each end; water, e.g., the construction of a water supply line and internal distribution network in several urban and rural areas; and roads, e.g., the major artery from Goris to Stepanakert. The fund also engaged in apartment reconstruction in Stepanakert and assisted children of soldiers orphaned by the conflict. It also underwrote and carried out projects in Armenia.

The government of Armenia itself also played an important role in Nagorno-Karabakh. Its financial assistance substantially underwrote the public-sector budget, as already noted. Civilian activities and the Nagorno-Karabakh defense establishment benefited.

The issue of the coordination of international humanitarian action in Nagorno-Karabakh was a less pressing issue than elsewhere because of its small scale. Various organizations identified areas of need and acted upon them, coordinating with the principal government body dealing with humanitarian assistance questions, the State Committee of Deported Citizens and Humanitarian Aid, and with the relevant ministries. Thus, MSF worked very closely with the Nagorno-Karabakh Ministry of Health. Little overlap apparently occurred among organizational activities. The government was extremely active in designing new projects, but, as noted above, had considerable difficulty in financing them. It also played an active role in the implementation of transition activities, such as the resettlement program.

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However, the interface between aid providers and the government was not free of trouble. Although the Armenian and diaspora organizations active in Nagorno-Karabakh voiced few complaints regarding their relations with government, international NGOs had a different experience. The one aid agency's impending departure was the result not only of the health system's gradual stabilization in the country but also that Nagorno-Karabakh authorities held a key to their warehouse and removed materials without consultation, presumably for military use. Another NGO opted to continue its activities but confirmed the existence of problems in its dealings with the authorities, particularly the military. The comment that "no one would want to antagonize a military man, since they are the heroes in Nagorno-Karabakh," suggested an atmosphere of pressure, if not low-level intimidation. One other NGO maintained direct relief distributions using expatriate staff but acknowledged that the authorities did not allow enough international personnel to avoid leakage of supplies altogether.

The limited scale, but strategic value, of aid activities in Nagorno-Karabakh highlighted the political objectives and importance of private assistance from the Armenian diaspora. Observers noted that in 1991 and 1992, when it was virtually bankrupt, the Nagorno-Karabakh government nevertheless managed to mount major military activities and to support a large army. Acknowledging that outside humanitarian aid may have played a role, one of those involved observed that "when Nagorno-Karabakh was encircled and starving, there was not a clear delineation between purely humanitarian aid and indirect military aid. In any event, without aid, Nagorno-Karabakh would have ceased to exist."

U.S. officials stated categorically that no government funds went to Nagorno-Karabakh; all were provided to Armenia proper, and of these, none were used by Armenian military forces. This assertion was questioned by some, and even U.S. officials acknowledged that it is "reasonable to believe" that at a minimum, generous U.S. aid levels freed up Armenian government resources for use in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the Nagorno-Karabakh experience in political terms is that in the absence of



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adequate international support during and subsequent to the humanitarian emergency of 1990–1993, Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and diaspora Armenians handled the problem for the most part on their own. Their contribution largely mitigated the humanitarian consequences of the war in the region and since 1994 has supported the region's substantial recovery.

Nagorno-Karabakh gives the appearance of an intensely organized and militarized ministate, with available resources efficiently marshaled and deployed on the basis of a rational decision-making process. Cohesion rests on a widely shared and deeply rooted consensus to consolidate independence or to achieve unification with Armenia; an equally profound sense of imminent extirpation in the face of Azeri hostility and numerical superiority; an impression of international indifference; and a strong sense that Nagorno-Karabakh will survive only because of self-reliance and discipline, which allows little room for dissent.

Nagorno-Karabakh's success by its own devices has served to strengthen these perceptions. As one senior member of parliament stated in a discussion of the limited potential of OSCE peacekeeping troops, "our principal security guarantee is our people, our army, and the truth." An Armenian journalist assessed the Nagorno-Karabakh spirit somewhat differently:

War has made them cruel. They no longer trust anyone. They would no more believe [Armenian President] Ter Petrosyan than [Azerbaijani President] Aliev. They trust the rifle and the tank....The international community must understand that they no longer believe.

In this sense, the international community's abdication of responsibility in dealing with the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh has contributed to the difficulty of achieving a durable long-term settlement of the conflict. It has deepened Nagorno-Karabakh's isolationism and self-reliance and correspondingly reduced the degree of influence that international and multilateral actors can bring to bear in

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search of such a settlement. “What have you done for us and why should we listen to you?” asked one Nagorno-Karabakh official. If effective humanitarian aid can serve as a confidence-building device, its absence in this instance seems to have had the opposite effect.

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## CHAPTER 4

### INTERPLAY BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND POLITICS

The foregoing description of challenges and responses in each of the three jurisdictions affected by the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh suggests a number of respects in which political factors shaped humanitarian action. This section explores those interactions, setting the stage for conclusions and recommendations in the final chapter of the study.

#### **Political Contexts and International Humanitarian Action**

Each of the three political authorities confronted the challenge of meeting the human needs of conflict-affected populations within the framework of prevailing national visions. Perceiving Karabakh Armenians to have won a decisive war reversing past injustice, Yerevan authorities faced two humanitarian imperatives. The first was to integrate refugees from parts of Azerbaijan other than Nagorno-Karabakh into the Armenian economy and society. Although the problem was eased by emigration to Russia, outside assistance—reinforced by national measures such as legislation allowing Armenian refugees from parts of Azerbaijan other than Nagorno-Karabakh to apply for and receive Armenian citizenship—was critical in achieving the desired integration. The second was to ensure the reconstruction of Nagorno-Karabakh and its secure linkage to Armenia, in cooperation with the authorities of the breakaway region. Again, this involved substantial international assistance, primarily from the Armenian diaspora. It also necessitated a decision not to extend rights of citizenship to those displaced from Karabakh and the adjacent district to the north (Shahumian) because their return to the region was an essential aspect of its viability in the long term.

The circumstances in Azerbaijan were quite different. One region of the country was outside government control. Efforts to reestablish jurisdiction over Nagorno-Karabakh had led to the complete defeat of the country's armed forces, the further loss of close to 20 percent of the national territory, and the

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displacement of over one-half million people. Paradoxically, however, this outcome produced a set of objectives relating to humanitarian objectives similar to those of Armenia. The government responded to the exodus of Azeris from Armenia with efforts to settle them permanently in Azerbaijan. Had the government sought to reintegrate IDPs from the occupied territories into Azerbaijan, it would have been a confession of defeat in the face of a strong nationalist pressure to retake the lost lands. International assistance that reduced the likelihood of eventual resettlement ran counter to this political imperative.

For the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities, the conflict was over and won. They sought to consolidate their hold on Nagorno-Karabakh territory and to overcome the humanitarian consequences of war. The former required that displaced Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians return to their villages or to previously Azeri-populated villages and that other Armenians be settled in Nagorno-Karabakh or the Lachin Corridor. The latter required directing attention toward reconstruction and economic recovery. "We have learnt how to fight," President Robert Khocharian told one visiting NGO group in 1996, "now we need to learn how to develop economic structures and our relations with the outside world."<sup>1</sup> "The sooner reconstruction proceeds," explained another Nagorno-Karabakh official, "the sooner the Azeris will accept it." International aid, it was clear, would be harnessed accordingly.

Each of the three political visions had obvious implications for humanitarian action. Each framed the context within which the authorities wished international assistance to be provided. In turn, the agencies responded differently according to the particular aid institution, the political jurisdiction involved, and the aid activities mounted.

The ICRC, for example, made clear in Nagorno-Karabakh that it would not assist in the repopulation of former Azeri villages, concentrating instead on reconstruction elsewhere. It insisted on delivering and monitoring relief supplies by ICRC personnel themselves in an effort to limit abuses by the authorities. ECHO allowed its funds to be used to help Karabakh Armenians return to their own homes in Nagorno-Karabakh but not to help those settling in Shusha or the Lachin Corridor.

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One NGO that provided relief supplies in the Lachin corridor was uncomfortable with the task, realizing that many recipients were dependents of military personnel and that the government was encouraging resettlement to consolidate its claims to the area.

One of the NGOs intensively involved in Nagorno-Karabakh was Feed the Children (FTC), which preceded its activities with a detailed, on-the-ground needs assessment in early 1996. Based on its report, FTC mounted programs to assist civilians settling in former Azeri villages, reasoning that they too had basic survival and reconstruction needs and should not be denied help simply because of this highly politicized landscape. The Hayastan All-Armenian Fund gave assisting with infrastructure throughout Nagorno-Karabakh a high priority, but reported that none of its projects were in occupied territories. This disclaimer apparently did not apply to the Lachin Corridor, where the fund was reconstructing and improving the road link from Goris to Lachin and on to Stepanakert.

In Azerbaijan, political considerations and humanitarian imperatives intersected in many areas, including the issue of quality and permanence of the housing provided. Considerable tension prevailed between the authorities, who did not want the uprooted to be made more comfortable, and the aid agencies, who wanted to ensure that basic needs were met. The three basic types of structure—mudbrick, limestone, and prefab—varied widely in cost (\$380, \$1,250, and \$2,600 per unit respectively), the time needed for construction, the utilization of locally available materials, and the degree of self-help by the occupants.

The government's general preference was to use mudbrick, the cheapest and least permanent option, which was indeed the option chosen by some agencies, largely on the grounds of appropriateness, cost, and community involvement. Other agencies chose limestone, which would be less portable should they be allowed to return to former lands. Still other agencies erected prefab structures, using European contractors and with less attention to political implications. The prefabs were reportedly the least useful to those affected by the conflict, with units assigned in some instances by local officials as a

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form of political patronage. A politically sensitive strategy might have attempted to provide the more permanent structures to those least likely to return, such as those from the Lachin Corridor.<sup>2</sup>

If the authorities were concerned that international aid might be an incentive for IDPs to stay where they were, the agencies also were worried that their relief assistance would entice people from areas of temporary settlement back into still-insecure districts near the confrontation line. As a result, some decided against providing assistance there. Others took the opposite position, concluding that people would make their own decisions about when it was safe to return on grounds other than the availability of assistance.

So sensitive were the political implications of humanitarian activities that the agencies were deeply ambivalent about whether to proceed with planning for the resettlement in the event of a peace agreement.<sup>3</sup> Most believed that contingency planning was necessary to avoid the embarrassment of being confronted by large movements of people without having prepared the desirable protection and assistance. However, some believed that proceeding in advance of discernible progress in negotiations would be provocative, particularly in Azerbaijan, and thus did not press ahead.<sup>4</sup>

In other respects too, the three political contexts intersected with the tasks of humanitarian agencies. These included the approach of the respective authorities to a transitional post-Soviet economy, their views of regional interests and relationships, and their preconditions and preferences regarding a durable political settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Such broader political matters were, of course, well beyond the scope and competence of humanitarian organizations. Yet, each framed the context within which the authorities approached international organizations and their resources.

### **International Political Agendas and National Humanitarian Activities in the Region**

As mentioned, international actors and resources intersect with national visions and government priorities. They also inject their own political agendas, conditions, and constraints.

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The political baggage accompanying international humanitarian action was evident in U.S. government policy affecting humanitarian activities in Azerbaijan and Armenia and in the total absence of the UN's humanitarian apparatus from Karabakh.

By most accounts, the political conditions on U.S. assistance described earlier significantly undercut its effectiveness. Interviews with aid personnel and government officials throughout Azerbaijan, which routinely began with questions about the results of outside assistance, soon turned to problems created by Section 907. All those interviewed found the legislation a serious problem differing only in how debilitating the thought of the political conditionality had proved. The difficulties most frequently cited were in the areas of policy and administration.

In terms of policy, the ground rules for using AID resources prevented organizations from following widely accepted strategies, such as working to enhance the capacity of the government to meet the needs of its population and to move the displaced quickly from relief handouts to self-help activities. Given the Azerbaijani authorities' weakness in the management and coordination of humanitarian assistance, this effect was particularly negative and not offset by the efforts of IOM and others involved in capacity building.

Although there is disagreement on how restrictive 907 was intended to be and on who is to blame for its effects on humanitarian action, the ground rules nevertheless represented an affront to local decision-making. The possibility of a presidential waiver was no solace. "Developing a project at the grassroots level and then having it approved by the President of the United States is incongruous," observed one NGO. Reflecting on the rejection of its proposal to build small greenhouses for IDPs, another reflected sardonically, "It's a long way from a backyard greenhouse [in rural Azerbaijan] to the White House."

Aid efficiency as well as effectiveness was undercut. The requirement that U.S. assistance not strengthen the Azerbaijani government spurred the creation of a class of Azeri middlemen because the country had not replaced its command economy with an active private sector. Aid conditionality

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added a "politics tax" to the cost of humanitarian operations, putting an added price tag on the cost of forcing humanitarian activities into the service of political objectives.

In terms of administration, the requirements imposed on U.S. aid to Azerbaijan resulted in considerable added expense, delay, and irritation. The burden of proof was on the operating aid agencies and on SC-US, which administered AID's umbrella grant, to demonstrate that a given activity did not breach the myriad of U.S. regulations. The process was cumbersome. A proposal from one of the AID NGO grantees was reviewed (not necessarily in the following order) by SC-Baku, the U.S. embassy in Baku (acting in the absence of an AID mission), SC-Yerevan, AID/Yerevan, and AID/Washington. Often the U.S. headquarters of the individual NGO and SC-US also were involved. The bureaucratic obstacle course meant that in one instance U.S. authorization for the NGO to purchase an urgently needed vehicle took six months, with approval received only after the project itself was well underway.

Pressed to assess the extent of the damage to aid effectiveness caused by political conditionality, one NGO country program director expressed the view that on a scale of 10, the results were reduced from an "8" to a "6." Although the damage was serious, it was not the most crippling result in his experience in six other countries. Useful activities therefore were possible, but the problems were significant. "The reason people burn out here," explained another NGO director in anger, "is not the hardship of the post but the frustration with the politics of the situation, particularly the AID aspects of it." Although Section 907-related headaches were primarily a preoccupation of U.S. agencies, the approach and the accompanying humanitarian and political fallout were an item of ongoing discussion among a much wider circle.

If the constraints on U.S. aid were a problem in Azerbaijan, the liberality of outside resources was an issue in Armenia. In 1996, international aid exceeded the entire Armenian government budget, including defense. Some aid officials believed that the disproportionate assistance received by the country created problems of absorptive capacity within Armenia, as well as problems of underfunding of more serious needs elsewhere in the Caucasus and beyond. "Everyone



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understands that the disproportions in aid have to do with the diaspora," noted one of those involved.

Not sensitive to the embarrassment-of-riches dynamic, Armenian officials displayed little awareness of the broader issues of equity in regional distribution and limitations on absorptive capacity. One, for example, maintained that "Armenia will need aid, yesterday, today, and tomorrow." By contrast, aid agency officials spoke of too much outside assistance having been provided, although they acknowledged that serious needs in some sectors remained to be met. One representative of an aid-providing government commented, "We keep giving them goodies and there's no accounting." Reports of efforts to increase further the levels of future U.S. aid to Armenia have led to concerns that an already dysfunctional situation would be worsened as the diaspora overplayed its hand.<sup>5</sup>

If aid conditionality did not serve U.S. or international humanitarian and development interests, neither did it advance U.S. political objectives. U.S. micromanagement of NGO aid operations as a major irritant in relations with the government of Azerbaijan was mentioned earlier. The partiality of U.S. assistance was underscored by the fact that, without an AID office in Baku, decisions about aid matters in Azerbaijan were made in its regional office for the Caucasus in Yerevan.<sup>6</sup> Beyond that, however, U.S. diplomats suggested that American commercial interests were not served by Azerbaijan's pariah status. They noted with concern the absence of visits to Baku from the Commerce Department, the Export-Import Bank, and other U.S. government entities. The question of whether the conditionality and disproportionality of aid to Azerbaijan also complicated the task of negotiating an end to the conflict is examined in the following chapter.

The political baggage carried by humanitarian institutions also was demonstrated by the inability of the United Nations to function as a serious humanitarian player in Nagorno-Karabakh. "Karabakh is left out of everything," lamented one aid official. To be sure, the political constraints under which intergovernmental organizations labor make it difficult to function when one warring party is unprepared to authorize, or even to acquiesce in, their activity. Discussions

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with the major actors suggest, however, that the underlying problem was a lack of UN political courage and resourcefulness. Although the Azerbaijan authorities resisted UN involvement in Nagorno-Karabakh, the reality seems to have been, as one observer noted, “The UN itself doesn’t want to go to Karabakh.” In any event, for the world body not to be in the forefront of the humanitarian effort there stands as one of the foremost political casualties of the conflict.

As in other cases analyzed by the Humanitarianism and War Project, the reluctance to engage in Nagorno-Karabakh resulted from the UN member states’ shared interest in the maintenance of territorial integrity and domestic jurisdiction where these interests were threatened by secessionist movements. In addition, as one UN official observed, the UN is, after all, a club in which members determine policy. Nagorno-Karabakh is not a member; its lack of representation not surprisingly translated into a lack of UN response. In this sense, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict provides another example of a structural problem in UN efforts to deal with internal conflict. One entire category of parties to such conflict—unrecognized insurgent regions—remains largely off the UN humanitarian screen.

As noted earlier, UN Security Council resolutions recognized an obligation to address humanitarian need within the region, including in Nagorno-Karabakh. Yet internecine squabbling both within and among UN organizations emerged, with UN officials articulating the national agendas of their host states. A proposal by the DHA office in Yerevan for a needs assessment in Karabakh was opposed by other UN officials in Azerbaijan who felt that mounting a UN needs assessment from Yerevan in a portion of Azerbaijan would seriously affect their relationship with the authorities in Baku. Although their fears were well-founded, the UN system exhibited an absence of resourcefulness in finding ways around the existing political problems. (For instance, the mission might have been mounted from Geneva or New York instead of Yerevan or Baku.) Other intergovernmental agencies such as ECHO proved more resourceful.

Although private organizations typically picture themselves as uninhibited by politics, NGO activities in the Nagorno-

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Karabakh conflict were themselves vulnerable to the politics that drove donor government involvement. One obvious example was that the general limitation on the use of U.S. public monies for aid in Azerbaijan also applied in Karabakh, substantially impeding activities of AID grantees in that region. Very few NGOs had substantial funds from private sources; most of their activities reflected the agendas of one governmental donor or another. ECHO funded agencies working in all three jurisdictions.

The fact that assistance is highly political in agenda, scale, or impact does not mean that it is necessarily without humanitarian value. Politics is a factor in virtually all settings in which humanitarian action is needed, particularly in “complex emergencies” where humanitarian need and action are intimately connected to military and political realities. In some circumstances, political factors can even enhance humanitarian effectiveness, especially when political pressure expands humanitarian access or when additional resources accomplish useful things. In the Karabakh conflict, however, the impacts were largely negative. The fact that some humanitarian agencies such as the ICRC, SC-US, Oxfam, MSF, and the ARC were active in two, or in some instances in all three, of the political jurisdictions did little to soften the prevailing politicization of international humanitarian action.

### **The Impacts of the Conflict on Humanitarian Effectiveness**

The conflict made many of the basic tasks and procedures of humanitarian action difficult to carry out. The problem of assessing needs was not limited to Nagorno-Karabakh. In both Armenia and Azerbaijan, agencies had difficulty in establishing how many persons were in need of what kinds of assistance. This was particularly pronounced in Azerbaijan. “They inflate the numbers. We know they inflate the numbers. They know that we know that they inflate the numbers,” explained one aid official with a smile. “But we plan our activities accordingly.” In this context, the establishment by international aid agencies in both Armenia and Azerbaijan of vulnerability indicators and the use of a more focused and

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realistic approach across various population groups represented a positive development.

The basic function of planning also was impaired by the continuation of the conflict. As noted earlier, contingency planning raised political sensitivities. One senior UN official observed, "We must be prepared for the contingency but not give the expectation that repatriation is likely." Functioning in a setting of "no war and no peace" also made it difficult to mount serious reconstruction initiatives. The occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh needed the most reconstruction assistance, yet politico-military conditions relating to the suspended conflict prevented even a rudimentary assessment of the problem. That said, some organizations established contingency funds to ensure the availability of resources should large-scale resettlement take place after a peace agreement.

The Karabakh conflict also tested the professionalism of humanitarian personnel. On occasion, UN humanitarian officials in the field appeared to work harder to defend the positions of the governments with which they interfaced than to find ways of solving difficult political problems. Bureaucratic turf-protection undercut effective humanitarian diplomacy, with UN offices in Geneva and New York affected as well.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, officials of some international NGOs spoke broadly of "we" and "us" in describing the efforts of the Armenian government. One NGO seemed oblivious to the implications of sending a staff person of Armenian extraction on a mission to Azerbaijan. Preoccupied with their own efforts in a given jurisdiction, many humanitarian staffs and organizations seemed unaware of the extent to which parlance and programs conveyed an impression of partiality at odds with the essence of humanitarian action.

In addition to generating the suffering to which aid organizations should respond. The conflict also added what might be called a "war tax" to the cost of aid operations. As evident from map 3, the most direct and cost-effective means of getting relief supplies into Armenia was through Turkey, an option ruled out by the Turkish blockade of Armenia. Studies also suggest that in the case of relief shipments originating in Asia, savings also might have been realized by importing relief supplies into Azerbaijan through Iran. To date the aid

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agencies, reflecting U.S. attitudes toward Iran, have shown a preference for the more expensive route through Georgia. Without doubt, constraints on cross-border movement of goods imposed by the war, blockades, and politics raise the cost of humanitarian operations.

Under present circumstances, the Turkish blockade not only raises the cost of shipping relief supplies into Armenia through Georgia, but it also increases the ability of Georgians to obstruct such shipments. An Armenian government official, expressing great appreciation to WFP's Caucasus Logistics Advisory Unit (CLAU), which has provided diesel locomotives and technical assistance to railroad transport and port management, nevertheless noted that shipments still have to cross national borders, where they are often held up. One major relief agency operating in Armenia was so incensed by the loss of goods on the Georgia route that it threatened to review its activities in Georgia if the government did not ensure safe transshipment through its territory. With the conflict over and borders open, transport would be more regular and cheap, goods would be more competitively than artificially priced, and extortion more difficult.

The above analysis has focused on the interplay between humanitarian and political factors within and among each of the three jurisdictions, and how these affected the timeliness and effectiveness of delivery of humanitarian assistance. Certainly, the persistence of the conflict has complicated efforts to address human need. A settlement of the conflict would remove many impediments to the delivery of assistance, while presumably mitigating the key factor producing and sustaining need—the displacement of a substantial portion of the region's population. In turn, it is evident that distortions in the delivery of humanitarian assistance complicated the process of resettlement. These issues are the focus of the next chapter.



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## CHAPTER 5

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

This chapter examines the interaction between humanitarian action and conflict resolution. It reviews the political settlement process, its progress thus far, and the impediments to a resolution of the conflict. The chapter then turns to the impact of humanitarian action on the prospects for settlement. It concludes that the opportunities for translating what has turned out to be a durable cease-fire into lasting peace are limited, and that humanitarian action, which at its best may encourage the conflict resolution process, in this instance actually complicated it.

#### **The Evolution of the Mediation Process**

The most persistent needs associated with the Karabakh dispute are those of IDPs in Azerbaijan. More than 600,000 persons displaced from their homes in Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding districts of Zangelan, Qubately, Fizuli, Kelbajar, Jebrail, Agdam, Daskelan, and Terter remained in temporary shelter in Azerbaijan and, to a lesser extent, in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Both the Armenian and Azerbaijani governments accommodated each other's refugees, and the Nagorno-Karabakh government encouraged Armenians from other parts of Azerbaijan to settle within its jurisdiction. However, the Armenian government resisted the integration of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, hoping that they would return to their homes and further the consolidation of Armenian control in Nagorno-Karabakh. Similarly, the Azerbaijani government impeded aid activities that might have the effect of rendering permanent the situation of Azeri IDPs from Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied territories.

The situation for Armenian refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh and Shahumian who fled to Armenia and were denied citizenship there was somewhat less onerous than that of the Azeris. They could return home; the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh welcomed their return; and rudimentary humanitarian programs were in place to assist their

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resettlement. However, their return was only secure as long as the cease-fire was transformed into a durable political settlement accepted by all parties. Azeri IDPs, by contrast, had no where to go and would not until the conflict was settled.

As discussed in chapter 2, the effort to mediate a resolution to the conflict dated back almost to the start of the war. Initiatives were undertaken both by individual states—Iran, Turkey, Russia—and on a multilateral basis. Reflecting an agreement with the UN, the OSCE since 1992 has taken the lead in multilateral efforts at mediation. The OSCE's efforts in turn have been concentrated in the Minsk Group forum. The Minsk Group was established in 1992, bringing together 11 interested states in a joint effort to lay the groundwork for a conference on the political status of Nagorno-Karabakh to be held in Minsk. During its first years, the Minsk process coincided rather uneasily with independent Russian efforts to mediate the conflict through Russia's special envoy, Vladimir Kazimirov, and then-Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev.<sup>1</sup>

As U.S. Ambassador John Maresca stressed, the existence of parallel tracks had a number of pernicious consequences, not the least of which was that the parties to the conflict could shop around for the most advantageous terms.<sup>2</sup> Another consequence was that an independent track pursued by a major regional actor and Minsk Group member delegitimized the CSCE/OSCE effort in the eyes of the parties. Despite these complexities, a durable cease-fire was put into place in May 1994, largely on the basis of Grachev's mediation. The focus then shifted to the negotiation of measures to stabilize the cease-fire (e.g., the insertion of a peacekeeping force), and to the search for a political settlement that would find a way to harmonize Azerbaijani insistence on territorial integrity with Nagorno-Karabakh aspirations to self-determination.

In this new context, the dual track problem was to a large extent overcome at the CSCE's Budapest Summit in December 1994, when Russia became a cochair (with Finland) of the Minsk Group, and the organization agreed on the insertion of a peacekeeping force to police the cease-fire and eventual settlement.<sup>3</sup> Since then, the parties have been negotiating primarily within the Minsk context on the terms of a settlement. Initially, the approach was sequential. The first phase



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was the negotiation of a set of conditions for the placement of peacekeepers and the return of displaced persons and refugees; the second phase was to define Nagorno-Karabakh's political status.

This approach was abandoned in 1995–1996, largely at the behest of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, for the simple reason that Karabakh control of the occupied territories was Nagorno-Karabakh's principal bargaining chip in negotiations over its status. Any agreement leading to the partial or complete withdrawal of Karabakh forces from the occupied territories would constitute a unilateral abandonment of a principal source of power before the real bargaining began. Consequently, the focus of negotiation shifted to the search for a package deal in which the territorial and security issues would be resolved at the same time as the political issues. Azerbaijani authorities did not greet this shift enthusiastically.

As of the latter part of 1996, little progress toward a resolution was evident. Although many felt that Russia and the United States could compel a settlement, neither state was prepared to intervene. Most interviewees believed that little progress was possible until the Russian, Armenian, and U.S. elections were held. The long-term Russian approach to the conflict was uncertain until the contest between Yeltsin and Zyuganov was resolved. Armenian President Ter Petrosyan was unlikely to make any substantial concessions or exert any significant pressure on the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities until his own domestic situation was secure. The U.S. government was unlikely to take any significant foreign policy risks, including an active role in mediation, in the months before the November 1996 elections. Some of those interviewed anticipated, therefore, it might happen during the November–December 1996 OSCE Lisbon review conference.<sup>4</sup>

### **Obstacles to a Settlement**

Most external observers of the process of conflict resolution have had a general sense for more than a year of what an agreement will probably look like. Nagorno-Karabakh would surrender control over the occupied territories, a principle

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that the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities themselves accepted with one important proviso. An international peacekeeping force—either an OSCE force or an OSCE-CIS hybrid—would be deployed along the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh in the occupied territories. Nagorno-Karabakh would receive enhanced autonomy within Azerbaijan. The Lachin Corridor issue somehow would be finessed, perhaps through a long-term leasing arrangement supplemented with an agreement on demilitarization and some form of international guarantee.

Although the outlines of such a settlement were reasonably clear, substantial obstacles remained. As one U.S. official involved in the process lamented: “Getting three sets of people out of their fantasy worlds long enough to sign a piece of paper [was a formidable challenge] even though everybody knows what it will look like.” Major obstacles included the perspectives of the parties on key issues; problems relating to the financing, structure, and deployment of a peacekeeping force; and the attitudes and interests of key external actors such as the Russian Federation and Turkey. Complicating these matters was the climate of profound distrust among the parties on the ground.

The most obvious obstacles to settlement were the Lachin and Shusha issue and the question of Nagorno-Karabakh’s ultimate status within Azerbaijan. Control over the Lachin Corridor between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia was seen as a survival issue by Nagorno-Karabakh authorities. Therefore, Nagorno-Karabakh did not want to compromise on Armenian and/or Karabakh control over the route to Armenia, although some flexibility was evident on the width of the corridor. Some officials in Nagorno-Karabakh also accepted the possibility of limited territory swaps, with Nagorno-Karabakh ceding limited areas in eastern Nagorno-Karabakh and Shahumian in return for the corridor. A senior Karabakh official described Nagorno-Karabakh objectives quite simply, “We shall never be an enclave again.” A Karabakh diplomatic representative was equally blunt: “Whatever happens to the occupied territories, the Lachin Corridor stays with us. The sooner reconstruction proceeds there, the sooner the Azeris will accept it.”

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The Azerbaijani authorities were completely unwilling to accept any transfer of authority over the corridor, but were more open to the international policing of it. Azerbaijan also took a dim view of midrange solutions such as a long-term corridor lease.

Likewise, from a Nagorno-Karabakh perspective, Shusha should never be returned to Azerbaijani control. In Nagorno-Karabakh's view, Shusha was historically Armenian; the fact that prior to the war the city had an Azeri majority was an historical result of the massacre of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians who lived there in 1920. The shelling of 1991–1992 indicated to Nagorno-Karabakh officials that the security of Stepanakert could not be assured without control of the heights above the city, including Shusha. The Azerbaijani position was equally clear: Baku would not accept Armenian control over the town. After all, Shusha had been an historical center of Azeri culture, populated predominantly by Azeris prior to the war, and subject to ethnic cleansing by Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians during the spring 1992 offensive.

On the issue of status, the Nagorno-Karabakh position was unequivocal; Stepanakert would not accept any "vertical" relationship with Baku. As one official stated: "Why should Baku be able to tell us how many cigarettes we smoke?" Instead, although accepting that the objective of *de jure* sovereignty or union with Armenia was beyond its reach, given the sanctity of frontiers in the view of OSCE member states, Nagorno-Karabakh sought *de facto* independence. This would include control over its own armed forces and police and over economic policy and taxation. Nagorno-Karabakh also insisted on a specific international guarantee of this status. A guarantee by the OSCE was unacceptable, given the organization's military weakness. Instead, Nagorno-Karabakh sought guarantees from NATO and/or the United States and the Russian Federation, involving automatic and immediate military response in the event of "aggression."

As of 1996, the Azerbaijani government accepted that Nagorno-Karabakh would be granted the "maximum possible autonomy" in any agreement on status. Without greater specificity, however, it remained unclear just what the offer meant and how seriously it could be taken. When pressed,

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Azerbaijani officials asserted that the final form that autonomy took was a matter for the Minsk Conference and that the parameters of autonomy could not be fully specified until Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia abandoned the prospect of independence for the region. However, in discussing the broad outlines of Baku's position, Azerbaijani officials stressed that Nagorno-Karabakh would have no role in defense and military issues, foreign affairs, and taxation beyond the local level.

The unwillingness of Azerbaijan to define the parameters of autonomy was greeted with derision in Nagorno-Karabakh. As a leading foreign ministry official stated:

There are many different levels of autonomy, the highest being independence. Azerbaijan had to decide which one it was talking about. Was it Bosnia, Tatarstan, or what? The problem is that they are unwilling to concretize their proposal.

The positions of the two sides reflected a number of optimistic but mutually inconsistent assumptions. Nagorno-Karabakh felt little reason to compromise because it had won the war. As one Nagorno-Karabakh official emphasized, generally the defeated party, not the victorious, made concessions. Moreover, Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenians officials repeatedly expressed the view that there would be no renewal of the war by Azerbaijan because the people did not support it. If it were renewed, the Azeris would lose again, for the same reason. In the meantime, with each passing day, the Armenian position in Karabakh grew stronger. Consequently, Karabakh and Armenia approached the settlement process with little urgency.

Azerbaijani officials also expressed the strong opinion that time was on their side. Although there were few signs that the economy was improving, oil revenues would start to flow and translate in the medium and long term into greater prosperity for the country. A stronger economy would make possible a revival of a military option should it be necessary. As one senior government official said:

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Armenia has bitten off more than it can chew; they cannot sustain their position in the longer term, and no one would recognize the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. Meanwhile, an independent Azerbaijan has good long-term prospects. It is politically stable and has a good resource base. Time is on its side... We want a political settlement, but, if we can't get it, we will obtain a military one.

He asserted that although Russia had supported Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, it was increasingly preoccupied by its own internal problems and was no longer able to aid Nagorno-Karabakh as it had in the earlier stages of the conflict.

In short, none of the parties perceived any urgency in the quest for settlement; all saw time to be on their side. International mediators recognized the stalemate, one of whom noted in exasperation that until the two sides were ready to get serious about the peace process outsiders could do little. When the warring parties had decided to settle, international mediators would be there to help them with the process.

Various domestic political factors in both Armenia and Azerbaijan have constrained their capacity to make a constructive contribution to the process. Armenia's influence over Nagorno-Karabakh has been a matter of dispute. Some maintain that significant differences of view existed between the two governments on the negotiating process; others hold that President Ter Petrosyan is in effect a second representative of Nagorno-Karabakh at the talks. Most on the Azerbaijani side contend that the purported independence of Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia on matters relating to the conflict is a convenient fiction allowing Armenia to evade its responsibility for continuing the conflict.

Whatever the case, given Nagorno-Karabakh's infrastructural and financial dependence on Armenia, the Armenian government is theoretically in a position to pressure Nagorno-Karabakh to compromise. Yet, any significant concession at the expense of Nagorno-Karabakh or manifest pressure upon it could be used against the president and his government by opposition forces in Armenia. Given the emotional sensitivity

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of the Karabakh issue in Armenian politics, such manipulation could be politically disastrous. In Azerbaijan, President Aliiev's predecessors have fallen from power largely as a result of reversals on the Karabakh question. Although the Aliiev government has a firmer hold on power, this unpleasant record undoubtedly influences, their political calculus on the Karabakh issue.

Politics also constrain the principal external participants in the mediation process. Both Russia and the United States, again in theory, have the means at their disposal to mount significant pressure upon Armenia to "deliver Karabakh" in a settlement. Russia's significant military assistance gives it leverage, as do the mutual assistance agreements that serve to reassure Armenia in the face of the perceived Turkish threat. Armenian dependence on U.S. financial support also is widely held to give the United States a privileged place in Armenian decisionmaking.

It, however, remains unclear just how wedded Russia is to the idea of a durable resolution of the conflict. As discussed in chapter 2, the conflict operated as a means of applying pressure on Azerbaijan to comply with the broader Russian strategic agenda in the region. In this respect, ending the conflict would reduce Russian leverage. In the case of the United States, the domestic political weight of the Armenian diaspora limited the U.S. government's flexibility in pursuing a political settlement. U.S. officials freely conceded that massive assistance to Armenia has delivered nothing in the way of influence on that government's approach to conflict resolution. In the meantime, as discussed further below, conditionality on U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan limited its influence there.

### **The Role of the OSCE**

The OSCE has taken the lead as a mediator of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict since 1992, in part on the basis of an agreement with the UN on a division of labor in the Transcaucasian region. Although deserving high marks for persistence, the organization faced a number of obstacles. As with most international organizations, its effectiveness depended on the

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degree to which its members shared perspectives on the issues in question and their willingness to translate shared preferences into concerted multilateral action.

As noted, at least two principal members—Russia and the United States—disagreed on Nagorno-Karabakh and other regional issues. Russia was pursuing a unilateral agenda of reconsolidation of influence in the region. Its policies toward regional conflict and conflict resolution, including those relevant to activity by multilateral organizations, were strongly affected. Conversely, the United States saw regional organizations such as the OSCE as useful instruments, given its interest in strengthening the independence of the region's states from Russian influence.

Such differences in perspective led to prolonged debate about the nature of peacekeeping in Nagorno-Karabakh. Russia's preference at various times in the evolution of the conflict has been for a CIS peacekeeping force similar to that in Georgia. This perspective had not disappeared entirely, as evidenced in the May 1996 analysis of the influential Moscow-based Council on Foreign and Defence Policy. That analysis argued that "it is definitely not in Russia's interest to see outside mediation and peacekeeping operations on the territory of the former Soviet Union."<sup>5</sup> Yet the other members of the OSCE (notably the United States and Turkey) were unwilling to abandon the belligerents to an exclusively Russian effort.

Such tensions translated into disagreement on the structure and composition of the proposed peacekeeping force. Options for deployment ranged from a 765- to a 4,400-person force; mandates ranged from simple observation of the cease-fire through interposition.<sup>6</sup> The Russian side pressed for a force that would be at least 50 percent Russian and under Russian command. Western members took the position that no more than one-third of the force should be Russian, with a further 17 percent perhaps drawn from other CIS states. They also rejected the notion of Russian command, citing established UN practice that the largest contingent not provide the force commander. Interviewed for this study, a senior diplomat from a neutral member of the OSCE summarized the Western position quite simply:

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The West would not accept a Russian-dominated force...No one wants the OSCE to act essentially as a cover for a Russian peacekeeping operation. There would be a Western European commander and some western troops. Russia had no choice on the issue of command. It would get the number two slot.

Force composition was also contentious. Armenia was unwilling to accept Turkish participation, while Azerbaijan and Turkey insisted on it. Azerbaijan was also reluctant to contemplate Russian contingents on its soil. The "33 percent Russia plus 17 percent CIS" formula seemed ultimately to have been accepted grudgingly by Azerbaijan.

Underlying these issues was the sensitive question of whether an adequate level of non-CIS forces would be available once deployment proceeded. The fact that OSCE personnel were unwilling to discuss potential western contributions may have reflected not merely diplomatic discretion but also the difficulty of lining up participants. One member of the planning group noted that when the OSCE circulated the peacekeeping concept paper to member states, only 14 responded with comments. The lack of response, he believed, probably reflected "the unwillingness of member states to express interest in the project because they might be expected to assume a more active role down the road."

There was also tension regarding the mandate. The HLPG focused on a highly traditional mission, with those involved citing the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) experience in the former Yugoslavia as an example the dangers of going further. In the event of violation of the proposed buffer zone, the force would attempt to block the movement of troops but would not resist it. The planning group itself recognized the unhappiness of the parties with this envisaged mandate. In particular, Nagorno-Karabakh would see this as trading the occupied territories and the protection they offered for renewed insecurity, particularly given the OSCE's lack of a track record in effective peacekeeping.

Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenian officials both made clear their preference for a Dayton-type peace agreement



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mandate with the requisite heavy military capability, but they expressed uncertainty about the OSCE capacity to do an adequate job. As one Nagorno-Karabakh official stressed: “We don’t want to serve as the OSCE’s guinea pigs.” Another summarized more baldly and passionately Nagorno-Karabakh’s unhappiness with the entire OSCE process:

The false slogan of peacekeeping is a facade for the re-imposition of Azeri power. We had this for 75 years. Everybody knows the result. It is unreal to attempt to impose this status again. We will never be an enclave again. We will never live again as part of Azerbaijan. This does not exclude agreed relations on a horizontal basis without domination or subordination. The attempt of mediators to rule out all these arguments is done to freeze the conflict in the long term, so that Nagorno-Karabakh will be the apple of regional discord. This approach is unacceptable. It is insulting to treat a patient without a diagnosis and then to give him the wrong medication.

From the perspective of this study, the humanitarian aspect of the mandate is particularly important. The planning document cites as the last of 16 responsibilities, “the facilitation of humanitarian assistance, if so tasked.” There is no reference in the mission task statement to a protection function vis-a-vis civilian populations. Some member state urged planners to “expand the peacekeeping force to include humanitarian assistance and assistance to refugees.” In response, the HLPG confirmed that “current force strength and dispositions are based on the draft mandate which does not include such humanitarian tasks as part of the mission,” and suggested that UN agencies “already well represented in the area” and NGOs take primary responsibility.

The humanitarian dimension thus received too little attention in OSCE planning. This seemed a major oversight, given the likely large-scale return of IDPs into destroyed settlements; the consequent need for massive and rapid

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reconstruction and for maintenance of these populations while reconstruction proceeds; the deterioration of much of the region's infrastructure; the ruggedness of the terrain; and the probably unsettled quality of inter-communal relations in the initial period after a return. Although UN agencies and NGOs indeed would be the major humanitarian actors, experience in settings such as Georgia underscored the need for a clear understanding from the outset of the complementarity of peacekeeping and humanitarian tasks.<sup>7</sup>

Cost estimates for an Nagorno-Karabakh peacekeeping operation ranged between \$75 and \$156 million for an initial six-month period. Wealthier states in the OSCE favored a high threshold for member contributions because any costs not covered by the agreed threshold would have to be paid by those able to carry them. Not surprisingly, the less wealthy sought a low threshold. When this report was written, resolution of most of these financial and other contentious issues had been deferred pending agreement among the parties that would clear the path for deployment. On command issues, for example, one HLPG member noted that the chain of command from Vienna to the head of mission in the region to the force commander had been specified but that the command structure within the force had not been defined. In fact, the HLPG was prohibited from discussing the issue.

The lead time of 120 days between agreement on deployment and full fielding of the force was unrealistic, given the number, complexity, and contentiousness of the unresolved questions surrounding the peacekeeping force, many of which were assumed to be resolved prior to the decision to deploy. This was particularly the case since the OSCE's attention had shifted to Bosnia-Herzegovina, raising doubts about its capacity to proceed in a timely and efficient way on Nagorno-Karabakh. When interviews were conducted in Vienna in January 1996, approximately one-half the HLPG had been shifted from the Karabakh project to plan for OSCE activities related to implementation of the Dayton Accord. One senior OSCE diplomat expressed the hope that an agreement on Nagorno-Karabakh would not emerge during the Dayton process:

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The timing of such an agreement would be problematic for the OSCE.... The Bosnian issue is currently taking 150 percent of our attention. The OSCE doesn't have the resources to handle one of these crises, let alone both.

The lack of institutional linkages between the OSCE and the CIS raised further questions about the timeliness of the OSCE response, once the way was cleared for deployment. Timely deployment would be particularly problematic if, as many believed, it would be a joint OSCE/CIS initiative. There are no institutional connections between the HLPG and the CIS on the military side. OSCE political and administrative linkages with the CIS structure are rudimentary, reflecting doubts about the genuineness of the CIS's multilateral character and reluctance to legitimize what many perceived to be an instrument of Russian regional hegemony. Although this gap was filled to a certain extent by direct contacts with Russia, fears remained that a formal structure of OSCE/CIS cooperation on Nagorno-Karabakh peacekeeping would be merely a fig leaf for cooperation with Russia.

OSCE effectiveness was also hampered by organizational anomalies. Three units of the organization had various responsibilities for Nagorno-Karabakh: the HLPG on the military side; the secretariat and chairman in office (CIO) and the chairman's personal representative on political issues; and the Minsk Group on mediation. Communication and coordination among these units appeared to be poor. For example, the personal representative of the CIO for Nagorno-Karabakh was not regularly briefed on the activities in the Minsk Group. As a result, he occasionally learned about new proposals in the OSCE negotiating process from the parties themselves, who were better informed on the proceedings. The personal representative was not invited regularly to Minsk Group sessions. The Minsk Group only irregularly shared documentation with the OSCE secretariat in Vienna. Because the CIOs took their files home with them at the end of each one-year term, there was little continuity in documentation at the highest

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level of the organization. All told, such shortcomings provided ample reason to question the OSCE's capacity to do an effective job of peacekeeping in Nagorno-Karabakh should the opportunity for deployment be presented.

Given this litany of difficulties, widespread disillusionment among the parties was to be expected. One Azerbaijani diplomat declared:

No constructive proposals have ever emerged from the Minsk process, nor is a breakthrough likely. The OSCE provides employment for diplomats, not serious work on the issues....The easiest thing for the OSCE to agree on is postponement of decisions pending new meetings preferably held in pleasant places at a nice time of year.

In light of such problems, some have suggested that the United Nations might assume a more active role in mediation. It seems unlikely, however, that this would be greeted with enthusiasm, particularly in Nagorno-Karabakh. As one Nagorno-Karabakh official explained: "The UN was silent when we were being suppressed. It was only when we started to win that UN resolutions began to appear. They denounced **us** as aggressors!" Azerbaijani representatives also have expressed reservations about a UN role, reflecting Russia's veto power in the Security Council and their distrust of the regional hegemony.

The lack of progress on a political settlement had important humanitarian implications. First, an economic recovery sufficient to render unnecessary the current short-term humanitarian assistance was unlikely to occur without a settlement of the conflict. Second, clear evidence of donor fatigue and impatience with the absence of a political settlement posed a threat to sustaining aid levels. The danger associated with the indefinite continuation of suspended conflict was that levels of external assistance to meet humanitarian need would diminish, but local recovery would not fill the gap. In addition, as one U.S. official warned, the "refugees" in Azerbaijan were a time bomb that needed to be taken much more seriously.

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## The Humanitarian Connection

If the absence of progress on conflict resolution deprived humanitarian action of potential synergies, humanitarian activities made a disappointing contribution to the general climate in which efforts at mediation proceeded. Both, positive and negative, interactions between humanitarian activities and conflict resolution have received ongoing attention in reviews by the Humanitarianism and War Project of other armed conflicts.<sup>8</sup>

On the positive side, humanitarian action contributed significantly to the stabilization of the situation in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. A number of humanitarian organizations inserted a confidence-building element into their programming. The ICRC removed a significant irritant in relations among the three jurisdictions by identifying, visiting, and arranging an exchange of POWs and hostages. It thus helped promote international norms of war and the treatment of POWs in these communities, enhancing trust on all sides.<sup>9</sup>

The regional offices of OXFAM brought their local staffs together for joint meetings to build bridges between local employees from states in conflict. Using AID resources, the ARC mounted parallel assistance programs in northeastern Armenia and northwestern Azerbaijan to deal with the consequences of conflict-related interruptions in cross-border pastoralism and trade. Given the overall volume of aid, however, it is striking that so little was devoted to activities directed toward confidence building and conflict resolution.

On a more ominous note, the structure of humanitarian action in the region has had numerous negative implications. The dearth of international assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh had two principal effects. First, it sustained the isolation of Karabakh and limited its exposure to international norms. The situation was probably distorted further by the fact that the bulk of external activity in Nagorno-Karabakh was from the Armenian diaspora, which in many respects shared and reinforced Karabakh perspectives on the conflict. A number of international personnel active in Nagorno-Karabakh expressed concern in mid-1996 that the impending withdrawal of two of the few NGOs active in Nagorno-Karabakh, MSF-France, and

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Halo Trust, would further intensify the region's isolation and the authorities' uncompromising attitude.

Second, the comparative neglect of Nagorno-Karabakh in the humanitarian sphere diminished the credibility of international actors in the process of conflict resolution. Had the international community mounted equitable and serious assistance activities within Nagorno-Karabakh, these might have encouraged somewhat greater flexibility by the authorities on political issues. Ultimately, the dearth of external assistance forced the Nagorno-Karabakh leadership to rely on themselves. As a senior Karabakh official stated with bitter defiance noting the refusal of the EU and Save the Children to mount programs in Nagorno-Karabakh and the insignificant amounts of international assistance available there, "the child has been born, whether or not the parents recognize it." The fact that Nagorno-Karabakh overcame the humanitarian emergency with minimal international multilateral or bilateral assistance enhanced its self-confidence, and, correspondingly, reduced its propensity to compromise.

In Armenia, the wealth of external assistance appears, paradoxically, to have had similar effects on the government's approach to conflict resolution. One U.S. aid official commented that disproportionate and politicized U.S. assistance to Armenia "plays into the resistance of Armenia to compromise and into the sense of isolation of Azerbaijan." For their part, UN officials in Yerevan concurred that "the imbalance of assistance from the U.S. has steeled the intransigence of the Armenians." Many believed that ample external assistance underwrote the Armenian military effort by permitting the diversion of Armenian government funds to the military and thus benefited the Karabakhi military and civilian sectors.

Such connections were acknowledged by an Armenian NGO official who maintained that despite existing restrictions on AID, IMF, and other funds against underwriting military activities, they indirectly supported Armenia's politico-military priorities. "When Nagorno-Karabakh is encircled and starving," he noted, "there is no clear-cut delineation between purely humanitarian assistance and indirect military aid."

A U.S. official went even further, asserting that the level of aid from Washington too closely approximated that of

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Armenian military expenditure to be coincidental. He suspected that the former underwrote the latter, not just through fungibility but through direct transfer. In any event, it seemed evident that the volume of external assistance to Armenia diminished the strain on the Armenian budget emanating from the continuation of the “no war-no peace” situation and reducing the Armenian potential willingness to pursue a viable compromise. Moreover, the fact that the assistance policies of the largest aid contributor reflected the activities of an American-Armenian community deeply sympathetic to the Armenian and Karabakh position reduced U.S. government influence over Armenian policy toward the conflict.

Finally, in the case of Azerbaijan, whatever influence humanitarian assistance might have provided the United States in conflict resolution was diminished by the nature and thrust of its assistance policy. As a senior Azerbaijani official declared, “Section 907 is self-evidently hypocritical and a considerable injustice to Azerbaijan.” He went on to discount the point that U.S. hands were tied by domestic political considerations. “It’s all very well to blame Congress, but 907 is U.S. [government] policy.” This handicap was recognized by U.S. officials involved in efforts to mediate a settlement of the Karabakh conflict. Noting that “every Azeri over the age of two and a half months” had heard of Section 907, one official commented that it was this conditionality on U.S. aid, rather than its disproportionality, that made his diplomatic task difficult. Another U.S. diplomat expressed a degree of sympathy for Azerbaijani impatience with the U.S. position by making the observation that:

We try to preach human rights and discourage governments from following ethnic policies. Then an ethnic lobby imposes something like this that isn’t in U.S. national interest. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs [in Baku] beats us over the head with this every time we see them.

The fact that Armenia received a disproportionate share of multilateral assistance had a similar effect on Azerbaijani

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perceptions of the credibility and impartiality of international organizations, as noted in chapter 4. The same Azerbaijani official quoted above noted that there was “no difference between the OSCE and the UN because both were composed of states who pursued their own interests and neither organization was faithful to its principles.”

Whether a more principled approach to humanitarian assistance—that is, greater fidelity to impartiality and proportionality—might have moved the conflict resolution process forward is not certain. Yet, it seems likely that the prevailing imbalance undercut the potential of humanitarian assistance to build confidence between the parties. Observations regarding the effects of asymmetries in humanitarian action on conflict resolution are not intended as an endorsement of the use of aid resources as bargaining chips in negotiations. Whether or not a different mix of assistance would have produced a successful compromise, moral suasion by outsiders might well have been enhanced by more balanced policies. The biases evident in U.S. assistance to Armenia and Azerbaijan and in the international community’s approach to humanitarian need in Nagorno-Karabakh diminished their capacity to assist the parties toward a political settlement.

In the event of a negotiated settlement and return of the Azerbaijani IDPs into the occupied territories, humanitarian action will have an opportunity to play a significant role in stabilizing the settlement and in building confidence between the Armenian and Azeri populations. The absence of systematic and coordinated planning for the return is therefore disturbing. So, too, is the absence of regular and structured interactions between the OSCE and the humanitarian community on coordinating the activities of peacekeeping personnel and humanitarian actors.



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## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has analyzed humanitarian action during the Karabakh conflict. Humanitarian action has been understood broadly to include those activities designed to meet immediate needs for protection and survival and to engender economic recovery among conflict-affected groups. Humanitarian action is grounded in the right, protected by international humanitarian law, of persons in need to have access to succor and of impartial aid organizations to provide such assistance.

Although humanitarian action is by definition devoid of political agendas, politics often intrude. The allocation of assistance between various groups is frequently influenced by the political agendas of states or groups within states. The state-centric focus of international organizations may also distort responses solely on the basis of need. Such was particularly true in the Nagorno-Karabakh case, where political agendas figured prominently in the conflict itself and in the shape and effectiveness of the international response to it.

This chapter draws a number of conclusions in the political and humanitarian spheres. It also offers recommendations related to humanitarian action, peacekeeping, and conflict resolution.

#### **The Political Context**

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is now in its eighth year with no sign of a durable resolution of the issues dividing Karabakh Armenians from their Azeri conationals. The cease-fire that has held since 1994 has not been accompanied by discernible progress toward a settlement of key issues dividing the sides. Although the bulk of the refugees from the two countries are being integrated into their host countries and are making a slow transition from humanitarian assistance to income generation, this transition has been complicated by the economic situation facing both countries. Yet in the absence of progress on the political front, there is no prospect for the normalization of the situation of the roughly 600,000 IDPs in Azerbaijan.

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The lack of settlement in turn has complicated the process of economic transition and political reform in both Azerbaijan and Armenia and has slowed the development of the region's energy resources that are ostensibly the gateway to regionwide prosperity and reconstruction. The economic implications of the situation of "no war-no peace" have important humanitarian consequences for both countries because the conditions of the displaced are in many respects no worse than the lingering (and, in the Azerbaijani case, deepening) misery of the populations as a whole.

The stasis in the political negotiations reflects the intrinsic difficulty of reconciling the principle of territorial integrity with that of the self-determination of minorities. The impasse reveals the deep distrust between the two sides and the subsequent intransigence in the negotiation of key points, such as control over the Lachin Corridor and the city of Shusha, and the broader issue of status for the Nagorno-Karabakh region within Azerbaijan. The volatile domestic politics of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the symbolic significance of the Karabakh conflict in internal debates within each country, have reduced maneuverability even further.

Ironically, external state actors have done little to move the parties toward an equitable settlement, and this despite (or perhaps in part because of) the great strategic importance of the region as a potential source of and conduit for energy products. U.S. diplomacy is constrained by the influence of the domestic Armenian interest groups; U.S. credibility as an impartial mediator also has been called into question by the pro-Armenian thrust of its assistance policies.

For Russia, the conflict is related closely to the broader question of its troubled relations with the Republic of Azerbaijan and its desire to restore wide influence over that country and the Transcaucasian region. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has become a means of applying pressure on Azerbaijan to acquiesce in Russian policy preferences on the basing of Russian forces in the region; on joint control of the external borders of the former Soviet Union and the defensive systems placed along those borders; on the ownership of Caspian Basin energy reserves; and on control over the shipment of the region's energy products to market. This array of

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perceived national interests has prevented Russia from acting as an honest broker in a political settlement. Both U.S. and Russian efforts at mediation have been complicated seriously, moreover, by the cycles of domestic politics. The coincidence of Russian, U.S., and Armenian elections in 1996 delayed action on the resolution of the conflict.

The other major contiguous states, Iran and Turkey, also have done little to contribute to normalization. For both, the conflict has important domestic political consequences. Iran's concerns over the spread of Azeri nationalism have favored rapprochement with Armenia and, according to some, with Karabakh itself. Turkey's support for Azerbaijan reflects deep historical antipathy between Turkey and Armenia, widespread public and elite support for Azerbaijan, and discomfort with Russian assertion along its northeastern border.

Under these circumstances, and despite the initial enthusiasm that the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict would mark the OSCE's transition into an effective regional security organization, it is hardly surprising that the mediating effort of the OSCE has produced little thus far. The OSCE's capacity to act is in large part dependent on key member states. For reasons already mentioned, this will has been absent. Moreover, Russian enthusiasm for the OSCE's role in the region is tempered by a concern that an effective multilateral presence there may complicate its own foreign policy agenda in the Transcaucasus.

In addition to these political complications undermining the role of the organization with respect to Nagorno-Karabakh, the OSCE has faced numerous other problems. These include the lack of enthusiasm of western member states to contribute to the planned peacekeeping force, the limited organizational resources of the OSCE to handle an operation of these dimensions, and the anomalous and dysfunctional structure of the organization's involvement in the conflict.

### **The Humanitarian Response**

The result of these geopolitical and institutional factors is the continuation of deep privation among many people, particularly in Azerbaijan. Intergovernmental, national, and

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nongovernmental organizations became heavily involved in the conflict in 1993–1994 as part of an international response to a mutually reinforcing set of war-related humanitarian crises in the Transcaucasus.

As in Georgia, this combination of actors did a commendable job in averting humanitarian catastrophe, with the exception discussed below. Large numbers of refugees and displaced persons were temporarily housed and given access to reliable sources of food in an expeditious manner; the real threat of epidemic among the population of forced migrants was averted. Necessary support to the populations of both countries as they contended with the combined effects of war and economic collapse was provided. This was achieved in conditions in which local governmental structures were often inadequate for the performance of basic administrative functions, let alone for the coordination of large amounts of humanitarian assistance provided by a wide array of foreign actors. Rapid progress was made in Armenia to strengthen government capacities in the humanitarian field. The record of capacity building in Azerbaijan is less impressive.

The most obvious failure of the international humanitarian community was in Nagorno-Karabakh. The humanitarian emergency there peaked in 1991–1992, when the region was under severe attack by Azerbaijani forces and cut off from Armenian supply sources. The survival of the population rested on a fragile lifeline provided by helicopters flying in and out of Nagorno-Karabakh, often under anti-aircraft fire. A substantial portion of the ethnic Armenian population fled to Armenia, and the Azeri population of the republic was “cleansed.”

During this period, no serious intergovernmental assessment of the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh was conducted, and no substantial or proportionate assistance provided. External assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh was given only by Armenian and Armenian diaspora sources, a small number of NGOs, and the ICRC. Although this reflected difficulties associated with humanitarian action in conditions of active hostilities, the fact that the stabilization of the military situation was not followed by an influx of aid confirms the politicization of humanitarian assistance. The fundamental problem involved

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the generic difficulty experienced by governments and inter-governmental agencies in coping with humanitarian emergencies in insurgent regions.

The relative neglect of Nagorno-Karabakh was not the only politically induced distortion of humanitarian action: assistance delivered to Armenia and Azerbaijan was seriously asymmetrical, as indicated in chapter 3, reflecting in large part politically inspired limitations on U.S. humanitarian action in Azerbaijan. Section 907 represented a “politics tax” on U.S. government-funded activities in Azerbaijan, although the new 1996 AID guidelines may provide a degree of belated tax relief. The refusal of many donors to allow purchase of materials in Iran for Nakhichevan rather than working through middlemen in Azerbaijan illustrates the intrusion of politics as well.

The stated rationale for the U.S. legislation—aid should be used as leverage to induce removal of the Azerbaijani blockade on Armenia—had a certain logic, but in practice the limitation on assistance failed to produce the desired result. More important, although its proponents maintained that Section 907 was not intended to interfere with humanitarian action, it did so in practice. Constraints on such action resulting from political considerations violate the tenet that humanitarian aid should be provided solely in accordance with need. The restrictions on U.S. bilateral assistance also retarded the effort to enhance the Azerbaijani government’s capacity to coordinate and utilize assistance. In other words, the effectiveness, as well of the scale of aid, was undercut.

For their part, aid providers displayed a number of weaknesses that often characterize humanitarian action in such settings. The performance of many agencies in the field was greatly influenced by the personalities of those involved. Personnel tended to develop sympathies with the policy and political positions of host governments, becoming defenders of their views on occasions when challenging the authorities, from a humanitarian standpoint, would have been more appropriate. UN agencies were affected more strongly by the personalistic factor than was the ICRC, suggesting a certain weakness in the institutional culture of the world body. Some NGOs, too, particularly those expressing the concerns of

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the diaspora, blurred necessary distinctions between independent humanitarian actors and political agendas.

The data demonstrates the extent to which political considerations distorted humanitarian activities and complicated the efforts of aid groups. The international response to the Karabakh conflict confirms the essentially derivative status of humanitarian action: humanitarianism is rarely undertaken as a good in itself. Although humanitarian principles require proportionality and an absence of extraneous agendas in response to human need, "real world" realities inject into the contours and conduct of humanitarian activities certain political objectives and obstacles. What is needed, accordingly, is not to lament the compromises that emerge but rather to find ways to protect the humanitarian impulse and resulting activities from politicization.

Aid organizations cannot expect international, regional, or local political institutions to be motivated exclusively by unalloyed concerns for civilian populations. However, such organizations can and should strive to establish and maintain parameters within which to do their work with integrity. The implications for the source of the funds they accept, the constraints within which they are prepared to function, and the coordination among them are addressed in the recommendations which follow.

### **Humanitarian Action and Conflict Resolution**

The obvious and great political obstacles to a resolution of the dispute over Karabakh raise the issue of whether humanitarian action has served, or might serve, as a confidence-building measure through enhancing trust between communities, regenerating ties of interdependence among them, and fostering a sense of security conducive to compromise. Here, regrettably, the record is on the whole negative, despite important efforts on the part of a small number of aid providers. There is strong reason to believe that the lack of assistance to Karabakh itself reduced the international community's credibility and influence there, while Nagorno-Karabakh's perceived self-reliance in dealing with military and humanitarian tasks enhanced its intransigence.

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Moreover, the generosity of humanitarian assistance in Armenia and the perceived influence of the Armenian diaspora over the assistance policies of key actors has arguably diminished Armenia's own willingness to seek a resolution of the Karabakh issue. More serious, perhaps, the amount of assistance received by Armenia has probably allowed the authorities to sustain a defense effort and program of military assistance to Karabakh far beyond what otherwise would have been possible.

Finally, the discrimination evident in U.S. policy against Azerbaijan in the delivery of assistance and the overall discrepancy between levels of need and of assistance to Armenia and Azerbaijan, worked to discredit the U.S. as an impartial mediator. It has also diminished the credibility of the international community's role in mediation of the conflict. There are indications that humanitarian action has acted not as a confidence-building measure but as the reverse. At the very least, little evidence suggests that humanitarian action has reached the potential in this sphere realized in some other conflicts reviewed by the Humanitarianism and War Project.

## **Recommendations**

### *Humanitarian Action*

1. Because impartial needs assessment by qualified international personnel represents the basis for responsive and effective humanitarian programs, steps should be taken in situations such as Nagorno-Karabakh to establish and protect the capacity of the United Nations and its organizations to conduct such assessments. In addition, the capacity of the UN system to provide assistance and protection in conflict settings should be strengthened. In situations in which assessment and programming functions cannot be carried out by the United Nations, other organizations such as the ICRC, NGOs, and the OSCE should be encouraged to play an expanded role. Otherwise, civilians already suffering from a conflict are further disadvantaged by the politicization of humanitarian action.

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2. Informed by the Nagorno-Karabakh experience and others like it, policymakers and other stakeholders need to be clearer about the demonstrated trade-offs associated with the politicization of humanitarian action and should work to safeguard the integrity of such action. Political constraints on assistance, to one degree or another a feature of much of the aid provided to those affected by this conflict, is likely to reduce the effectiveness and efficiency with which humanitarian needs are met. Politically-based discrimination against particular categories of recipient is not only a violation of humanitarian principles, it may also complicate efforts at mediation and reduce the confidence of the parties in the settlement process.

Given evidence that in the case of U.S. assistance, some political constraints may have arisen as a result of failures of communication between the Congress and the Executive Branch and between various Executive Branch agencies, more effective coordination within the U.S. government is needed.

3. One major casualty of the intrusion of politics into the humanitarian sphere in the Nagorno-Karabakh setting has been the planning for resettlement and reconstruction in the occupied territories; therefore, that task should be tackled immediately. Although the planning of humanitarian activities may have political implications, the consequences of being unprepared for a large-scale movement of people may itself contribute to a new humanitarian catastrophe.
4. Because mounting and operating humanitarian programs requires highly professional managers who successfully maintain their independence from the political viewpoints of the host authorities and who carry out clear and consistent institutional mandates, steps should be taken by organizations functioning in highly politicized settings to ensure greater institutional consistency in policy, culture, training, and staff performance. Such measures as the regular rotation of personnel within and across the region and the closer coordination of programs on a nationwide



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basis to enhance proportionality and transparency should be explored urgently. An individual organization that chooses to work within only one political jurisdiction is not therefore relieved of its responsibility to frame its activities within the context of regionwide issues of proportionality and impartiality.

5. Because the challenge of humanitarian action in the Karabakh context was closely related to the broader problems of economic collapse and transition to a market economy, international responsibility to assist such transitions should be clarified, particularly in view of the tightening of aid budgets and competing demands for assistance from traditional recipients in the developing countries. The WFP approach of raising extrabudgetary resources for activities in Central and Eastern Europe so not to undercut its primary focus on needs in developing countries seems worthy of consideration by other organizations.

#### *Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping*

1. It is clear from other conflicts, if not from the case of Karabakh, that humanitarian action can make a discernible contribution to the normalization of relations among communities in conflict, building confidence upon which durable political solutions may be based. Although such bridging activities are undoubtedly difficult in the case of “ethnically cleansed” populations, alternative modes of confidence building, such as regionwide approaches to problems and staffing and personnel initiatives within agencies operating on both sides of a conflict, should be explored. More regular and extensive communication between humanitarian and diplomatic actors, although stopping short of formal operational coordination, would help to capitalize on potential synergisms.
2. The timeline between a decision by the OSCE to deploy peacekeeping forces and their actual deployment is for the moment unrealistically short, given the numerous

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unresolved issues facing planners of the force. More sustained efforts should be made to work out command procedures, force composition, financial arrangements, and details of the mandate prior to the achievement of a partial or complete agreement allowing deployment.

3. More consideration should be given to humanitarian aspects of the force mandate, notably protection of and assistance to returnees and aid providers and to specific postconflict challenges such as demining. A systematic effort should be made to consult with humanitarian actors in the finalization of the OSCE mandate.

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## ENDNOTES

### Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>By using the term Nagorno-Karabakh, we take no position on issues related to the political status of the region. The Nagorno-Karabakh government has declared its independence, a claim recognized by no state, including the Republic of Armenia, and by no international organization. From the perspective of the community of states, Nagorno-Karabakh remains part of Azerbaijan. When referring to Nagorno-Karabakh, we use such terms as “territory” or “region” in order to avoid terminological bias.

<sup>2</sup>As with most cases, there is disagreement about the number of persons displaced by the conflict; data is manipulated to secure higher levels of assistance and sympathy. In this instance, the Azerbaijani government has inflated the numbers of IDPs and refugees, often speaking of a million affected people in Azerbaijan. These estimates are hotly contested in Armenia. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Baku has noted that as data collection on IDPs has grown more precise, the numbers have tended to shrink. We have used recent April 1996 UNHCR data on the displaced, which place the total at 607,716. See UNHCR-Azerbaijan, “Summary of Refugee/IDP Statistic Information (Status as of April 1, 1996).

<sup>3</sup>S. Neil MacFarlane, Larry Minear, and Stephen D. Shenfield, *Armed Conflict in Georgia: A Case Study in Humanitarian Action and Peacekeeping*, Occasional Paper #21 (Providence, R.I.: Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies, 1995).

<sup>4</sup>For a more extended discussion, see Larry Minear and Thomas G. Weiss, *Humanitarian Action in Times of War: A Handbook for Practitioners* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993): 7–41. The handbook is also available in French and English.

### Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup>“Azerbaijan: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh” (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994): xiv.

<sup>2</sup>The last census in these jurisdictions was conducted in 1989. Demography is so politicized in the region that any result of a further official enumeration would be questionable. The titular population column shows the percentage of the ethnic group for which the jurisdiction was established (Azeris in Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan, Armenians in Armenia and Karabakh).

<sup>3</sup>For further background, see UNDP, “Azerbaijan Human Development Report 1995” (Baku: UNDP, 1995): 1–13.

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<sup>4</sup>"Armenia Human Development Report 1995" (Yerevan: UNDP, 1995): 16–25.

<sup>5</sup>For succinct, and completely incompatible, pro-Armenian and pro-Azerbaijani accounts of the roots and evolution of the conflict, see Christopher Walker, "The Armenian Presence in Mountainous Karabakh," and Sulejman Alijarly, "The Republic of Azerbaijan: Notes on the State Borders in the Past and Present," both in John F. R. Wright, *et. al.*, *Transcaucasian Boundaries* (London: UCL Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup>Suzanne Goldenberg, *Pride of Small Nations: The Caucasus and Post-Soviet Disorder* (London: Zed Books, 1994): 160.

<sup>7</sup>The Azerbaijan Popular Front disclaims responsibility for these attacks, asserting that the attacks were the work of hooligans and provocateurs.

<sup>8</sup>"Azerbaijan: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh" (New York: Helsinki Watch, 1994): 4.

<sup>9</sup>See Human Rights Watch, 5. Officials of the Nagorno-Karabakh government acknowledged the substantial loss of civilian life in this operation.

<sup>10</sup>A number of the personnel in the 366th had been in Stepanakert since 1988 and had developed close ties to the local population. The fact that their barracks had been bombarded by Azerbaijani artillery may also have embittered them against those besieging the city.

<sup>11</sup>The offensive was enabled by military assets handed over by the former Soviet Union following an agreement reached at a meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Tashkent in May 1992.

<sup>12</sup>Human Rights Watch, 18–25.

<sup>13</sup>For a recent and influential account of Russian concerns in the former Soviet area, see "Vozrodit'sya li Soyuz? Budushchee Postsovetskogo Prostranstva: Tezisy Soveta po Vneshnei i Oboronnoi Politike," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (May 23, 1996).

<sup>14</sup>For a discussion of the interregional relations within the Transcaucasus, see S. Neil MacFarlane, "The Structure of Instability in the Transcaucasus," *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* 4 (1995): 380–393.

<sup>15</sup>Interviewed in Ottawa and New York, Armenian officials reported that the current value of trade with Iran exceeds that with Russia. The same is true for Azerbaijani trade with Turkey and Iran.

<sup>16</sup>The Armenians, however, probably did not need a great deal of convincing because they perceived Russia to be their sole guarantor of security in the face of Turkish and Azerbaijani hostility.

<sup>17</sup>Human Rights Watch, 67, and 67–73.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>20</sup>Dmitri Furman, "The Dynamic of the Karabakh Conflict," in Hans-Georg Ehrhart, *et. al.*, eds., *Crisis Management in the CIS: Whither*

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Russia? (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995): 42.

<sup>21</sup>The complexities of this dual-track negotiating process are well covered in Elizabeth Fuller, "The Karabakh Mediation Process: Grachev versus the CSCE?," *RFE/RL Research Report* III, 23 (June 10, 1994): 13–17.

<sup>22</sup>Piotr Switalski, "CSCE and Conflicts in the CIS Area," in Ehrhart, *et. al.*, 169.

### Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup>Armenians and persons of Armenian descent live in some 60 countries, with one million in the United States, Russia, and large communities in Iran and Georgia as well as in Canada, Argentina, France, Lebanon, and Syria. See UNDP, *Armenia: Human Development Report*, 34. UN data reduce the current population in Armenia from 3.7 million to 3.2 million due to migration. Consolidated Appeal, iii.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations, *Consolidated Appeal for the Caucasus*, vol. I, June 1996–May 1997 (New York: United Nations, May 1996): 5, Armenia section. The flow of refugees is covered in detail in the previous chapter of the present study.

<sup>3</sup>Consolidated Appeal, Armenia section, 5. As noted in chapter 2, however, this performance provided little comfort, given the depth of the prior economic decline.

<sup>4</sup>Hrant Bagratian, "Foreword," *UNDP Human Development Report 1996*.

<sup>5</sup>The Georgia case study noted that the conflicts "take place on terrain unfamiliar to international humanitarian and politico-military actors. Most UN organizations and NGOs as recently as the early 1990s lacked much prior experience in the former Soviet Union. The populations and societies of the 15 new former Soviet republics are different in many important respects from those with which the UN and humanitarian organizations typically have interacted in the past." MacFarlane, Minear, and Shenfield, 3.

<sup>6</sup>*UNDP Human Development Report*, iii.

<sup>7</sup>The so-called Paros vulnerability assessment system developed by Agency for International Development (AID) in 1994 helped to establish relative vulnerability. As of 1996, some 700,000 of the 850,000 assessed Armenian households were registered, providing data that was expected to form the basis for allocating various kinds of international assistance. Although the desirability of such a system was beyond doubt, agencies were divided about its reliability. As one UN official said, the assessment process and its inquiries of individual families represented an invitation to beg. "Paros" means beacon in Armenian. See Consolidated Appeal, Armenia section, 8–9.

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<sup>8</sup>A survey carried out in July 1995 identified 9 UN and other intergovernmental organizations, 5 bilateral government agencies, 46 NGOs, and the ICRC. See Save the Children's Armenia Field Office, "NGO Humanitarian and Development Activities in Armenia," July 1995.

<sup>9</sup>"This legislative victory represents everything the Assembly has advocated for over the past year and a half." Armenian Assembly of America, "President Signs Foreign Aid Bill," press release dated January 26, 1996, 1. The corridor legislation was framed in global terms and did not mention Turkey by name. Turkey, meanwhile, has justified its blockade of Armenia partly in terms of restrictions on U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan. The Transcaucasus Fund authorized funds to be extended throughout the region.

<sup>10</sup>The proliferation of indigenous organizations seems to have been spurred less by the conflict than by opportunities in the burgeoning private sector. Of the almost 300 entries in a 1996 directory of Armenian NGOs, only a few such organizations were in existence before 1990; many were founded from 1990–1993, and scores more were begun during 1994–1995.

<sup>11</sup>UN Consolidated Appeal, vol. II, Armenia section, 4.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>13</sup>This sentiment was also evident in a number of interviews with Armenian diplomats, who argued for a prompt transition from emergency aid to development assistance.

<sup>14</sup>The refugee integration process has created a number of problems in Armenia. Efforts to resettle refugees in volatile border zones caused considerable controversy, where they were exposed to danger. In addition, aid to refugees created a degree of resentment within the host population. The displaced were perceived to have more routine access to humanitarian assistance than the local population hosting them. Finally, cultural tensions existed between natives of Armenia and returnees, many of whom do not speak Armenian and have never lived in Armenia.

<sup>15</sup>Those participating in the umbrella grant program in 1996 were the Aid to Artisans, the ARC, the Armenian Assembly of America, the Armenian Relief Society, the Fund for Democracy and Development, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), and World Vision.

<sup>16</sup>Consolidated Appeal, vol. I, Azerbaijan section, 19.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>The practice of offering hospitality to the displaced as guests in private homes also characterized the conflicts in Georgia and the former Yugoslavia with positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, host family placement in these two cases integrated the displaced more into existing community structures. On the other hand, such placement risked substantial deterioration in the hosts' economic

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position while subjecting them to the stresses of overcrowding. Moreover, distribution of the displaced population among host families made measurement of the dimensions of the IDP/refugee problem more difficult as well as complicated the monitoring of aid distribution. See MacFarlane, Minear, and Shenfield, 24; and Larry Minear, *et al.*, *Humanitarian Action in the Former Yugoslavia: The UN's Role 1991–1993*, Occasional Paper #18 (Providence, R.I.: The Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, 1994): 13.

<sup>19</sup>Consolidated Appeal, vol. II, Azerbaijan section, 169–175.

<sup>20</sup>Some corporately-funded activities funded were not, strictly speaking, humanitarian, including cultural exchange programs underwritten by BP, seismic studies by Chevron, and blood research by CONOCO.

<sup>21</sup>Betty Blair, Executive Editor, *Azerbaijan International*, interview with the authors, August 21, 1996.

<sup>22</sup>An amendment to Section 907 passed in 1996 eases the restrictions if the president determines that “humanitarian assistance provided in Azerbaijan through NGOs is not adequately addressing the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons.” However, State Department officials expressed doubts that current U.S. policy would be changed by the executive branch in a presidential election year.

<sup>23</sup>Participating in the umbrella grant in 1996 were the ARC, CARE, the Institute on American-Soviet Relations (ISAR), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Relief International, and World Vision.

<sup>24</sup>Consolidated Appeal, Azerbaijan section, 20.

<sup>25</sup>UNHCR, “UNHCR in Azerbaijan: Three Years of Helping the Displaced People in Azerbaijan and Plan of Activities in 1996” (Baku: UNHCR, February 1, 1996): 2.

<sup>26</sup>The NGOs participating in the umbrella grant program in 1996 were the ARC, CARE, IRC, ISAR (formerly the Institute on Soviet-American Relations), Relief International, and World Vision.

<sup>27</sup>As noted in the introduction, this study uses the terms “region” and “territory” to refer to the jurisdiction of Nagorno-Karabakh.

<sup>28</sup>Given the rapid depreciation of the dram, an exact dollar equivalent cannot be given. In May 1996, this was worth approximately \$18 million.

<sup>29</sup>Strictly speaking, this official was not correct. In 1992, the UN mission mentioned earlier had visited the Nagorno-Karabakh territory, entering from Azerbaijan. In addition, UNICEF had mounted vaccination activities in Nagorno-Karabakh, drawing on funds from its Baku office and staff from its Armenia program.

<sup>30</sup>Security Council Resolution 884, November 11, 1993.

<sup>31</sup>The situation parallels that of Chechnya, where the United

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Nations appealed for funds for activities conducted only in the neighboring republics but not in Chechnya proper. See Greg Hansen and Robert Seely, *War and Humanitarian Action in Chechnya*, Occasional Paper #26 (Providence, R.I.: The Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, 1996). The difficulties of the United Nations in providing assistance in situations in which sovereignty is disputed have been a recurring theme of the case studies conducted by the Humanitarianism and War Project.

<sup>32</sup>In April 1994, two representatives of the World Council of Churches, which had provided medical supplies, visited Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. Their report, calling for an end to the blockade against Armenia, urged the ecumenical community to do "all within its power to bring about peace." "People in Need: Report of the Team Visit to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh" (Geneva: World Council of Churches, April 1994): 46.

<sup>33</sup>The final 59 held in Nagorno-Karabakh, 39 in Azerbaijan, and 12 in Armenia were freed in May 1996 in conjunction with a visit to the region by Russian Foreign Minister Yevgenii Primakov.

## Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup>Confidential communication.

<sup>2</sup>For a more detailed discussion, see Peter L. Abeles, "Review of the United Nations Shelter Sector Program for Internally Displaced People in the Caucasus," the Bureau of Refugee Programs, U.S. Department of State (April 10, 1996).

<sup>3</sup>Serious work on reconstruction for settler populations is limited to those areas of the Fizuli district under Azerbaijani control, with the World Bank as the lead international agency. This effort has been hampered by bureaucratic and accountability problems associated with working through the Azerbaijani authorities.

<sup>4</sup>One of the notable exceptions to such international reluctance was the Trade Facilitation, Customs Procedures, and Freight Forwarding Project of the European Union's (TACIS) Program. In mid-1996, experts visited border crossing points in eight countries of the region, taking photographs and engaging customs officials in discussions on the clear assumption that sooner or later blockades would be lifted, borders reopened, and trade resumed.

<sup>5</sup>Some in the diaspora have also expressed concern that their privately channeled contributions may not have been utilized as intended.

<sup>6</sup>A recurring theme in recommendations by the Humanitarianism and War Project is that for the sake of impartiality, humanitarian activities in settings of civil strife should be administered from the capital of neither contending party. (See, for example, Tabyiegen



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Agnes Aboum, *et al.*, *A Critical Review of Operation Lifeline Sudan: A Report to the Aid Agencies*, (Providence, R.I.: The Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, 1990).

<sup>7</sup>A recent case study of international action in Haiti identified similar problems of professionalism among UN personnel, particularly in relating to the *de facto* authorities who had overthrown the constitutional regime. See Edwige Balutansky, *et al.*, *Haiti Held Hostage: The International Response to the Quest for Nationhood 1986–1996*, Occasional Paper #23 (Providence, R.I.: The Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, 1996): 52, 107–108.

## Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup>For a very useful discussion of these competing processes, see Elizabeth Fuller, “The Karabakh Mediation Process: Grachev Versus the CSCE,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) Research Reports* III, no. 23 (June 10, 1994): 13–17.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>3</sup>Unilateral Russian efforts to produce a settlement continue, however, sometimes in the absence of consultation with Russia’s Minsk Group partners.

<sup>4</sup>Yeltsin, who won Russia’s July 1996 presidential election, remained incapacitated with heart trouble, his advisers squabbling among themselves on a host of issues. Little initiative was evident in Russian foreign policy. Ter Petrosyan was reelected as Armenia’s president in September, although the election was in considerable dispute and was followed by increased pressure against opposition political groups. Clinton also was reelected in the United States in November 1996. The Lisbon conference in December 1996 revealed no softening of the positions of the parties.

<sup>5</sup>“Vozrodit’sya li Soyuz: Budushchee Postsovetskogo Prostranstva,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (May 23, 1996).

<sup>6</sup>See High Level Planning Group, “The Concept for the OSCE Multinational Peacekeeping Mission for the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict,” mimeo (Vienna: OSCE, November 15, 1995).

<sup>7</sup>See MacFarlane, Minear, and Shenfield, 65–69, 81–83.

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, Cristina Eguizábal, *et al.*, *Humanitarian Challenges in Central America: Lessons from Recent Armed Conflicts*, Occasional Paper #14 (Providence, R.I.: The Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, 1993).

<sup>9</sup>The ICRC’s contribution was important even though criticism of certain aspects of the exchange by the warring parties made the undertaking itself contentious.

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APPENDIX I

CHRONOLOGY

**1920**

**March 23** Expulsion of Armenians and burning of Armenian quarter in Shusha.

**1921**

**July 5** Nagorno-Karabakh awarded to Azerbaijan by Caucasus Bureau of the Russian Communist Party.

**1923**

**July 7** Azerbaijan establishes the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast'.

**1965**

**April 24** Mass commemoration in Yerevan of fiftieth anniversary of Armenian genocide.

**1988**

**February 13** Mass demonstrations in Stepanakert.

**February 20** Nagorno-Karabakh government votes to unify with Armenia. Solidarity demonstrations in Yerevan.

**February** Displacement of Armenians from Armenian districts bordering Azerbaijan.

**February 27  
–March 2** Violence against Armenians in Sumgait.

**March 23** USSR Supreme Soviet rejects transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

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<b>June 13</b>	Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet rejects Nagorno-Karabakh unification with Armenia.
<b>June 15</b>	Armenian Supreme Soviet affirms support for Nagorno-Karabakh unification with Armenia.
<b>July 12</b>	Nagorno-Karabakh announces secession from Azerbaijan.
<b>November</b>	Mass expulsions of Armenians from Azerbaijan and of Azeris from Armenia.
<b>December</b>	Karabakh Committee arrested.
<b>December 12</b>	Earthquake in Armenia kills 25,000 people and triggers international humanitarian response.

### 1989

<b>January 12</b>	USSR Supreme Soviet declares direct rule over Nagorno-Karabakh.
<b>May</b>	Mass demonstrations in Armenia. Release of Karabakh Committee.
<b>July</b>	Popular Front of Azerbaijan founded. Rail blockade of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh begins.
<b>July 25</b>	Shahumian(ovsky) District Soviet applies to the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet to be included in Nagorno-Karabakh.
<b>August 1</b>	Baku turns the Shahumian(ovsky) application down.
<b>Fall</b>	Azerbaijan opposition parties lead mass protests against USSR rule; national sovereignty officially proclaimed.

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**November** Direct Moscow rule over Nagorno-Karabakh ends. Nagorno-Karabakh National Council declares unification with Armenia.

**December 1** Joint decision of the Armenia Supreme Soviet and the Nagorno-Karabakh National Council to unite Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.

### **1990**

**January** State of emergency declared in Nagorno-Karabakh, Shahumian(ovskiy) District, and adjoining areas.

**January 9** Armenian Supreme Soviet discusses the Nagorno-Karabakh budget.

**January 12** Mass demonstrations and attacks on Armenians in Baku.

**January 20** State of emergency declared in Baku. Soviet troops invade the capital of Azerbaijan.

**May** Multiparty elections in Armenia; Armenian National Movement victory.

**August 4** Levon Ter Petrosyan elected chair of Armenian Supreme Soviet.

**August 23** Armenian Supreme Soviet adopts declaration of intent to secede from USSR.

### **1991**

**March** First CSCE involvement in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Eleven member committee on Nagorno-Karabakh established.

**April 30** The USSR and Azerbaijani "Ring" operation begins around Nagorno-

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	Karabakh. Ultimately, the operation results in the deportation of 6,000 Armenians from 24 villages.
<b>August</b>	Geidar Aliyev becomes chairman of the parliament of Nakhichevan.
<b>August 30</b>	Azerbaijan declares independence.
<b>September 21</b>	Armenian voters approve national independence in referendum. Yeltsin-Nazarbaev joint mediation effort begins.
<b>September 22</b>	Zheleznovodsk agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan on start of peace talks mediated by the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan.
<b>September 23</b>	Armenia declares independence.
<b>September–October</b>	Azerbaijan establishes Ministry of Defense and requisitions Russian military equipment on Azerbaijani territory. Shelling of Stepanakert begins. Referendum in Azerbaijan confirms independence.
<b>October 16</b>	Ter Petrosyan elected president of Armenia.
<b>October–November</b>	Armenian and Azerbaijani artillery exchanges in Shusha, Khojali, Askeran, and Hadrut.
<b>November 12</b>	The “gas blockade” of Armenia begins.
<b>November 16–19</b>	Russian/Kazakh mediated talks result in agreement on step-by-step reopening of the gas supply and the roads. Trains start running between Nakhichevan and Armenia, and between Kazakh (Azerbaijan) and Idzhevan (Armenia).
<b>November 20</b>	Helicopter crash between Martuni and Agdam, killing peoples' deputies of the

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	'USSR and Azerbaijan, the commander of the state-of-emergency area, members of the working group from Russia and Kazakhstan, members of Azerbaijan's presidential staff.
<b>November 21</b>	Gas supplies to Armenia are not resumed. Azerbaijani cuts power supply to Stepanakert. Azerbaijan military forces launch a rocket attack on villages in the Askeran and Hadrut districts. Armenia attacks Azeri villages.
<b>November 22–23</b>	Protest rallies begun in Baku and led by the Popular Front demand the resignation of President Ayaz Mutalibov.
<b>November</b>	Turkey offers to mediate Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.
<b>December 10</b>	Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh vote for independence. Fighting continues as the USSR dissolves. Indiscriminate shelling of Stepanakert from Shusha goes on through December.
<b>1992</b>	
<b>January 6</b>	Nagorno-Karabakh declares independence.
<b>February</b>	Shusha is encircled and bombarded by Armenians. Iran begins shuttle diplomacy. 366th Motor Rifle Division withdraws from Stepanakert.
<b>March</b>	Armenia's President Ter Petrosyan renounces territorial claims on Nagorno-Karabakh. ICRC opens delegations in Armenia and Azerbaijan.
<b>March 6</b>	Ayaz Mutalibov falls from power.
<b>May 7</b>	Armenia and Azerbaijan sign treaty mediated by Iran in Teheran.

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<b>May 8</b>	Nagorno-Karabakh forces capture Shusha. Coup and countercoup in Baku. Isa Gambarov becomes acting president.
<b>May 17</b>	Lachin falls to Nagorno-Karabakh forces.
<b>June 7</b>	Abulfaz Elchibey elected president of Azerbaijan and forms first postcommunist government.
<b>June 12</b>	Azerbaijan launches counteroffensive against Nagorno-Karabakh.
<b>August</b>	Armenian Parliament passes resolution supporting Armenian rights in Nagorno-Karabakh.
<b>December</b>	UNHCR arrives in Azerbaijan

### 1993

<b>February</b>	Nagorno-Karabakh offensive retakes much of Mardakert District and isolates Kelbajar.
<b>Early April</b>	Armenians overrun the Kelbajar and Fizuli areas.
<b>April 30</b>	UN Security Council adopts Resolution 822 calling for a cease-fire and Karabakh withdrawal from Kelbajar. Cease-fire to be monitored by 500 OSCE observers. The resolution opens the way to a tripartite mediation effort by Russia, Turkey, and the United States.
<b>May 24</b>	Azerbaijan declares unilateral cease-fire.
<b>May 25</b>	Russian Army completes withdrawal from Gandzha.
<b>May–June</b>	Elaboration of CSCE peace plan, including an observer force of 600 and a political conference at Minsk. Establishment of Minsk Group.

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<b>June 4</b>	Rebellion begins in Gandzha under the command of Colonel Surat Huseinov.
<b>June 14</b>	Ter Petrosyan travels to Stepanakert to explain CSCE peace plan.
<b>June 15</b>	Geidar Aliev elected as chairman of Azerbaijan's parliament.
<b>June–September</b>	Karabakh offensive takes Agdam, Fizuli, Jebrail, and Goradiz.
<b>September 24</b>	Azerbaijan applies to rejoin CIS.
<b>October</b>	Aliyev elected president of Azerbaijan. WFP arrives in Armenia.
<b>November</b>	WFP establishes mission in Azerbaijan.
<b>December</b>	Massive Azerbaijani winter offensive begins. Establishment of CLAU by WFP.
<b>Late 1993</b>	EU finances national cold chain system for refrigeration of vaccines in Armenia. IOM begins capacity-building program in the Azerbaijani Humanitarian Assistance Commission.

## 1994

<b>February</b>	Renewal of Azerbaijani offensive with few results.
<b>February-March</b>	UNDHA-coordinated needs assessment mission visits the Transcaucasus.
<b>April</b>	First UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the Caucasus issued.
<b>May</b>	Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh sign the CIS-sponsored Bishkek protocol, calling for a cease-fire and the beginning of troop withdrawals. Russian-mediated cease-fire takes effect and holds. WFP food deliveries begin.



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<b>June</b>	Armenia approves security agreement with Russia allowing the stationing of Russian troops in Armenia near the Turkish border.
<b>July</b>	Armenia refuses Turkish offer to send peacekeeping forces to Nagorno-Karabakh.
<b>October</b>	Coup in Baku, apparently supported by Prime Minister Surat Huseinov, fails to topple Aliyev.
<b>December</b>	CSCE becomes OSCE. Agrees on peacekeeping force for Nagorno-Karabakh, to be deployed when conditions permit.

### 1995

<b>February</b>	Agreement is reached among the parties on measures to strengthen the cease-fire.
<b>March</b>	Second UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the Caucasus, covering April 1995–March 1996 is launched.
<b>July</b>	Parliamentary elections in Armenia.
<b>August</b>	Parliamentary elections and constitutional referendum in Armenia.

### 1996

<b>February</b>	Supplement to the March 1995 UN appeal for the Caucasus issued, covering January–May 1996.
<b>May</b>	Russian and ICRC-mediated completion of POW and hostage exchange between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh. UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the Caucasus issued, covering June 1996–May 1997.

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<b>September</b>	Presidential elections in Armenia result in reelection of President Ter Petrosyan. Elections judged by international observers to contain substantial irregularities.
<b>November</b>	Presidential elections in Nagorno-Karabakh result in reelection of President Khocharian.
<b>December</b>	OSCE Review Conference in Lisbon, at which all members except Armenia reaffirm Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

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## APPENDIX II

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## APPENDIX III

### PERSONS INTERVIEWED

#### **UN and Other Intergovernmental Officials**

Ashraf Ali	Emergency Officer, WFP, Baku
Immanuel Ankeutil	Director, ECHO, Baku
Lars Bjorkmann	Senior Relief Officer, WFP, Rome
Les Cheesman	Regional Coordinator, Trade Facilitation, Customs Procedures, and Freight Forwarding Project, TACIS
Mamo Desta	Country Director, WFP
Daria Fane	OSCE Mission to Georgia, Tbilisi
Majed Fassih	Country Director, WFP, Baku
Phillip Fluri	Acting Personal Representative of the OSCE CIO for Nagorno-Karabakh, Tbilisi
Roman Harmoza	Deputy Head, OSCE Mission to Georgia, Tbilisi
Horst Heitmann	Political Affairs Officer, UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), NY
Arjun Katoch	Humanitarian Affairs Officer, DHA (UN), Yerevan
Lama Khouri	Political Affairs Officer, UN Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO), NY
Kazuhide Kuroda	Humanitarian Affairs Officer, DHA, NY
Roberto Laurenti	Head of Office, UNICEF, Baku
Paolo Lembo	UN Resident Coordinator and DHA Humanitarian Coordinator, Baku
Bernard Lhoest	Humanitarian Affairs Officer, DHA, Baku
John Renninger	DPA, New York
Mark Roberts	Chief Finance Officer, HLPF, OSCE, Vienna
Robert Robinson	UNHCR Representative for Armenia; UNDHA Coordinator for Armenia; Chairman, Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, Yerevan
Christina Segulja	Political Affairs Officer, DPKO, NY

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Piotr Switalski	Senior Diplomatic Adviser to the Secretary-General, OSCE, Vienna
Francesc Vendrell	UNDPA, NY
Heikki Vilen	Director, HLPG, OSCE, Vienna
Kaiser Zaman	UNHCR Representative, Baku

### NGO and ICRC Officials

Vugar Ablusaganov	Assistant Information Delegate, IFRC, Baku
Rouben Adalian	Director, Research and Analysis, AAA, Washington
Vardan Airapetian	Relief Assistant, IFRC, Yerevan
Iskander Bayramov	Conflict Resolution Center, Baku
Linda Bedeian	Director, NGO Affairs, AAA, Washington
Erwin Blau	Head of Subdelegation, IFRC, Sabirabad
Keith Buck	Relief Program Director, World Vision, Baku
Paul Conneally	Information Delegate, IFRC, Baku
Mike Feldbush	Volunteer, ADRA, Baku
Elisabeth Fong	MSF-France, Baku
Vahram Gabrielian	Liaison with International Organizations and Affiliates, Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, Yerevan
Olga Ghazarian	Program Manager-Armenia, OXFAM-UK, Yerevan
Thierry Grandon	MSF-France, Stepanakert
Nicolas Guiral	Administrator, MSF-France, Yerevan
Maarit Hirvonen	UNICEF, NY
Zoran Iovanic	Head of Delegation, ICRC, Yerevan
James Jones	Project Coordinator, ICRC/ARC, Yerevan
Lutful Kabir	Program Director, SC-US, Baku
Didier Kessel	Head of Mission, MSF-Belgium, Baku
Edith Khatchatourian	Director, Yerevan Office, AAA
Luz Videz Mangham	Program Director, FTC, Yerevan
Elkhan Mekhtiev	Director, Conflict Resolution Center, Baku
Michel Minnig	Head of Delegation, ICRC, Baku
Maha Muna	Program Officer, IRC, NY

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Fuad Mustafayev	Vice President, Azerbaijan Fund for Development of Democracy, Baku
Piwi Ophoff	Acting Relief Coordinator, IFRC, Yerevan
Bridget O'Sullivan	Finance Administration Delegate, IFRC, Yerevan
Maria Princi	Project Manager, Europe and Central Asia, Office of International Relief and Development, ARC, Washington, D.C.
Ian Ridley	Country Director, ADRA, Baku
John Riehl	Director, Medical Services, AmeriCares
Khanoglan Salahov	Camp Manager, Azeri Red Crescent Society, Sabirabad
Sergio Salis	Head of Mission, ICRC, Stepanakert
Armen Sarkissian	Medical Director, World Rehabilitation Fund, Yerevan
Stephen Vance	Regional Director for the Caucasus; Armenia Country Director, SC-US, Yerevan
Ross Vartian	Executive Director, AAA, Washington
Thorsten Wegner	Head of Delegation, IFRC, Baku
Dolores Weis	Country Director, IRC, Baku
Elizabeth Whitaker	Desk Officer, CIS and Eastern Europe, AmeriCares
Roy Williams	Director of Operations, IRC, NY
Arif Yunusov	Local Project Manager, Caritas (Denmark), Baku

### **Government Officials, Diplomats, and Political Figures**

Movses Abelian	Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations, NY
Alishov Aliverdi	Mayor, Sabirabad
Yashar Aliyev	Counselor, Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, NY
Alexander Arzoumanian	Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations, NY
Valeri Atajanian	Deputy Foreign Minister, Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert

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Vassilii Atajanian	Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee, Parliament of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert
Fridrickh Badeyan	Working Group Chairman, Humanitarian Assistance Central Commission
Laisvydas Barsauskas	Commander, Canadian Contingent, OSCE, Vienna
Michael Bosshart	Second Secretary and Political Officer, U.S. Embassy to Azerbaijan, Baku
Kaha Chitaia	Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee, Parliament of Georgia
Dennis Culkin	Office of Health Reform and Humanitarian Assistance, Europe and Newly Independent States Bureau, AID, Washington, D.C.
David Franz	Third Secretary and Vice-Consul, U.S. Embassy to Armenia
Arsen Gasparian	First Secretary, Mission of Armenia to the OSCE, Vienna
Archil Gegeshidze	Foreign Policy Adviser to President Edouard Shevardnadze, Georgia
Mike Gelner	Foreign Service Office (FSO), U.S. Department of State, Washington
Samuel Gevorkian	Chief of Medicine, Nagorno-Karabakh Armed Forces, Stepanakert
Lenston Goulian	Chief, State Committee of Deported Citizens and Humanitarian Aid, Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert
Andrei Granovsky	Senior Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, NY
Ashot Grigorian	Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Armenia, Ottawa
Nizami Guliyev	Head of Working Group, Republican Commission of International, Humanitarian, and Technical Assistance, Azerbaijan, Baku
Jaffar Jabrailov	Community Leader, Sabirabad
Bruno Kosheleff	Assistant AID Representative for the Caucasus, Yerevan
Eldar Kouliev	Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, NY
Kent Larsen	Program Manager, Humanitarian



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Betsy Lippman	Assistance, Europe and Newly Independent States Bureau, AID, Washington Program Officer, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, U.S. Department of State
Peter McKellar	Minister-Counsellor, Deputy Head of the Canadian Delegation to the OSCE, Vienna
Naira Melkumian	Deputy Representative of Nagorno-Karabakh in Armenia
Karlen Mikaelian	Deputy Minister for Social Security, Employment, Migration, and Refugee Affairs, Government of Armenia, Yerevan
Assim Mollazade	Deputy Chairman, Azerbaijan Popular Front Party, Baku
Garnik Nanagoulian	Ambassador of Armenia to Canada, Ottawa
Mark Nichols	Program Officer, Europe and the Newly Independent States Bureau, AID, Washington, D.C.
Rufat Novruzov	Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, NY
Gerald Oberndorfer	Special Assistant, Humanitarian Assistance, Office of the Coordinator for Assistance to the NIS, U.S. State Department
Vardan Oskanian	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Armenia, Yerevan
Zhirair Pogosyan	Deputy Prime Minister, Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert
Joseph Presel	Special Ambassador and Nagorno-Karabakh Negotiator, U.S. State Department, Washington, D.C.
Philip Remler	Special Adviser to the Nagorno-Karabakh Negotiator, U.S. State Department, Washington, D.C.
Erik Stoudman	Minister, Swiss Delegation to the OSCE, Vienna
Susan Thornton	Second Secretary, U.S. Embassy to Armenia
Jack Tucker	Economic Officer, U.S. Embassy to Azerbaijan, Baku
Peter Walker	Ambassador of Canada to the OSCE

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Youri Zakharian	Executive Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert
Zurab Zhvania	Chairman, Parliament of Georgia
Tofik Zulfugarov	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Baku

### **Journalists, Academics, and Others**

Ali Aliyev	Expert, Turan Information Agency, Baku
Betty Blair	Executive Editor, <i>Azerbaijan International</i> , Sherman Oaks, CA
Gregory Clock	Government Affairs Adviser for Azerbaijan, AMOCO
Haroutiun Khatchatrian	Deputy Director, Noyan Tappan, Yerevan
George Khutsishvili	Director, International Center for Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi
Jayhun Molla-zade	Editor-in-Chief, <i>Caspian Crossroads</i>
David Petrosyan	Noyan Tappan, Yerevan
Lawrence Sheets	Caucasus Bureau Chief, Reuters, Tbilisi
Dimitrii Trenin	Research Associate, Carnegie Endowment, Moscow
Andrei Zagorsky	Deputy Director, Moskovskii Gosudarstvennyi Institut Mezhdunarodnykh Otnoshenia, Moscow

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## APPENDIX IV

### ABOUT THE HUMANITARIANISM AND WAR PROJECT AND THE AUTHORS

The passing of the Cold War has challenged the world's humanitarian system in many ways. Populations within countries suffering from civil wars have become increasingly accessible. Yet international efforts to provide emergency relief and to protect basic human rights are threatened more than ever before by political and military insecurity. In greater demand, humanitarian organizations are also experiencing greater difficulty in carrying out their tasks.

Assisting in the international response to the heightened challenges, the Humanitarianism and War Project is an independent policy research initiative based at Brown University's Watson Institute in Providence, Rhode Island. The project is underwritten by funds from practitioners themselves—United Nations organizations, government aid agencies, and private relief groups—and by interested foundations.

During the years 1991–1996, it conducted more than 3,000 interviews in complex emergencies around the world, producing an array of case studies, handbooks and training materials, books, articles, and op-eds for an audience of practitioners, policy analysts, academics, and the general public. Reviewing conflicts in the Persian Gulf, Central America and the Caribbean, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, the Great Lakes region of Africa and the Horn, and the Caucasus, the project analyzed humanitarian activities in their interplay with political and military institutions and formulated practical recommendations.

In 1997, the project launched a third three-year phase of activities. Building on its work in individual countries, it is now comparing such experiences to identify recurring challenges and formulate effective strategies for meeting them. Work on an analysis of the humanitarian and political impacts of economic sanctions continues. A new effort is examining institutional learning and change among humanitarian organizations after the Cold War with an eye to identifying “best practices.”

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As the initial post-Cold War euphoria has given way to a more sober view of the difficulties of international humanitarian action, the project continues to review the operational dilemma and vexing questions of humanitarian ethics that increasingly preoccupy practitioners. It seeks to identify concrete ways for practitioners to move from reflexive compassion to complex humanitarian action.

Institutions contributing to the project since its inception include the following:

- 5 governments: Australia, France, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and United States.
- 12 intergovernmental organizations: European Commission Humanitarian Office, International Organization for Migration, OECD Development Centre, UNHHA, UNDP, UNDRO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Special Emergency Program for the Horn of Africa, UN University, UN Volunteers, and WFP.
- 17 nongovernmental organizations: American Red Cross, Catholic Relief Services, Danish Refugee Council, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (Canada), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Orthodox Christian Charities, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, Mennonite Central Committee, Nordic Red Cross Societies (Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish), Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam-UK, Save the Children-UK, Save the Children-US, Trócaire, and World Vision.
- 5 foundations: Arias Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, Rockefeller Foundation, and U.S. Institute of Peace.

Additional information about the project, including a publications list and a description of current activities, is available at our web site: [http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson\\_Institute/H\\_W](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson_Institute/H_W).

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**S. Neil MacFarlane**, former professor of political studies and director of the Centre for International Relations at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, has been since the fall of 1996 the Lester B. Pearson Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford. He has written widely about regional and political security issues in the Newly Independent States. He has been a regular visitor to the Caucasus region, serving in 1992 as a member of a CSCE team monitoring the Georgian elections.

**Larry Minear** is co-director (along with Thomas G. Weiss) and principal researcher of the Humanitarianism and War Project at Brown University. He has worked on humanitarian and development issues since 1972, serving as staff to two NGOs—Church World Service and Lutheran World Relief—and as a consultant to NGOs, governments, and UN organizations. He has conducted research in many humanitarian emergencies and has written extensively for specialized and general audiences.

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## About the Organization

Brown University's Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies was established in 1986 to promote the work of students, faculty, visiting scholars, and policy practitioners who are committed to analyzing global problems and developing initiatives that address them. The Watson Institute promotes research, teaching, and public education on international affairs, an area of inquiry that encompasses inter-state relations; transnational, regional and global phenomena; and cross-national, comparative studies.

The Watson Institute supports and coordinates the activities of scholars and practitioners with interdisciplinary approaches to contemporary global problems. Most are social scientists working on political, economic, social or cultural issues, along with scholars from the humanities and the natural sciences whose perspectives contribute directly to the understanding of these issues. The Watson Institute's affiliated centers and programs currently engage in a broad range of activities, from improving the teaching of international studies to contributing to research and public education about international security, the comparative study of development, health, hunger, the United Nations, U.S. foreign policy, and issues arising in regions throughout the world.

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