

6-5-2019

# A State of Longing: Perspectives from Nagorno-Karabakh IDPs

Isabelle McRae  
*Portland State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/honorstheses>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

## Recommended Citation

McRae, Isabelle, "A State of Longing: Perspectives from Nagorno-Karabakh IDPs" (2019). *University Honors Theses*. Paper 686.  
<https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.702>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: [pdxscholar@pdx.edu](mailto:pdxscholar@pdx.edu).

A STATE OF LONGING

A State of Longing:  
Perspectives from Nagorno-Karabakh IDPs

By

Isabelle McRae

An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in

University Honors

And

International Studies

Thesis Advisor

Harry Anastasiou, Ph.D.

Portland State University

2019

### **Abstract**

Since the ceasefire in 1994, the intractable conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh continues to have a severe impact on security and development in the Caucasus region. Internally displaced Azerbaijanis (IDPs) from Nagorno-Karabakh are one of the main stakeholders in the conflict, and yet little study has addressed the impact of their symbolic values and identity issues vis-à-vis resolution efforts. Accordingly, this thesis focuses on four themes which arose in the author's ethnographic research in Azerbaijan with internally displaced Azerbaijanis. The paper will address the group's relation to the land, the framing of kinship and identity, relations with Armenia and the Armenian community, and perspectives on youth and trauma. Looking at the significance of informal histories and collective memory for this community, the thesis intends to add to a growing repository of qualitative study in intractable conflicts, and considers how identity issues can play a central role in both the resolution and the perpetuation of dead-lock in Nagorno-Karabakh.

## **Background**

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict began in 1988, when growing movements for national sovereignty within the Soviet Union sparked ethnic tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The semi-autonomous oblast of Nagorno-Karabakh was placed under the administration of Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic in 1923 in order to quash conflict in the region and expand the control of the Soviet Union under Stalin. This allocation of Nagorno-Karabakh resulted in many decades of relative peace in the region throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gahramanova, 2010). However, the population underwent gradual but extreme demographic changes, and by the late 1980s, Nagorno-Karabakh was composed of approximately a 74% ethnic Armenian and 25% Azeri population (Najafizadeh, 162, 2013). As perestroika gave way to the first expressions of nationalism, ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh petitioned for the territory to be unified with the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. Drawing upon historic claims and grievances in regard to the Soviet Union's territorial engineering, the petitions went into full force in 1987. Neither the Azerbaijani state nor the Soviet Union was prepared to acknowledge these calls for administration changes and the mass demonstrations in Stepanakert and Yerevan which followed in 1988. Once Armenian and Azerbaijani nationalisms were backed up by real communal violence, with both states claiming historical rights of ownership over Nagorno-Karabakh, inability to evade the burgeoning conflict or resolve it peacefully led to a full-fledged war over the territory by 1991 (Najafizadeh, 2013). As the Soviet Union collapsed and withdrew its troops from the region, the unprecedented flow of weaponry and mercenaries to both sides plunged the newly-independent states into brutal chaos (Human Rights Watch, 1994). By 1993, Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent Azerbaijani districts were under Armenian control (De Waal, 2003).

Although the fighting ended ostensibly in 1994 with a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement, Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding districts, which comprise approximately 16% of Azerbaijan's pre-war territory, continue to be occupied by the Republic of Armenia and operate as a *de facto* state (Garagozov, 2016). During 1991-1994, estimates of between 750,000 to a million ethnic Azerbaijanis were expelled from their lands in and around Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia (Najafizadeh, 2013; de Waal, 2008; UNHCR, 2009). In a small country with little more than 8.5 million citizens, roughly one in eight people retain status as either refugees or internally displaced people (IDPs) (UNHCR, 2009). Nagorno-Karabakh is still the site of border skirmishes and cease-fire violations (Kopecek et al, 2016).<sup>1</sup> Over the years, there have been significant and ongoing intergovernmental efforts to resolve the territorial dispute peacefully, as heads of state work with international mediators via the OSCE Minsk Group, but these efforts have not been able to implement a lasting compromise which would satisfy the conflict's stakeholders (Geukjian, 2016). The two countries, former neighbors and even kin, remain bitterly cut off from each other, and communication between the communities is highly polarized. Nagorno-Karabakh and the IDP situation remain the central social and security issue for Azerbaijan, and indeed for the Caucasus region and beyond (Kopecek et al, 2016).

This thesis will take a qualitative analysis approach which will focus on personal stories of displaced people from Nagorno-Karabakh to understand cultural trauma and perceptions of politics as a factor in the conflict. During the nine months I spent studying and working in the capital Baku, I made close personal ties with many people in the Nagorno-Karabakh IDP community. I first

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2016, Azerbaijan went on the offensive. The three days of fighting on the border, known as the April War, resulted in an estimated 350 casualties. It was the largest border skirmish since the 1994 ceasefire was implemented, demonstrating that the frozen conflict could turn hot any time (Jarosiewicz & Folkowski, 2016).

went under the auspices of the Critical Language Scholarship for Turkish in 2016, and having been inspired by the curious conjunction of Turkic and Soviet culture, returned in 2018 for continued study in Azerbaijani and Turkish. Listening to the stories of my host family and my language instructors, who were, incidentally, all from Nagorno-Karabakh, and gaining a deeper understanding of the situation through work with the Ministry of Education's IDP language program gave me inspiration for this thesis. While IDPs/refugees in Azerbaijan have benefited from state-led as well as international aid programs to address shortages in housing, education, employment and basic subsistence, twenty-six years later, this population remains underserved and economically disadvantaged (Najafizadeh, 2013; Refugee and IDP Committee of Azerbaijan, 2019; UNHCR, 2009). This project intends to contribute to a deeper understanding of this community's needs, grievances, and perspectives, and thus add to the growing literature on the impact of identity issues within the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

### **Fieldwork Methodology**

After receiving IRB approval from Portland State's Human Research Committee, I traveled to Baku to conduct semi-structured in-person interviews with IDPs in order to learn how they relate to their historical memories of displacement and how their grievances are addressed or not addressed by existing governance strategies. I employed ethnographic interviewing and participant observation as my primary method of data collection, in conjunction with secondary sources. Qualitative methodologies have been shown to be an effective way of documenting and preserving history and perspectives, and engaging with cultural issues and values (Bernard et al, 2015; Seidman, 1998). In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, there has been very little qualitative work from researchers outside of the conflict (Gamaghelyan, 2010). While I am not a stakeholder in this

conflict, I am an American researcher who is personally involved in this community and am cognizant of being limited in only representing the Azerbaijani side. With this in mind, I have attempted to preserve the agency and voice of the Azerbaijani IDPs who participated in this study, with the belief that the stories of ordinary people, in their own words, are a critical addition to existing literature on Nagorno-Karabakh and on historical displacement. In intractable conflict, collective narratives of the war are typically conformist to the nationalist narratives (Ginges & Atran, 2011). From my early observations and work of others, such as Garagozov (2016, 2012), the personal experiences of IDPs do not always conform to the social norms reproduced by the state. Thus, the stories of IDPs may serve as an important area to consider the intersection of collective and individual constructions of history and imaginings for the future that must be taken into account for resolution and reconciliation.

The fundamental criterion of the study was to interview people from Nagorno-Karabakh or one of the 7 neighboring occupied territories who could share first-hand memories of their homes and the war. I interviewed ten people of varying socio-economic levels, six women and four men, between the ages of 37-68 from six regions. All but one had fled during the war and therefore had official IDP status<sup>2</sup>. Interviewees were comprised both of those I knew personally and those referred by existing contacts through snowball sampling. In Azerbaijan, people are more inclined to engage in projects if they are personally referred by someone they know and trust (via kinship or strong community networks), which is why snowball sampling was determined to be

---

<sup>2</sup> In Azerbaijani *məcburi qəçkün* means forced migrant or internally displaced person (IDP), in contrast to *qaçkın*, which means refugee and refers to ethnic Azeris who lived inside Armenia, although at times these terms are used interchangeably.

the most effective form of recruitment. In coming into such a tight-knit community as a foreigner, and asking people to speak on emotional and sensitive issues, these personal introductions were absolutely crucial to establishing trust. The open-ended interviews were conducted in Azerbaijani, lasting 45 minutes to two hours in length, and held in classrooms and sitting rooms, both one-on-one and jointly. Before proceeding with the interviews, participants were briefed on the intention of the study: to provide their personal experiences of being from Nagorno-Karabakh and their perspectives to contribute to research on the issue. Interviews were conducted after receiving informed consent, and the identities of the participants were protected with pseudonyms.<sup>3</sup>

Interview questions, while open-ended, were based on a framework to address key areas of interest created with my thesis advisor Harry Anastasiou. The questions were organized in two groups and further broken down into past, present, and future:

1. Nagorno-Karabakh IDPs' personal experiences:

*(personal history relating to the community and interactions with the other)*

in the Past (before the conflict, during the conflict, during displacement)

in the Present (currently, in Baku)

in the Future (whether they perceive/wish/expect the situation will change or not)

2. Nagorno-Karabakh IDPs' perceptions of political leadership and government:

*(relating to their concerns, grievances, and aspirations)*

in the Past (before the conflict, as the conflict started, during displacement)

in the Present (the current state of affairs, locally and internationally)

---

<sup>3</sup> Despite assurances that I would be the only one accessing the recordings of the interviews, several participants were not comfortable having their responses recorded, or frequently asked me to turn off the recorder, so I relied on notes and write-ups of some exchanges.

in the Future (visions for the future)

The transcriptions of the interviews made up the basis of the primary-source material, but were accompanied by participant observations gathered from spending time with respondents; from drinking tea in their homes, looking at photo albums and maps, to conversations with taxi drivers, peers, and visits to schools and war memorials. The interviews themselves were couched in much longer conversations, including discussions with the whole family—grandparents and children alike. In fact, in all the interviews which took place in people's homes, other family members were present at one time or another. The family dynamic was and is a primary part of life in Azerbaijan and critical to understanding the multilevel issue of Nagorno-Karabakh. This dynamic was not something I could capture fully with a recorder, both for ethical and practical reasons, but it is the crucial and invisible backdrop of this research.

Following an inductive or grounded approach to data analysis and interpretation, as outlined by Seidman (1998) and Bernard (2015), I coded the transcripts by the themes and sub-themes which emerged as core issues in the interviews and in my observations. These were issues I found emphasized in individual stories, and across interviews and informal exchanges. The process allowed me to code excerpts by multiple themes, in order to examine them by group and consider them in terms of my secondary sources. What follows is the interpretation of themes which were found to be salient in the stories of Nagorno-Karabakh IDPs. These themes have been conditionally addressed in four sections: relations to the land; kinship and identity; relations with Armenia; and youth and trauma. While a study of this proportion is highly limited, attention to these issues can shed light on the ongoing grievances of this population and other historically displaced peoples. It can invite greater reflection when it comes to the future for this community

and help explain why the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh remains frozen despite decades of attempts at resolution.

### **Limitations**

As my first experience of ethnographic interviewing in a non-native language, I quickly realized that my page of meticulously translated interview questions was a guide and not a rule. I had to learn to adjust my framing of the questions for each participant, to bring up subjects in a way that was natural and not forced, while still addressing my fundamental questions: how and in what context did this person grow up, how did they experience the war, how did they perceive the Armenian community, the political leaders, the present situation and the future. Leading these conversations, I also realized that I had the responsibility to gauge the emotional direction of the interview. I would begin by asking participants to tell me about how they grew up, what their community was like, etc. But, inevitably, as the conversation turned to conditions of displacement and war, painful memories and experiences would come up. While secondary sources allow one to develop an understanding of operant issues and concepts, the challenge of this qualitative study was to faithfully convey the significance of these interviews, which come from real people struggling and hoping for a better future. Fully representing the emotional dimension of these interviews and interactions was a clear limitation in such a short paper. Revisiting traumatic events and taking the time to explain their lives was not without risk for interviewees, and these interactions influenced how I came to understand the conflict.

When I returned to the US, I listened to the recordings in Azerbaijani and transcribed them in English. It was an extremely tedious process, which forced me to spend hours on a single interview, thanks to the dearth of online Azerbaijani language resources and my ignorance of

Russian military vocabulary. More importantly, going through the recordings word-by-word, I was truly struck by the emotional weight of people's stories, in a way that I had not been during the interviews. Translating recounts of torture and tragedy was as intellectually draining as it was emotionally. I have worked to bridge the gap between the objectivity of academic writing and the language of my informants, but I invite the reader to imagine that they are sitting down, drinking tea and listening to these stories as I did.

### **Land**

The kids ask me, if you could would you return to Agdam? And I say, do you understand what love for the land is? I would return today. If we got it back I would return today. Immediately, to my city. Today if I went back to Agdam I would still know the place of everything, what was where, even though it has been completely destroyed now.

(Xatira, personal interview, January 15, 2019)

*Torpaq* is one of the central keywords in the Karabakh issue. In Azerbaijani it means land, earth, the ground itself. The issue of Karabakh is centered around the meaning of that particular land and the values that are ascribed to it by its stakeholders, both concretely and symbolically (Gagarozov, 2016). From the stand-point of international politics, Nagorno-Karabakh is an ethno-territorial conflict. The conflict is discussed in terms of its strategic location, the demographics of its people, and the natural resources available to be exploited by competing states. Attempts at resolution have focused on interest-based solutions with assessments based on how much arable land, lumber, mineral resources, political space and so forth can be traded in negotiations between heads of state (Gamaghelyan, 2010). However, looking at conflict in terms of resources is highly

insufficient when it comes to understanding how people from Karabakh and greater Azerbaijan ascribe symbolic value to the land and thus why this conflict persists (Newman, 2006).

*Dede baba yurdu* is the colloquial Azerbaijani term for homeland. Literally, the home of one's grandfathers.<sup>4</sup> In rural culture, where people's spiritual and material livelihoods are intimately connected to the earth, the community is dependent on the land for its survival and wealth. The land, therefore, had meaning in itself: as Newman (2006) discussed, the concrete political and economic significance of territory is ultimately secondary to "feelings of belonging and rootedness" (p. 97). In rural Nagorno-Karabakh, communities were in direct relationships with the springs, the forests, the mountains, the meadows, the animals, and holy places (Watts, 2013). These physical elements, combined with the region's long and colorful history as the birthplace of many of Azerbaijan's greatest poets, musicians, and scientists, became part of the mythology and symbolism which make Karabakh not only special, but central to the identities of people and their families who were displaced (Najafizadeh, 2015). Nagorno-Karabakh is considered to be the repository for Azerbaijan's history and legacy.<sup>5</sup> Claiming right to the land is substantiated by a primordial narrative of belongingness ("home of the grandfathers") which is reproduced as much on the community-story level (through oral histories of kinship and folk heroes) as through the state-centric reproduction (Geukjian, 2016). As Armenia and Azerbaijan continue in competition for the territory, their stances are rooted in contending and incompatible claims to this ancestral

---

<sup>4</sup> *Vatan* is the political term for nation or homeland. For instance, Azerbaijan is considered IDP's *vatan*, but Karabakh is considered IDP's *dede-baba yurdu*.

<sup>5</sup> See Virtual Karabakh, 2018.

homeland, with each state engaged in reproductions of narratives which substantiate their own mythologies and invalidate the other's (Newman, 2006; Gahramanova, 2010; Gamaghelyan, 2010).

The love of the land arose as a central theme in interviews and informal discussions, reflecting a common long-term sentiment in intractable conflict (Halperin & Pliskin, 2015). Sentiments, in contrast to short-term emotions, are enduring compositions of emotion toward a group, place, or symbol (Halperin & Pliskin, 2015). Love for the land supports and validates other enduring sentiments in this conflict, such as entrenched feelings of hatred toward the Armenian community and a sense of victimization due to the loss of land and livelihood. In Nagorno-Karabakh, in both rural and urban areas, people lived well before the war: IDPs spoke with great pride about their abundant gardens and the homes they had built, their livestock and local jobs, the beauty of nature and friendly interethnic relations. To lose the physical land—along with their savings, homes, and worldly possessions in the blink of an eye, was a trauma that remains alive in their hearts and their memories. As common in long-term conflict situations, these personal stories have been passed down to the younger generations and crystallized in the oral history of their families and communities (Atran and Axelrod, 2008; Gamaghelyan, 2010). One man from Qubatli spoke about this feeling for Karabakh:

There was not a place we didn't love. Everywhere was beautiful. Beautiful mountains, beautiful gardens, beautiful springs, beautiful views, lakes, meadows, forests. The forests of Shusha, the historic forests of Shusha. The plane forests... We would collect strawberries, mushrooms, plants that had been discovered long long ago by our forefathers. Since the day we opened our eyes we were nourished by these foods. I sat beside the springs, I swam in the rivers and in the lakes, I wandered in the rocks.

(Elshad, personal interview, January 21, 2019)

The value of Karabakh is about identity as much as it about resources: not only the violent occupation of territory, the loss of livelihood and home for nearly a million people, but being ripped from the places that they held dear and depended on for sustenance. Taking care of the land is perceived as a part of a community's responsibility (Watts, 2013). Because of this symbolic valuation of the land and how it falls under traditional codes of honor, the land becomes an extension of identity for residents there (Atran & Axelrod, 2008). In the context of ongoing conflict, the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh is mythologized by Azerbaijanis as a spiritual as well as physical destruction of their identity by the Armenian and Russian (imperial) forces. To illustrate this symbolic desecration, multiple interviewees mentioned the sorrow of leaving behind the graves of parents, the cutting of forests in Shusha and Zengilan, and the changing of historical names and razing of monuments,<sup>6</sup> to show that the cruelty of the other group went beyond the simple destruction of war and targeted sites that the Azerbaijani communities considered sacred. For IDPs, these examples carried as much significance as the loss of material goods and possessions. Such examples add a symbolic dimension to the community's grievances. These stories serve as the superstructure to collective sentiment, in accordance with Halperin's (2016) assessment that, "the emotional sentiments, or emotional 'stories' serve as a glue, holding together the conflict-supporting beliefs contained in the collective memory" (p. 134).

---

<sup>6</sup> See Muth (2014) for a study on the erasure of Azerbaijani language in Stepanakert.

Stories of love for the land were intertwined with other negative sentiments. A woman from Zengilan expressed a sense of outrage and victimization shared by IDPs, while also implying that the new generation has a duty to right the wrongs passed down to them:

This land was from our grandfathers. How can you take ownership of that land?

You cannot. Because look, how many talented people grew up there, how many historical monuments. They have destroyed all of them, not a single one remains, not one. We will never be able to forgive them. I don't believe that the generation that comes after us will forgive them. I don't believe it at all.

(Nergiz, personal interview, January 18, 2019)

The love of the land and the memories of home give IDPs hope for the future, but are also the source of their collective grief. This longing for the past, coupled with decades of living in a state of limbo, has entrenched strong feelings of injustice and hatred. These sentiments inspire many IDPs and regular citizens (non-IDPs) to advocate for revenge and violence as a solution to their grievances, when “the peaceful road” seems to have produced only dead-ends (Geukjian, 2010). As studies by Garagozov (2016) and Halperin & Pliskin (2015) have shown, group emotions may produce even stronger negative reactions in those who identify with the in-group (IDPs), but did not experience the trauma first-hand. In Azerbaijan, this is certainly the case, as non-IDPs often exhibit even stronger negative emotions toward Armenians than those who lived in Karabakh during the era of the Soviet Union and retained memories of positive co-existence (Garagozov, 2016). This tendency would explain how some of the younger generations express more militant perspectives than their parents, an issue which will be addressed further later in this paper.

### **Kinship & Identity**

One of the central themes running through the interviews was family relations, as the main way through which kinship and identity was expressed. This section corresponds with collective memory, as defined by Bresco de Luna's (2017). This term "refers to the active past inextricably bound to the present identity of a group" (p. 281). The stories of family and kinship told by informants correspond with what Garagozov (2016) calls "informal history"; the transmissions of stories within family networks from generation to generation (p. 28). These stories both mirror and at times contest the formation of collective memory through official social institutions. Per Bresco and Wagoner (2016), dynamic memory can explain the importance of these informal histories, as the collective past is constantly informing how people imagine a future, and therefore what possibilities exist in that future.

For the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, the framing of memories is a critical key to unlocking the possibilities for future resolution. Informal histories exist, not in a vacuum, as the domain of individual experiences, rather as pieces of the stories which represent regions, communities, and families. Although the older interviewees discussed the trauma of what they witnessed during the war, it was particularly the younger generation, displaced as children and having spent their entire adult lives in limbo, that felt the most torn as they tried to plan for the future. They used language which was indicative of this rupture. For example, Aysel said she felt her childhood cut off forever when her family crossed the Araz River into Iran on the back of a lorry (personal communication, January 18, 2019). Ramina said she still felt like she was twelve years old inside, the age when they left Qubatlí (personal communication, January 24, 2019). Even though the bombs were raining on their village, Ramina told me that her two sisters had still gone to school. They hid in

the dug-out under their bed in the evenings. At that time, everyone had built bomb shelters in their homes, but as the regions were occupied one-by-one, having to leave for good became more and more of a reality. For children, living in a climate of war, life was mundane as much as it was traumatizing. Nuray recounted how she and her sister would get bored in the bomb shelter, saying that they could never sleep comfortably, but still had to go to school in the morning. Then it became too dangerous and families started sending their children to live with relatives in other cities. Elshad from Qubatlı told the heart-wrenching story of an attack on his village, when he was fourteen. Grad rockets smashed through his family's house, killing his sister and her family while his father shielded him by pinning him to the floor (Elshad, personal interview, January 21, 2019). Traumatic experiences such as these left younger IDPs feeling responsible for a future return to Nagorno-Karabakh in order to make peace with their experiences, yet depressed by the reality of living over half their lives displaced.

Another aspect of dynamic memory was the way informants recounted detailed images from their former homes. In these narratives, interviewees often claimed that they remembered everything about their past; every tree, every door, every household utensil they left behind. One of the interviewees, Ramina, said that shortly before her father passed away, years later in Baku, they looked at Google Maps together. They searched for their old home. "Of course, everything had been destroyed, but we still knew where the buildings used to stand, and the bridge. The river, well they [the Armenians] couldn't change that," (Ramina, personal communication, January 24, 2019). The vividness of the memories that respondents recounted, many of which have been re-told and re-remembered again and again, seem to give IDPs a type of double-life: there was life before the war, and life after it. These are distinct and irreconcilable experiences. This double-life

was expressed as the source of suffering and confusion by interviewees as they navigated their lives and planned for the future. Aysel, a mother of two and an academic, described her feelings:

After leaving Zengilan... Both my mother and my father their hair became really white, and today I think, I am 37 years old. When my mother left she was 33 years old. It was really hard, that stress, I think about it. I always think about it, now that I have two daughters, and if I had lived the same life, would I have been able to overcome these struggles? It was so difficult. To flee and leave those things. For me, as a child it wasn't like I was leaving them behind. Much later I left them behind, much later I became scared. I was a child, I didn't understand where we were going, why we were going.

(Aysel, personal interview, January 18, 2019)

The tension between generations showed up in all of the interviews. In Azerbaijani culture, life revolves around family. Informants illustrated and validated their own histories by recounting the experience of family members, which often became the reasoning behind some of their deepest beliefs. These family narratives served as oral allegories for larger collective narratives about pride, grievance, resentment, hatred, etc. (Bresco de Luna, 2017). Resilience after the war, especially for those who experienced displacement as children, was seen as a product of crucial family support. Now as adults, the generation displaced as children is raising children of their own who have seen neither conflict nor suffering. But the new generation has also never seen the home their parents long for. The youngest IDPs perceive their own children as lacking the motivation that comes with having struggled—while this is a common intergenerational issue, it is magnified by traumatic experiences of conflict. In line with Bresco's (2017) concept of dynamic memory, as

parents imagine a future for their children based upon their own past experiences, they constrain their children's experiences to fit this image. This, in turn produces a type of intergenerational conflict. Informants discussed how they perceived a level of dissonance between their individual experience growing up during wartime, and how they compare their children with themselves and themselves with their parents.

Another aspect of the intergenerational dynamic was a sense of shame felt by IDP parents who cannot provide their children the upbringing that they themselves experienced. In Baku, the majority of families have migrated to the city from other regions, and therefore going back to the village or countryside during the summer and holidays is the traditional way for families to maintain kinship networks, keep their pantries stocked, and unwind. The village life—good food, clean air and water, time in nature—is highly valued in Azerbaijan. IDP parents have deep concerns about the consequences of their children losing this connection to rural life as they grow up in the city, distracted by materialism and technology. One father from Qubatlı talked about this struggle as a parent, illustrating salient concerns about losing physical and economic access to the land:

My son asks me, 'take us to the countryside, take us to our village, our region.' I say, we have a region, only the Armenians have occupied it. Now, how do I explain this to this poor child! He's not even in the first grade yet... Tomorrow, when the land is returned, I will be able to bring my child there. That child was born here. If I die tomorrow, the land is forgotten... I talk about it. I tell him how we had a view like this. Our garden, in our garden there was every kind of fruit. Today I do not have the ability to give him one of those fruits.

(Ali, personal interview, January 26, 2019)

The confusion and distress of physical displacement was crucial part of the IDP identity, evidenced in the way respondents articulated stories of relocation, survival, and overcoming. In 1994, 1 in 8 people in Azerbaijan had been displaced (UNHCR, 2009). IDPs experienced the trauma of going from self-sufficient lifestyles in villages and small towns, to the capital in the midst of an economic and political crisis. This rupture had different implications for each generation fleeing. For children this meant a break, sometimes permanent, from their education. For adults, radical shifts in livelihood and means. Housing was informal, once well-off families lived in dormitories, schools and camps, or crowded with relatives. The new government under President Heydar Aliyev offered substantial support to IDPs throughout the 90s and beyond: they gave out food, paid for utilities and education, and organized housing and schools (Ministry of IDP Affairs, 2019; UNHCR, 2009). Because of this aid, while IDPs have differing opinions on how the state should conduct itself vis a vis the conflict, they feel an immense sense of loyalty to the administration. This support has had serious implications for Azerbaijani politics: as Nagorno-Karabakh is seen to be the dominant, over-arching security issue which takes precedence in Azerbaijani politics, efforts to focus on other important domestic issues are frequently put aside in favor of hardline nationalism (Gahramanova, 2010).

### **The Neighbors**

What can account for war between neighbors? This was one of my primary questions in looking at the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. As the protracted resolution process has left Azerbaijan and Armenia in a neither-war-nor-peace limbo, negative narratives around inter-ethnic relations are exacerbated by the media and political discourse of the conflict, becoming crystallized

in Azerbaijani culture (Navikova, 2012). Nevertheless, one-on-one interviews with IDPs revealed that these collective narratives are often made up of conflicting emotions and ambiguous memories.

While interviewees discussed their pre-war lifestyles, they were also asked to talk about relations with Armenians in their communities before the war. This question was particularly directed at older interviewees, those who were at least middle-school age during the war, as children were not typically cognizant of these relationships. When asked to speak about pre-war relations, these interviewees fondly recounted how hospitable and kind Armenians were in their communities, highlighting their contributions on the local level and emphasizing economic and intellectual exchanges. One informant from Zengilan reminisced:

We made friends with the Armenians. We had many bee hives, and they would come to visit us, they also had bees. Our greatest friendship started there. They would bring their bees and keep them at our house...We got along wonderfully with them. We would go visit them, we would even go to Armenia for visits. How hospitable they were: we would go to them, they would come to us...When they had weddings we would go, they would come when we had weddings. We had such a great connection, there was nothing difficult at all. It was a delightful place.

(Nergiz, personal interview, January 15, 2019)

Although the Caucasus was host to a long history of sporadic ethnic conflict, forced population resettlement and state violence throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these peaceful inter-ethnic relationships had been part of the fabric of the villages and towns in Azerbaijan and Armenia, promoted by the Soviet ideology of “friendships between people” (Navikova, 2012, p. 553). While Armenians and Azerbaijani had historical grievances simmering below the surface, these did not

provide a large-scale motivation until shifts in Soviet administration allowed for Armenia's movement for national sovereignty to take hold in 1988 (Gahramanova, 2010). Still, as late as the 90s, the violence was initially seen as occurring outside of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, in Baku and Yerevan, and fueled by the actions of players within the intelligentsia (Gahramanova, 2010; De Waal, 2003). In both republics, intermarriage between communities was common and accepted, and because of Soviet secular policies, there was little emphasis placed on religious identity differences.

Interviewees were prompted to identify when they noticed these relations were deteriorating in their communities. Interestingly, there was no consensus as to when this happened, which may have to do with the fact that informants of different age groups and in different regions were effected differently, but also indicates that there has been no consolidated nationalist narrative to mark what was happening on the ground at that time. For a resident of Agdam, it was the killing of two young boys who marched to Stepanakert to stand up against the Armenian movement for Karabakh's unity with Armenia. For another, it was the cutting of the Topxana forest outside Shusha. For a young girl in Zengilan, she recalled the story of her aunt in Armenia receiving death threats from her neighbors and having to flee. One informant from Qubadli discussed how the growth of nationalist ideology in Armenia made its way into the organs of the Soviet intelligentsia, and how in his university this movement for national unity began to take hold in 1988 as weapons were being amassed in the countryside.

Before the outbreak of the conflict, Armenia had begun deporting Azeri communities from inside the Armenian SSR, many of which ended up in Sumgayit, a working-class oil city outside of Baku with an acute housing crisis, where this hostility fully took shape (De Waal, 2006). On February 27, 1988, days after the unprecedented march on Stepanakert and vote to unite with the

Armenian SSR, Azeri mobs took to the streets and attacked Armenian households and businesses in Sumgayit, killing dozens of people. Martial law was instated, and the Soviet Socialist authorities tried to suppress the news (De Waal, 2003). But the situation began to grow tense as fights started to break out. Armenians were urged to leave their homes in Azerbaijan and go to Armenia. A professor from Qubatli explained how relations began to change:

We lived on the border and hung out with Armenians. There were still those that we had close relations with. They said, your people have behaved really cruelly in Sumgayit, they killed women and children. All of them showed the slides that had been taken there [in Sumgayit] all around the territory of Armenia. This added to the enemy ideology. They already had hostility toward us, but we still thought, this will get better, they will research the real cause of the event and things will work out...

(Novruz, personal interview, January 19, 2019)

Interviewees expressed a sense of disbelief in the violence which the countries were slowly sinking into in the late 80s and early 90s. Initially, residents of these mixed communities could not believe that their neighbors would perpetrate such violence, as much as they disbelieved their own people capable of such things. To this day, there is little to no responsibility taken for violence perpetrated from the Azerbaijani side (such as the pogroms in Sumgayit, Baku and Ganja), and these violent events are usually explained by conspiracies which deflect blame back to Armenians or Russians. This unwillingness to recognize the validity each other's historical grievances plays a strong role in the perpetuation of the dead-lock on both sides (Navikova, 2012).

### **A Complicated Tolerance**

It is celebrated knowledge that Azerbaijan is made up of many different tribes and ethnic communities: there are Lezgin, Talysh, German, Russian, Kurdish, Jewish, as well as many other minorities. Azerbaijanis pride themselves on religious tolerance (in Baku, there are mosques, Orthodox churches, and synagogues all within a half mile of each other). Tolerance and diversity is considered a national treasure in Azerbaijan. When interviewees were asked whether they knew of Armenians in Azerbaijan, the majority recalled immediately that some 30,000 Armenians still live peacefully within the country.<sup>7</sup> The Armenians living in Azerbaijan were communities who had historically resided there. During the war, many fled or left Azerbaijan, but still many had integrated, married, and would not have found a home elsewhere. As the war continued, Armenians living in Azerbaijan changed their names and went underground to protect themselves. Although interviewees said these Armenians now live more openly, they do face violence and discrimination and have no political or social representation within the country (Minority Rights Group, 2018).

This ambiguity of relations is important to highlight, as the discussion about the Armenian community allows informants to emphasize how tolerant Azerbaijan is in comparison to Armenia. Azerbaijanis generally believe that Armenia is a monoculture, that Armenians have changed all the names of historical (Azeri) places and that only ethnic Armenians are welcomed and all other ethnicities have been expelled. Given that Azerbaijanis may not travel to Armenia, that the media and education about Armenia is state-sponsored and openly espouses animosity, such ideas are

---

<sup>7</sup> The statistics on Armenians living in Azerbaijan outside of Nagorno-Karabakh are highly contested and because of name changes it is impossible to find an accurate census. 30,000 is the number that everyone cites, but may be a large exaggeration (Minority Rights, 2018).

easily promoted and accepted (Gahramanova, 2010; Garagozov, 2016; Navikova 2012). Additionally, NGO and social initiatives to bring these two communities together have been largely suppressed (Freedom House, 2019). The proclamation of tolerance ties into the victim narrative of Azerbaijani nationalism: Azeris have suffered and lost their homelands, and yet continue to welcome even those who treated them cruelly. There is pride in the fact that Azerbaijan did not force out Armenians the way that they had been forced out by Armenia. However, interviewee's attitudes changed sharply when asked if it was possible to have relationships or communicate with Armenians.

As discussed above, close personal relationships between Azerbaijanis and Armenians had been a normal part of life during the Soviet Union. Some 400,000 Armenians lived in Azerbaijan, a third of them in Nagorno-Karabakh (Minority Rights Group, 2018). As the conflict progressed, those former relationships and communication channels became completely severed. On the personal level, there is no way to talk to the other group any more, despite the fact that 'others' are still living in Azerbaijan. This othering is reinforced on multiple levels. When the Azeri population was directly displaced through conflict, the repercussions spread throughout all society, enforcing, even for those who would not be inclined to equate all Armenians with the enemy, a societal imperative to maintain the block on communication with them.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of whether Azerbaijanis distinguish between individuals and state actions, the block on communication is perpetuated through the media, the education system, and through cultural norms. Thus, attempting to forge personal relationships is treacherous; although some Azerbaijani IDPs maintain positive

---

<sup>8</sup> One language instructor told me she would not feel comfortable adding childhood Armenian friends on Facebook or visiting them in Russia although she wanted to connect with them, because it would be disrespectful or even treacherous to her family.

views about Armenian people (their workmanship and business acuity is traditionally praised), actually having a relationship with an Armenian, or getting in touch with former friends and neighbors would be a betrayal of the community and the state. The simple act of communication could cause individuals to lose face and potentially have serious consequences.

Interestingly, even those who felt they could not have relationships with Armenians because of their personal suffering and the suffering of their kin, acknowledged that relationships were possible *outside* of the two countries. Xatira from Agdam illustrated this ambiguity, stating that she took part in trainings for teachers from Post-Soviet countries in Georgia and the United States, and worked amicably with Armenians in her field. Her perspective was that they were just ordinary people; they, like she, had no blame in the conflict. In contrast, another academic self-reflectively discussed the complexity of the situation:

I cannot say I would never speak with an Armenian. I'm not saying they're not people. And it may be that these people are not responsible for the mistakes of politicians, it's only that there is no trust... when the government promotes a certain politics, this starts to get into people's heads.

(Aysel, personal interview, January 14, 2019)

Regardless of their personal views, IDPs seem to agree that within Azerbaijan, the stakes are too high for there to be communication between the two groups. However, a cause for hope on the community level may be that interviewees frequently expressed a sense of solidarity with Armenian people as part of a narrative of common suffering and outrage at being manipulated by larger countries (e.g. Russia) and by elites during the war. “No mother should have to lose a child, no mother should cry” was a common expression of solidarity for those who supported the conflict

being resolved peacefully. Many informants expressed sympathy for Armenians, as they are aware of the effects of economic sanctions on Armenia (via Azerbaijan and Turkey) and despite the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh felt that Azerbaijan was much better off economically.<sup>9</sup> Looking at the long history of shared values and co-existence between Armenians and Azeris, it should give one hope to realize that, in the words of conflict researcher Gahramanova (2010), “while Azerbaijanis view the Armenians as the enemy, the hatred is not of a racist nature. Rather, it is connected to land issues: ‘You are my enemy because you conquered my lands and forced me out’” (p.140). Once freed from the pressure of nationalism and the conflict discourse which perpetuates this animosity, somewhere outside their borders, individual Armenians and Azerbaijanis may have more in common than not.

### **Youth & Trauma**

Ramina started crying silently over her tea, as she described what happened at Khojaly. Even though she was a young girl when it happened, she told me that every winter when it snows she has this sensation of coldness and dread, and she thinks of those people who perished on February 25-26, 1992, when the Soviet Interior Troops withdrew and Armenian troops blockaded and attacked the town of Khojaly, firing upon and killing hundreds of civilians as they tried to flee

---

<sup>9</sup> “May God never bring war upon anyone... Those poor children, may they never see it. May they not hear the sound of those bombs and missiles. I do not wish that on anyone. Including the Armenians. That is also a shame. Over there are also people who have directed them down a bad path. It didn’t occur to them to come and take the land of Azerbaijan. Someone also manipulated them. They too live in bad conditions. They live in worse conditions than Azerbaijanis. We live well, we have everything we need, food, work. But their situation is very bad, the economy is very weak there.” (Nergiz, personal interview, January 18, 2019).

their besieged town (Human Rights Watch, 1994). The attack on Khojaly was the largest massacre to occur during the war; the Azerbaijani government claimed the loss of 613 lives, although according to De Waal (2012), the official parliamentary number places it at 485.<sup>10</sup> Khojaly has been memorialized as the worst tragedy to befall Azerbaijan in modern times and there have been attempts to have the event recognized as genocide (Virtual Karabakh, 2019; Justice for Khojaly, 2019). In many of the interviews, the event was remembered as the turning point when Azerbaijani families within Nagorno-Karabakh realized they would be forced to flee for their lives. A woman from Lachin, one of the regions very close to Armenia, described it:

For us there, thinking about the tragedy at Khojaly, the women and the children had to get out immediately. So that another tragedy was not to be experienced. Crying, weeping, dropping everything you have, you leave home. Think about it. It was like that. So hard, so hard.

(Pervane, personal interview, January 19, 2019)

For IDPs like Ramina and Pervane who escaped from nearby regions, what happened at Khojaly was experienced on a visceral level and their proximity to the event was deeply traumatizing. Khojaly is often cited as the primary reason why forgiveness and reconciliation with Armenia can never be possible—it was seen as the point-of-no-return in inter-ethnic relations. The targeting of civilians and the human rights abuses therein were frequently enumerated by respondents in gory detail. The atrocities committed at Khojaly are well known, as Khojaly and other events of the war

---

<sup>10</sup> As the village was taken into Karabakh Armenian control after the attack, an official death toll remains disputed. As many as 500-1,000 may have died (Human Rights Watch, 1994).

are key parts of school curricula. February 26 is a nation-wide day of mourning: school children come out to lay roses on the monuments, watch brutal documentaries in class, and draw disturbing and bloody pictures of the event (De Waal, 2012; Justice for Khojaly: Through Children's Eyes, 2019). Commemorative acts of this type, promoted by the state, and repeated year upon year serve to reproduce the collective imaging of the massacre in painful, unforgettable ways, obliterating questions of moral ambiguity (Wertsch, 2002). Some teachers who were interviewed said that the emphasis on these tragedies had negative effects on young children (both their own and their students), causing them to cry and panic in class, or become overly fixated on the brutal material.<sup>11</sup> However, another teacher believed that instruction about the war was extremely important, and that the next generation needed to know their history to be certain who their enemy was.

The younger generations, specifically the children of IDPs, may hold stronger feelings of animosity and militancy than those who remember life before the war, in line with Halperin & Pliskin's (2015) and Gargozov's (2016) studies. In school, the fixation on events of the war which portray Azerbaijan as victim, without acknowledging the instances in which it was also perpetrator, have a crucial influence on the construction of ethnonationalist sentiment at a young age. Children grow up both removed from the conflict, and cut-off from the other community, with no opportunity to question the validity and historicity of these beliefs about Azerbaijan and Armenia's role in Nagorno-Karabakh. The media in Azerbaijan is also strongly ethnonationalist, and continually features stories about Armenian aggression and Azerbaijani victimhood (Badelescu,

---

<sup>11</sup> "Why should my daughter look and cry after all these terrible things that happened in Agdam and Khojaly. She watches these videos and she cries and then she goes into a depression. Sometimes I don't let her watch them. But on Black January I can't get my daughter away from the television. It's bad! I say daughter, you've learned enough. And she says no, I want to learn more" (Aysel, personal interview, January 14, 2019).

2018; Navikova, 2012). With personal relationships between communities and individuals no longer tenable, the millennial generation has only experienced life in a frozen conflict, in a country where adults discuss the need and the willingness to go to war over their evening tea. What long-term repercussions will this have on the next generation of Azerbaijanis and their visions for Nagorno-Karabakh?

To be clear, the subject of the future in Azerbaijan is also complicated by larger themes. For young people growing up with different beliefs about success and consumerism within a capitalist system, the desire to sacrifice themselves for the land and their community's honor may only go so deep. Often to the chagrin of their elders, the children of IDPs and refugees may identify less as being from Karabakh and more with where they've grown up, in Baku or other cities. They may not necessarily share the desire of their parents to go back to a place they have never lived, if they perceive urban life and an urban future to be preferable (more mobile and economically advantageous) to a rural life. This generational shift in aspirations is made possible as IDPs' grievances are addressed on the ground level, through access to better housing, better schools, better job prospects which allow them to imagine a stable future in situ. Nevertheless, based on the small sample of families interviewed, it can be said that IDP parents strive to pass down their informal histories to their children. In sharing their collective stories of trauma, displacement, longing and survival, they wish to motivate their children to resolve the conflict—whether by going to war, or engaging in the community and finding a resolution.

### **Conclusion: Imaginings of the Future**

As I listened to these stories of good relations turned bad, and wondered how IDPs imagined a return to Karabakh would actually look like, I wanted to know if people thought reconciliation between Azerbaijan and Armenia could ever be possible. The professor from Qubatli shared his thoughts on the matter:

These memories need time, time is needed for these wounds to heal, to forgive, to go back home. There are those that say, many that say, may my son go to fight for the land, and he goes and he is martyred and his mother and father come and kiss the Azerbaijani flag and say, my son died protecting the land, he died fighting for his honor... But those people whose sons go to fight and are martyred, they still say I will get my land back and then they will be next-door neighbors to Armenia, living again in those villages... The time will come when relations will again arise between these two. But that relation, in this situation, it is still difficult to forgive, and I understand that.

(Novruz, personal interview, January 19, 2019)

For relations to be remade, it will take both concrete agreements and symbolic concessions in order to address such long-standing grievances and cultural trauma. As evidenced by these interviews, it will also take time, as well as a multi-level effort to rebuild the trust and forgiveness. But good relations are in the interests of both Azerbaijan and Armenia, their residents, and international stakeholders, for economic stability and for security in the Caucasus region.

For IDPs, being from Nagorno-Karabakh is the source of joy and sorrow, pride and pain; the paradox at the center of their identities as they negotiate this state of longing. As a way to

conclude the interviews, interviewees were asked to reflect on what being from Karabakh meant to them. Some of the responses were:

Pervane from Lachin, [laughing]: “Being from Karabakh, it’s a lovely feeling, although we cannot live this path anymore” (personal interview, January 19, 2019).

Ali from Zengilan: “Every moment, every minute, our dreams are there” (personal interview, January 21, 2019).

Xatira from Agdam: “To love Karabakh you have to see it. You have to live there. You have to drink from the water. You have to eat the bread. You have to breathe the air” (personal interview, January 15, 2019).

Novruz from Qubatli: “Being from Karabakh means both happiness and the tragedy of the conflict with our neighbors... But regardless of this, people who have lived the torture of Karabakh, even those from Khojaly who went through so much cruelty, would return without hesitation...The feeling of Karabakh is a feeling of pride” (personal interview, January 18, 2019).

As explored in this thesis and illustrated in the excerpts above, Nagorno-Karabakh carries strong symbolic and concrete meaning for Azerbaijani IDPs, as it surely does for Karabakh Armenians. As contemporary conflict studies have shown, the significance of the symbolic value will take precedence over material gain, especially in the case of intractable conflicts (Atran & Axelrod, 2008; Ginges & Atran, 2011). The power of sacred value for Nagorno-Karabakh stakeholders must be understood if a compromise is to be negotiated and implemented. In the words of Zittoun (2017), the collective past is always creating an imagining of the future. As older IDPs pass on the torch to their children, the ambiguity of these informal histories will change, and the future will also change, perhaps for the better. As it stands now, any resolution must take into

account the framing of identity issues within the conflict—the collective past—as it is passed down informally and formally to the next generation of Azerbaijanis. The key identity issues elucidated in this study may provide a more nuanced understanding of IDPs as one of the stakeholders in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Their identity concerns relating to the land, their community, their government and Armenia will need to be taken into consideration if a resolution is to be supported.

Ultimately, changing the vision for the future lies within the imaginings of the past. In the case of intractable conflict, these collective imaginings seem ubiquitous and monolithic, but as any form of institutionalized culture, they can also be changed and give way to alternate futures. In order for that to happen, the discourse on the institutional level will need to change, and mid-level politicians who played a critical part in fueling the conflict must now play an active role in deconstructing the victim-enemy narrative from the top down (Gahramanova, 2010; Gamaghelyan, 2010). Ethnonationalist discourse in both Azerbaijan and Armenian politics, media, and education does not allow for a reckoning of the land as the home and the source of livelihood for *both* peoples. Attempts to resolve the conflict via this discourse have only met with failure, as ethnonationalism cannot recognize the rights and claims of other ethnic groups within the same territory. And yet, the personal stories of IDPs show the existence of alternative narratives which if anything demonstrate the resiliency of hope and belief, and the desire for a better future.

### References

- Atran, S., & Axelrod, R. (2008). Reframing sacred values. *Negotiation Journal*, 24(3), 221–246.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1571-9979.2008.00182.x>
- Freedom House - Azerbaijan. (2019, January 31). Retrieved April 24, 2019, from  
<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/azerbaijan>
- Azərbaycan Respublikası Qaçqınların və Məcburi Köçkünlərin İşləri Üzrə Dövlət Komitəsi (The Republic of Azerbaijan State Committee of Refugee and IDP Affairs). (n.d.). Retrieved May 5, 2019, from <http://www.qmkdk.gov.az/az/pages/18.html>
- Bădulescu, L. (2018). Armenians on Azerbaijanis in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Shaping the image of the enemy. *Sfera Politicii*, XXV(193-194 (3-4)), 76–83.
- Bernard, H., & Gravlee, Clarence C. (2015). *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (2nd ed.). Lanham, Maryland ; London, England: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Brescó de Luna, I. (2017). The end into the beginning: Prolepsis and the reconstruction of the collective past. *Culture & Psychology*, 23(2), 280–294.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X17695761>
- De Waal, T. (2003). *Black garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through peace and war*. New York: New York University Press.
- De Waal, T. (2011.). More War in the Caucasus. Retrieved May 24, 2019, from Carnegie Moscow Center website: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2011/02/09/more-war-in-caucasus-pub-42579>

- Gahramanova, A. (2010). Paradigms of political mythologies and perspectives of reconciliation in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. *International Negotiation*, 15(1), 133–152. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157180610X488218>
- Gamaghelyan, P. (2010). Rethinking the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: identity, politics, scholarship. *International Negotiation*, 15(1), 33–56. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157180610X488173>
- Garagozov, R. (2016). Painful collective memory: Measuring collective memory affect in the Karabakh conflict. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 22(1), 28–35. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000149>
- Geukjian, O. (2016). *Negotiating Armenian-Azerbaijani peace: opportunities, obstacles, prospects*. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfebooks.com/isbn/9781315597621>
- Ginges, J., & Atran, S. (2011). War as a moral imperative (not just practical politics by other means). *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 278(1720), 2930–2938. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2010.2384>
- Halperin, E., & Pliskin, R. (2015). Emotions and emotion regulation in intractable conflict: studying emotional processes within a unique context: emotional processes within a unique context. *Political Psychology*, 36, 119–150. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12236>
- Human Rights Watch/Helsinki (Organization : U.S.) (Ed.). (1994). *Azerbaijan: Seven years of conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Seidman, I. (1991). *Interviewing as qualitative research: a guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Newman, D. (2006). *The resilience of territorial conflict in an era of globalization*. Kahler, M., & Walter, B. F. (2006). *Territoriality and conflict in an era of globalization*. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kopecek, V., Hoch, T., & Baar, V. (2016). Conflict transformation and civil society: the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68(3), 441–459.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2016.1147528>
- Minority Rights Group - Armenians. (n.d.). Retrieved April 23, 2019, from  
<https://minorityrights.org/minorities/armenians/>
- Muth, S. (2014). War, language removal and self-identification in the linguistic landscapes of Nagorno-Karabakh. *Nationalities Papers*, 42(1), 63–87.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2013.856394>
- Najafizadeh, M. (2013). Ethnic conflict and forced displacement: narratives of Azeri IDP and refugee women from the Nagorno-Karabakh War. (internally displaced persons)(Report). *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 14(1), 161–183.
- Najafizadeh, M. (2015). Poetry, Azeri IDP/refugee women, and the Nagorno-Karabakh war. *Journal of Third World Studies*, 32(1), 13–43.
- Novikova, G. (2012). The Nagorno Karabakh conflict through the prism of the image of the enemy. *Transition Studies Review*, 18(3), 550–569. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11300-012-0216-8>
- UNHCR (n.d.). Azerbaijan: Analysis of Gaps in the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Retrieved May 5, 2019, from UNHCR website:

<https://www.unhcr.org/protection/convention/4bd7edbd9/azerbaijan-analysis-gaps-protection-internally-displaced-persons-idps.html>

Jarosiewicz & Folkowski. (2016). The four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh. (2016, April 6).

Retrieved May 5, 2019, from OSW website:

<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-04-06/four-day-war-nagorno-karabakh>

Through Children's Eyes | justicekhojaly. (n.d.). Retrieved May 24, 2019, from

<http://www.justiceforkhojaly.org/content/through-childrens-eyes>

Virtual Karabakh – Khojaly Genocide. <http://www.virtualkarabakh.az>. (n.d.-a). Khojaly genocide. Retrieved May 24, 2019, from <http://www.virtualkarabakh.az/en/post-item/30/50/khojaly-genocide.html>

Virtual Karabakh – Country Page. <http://www.virtualkarabakh.az>. (n.d.-b). Qarabağ - Azərbaycan. Retrieved May 17, 2019, from <http://www.virtualkarabakh.az/az/home/2/qarabag-azerbaycan.html>

Wagoner, B., & Brescó, I. (2016). Conflict and memory: The past in the present. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 22(1), 3–4. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000147>

Watts, V. (2013). Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!). *Decolonization Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2(1).

Wertsch, J. V. (2002). *Voices of collective remembering*. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zittoun, T. (2017). Dynamic memories of the collective past. *Culture & Psychology*, 23(2), 295–305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X17695768>