

means that the situation is in fact far more dramatic, and more dangerous for the world order.

Finally, the authors make two very important points: the crisis was not caused by any internal divisions within Ukraine; but nor was it entirely Europe's or Russia's fault. Nevertheless, even though one can agree that any crisis has multiple causes, this reader would have liked to see these two insightful authors push their analysis a bit further to demonstrate how those various reasons interacted and produced this crisis. Despite these shortcomings, the book represents an interesting piece of analysis that will be useful for professional and broader audiences.

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Ohannes Geukjian, *Negotiating Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace: Opportunities, Obstacles, Prospects*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014. 286 pp.

The term “frozen conflict” was perhaps one of the more blatant misnomers to have emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union; its complacent implication of predictability had already been largely discredited by the dramatic “thawing” of the disputes in South Ossetia and Abkhazia during the 2008 Georgian War. In Nagorno-Karabakh, the cease-fire between Armenians and Azerbaijanis—in force since 1994—had always been a partial affair, with constant sniper-fire and occasional skirmishes ever more frequently disrupting a precarious silence along the line of contact, before a large-scale outbreak of hostilities in April this year.

That most recent conflagration was a timely reminder of the failure of over two decades of negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Since 1995, these negotiations have been carried out under the aegis of the OSCE Minsk Group, chaired by Russia, the United States, and France; the question as to why, in spite of such long-term great power involvement, the sides to the dispute have not been able to come to an agreement is the focus of Ohannes Geukjian's timely monograph.

Early in his work, Geukjian provides three hypotheses that could potentially explain this failure (4): first, the “BATNA” hypothesis, or the argument that both sides had a “Better Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement” throughout the period in question. Second, the author posits that the failure to agree could be tied to the “lying and bluffing” of the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides, preventing the emergence of the mutual trust required for a solution. The third hypothesis takes on normative overtones by postulating that “fairness and justice mattered,” insofar as an acceptable solution would have to satisfy incompatible notions of equity among the disputants.

The limited amount of data available on the hitherto opaque negotiations process itself would make it difficult for anyone to empirically prove or disprove any of the above hypotheses; and, in fact, towards the end of the monograph, their secondary importance becomes clear. There is little discussion of their relative merits, as would be expected in a more strictly structured work; instead, in the final chapter—on the obstacles to an agreement—elements largely left outside their scope, like the negotiators’ “top-level approach” (212), and their failure to build peace constituency in the societies concerned, are identified as the main obstacles to resolution. The reader is then presented with a range of precisely the contextual elements that would seem to be important in explaining Armenians’ and Azerbaijani’s dogged inability (or unwillingness) to reconcile, ranging from the ambiguous role of regional powers, over the skepticism in Armenian and Azerbaijani society, to the weakness of local civil societies and the detrimental role of their—overwhelmingly nationalist—media (213–22).

The middle, empirical chapters could be faulted for a relative lack of engagement with those contextual factors that then reveal themselves as important to the work’s concluding points; but it is precisely in their focus on the negotiations process proper that the value of Geukjian’s work becomes apparent. No publication to date has provided such a comprehensive, detailed, and balanced overview of the frustrating to-and-fros between the Minsk Group negotiators and the changing cast of characters in Baku, Yerevan, and Karabakh proper, over more than twenty years of conflict.

Considering the relative secrecy surrounding the negotiations, the well-documented catalogue of proposals, rejections, near-misses, and U-turns contained in the middle sections of the book is a veritable treasure-trove for anyone wishing to delve into the finer points of what could be described as the South Caucasus' ultimate Gordian knot.

Geukjian attempts to leave the reader with a glimmer of hope for a way out of a stalemate inherited from what was the former Soviet Union's bloodiest war in its "hot" phase, from 1989 to 1994; the book therefore concludes with a series of recommendations based on Väyrynen's comprehensive approach to "Conflict Transformation" (222–) aimed at breaking the deadlock through a fundamental change in the top-down negotiations model hitherto employed. But the entanglement of both Armenian and Azerbaijani identities with this conflict—which the author acknowledges—suggests a measure of skepticism, or even pessimism, should be in order. Some of the measures proposed—like Turkish–Armenian reconciliation, a "redefinition of the disputants' goals," positive-sum thinking, personal transformation—require a minimum amount of trust that is precisely what has been absent in all actors involved during the past decades; others—like changes in the leadership of the belligerent states—are (mostly) a matter of contingency, and might necessitate the kind of perceptual shock—like defeat in a resumed war—that everyone would want to avoid.

Like so many intractable conflicts, Nagorno-Karabakh presents a chicken-and-egg problem for any social scientist wishing to contribute to its resolution; the potential consequences of war, and the undoubted benefits of peace for both societies mean one has to nevertheless try. Balanced and ambitious, Geukjian's work must be lauded for its (albeit ultimately inconclusive) attempt to push the boundaries of the debate towards an ever-elusive, pacific conclusion.

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