

Nagorno-Karabakh Dispute: Why Intractable Conflict for Armenia?

Dağlık Karabağ Sorunu: Ermenistan için
Çözumsuz Çatışma Olmasının Nedenleri

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Abstract

The conflict between Armenian and Azerbaijan around Nagorno-Karabakh was violent between 1988 and 1994. Nevertheless, Nagorno-Karabakh dispute is regarded as one of the frozen conflicts, which has been witnessed for many years. In order to stop and contain the conflict, other states and international organizations advocated peaceful settlement. However, the problem went through a number of phases and has not reached a final solution despite of many years of negotiation under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group. In this context, the objective of this paper is to understand the main impeding factors that prevent peaceful resolution and establishment of a long-lasting peace for Armenia. As a framework to analyze the case of Armenia-Azerbaijan dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, this paper uses the “constructivist theory”, which explains national histories and identities as fluid, evolving, and formed over time, and which claims that it is mainly social relationships between agents, structures, and institutions that can lead to ethnic conflicts. Contrary to the primordialist approach, which treats ethnic groups as concrete and independent entities that exist inherently, the explanation of intractability within a constructivist framework constitutes the main

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difference. In view of this, government policies are also constructed according to interstate perceptions, expectations and the concepts developed towards themselves and others. As a result, rather than only including one-dimensional “ancient hatred” paradigm; “the problem of security”, “image of enemy”, “other countries” involvement with having interests in the region”, and most importantly “internal politics” can be regarded as the contributors to intractability for Armenia.

Keywords: Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, Conflict, Intractability, Constructivism.

Öz

Ermenistan ile Azerbaycan arasında Dağlık Karabağ sorunu ile ilgili yaşanan çatışma 1988-1994 yılları arasında şiddetlenmiştir. Bununla birlikte, Dağlık Karabağ sorunu yıllardır tanık olunan dondurulmuş çatışmalardan biri olarak kabul edilmektedir. Diğer devletler ve uluslararası örgütler sözkonusu çatışmayı durdurmak ve çatışmanın yayılmasını önlemek amacıyla barışçıl çözümü savunmuştur. Sorun pek çok aşamadan geçmiş, ancak AGİT Minsk grubunun gözetiminde yıllarca süren müzakerelere rağmen nihai çözüme ulaşamamıştır. Bu çerçevede, makalenin temel amacı, Ermenistan açısından barışçıl çözümün ve uzun süreli barışın tesis edilmesini engelleyen belli başlı önleyici faktörleri anlamaktır. Bu hususlar dahilinde sözkonusu çatışmanın analizinde, ulusal tarih ve kimlikleri akışkan, zaman içinde oluşan ve gelişen kavramlar olarak ele alan ve temelde yapanlar, yapılar ve kurumlar arasındaki sosyal ilişkilerin etnik çatışmalara yol açtığını ileri süren “inşacı teori” kullanılacaktır. Etnik grupları, doğuştan ve verili bir biçimde var olan, somut ve bağımsız oluşumlar olarak ele alan özcü yaklaşımın aksine, çözümsüzlüğü inşacı çerçeveden açıklamak önemli bir farklılık oluşturmaktadır. Bu anlayışa göre, devletlerin politikaları da devletlerarası algılar, beklentiler, kendilerine ve diğerlerine karşı geliştirdikleri kavramlara göre kurgulanmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, yalnızca tek taraflı olarak “tarihsel nefret” paradigmasını vurgulamak yerine, “güvenlik sorunu”, “düşman imajı”, “bölgede çıkarları olan

diğer ülkelerin katılımı” ve en önemlisi “Ermenistan’ın iç siyaseti” Ermenistan açısından çatışma çözümsüzlüğüne katkıda bulunan faktörler olarak ele alınmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dağlık Karabağ, Çatışma, Çözümsüzlük, İnşacılık.

1. Introduction

With the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, the field of International Relations has turned to the analysis of increasing regional and intra-state conflicts, and the role of major and regional states as third party in these conflicts. The Caucasus region has also witnessed a number of internal and ethnic conflicts over territories and borders. Complex ethnic claims and disagreements, conflicts over sovereignty, and growing hostility over the ethnic minorities and their legitimate political centers have dominated the political agenda of the states in the Caucasus.¹ A number of studies have sought to explain the roots of post-Soviet conflicts by developing and applying various theoretical approaches and ways in order to understand these conflicts. This paper focuses on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that firstly erupted in February 1988 and led to a war between Armenia and Azerbaijan between 1992 and 1994. Although a ceasefire was signed in 1994, the political leaders of the opposing nations have still not reached a solution over the region’s status. Thus, the intention of the study is to evaluate the “intractability” of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

It is generally argued that, in the intractable conflicts, the issues have frozen progress towards a resolution over the decades.²

¹ Yaşar Sarı, “Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and Role of Big Power in 1990s”, *Turkish Review of Eurasian Studies*, (2002): 118.

² Jacob Bercovitch, “Mediation in the Most Resistant Cases,” in *Grasping the Nettle: Analyzing Cases of Intractable Conflict*, ed. Pamela Aall, Chester A. Crocker, and Fen Osler, (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 99-101.

According to Bercovitch, intractability has some dimensions. For instance, intractable conflict tends to be long lasting, persisting decades of years. It is also characterized by present tension and violence. The victims of violence in the intractable conflict include civilians as well as combatants. There are many unresolved issues at stake, and although the parties may reach temporary cessations of violence, they cannot reach a fundamental and genuine resolution of their issues. Moreover, psychological manifestations of enmity and deep feelings of fear and hatred generally underlie the relationship between parties. In addition, intractable conflict attracts many actors and institutions that want to deal with, manage or resolve the conflict.³ However, in spite of many attempts at management or resolution, only few of these actors or institutions are successful.

Accordingly, after elaborating the historical background and mediation efforts of the conflict, the main purpose of this paper would be to understand the question that “*What are the main impeding factors that prevent peaceful resolution and establishment of a long-lasting peace for Armenia?*” As a framework to analyze the case of Armenian-Azerbaijan dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, this paper uses the “constructivist theory”, which explains national histories and identities as fluid, evolving, and formed over time, and which claims that it is mainly social relationships between agents, structures, and institutions that can lead to ethnic conflicts.⁴ Therefore, in this study, the factors which contribute to the intractability of the conflict for Armenia include the “problem of security”, “image of enemy”, “involvement of other countries which have interests in the region”, and most importantly “internal politics as well as historical memories of Armenia”.

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³ Seda Kırdar, “Conflict Resolution in Georgia: An Analysis Applying the Intractable Conflict Theory and the Governmental Politics Model”, *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, Volume XIII Number:4, (Winter 2008): 51.

⁴ Milena Oganessian, “Constructing and Deconstructing Histories: The Ethnicity Factor”, (2009): 4, <http://caucasusedition.net/analysis/constructing-and-deconstructing-histories-the-ethnicity-factor/>, (accessed April 23, 2014).

2. Background and Analysis

2.1. *Conflict and Failure of Peace*

As mentioned before, the conflict between Armenian and Azerbaijan around Nagorno-Karabakh dispute was violent between 1988 and 1994. Thousands of people died and approximately 250,000 Armenian and 1.1 million Azeri people have become refugees in this conflict.⁵ In order stop and contain the conflict, other nations and international organizations advocated a peaceful settlement. Nevertheless, the problem went through a number of phases and has not reached a final solution despite of many years of negotiation under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk group, which is the main institution of the peace process in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a mountainous region in the Caucasus. The neighboring countries, Azerbaijan and Armenia, began fighting over the territory after the Gorbachev's "glasnost" and "perestroika" policies, and the conflict broke up in 1988. After the years of warfare between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, an estimated 35,000 dead and approximately one million refugees in both sides were left behind.⁶ A cease fire has been held since 1994 between the sides of the conflict, but the conflict has not been over yet, in spite of a number of steps and initiatives for settlement of peace. It can be stated that the mistrust between the countries is still high. According to the position of the Azerbaijani government, part of its territory is occupied by the neighboring state of Armenia and, thus, the conflict is a problem between two sovereign states. On the other hand, to Armenian officials, it is a struggle for independence and self-determination by the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh against Azerbaijan

⁵ Carol Migdalovitz, "Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict", (August, 2003): 1, http://pards.org/crs_country/CRSReportArmenia-AzerbaijanConflict (August 8, 2003) Updated.pdf, (accessed May 1, 2014).

⁶ Sari, "Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict", 119.

through repeating that it has no territorial claims over Azerbaijan.⁷

In Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been the main organization leading the mediation efforts. The OSCE started its efforts in 1992 with the decision to arrange an international conference for settling the conflict. The political settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh has been discussed within the framework of the so-called “Minsk Group”. In order to prepare for this conference, a group of delegates was formed, including representatives of Sweden, the Russian Federation, Italy, and other third parties, as well as representatives from Azerbaijan and Armenia.⁸ However, the Minsk Process has been unsuccessful in reaching a settlement to the conflict so far. In December 1996, the OSCE held a conference in Lisbon. Delegates produced a draft statement which was acceptable for all parties of the conflict and which called for a peace resolution. However, that increased the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and no additional talks were held until 1997. In 1997, Finland’s term as co-chair of the Minsk Group ended and France, the United States and Russia became permanent co-chairs.⁹ The new leaders of the Minsk Group presented a comprehensive peace proposal. The then President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosian responded favorably, but the Karabakh Armenians insisted that there could be no peace as long as Nagorno-Karabakh remained a part of Azerbaijan. In September 1997, the OSCE negotiators decided to handle the problem from another direction. Rather than proposing a comprehensive settlement plan, they would split the peace

⁷ Jan Koehler and Christoph Zürcher, “The art of losing the state: weak empire to weak nationstate around Nagorno-Karabakh”, in *Potentials of Disorder: Explaining Conflict and Stability in the Caucasus and in the Former Yugoslavia (New Approaches to Conflict Analysis)* ed. Jan Koehler and Christoph Zürcher (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003): 145.

⁸ Isak Svensson, “The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Lessons from the Mediation Efforts”, *Initiative for Peacebuilding*, (2009): 9.

⁹ Kristen Eichensehr and W. Michael Reisman, *Stopping Wars and Making Peace: Studies in International Intervention*. (NLD: Martinus Nijhoff, 2009), 68.

negotiations into two stages.¹⁰ The first stage would involve military withdrawal; the second would involve the remaining political questions, such as final status. President Ter-Petrosian broke the Armenia's past opposition to a step-by-step solution, but the president's support for a phased peace plan caused a series of events which brought a political crisis. On February 3 1998, President Ter-Petrosian resigned. Prime Minister Robert Kocharian, an opponent of the step-by-step peace proposal and the former President of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, became President of the Republic of Armenia.¹¹

In November 1998, the Minsk Group co-chairs presented a new proposal that returned to the comprehensive settlement model. The idea would have united Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh in one entity, a common state, but the plan did not specify the hierarchical relationship, whether vertical or horizontal, between the two parts of the entity in order to leave room for negotiations between the parties.¹² The Armenians endorsed the new plan, but Azerbaijan strongly rejected the common state idea. Between 1999 and 2001, the then President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliiev and the then President of Armenia Robert Kocharian held a series of personal meetings, many of them one-on-one. For a while in 1999, it was seemed that a deal might be possible on the basis of the "Goble Plan" which contemplated a territorial exchange: Lachin for Meghri.¹³ The idea was unpopular in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. In January 2001, talks re-started between the two presidents with the encouragement of the Minsk co-chairs. A series of successful meetings resulted in Key West. These talks came close to achieving agreement, but domestic opposition in Azerbaijan caused Aliiev to abdicate some of his concessions, and the Key West talks also failed. In 2002 and 2003, no progress was made toward peace, in part because of elections in both Armenia and

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, 69.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Azerbaijan. Robert Kocharian won re-election in Armenia, and Ilham Aliiev was elected president of Azerbaijan. From 2004 to 2006, the Minsk Group conducted a series of secret meetings between the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers. These meetings, known as the “Prague Process”, were designed to facilitate later meetings between the presidents. In 2005 and 2006, the co-chairs proposed a series of principles on which to base peace negotiations. These principles included renunciation of the use of force, Armenian withdrawal from parts of Azerbaijan surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh, substantial international aid, the deployment of an international peacekeeping force, and mutual commitment to a vote on Nagorno-Karabakh’s final status after the return of displaced Azeris.¹⁴ The Prague Process resulted in four meetings between Presidents Robert Kocharian and Ilham Aliiev, but none of them produced a success. In December 2006, an internal referendum was held in Nagorno-Karabakh, and 98.58 percent of the Nagorno-Karabakh population voted in favour of setting up the region as an independent country.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the vote had no international recognition.

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After a number of peace initiatives, in 2007, Madrid Principles came out of negotiations and envisioned a step-by-step resolution including a gradual withdrawal of forces from the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, a special status for Kelbajar and Lachin, and a referendum to determine the future legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh. In 2009, an updated version of the Madrid Principles was revealed in Italy. The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs revealed the basic principles of the proposal, which included the return of the territories around Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan, an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh, a corridor to link Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, a future settlement on the legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh, the right of all refugees and internally displaced people’s right to return home, and

¹⁴ Ibid, 70.

¹⁵ Ibid.

security guarantees. According to the OSCE statement, the principles represented a compromise between the right to self-determination and the right to territorial integrity. However, the updated version got criticisms from the opposition in Yerevan, blaming President Serj Sargsyan for jeopardizing Armenia's national interests.¹⁶

It can be argued that an influential group of principal powers, in which the US, Russia and the EU dominate, plays the key role in the OSCE when it comes to the issue of conflict resolution. However, many years of peace talks through the medium of the OSCE Minsk Group have failed to produce any legitimate agreements. Only few attempts made by Russia, the US and France produced little outcome. So far, the good intentions expressed in the documents of the OSCE summits have not been implemented and they still remain on paper for many reasons, including the sides' refusal to cooperate, the conflict resolutions being objectively complex nature, etc.¹⁷ In that respect, Minsk group stated that their countries stand ready to assist the sides, but the responsibility for putting an end to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains with them. According to the Presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries, they strongly believe that further delay in reaching a balanced agreement on the framework for a comprehensive peace is unacceptable and they urge the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia to focus with renewed energy on the issues that remain unresolved.¹⁸ On the other hand, Armenian officials make their statements in the opposing way and they charge Azerbaijan relating the intractability of the situation. According to them,

¹⁶ Elena Pokalova, "Conflict Resolution in Frozen Conflicts: Timing in Nagorno-Karabakh", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 17:1, (2015): 77.

¹⁷ "OSCE Minsk Group in Crisis: A New Look at Nagorno-Karabakh Impasse", 6 May, 2011 <http://www.turkishweekly.net/op-ed/2820/osce-minsk-group-in-crisis-a-new-look-at-nagorno-karabakh-impasse.html> (accessed 4 February, 2015).

¹⁸ "Joint statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, by the Presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries", 18 June 2013, <http://www.osce.org/mg/102856> (accessed 4 February, 2015).

“Despite the negotiations held within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group which is the only internationally mandated format on conflict settlement, and the agreement to carry out negotiations within the Minsk process, Azerbaijan, distorting the nature and main reasons of the consequences of the conflict, takes attempts to involve other international organizations in the settlement and initiates parallel processes hindering the negotiation process and having campaign objectives especially in the United Nations General Assembly and the Council of Europe, too.”¹⁹

As a result, many years have passed since the Armenians and Azerbaijanis signed a ceasefire, but the absence of active warfare has not created a peace. Accordingly, the following part of this paper explores the “intractability” in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by displaying the factors influencing the progress of conflict potential. According to Philip Gamaghelyan, the “intractability” of the conflict largely originates from the desire of parties to have a sense of the final status of the region, rather than addressing the underlying problems.²⁰ Within the framework for understanding the case of Armenian-Azerbaijan dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, contrary to primordial arguments, “constructivist theory” will be used, which considers national histories and identities as fluid, evolving, and formed over time. Through using the explanations of constructivist argument, the following part of the study will try to address the question of “What are the main impeding factors that prevent peaceful resolution and establishment of a long-lasting peace for Armenia?”

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¹⁹ The Official Site of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, <http://www.mfa.am/en/artsakh/#a3>.

²⁰ Philip Gamaghelyan, “Intractability of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Myth or A Reality?” *Peace & Conflict Monitor, Special Report*, (July 2005): 1.

3. The Main Impeding Factors that Prevent Peaceful Resolution and Establishment of Long-Lasting Peace for Armenia

3.1. Constructivist Outline

In conflict studies, the notion of ethnicity is viewed and interpreted based on particular theoretical approaches to conflicts. The two political science perspectives on conflict, which is focused on here, are primordialism and constructivism. Firstly, primordialist approach argues that ethnic and racial identities are fundamental and immutable, arising from the congruities of blood, speech, and custom. Human beings do not actively choose their ethnic identities. Rather, they inherit them when they are born into communities that speak certain languages, practice particular religions, and follow specific social customs.²¹ According to this view, there is an inherent or primordial animosity between two camps that causes conflict. Primordialists assume that the actors have one main identity and that the way religions shape that identity is fixed over time. In that sense, a primordialist approach views the Nagorno- Karabakh territory as being fixed, and bound to a particular ethnic identity; as the cradle of a group's linguistic, cultural or religious origins. Since both Azerbaijanis and Armenians living in the region make a claim based on this idea, the conflict can be seen as the result of ancient grievances between the two groups as embedded hatreds that are "permanent and ineradicable".²² It can be argued that ethnicity itself is an important factor in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; however, it is not appropriate to call it exclusively a primordial ethnic conflict.²³ Nevertheless, as Kuburas argues, the primordial approach ignores the periods of relative peace and stability between two groups, and it does not account for other

²¹ Donald P. Green and Rachel L. Seher, "What Role Does Prejudice Play in Ethnic Conflict?" *Annual Review of Political Science* No:6 (2003): 520.

²² Melita Kuburas, "Ethnic Conflict In Nagorno-Karabakh", *Review of European and Russian Affairs*, 6 , (2011): 45.

²³ Behlül Özkan, "Who Gains from the "No War No Peace" Situation? A Critical Analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict", *Geopolitics*, 13:3, (2008): 578.

factors that are beyond the ancient or historical presence of people. It can be argued that primordial approach also underestimates the role of the political elite and their logic of perceived threats and opportunities under which elites make the choices in political crises.²⁴

On the other hand, constructivism is based on social interactions. Constructivism is one of the most influential contexts of the immediate post-Cold War period that is related with the way agents and structures co-constitute each other, the socially constructed nature of actors and their identities and interests, and the importance of ideational, normative and discursive factors in the shaping of international political reality. It is concerned with the beliefs, attitudes and perception of parties in conflict, the formation of regimes, the communicative-discursive strategies adopted by intermediaries in conflict, the role of language, memory, and the actions that individuals and groups can take to shape their lives and to resolve their conflicts.²⁵

Broadly speaking, constructivists see ethnic identities and ethnic conflict as the product of concrete historical processes. According to them, ethnic identities are not social givens, but they are produced through processes of socialization and acculturation.²⁶ Rather than primordial ties, ethnic groups are social constructs generated and maintained by specific historical processes such as the distribution of official identity cards. Although ethnic identities are actually produced by historical processes, they are not necessarily perceived in this way. Over time, ethnic identities gain widespread social acceptance. Individuals regard ethnic identities as immutable social facts and have difficulty separating their personal identities from those of the groups to which they belong. Unlike primordialists, who refer to emotions or

²⁴ Aytan Gahramanova, "Identity Conflicts And Its Implications For Conflict Management", *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, No.11 (May 2006): 167.

²⁵ Richard Jackson, "Constructivism and Conflict Resolution" in *the SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution* ed. Jacob Bercovitch & Victor Kremenyuk & I William Zartman, (Sage Publications,2009): 172-173.

²⁶ Green and Seher, "What Role Does Prejudice Play in Ethnic Conflict?", 521.

strategic calculations, constructivists focus on external processes in explaining the politicization of ethnic identities.²⁷

In addition, constructivism underlines the crucial role of ideational structures playing part in shaping social actors' identities and, consequently, realities. In that sense, ideational structures ascribe meaning to actors' identities through infusing them with a sense of who they are, what social roles they are expected to play, and how they should relate to other actors around them. In this way, actors' identities –that are the products of the ideational structures in which they are embedded- will shape their perception of the material world, define their interests, and determine their behavior towards other actors.²⁸

Despite the fact that primordial arguments could not explain what caused the violence in this region alone, it has become an important element in the construction of nationalist sentiment needed to mobilize it. However, contrary to primordialism, constructivism does not view ethnicity as conflict generating. Rather, it is mainly social relationships between agents, structures, and institutions that can lead to ethnic conflicts.²⁹ In addition, emotions, memory, and ideas can influence identity and behavior of the people. Constructivism also emphasizes the ways in which group identities emerge and change over time.³⁰ This theoretical approach suggests that peaceful co-existence between ethnic groups, one that is based on trust, is possible.

Consequently, for constructivists, ethnicity can be transformed from a resource and a cause of conflict to a form that can construct trust between groups. Confidence building measures that provide information between groups can resolve the security dilemma in ethnic

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Sabina A Stein, "Competing Political Science Perspectives on the Role of Religion in Conflict", *Politorbis*, 2/2011 <http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/pdfs/Politorbis-52.pdf> (accessed 4 February 2015).

²⁹ Oganessian, 4.

³⁰ Ibid.

conflict.³¹ Because of the fact that identity plays a significant role in social conflict, it is fundamental to how individuals and collectivities see and understand themselves in conflict. Accordingly, identities are created and transformed in processes of social struggle. Understanding how identities impact conflict, conflict processes, and the ways they are constructed within conflicts, informs about the emergence, escalation, and potential transformation of social conflicts.³²

3.2. *Intractability for Armenia*

As mentioned before, intractable conflicts are regarded as conflicts that persist because they appear impossible to resolve. They can emerge from a number of underlying reasons such as moral and identity differences, high-stakes resources, or struggles for power and self-determination.³³ Although many different factors can be displayed that strengthen this kind of conflicts according to different cases, there are some major characteristics of intractable conflicts in terms of actors, duration, issues, relationship, geopolitics, and management. First of all, in terms of actors, intractable conflicts involve states or other actors with a long sense of historical grievance, and a strong desire to redress or avenge these. In terms of duration, intractable conflicts take place over a long period of time. In terms of issues, intractable conflicts involve intangible issues such as identity, sovereignty, or values and beliefs. In terms of relationships, intractable conflicts involve polarized perceptions of hostility and enmity, and behavior that is violent and destructive. In terms of geopolitics, intractable conflicts usually take place where buffer states exist between major power blocks or civilizations. In terms of management, intractable conflicts resist many conflict management efforts and have

³¹ Ibid, 13.

³² Celia Cook-Huffman, “The role of identity in conflict”, in *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, ed. Dennis J. D. Sandole and others, (NY: Routledge, 2009): 19.

³³ Peter T. Coleman, “Intractable Conflict” in *the Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, ed. Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman, Eric C. Marcus, (San Francisco: Wiley, 2006), 534.

a history of failed peace-making efforts.³⁴

With respect to Nagorno Karabakh conflict, it can be asserted that neither country is trying to enforce a change in the environment towards peace. It is also important to underline the fact that internal politics also dictate the behaviors of the parties of the conflict. There is a sense that both sides are playing to emotions rather than towards a real settlement.³⁵ The factors like corruption, monopoly over resources, and lack of business opportunity have forced millions of people to emigrate to Russia and to Western Europe. Moreover, authoritarianism, lack of independent media in both countries prevents public debate of options for peace. As Mehtiyev argues, propaganda of hatred and military solution to the conflict dominates in Armenia's approach. In the analysis of the main impeding factors that prevent peaceful resolution and establishment of a long-lasting peace for Armenia, there are some important determinant points which should be underlined. As being the major impeding factors, "ancient hatred discourse", "the problem of security", "image of enemy", "involment of other countries which have interests in the region", and "internal politics" would try to be elaborated in the following part of the study.

First of all, the Armenians are linked in their shared identity, which is formed by the collective memory. This "socially constructed" selection from history provides a shared self-image.³⁶ In this self-image, national identity is generally expressed in terms of conflict with the enemy. In this sense, at its cornerstone, there is a deep hatred against anything Turkish, which is traced back to the events in 1915 under the rule of Ottoman Empire. According to Armenian perspective, since the basic needs have been violated throughout history, Armenians are still in the state of deprivation but in a new

³⁴ Jacob Bercovitch, "Characteristics Of Intractable Conflicts" (October 2003) <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/characteristics-ic> (accessed 3 February 2015).

³⁵ Elkhan Mehtiyev, "Armenia-Azerbaijan Prague Process: Road Map to Peace or Stalemate for Uncertainty?", *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, (May 2005): 1.

³⁶ Gahramanova, "Identity Conflicts and Its Implications for Conflict Management", 62.

kind. They claim that it is the trauma of “Armenian Genocide” of 1915 on the territory of Ottoman Turkey.³⁷ Many still perceive the conflict as an attempt to repeat what they called as the genocide. Thus, the process of victimization Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is considered as not only an opportunity to prevent a new genocide, but also a punishment for those who tried to commit it.³⁸

The problem of security is another important factor defining the potential of conflict. According to Armenian perspective, one of the main causes of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the perception that the need for security of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh is not satisfied.³⁹ At the beginning of the conflict, territory was regarded as the main satisfier of security of the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh. However, with the prolongation of the negotiation process over the conflict and international mediations, it was understood that conflicts having long roots cannot be solved by standard settlement models. Moreover, it is argued that the key objectives of the parties which directly involved changed over time. Accordingly, with respect to Armenia,

- The evolving Armenian leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh initially moved away from demanding the transfer of the territory to Armenia, to a temporary transfer over the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic or, alternatively, to direct administration from Moscow. The demand for -from the Armenian point of view- a reunification with Armenia was later changed to the current official viewpoint of independent statehood.

- The positions of the Armenian Karabakh Committee and later leadership of independent Armenia also changed over time, and

³⁷ Artak Ayuns, “Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Escalation or Resolution?” (2005): 4, http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/2/4/2/4/pages124245/p124245-3.php, (accessed April 5, 2014).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid, 5.

was only different from the Karabakh positions: from transfer of the Autonomous Oblast to unification with Armenia after independence, and finally to the *de facto* independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. For some time, the question of official acknowledgment of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic as an independent state by Armenia remained a sticking point between factions in the first government of Armenia.⁴⁰

According to Ayuns, innovative and creative ways of conflict resolution should be attempted. It is generally suggested that, in order to satisfy the human security, the peace should formally be strengthened by institutionalization. The problems about democratization of the Armenian society and the issue of economic development are other major sources of the problems, which can increase the level of the security problem.

Furthermore, the image of enemy, negative stereotypes and mistrust also create negative impacts on Armenian perspective towards the solution of the problem. According to Koehler and Zürcher, in Armenia, the interpretation of the conflict first switched to a simplifying nationalist paradigm in public discourse. In the Armenian case, as mentioned above, the most important qualifying criterion was the normative and internally unquestionable code that connected national identity to the historical experience of 1915 events.⁴¹ In that sense, any problem connected to Nagorno-Karabakh is connected to the question of the existence of the people.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the environmental groups turned into nationalist organisations in Armenia. The most influential one, the Karabakh Committee, was established by unknown intellectuals with strong nationalistic feelings under the leadership of Levon Ter-Petrosyan. The nationalistic discourse of the Karabakh Committee established a historical link between the events of 1915 in

⁴⁰ Koehler and Christoph Zürcher, "The art of losing the state: weak empire to weak nationstate around Nagorno-Karabakh", 146.

⁴¹ Ibid.,155.

the Ottoman Empire and violence in Sumgait by equalising Azerbaijanis and Turks.⁴² The image of enemy, “the Turk”, is strictly emphasized in Armenian society and transferred towards Azerbaijanis:⁴³

“The Muslim and the Turk were historically “the other” for Armenia. Turkishness was considered immoral, dirty and violent. “Anti-Turkishness” was, therefore accepted as a “natural” and inherently “good” attitude. Of course, some Armenians and Turks maintained good and even friendly relations at a personal level. However, such personal links did not translate to collective rapprochement.”⁴⁴

According to Ayuns, overcoming the image of enemy and negative stereotypes among the societies is possible through communications between the communities at both local and regional levels. For transformation of the existing mistrust and lack of confidence, the involvement of civil society is also seen as a necessary step.

The role of mass-media is also significant as being one of the most important links between the communities that can promote this process. The media can publicize the principles of moral norms, and can act to enforce those norms by publicizing violations. They can act as a go-between for parties who lack any other means of communication. The media can also educate the parties about each other’s interests, needs, and core values, and help to confirm the parties’ claims of transparency.⁴⁵ They can help to undermine harmful stereotypes and promote rehumanization of the parties.

Nevertheless, as Ayuns asserts, media plays a destructive role in

⁴² Özkan, 581.

⁴³ Ayuns, 7.

⁴⁴ Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006): 317.

⁴⁵ Robert Karl Manoff, “The Media’s Role in Preventing and Moderating Conflict”. This paper was prepared for the Virtual Diplomacy conference hosted by United States Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C. on April 1 and 2, 1997. <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/mano7476.htm> (accessed 4 February 2015).

the current peace process, and negatively influences the conflict through labeling the other as “enemy”. Azerbaijanis are predominantly represented as “barbarians”, “aggressors”, “traitors”, etc. to the Armenian society by the media. Moreover, it can be argued that the low level of democratization of societies also relates to the mass media, since it mainly represents the mainstream ideology and dominantly a tool of propaganda in the hands of authorities.⁴⁶ Apart from these factors, official statements of the leaders, statements in media, and their role in the decision-making process are also significant in shaping the Armenian perspective. According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry statements, there are some factors that prevent the establishment of confidence-building measures among the sides which are mainly caused by Azerbaijan. For them, although no nation is perceived by the Armenian people as enemies, Azerbaijan’s leadership does not miss a chance to declare all Armenians murderers, barbarians, fascists, and Azerbaijan’s enemies. The official documents claim that Azerbaijan bans individuals of Armenian descent to visit Azerbaijan, regardless of their nationality and place of residence. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia states that Azerbaijan is the only country, which acts against the process of the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, because it will result in the opening of the border closed by Turkey and will terminate the blockade.⁴⁷

In addition, one of the most important factors determining the conflict potential is the third countries’ interests in the region. It can be claimed that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has attracted the attention of many influential external actors. The countries involved in the mediation process such as Minsk Group co-chairs from Russia, USA and France, as well as neighbours of the South Caucasian countries like Turkey and Iran have mentioned their interests about the

⁴⁶ Ayuns, 7.

⁴⁷ Shavarsh Kocharyan, “Why the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Is Still Not Resolved” http://www.mfa.am/u_files/file/Article_nkr_eng.pdf (accessed 5 February 2015)

resolution of conflict and regional development perspective.⁴⁸ Also, supranational and international organizations like the EU, NATO, and OSCE, and local and international peace-building NGOs have also involved within the peace process of this intractable conflict. NATO has included its “Partnership for Peace” program and the EU offered the parties membership in “the European Neighborhood Policy”. Nevertheless, the public position of some other actors like Georgia and of British Petroleum and American, Norwegian, Turkish, Italian, French and Japanese oil companies (BP&Co), which develop the Azerbaijani oil fields, is regarded as being neutral toward the conflict.⁴⁹

There have also been a number of other actors of the conflicting parties and their outspoken supporters. On the one side, there are the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh, who claim that they would choose to start a new cycle of violence rather than agreeing to anything short of independence.⁵⁰ They are supported by the Armenian government, Armenian public, intellectual and business circles, Armenian refugees, and Armenian Diaspora. On the other side, there is the Azerbaijani government that threatens to retake Nagorno-Karabakh by force if a solution that satisfies its demands is not reached.⁵¹ It is supported by the Azeri public, intellectual and business circles, Azeri refugees and IDPs (internally displaced people), and Turkey.

Among these international and regional actors, for Armenia, Turkey plays a negative role since it pursues one-sided position that has been in favor of Azerbaijan in the conflict resolution process. However, Ayuns argues that, on the other side, Turkey has its positive role. According to him, violent conflict is not in Turkey’s agenda since it is interested in stability and security of the region as a result of the gas and oil projects and accession demands to the EU.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 6.

⁴⁹ Gamaghelyan, “Intractability Of The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Myth Or A Reality?”, 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Furthermore, internal politics and the political factors, which include the level of democratization, political will, public support and the negotiation process, also have great influence on Armenia. However, it can be argued that Armenia has an authoritarian political culture, which negatively affects the democratization process. The leaders are not recognized by the public as legitimate, which means that any agreement they reach regarding the resolution of conflict would be refused by the society.⁵² As Koehler and Zürcher argue, Armenia has important institutional weaknesses in the sense that the institutions defining statehood have been under the influence of informal pressure groups, networks, and institutions. In this system, influential patrons occupy key positions in the state and keep services for functioning.⁵³

As a result, the leaders do not exercise strong political will for concessions and compromise in Armenia. The semi-authoritarian political environment, deficit of resources of local NGOs, patriarchal mentality of the societies are regarded as some of the internal factors in Armenia which prevent the development of civil society involvement in the peace process and conflict transformation.

According to Gahramanova, the level of political opportunities in Nagorno-Karabakh case such as, liberalization, glasnost, and weakening of state structures, does not automatically generate violence. Structural contexts such as lack of power-sharing, dialogue, bargaining methods, and regional economic cooperation in the South Caucasus stimulated the conflict eruption. At this point, he defines the conflict as “elite-initiated” one, which swept through the whole society.

At this point, the role of “public diplomacy” in finding ways to resolve the conflict which encompasses civil society and leaders who

⁵² Ayuns, 5.

⁵³ Jan Koehler and Christoph Zürcher, “The Art Of Losing The State: Weak Empire To Weak Nationstate Around Nagorno-Karabakh” in *New Approaches of Conflict Analysis: Potentials of Disorder*, ed. Jan Koehler and Christoph Zürcher, (UK: Manchester University Press, 2003), 167.

can establish close relations with the society can be an important matter. It could be a crucial way for building relationships that comprises of understanding the needs of other countries, cultures, and peoples, communicating the points of view, and correcting misperceptions. The use of public diplomacy can increase people's familiarity with one's country through making them think about it, updating their images, turning around unfavorable opinions; it can increase people's appreciation of one's country through creating positive perceptions, getting others to see the issues of global importance from the same perspective; it can engage people with one's country through strengthening ties from education reform to scientific co-operation; encouraging people to see the country of the other as an attractive destination for tourism, study, distance learning.⁵⁴ The involvement of NGO, business, and community leaders in the peace process is considered as important steps in order to promote conflict transformation, and overcome negative experience.⁵⁵

As it can be seen from the above-mentioned factors, there are a lot of reasons which prevent peaceful resolution and establishment of a long-lasting peace for Armenia. Unlike primordialist arguments that support the interpretation of ethnic war as primarily about passion, it can be stated that identities are often new, often mutable, and always in existence as the result of some ideology that defines who is a member of an ethnic group which is "socially constructed."⁵⁶ In other words, constructivists allow the possibility that, in some situations, group identities can be fluid and changed or new identities can be created, whereas, in primordialism, they are more difficult to change. Therefore, in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it is important to try and understand the possibilities for political change, particularly

⁵⁴ Mark Leonard, *Public Diplomacy* (London: Foreign Policy Center, 2002), 8.

⁵⁵ Ayunas, 6.

⁵⁶ Stuart J. Kaufman, "Ethnic Fears and Ethnic War In Karabagh", *Working Paper Series, No. 8*, (October 1998): http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/ruseur_wp_008.pdf (accessed 5 February 2015).

conflict situations and the role of agents in reducing violent conflict in both Armenian and Azerbaijani sides.

Rather than the outcome of substantial and fixed ethnic identities; and only including one-dimensional ‘ancient hatred’ paradigm; “the problem of security”, “image of enemy”, “involment of other countries which have interests in the region”, and “internal politics” can be regarded as the contributors to intractability for Armenia. Moreover, it can be argued that ruling elites exploit the conflict to legitimise their rule in the eyes of their citizens and to promulgate their undemocratic regimes through constructing the representations of danger and insecurities.⁵⁷ The narrative of the conflict has identified the ‘other side’ as a ‘threat’ to its identity. In addition, history has been instrumentalised as it played a significant role in strengthening the collective identity. Furthermore, history is manipulated to justify the claim of ‘we were on this territory first’ to exclude ‘the other’ from the constructed space of homeland. The outcome of this narrative is that the state will feel compelled to resist and combat the ‘threatening other’ to protect the physical borders as well as the boundaries of the nation-state identity.⁵⁸ Both Armenia and Azerbaijan are states with institutional weaknesses where the institutions and procedures defining statehood have, in effect, been taken over by informal pressure groups, networks and institutions that are not taken into account by the way the state is formally constituted. The fact that influential patrons occupy key positions in the state and keep services to some degree functioning which leads to pursuing network-interests rather than common or national interests.⁵⁹ Also, according to Özkan, the Karabakh issue mainly determines political discourse in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Ruling elites use this conflict as a tool to

⁵⁷ Özkan, “Who Gains from the “No War No Peace” Situation? A Critical Analysis of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict”, 574.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 584.

⁵⁹ Koehler and Zürcher, “The art of losing the state: weak empire to weak nationstate around Nagorno Karabakh”, 167.

restrict the democratic rights and to justify their authoritarian rules. The concentration of power in the presidents and the lack of civil institutions have subversive effects on the future of the societies.⁶⁰ As a result of all these processes, a stronger relationship between parties is strongly necessary in order to resolve the conflict. Additionally, third parties can explore how to overcome obstacles, and break stalemates in order to continue negotiations, make accommodations, and conclude agreements. Powerful third parties can use persuasion, reward, and well-timed concessions to save face for each party, de-escalate the conflict, and get both parties to reach agreement.

4. Conclusion

In short, it can be argued that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a significant event in Armenia's foreign policy and it is also one of the difficult conflicts in the South Caucasian area. Armenia has been insisting on self-determination to the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh, while Azerbaijan defines the conflict as a problem of territorial integrity. Accordingly, this paper tried to focus on the possible impeding factors that prevent peaceful resolution and establishment of a long-lasting peace for Armenia. Apart from the primordial discourses and claims, other factors such as “the effect of historical memories”, “security problem”, “image of enemy”, “third countries’ role”, and “internal politics” were tried to be elaborated in this study.

It can be stated that both sides of the conflict need a resolution for this complicated and emotional issue. As Ogenasyan underlines, collective memories, fears, and ancient histories continue to promote alienation between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Moreover, the major attempts to resolve the conflict, including international mediation, have not reached a success. All of these dimensions have turned the tension into an intractable conflict.

⁶⁰ Özkan, 592.

However, as mentioned above, constructivism suggests that peaceful co-existence between ethnic groups, one that is based on trust, is possible. At this stage, it can be helpful to continue opening more space for engaging dialogue which would address concerns, fears, and mutual interests of the parties involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. For parts of the conflict, the goal of the dialogue should be to decrease stereotypes and deep biases as well as to build trust at the personal level.⁶¹ It is important to understand which common interests can bring these groups together. The strategy of promoting educational and cultural efforts maintained at the local, regional, and international levels could also have an instrumental role.⁶² Moreover, international community also have essential role in supporting the transformation of this conflict into the peace process. Thus, it is very important to overcome the lack of trust between the negotiating sides, domestic pressure, elite discourse, and the lack of pressure from international powers.

In the future, there may appear some options of for direction of the process. According to discussions, on the one hand, future strengthening of authoritarian tendencies and same “ancient hatred” discourse will destroy the hopes for management of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On the other hand, development of civil society gives some motivation for peace process and conflict settlement.

Consequently, there may emerge some possible ways, which can contribute to the process of conflict management. However, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is very complex and it is very difficult to have a full understanding through confining the issue into one paper. Therefore, this is only one aspect of interpretation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through both underlining the effect of the history and some internal mechanisms that prevent the solution for Armenian state.

⁶¹ Oganessian, 11.

⁶² Ibid.

Özet

Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesi ve Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasının ardından, Uluslararası İlişkiler alanında bölgesel ve devlet içinde meydana gelen çatışmalar ile ilgili pek çok çalışma yapılmıştır. Bununla beraber, büyük güçler ve bölgesel devletler gibi, üçüncü tarafların söz konusu çatışmalar içindeki rolleri ile ilgili yapılan analizlerde de bir artış gözlemlenmiştir. Bu süreç içinde, Kafkasya Bölgesi de toprakları ve sınırları üzerinde bir dizi iç ve etnik çatışmaya tanıklık etmiştir. Karmaşık etnik talepler ve anlaşmazlıklar, egemenlik üzerine yaşanan çatışmalar ve etnik azınlıklar ile onların meşru siyasi merkezleri arasında büyüyen düşmanlıklar Kafkasya'daki devletlerin siyasi gündeminde hâkim olan belli başlı sorunları oluşturmuştur. Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması sonrasında yapılan pek çok çalışmada bu tarz çatışmaları anlamak ve söz konusu çatışmaların kökenlerini açıklamak için çeşitli teorik yaklaşımlar uygulanmıştır. Bu çerçevede, bu çalışmada, Şubat 1988'de patlak veren ve 1992 ile 1994 yılında Ermenistan ve Azerbaycan arasında bir savaşa yol açan Dağlık Karabağ ihtilafı üzerinde durulmaktadır. 1994 yılında imzalanan ateşkese rağmen, karşıt iki ülkenin siyasi liderleri hâlâ bölgenin statüsü üzerinde bir çözüme ulaşamamışlardır. Bundan dolayı, çalışmanın amacı Dağlık Karabağ çatışmasının “çözumsuzlüğü” değerlendirmektir. Azerbaycan ile Ermenistan arasındaki çatışmaların temelinde, her iki ülke arasındaki “dondurulmuş çatışma zemini” konumundaki “Dağlık Karabağ Sorunu” bulunmaktadır. Genel olarak incelendiğinde, çözumsuz çatışmalarda bazı temel boyutlar mevcuttur. Söz konusu çatışmalar onlarca yıldır devam eder ve uzun ömürlü olma eğilimindedir; ayrıca her zaman gerilim ve şiddet niteliğine sahiptir. Bu tür çatışmalarda savaşan askerlerin yanı sıra siviller de şiddete maruz kalmaktadırlar. Bununla beraber, şiddet geçici olarak durdurulsa dahi karşıt taraflar aralarındaki sorunlarla ilgili nihai çözüme ulaşamamaktadırlar. Ayrıca, taraflar arasındaki ilişkide düşmanlık, korku ve nefret duyguları hâkimdir. Çözumsuz çatışmalarda, taraflar arasındaki sorunu çözmek ve anlaşmayı sağlamak isteyen birçok aktör ve kurum mevcut olsa da, yapılan girişimlerin pek çoğu başarısızlıkla sonuçlanmaktadır.

Çözümsüz ve dondurulmuş çatışmalara örnek teşkil eden Dağlık Karabağ sorunu da pek çok aşamadan geçmesine ve AGİT Minsk grubunun gözetiminde yıllarca süren müzakerelere rağmen nihai çözüme ulaşamamıştır. Bu çerçevede çalışmanın temel amacı, Ermenistan adına barışçıl çözümün ve uzun süreli barışın tesis edilmesini engelleyen belli başlı önleyici faktörleri anlamaktır. Bu hususlar dâhilinde söz konusu çatışmanın analizinde, ulusal tarih ve kimlikleri akışkan, zaman içinde oluşan ve gelişen olarak ele alan ve temel olarak yapılar ve kurumlar arasındaki sosyal ilişkilerin etnik çatışmalara yol açtığını öngören “inşacı teori” kullanılmıştır. Çatışma çözümlerinde özcü (primordialism) görüşü benimseyenler, kimliğin tarihi ve sosyal koşullardan bağımsız bir varlığa sahip olduğunu, ekonomik ve kurumsal düzenlemelerin bu varlığı yok edemeyeceğini ve bireylerin siyasi temayülleri üzerinde özcü bağılıkların önemli bir role sahip olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Buna göre etnik gruplar, doğuştan ve verili bir biçimde var olan somut ve bağımsız oluşumlardır. Kimliği oluşturan bağılıklar, ekonomi, siyaset, coğrafya ve tarih gibi başka faktörlerle açıklanamaz. Bu çalışmada çerçeve olarak ele alınan inşacı kurama göre ise, aktörlerin davranışlarında esas olan çevrelerindeki nesnelere taşıdıklarını düşündükleri anlamlardır. Bu anlayışa göre, devletlerin politikaları da devletlerarası algılar, beklentiler, kendilerine ve diğerlerine karşı geliştirdikleri kavramlara göre kurgulanmaktadır. Bu aşamada, düşünce ve kimliklerin nasıl oluşturulduğu, nasıl bir dönüşüm geçirdikleri ve devlet tutumlarını anlamada bunların ne tür etkileri olduğu gibi hususlar önem arz etmektedir. Bu çalışmada, Ermenistan için çatışma çözümsüzlüğüne katkıda bulunan faktörler olarak “güvenlik sorunu”, “düşman imajı”, “bölgede çıkarları olan diğer ülkelerin katılımı” ve en önemlisi “Ermenistan’ın iç siyaseti ve tarihsel anıları” ele alınmıştır.

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