



Why Peace Now? The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict through Ripeness and Cultivation Theories

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Abstract

Why did the United States initiative Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) emerge after decades of unsuccessful mediation and what does its design imply for durable peace? This article compares two theoretical frameworks in peace establishment; ripeness and cultivation. The first one refers to short-term arrangements and the former one concentrates on long-term peace formulations. Despite the complexity and comprehensiveness of these frameworks, their application to empirical settings can illustrate theoretical limitations. The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict provides an interesting case to assess the empirical value of theories as the conflict experienced power asymmetry, and international mediation. The article argues that TRIPP arose because of geopolitical changes leading to asymmetrical pressure. US-led mediation institutionalized connectivity and economic cooperation between the conflicting states, thereby providing a Way Out via institutional form. While institutional cooperation is crucial, peace establishment requires deeper layers of social engagement and whether TRIPP moves beyond state-level interaction to social cooperation is furtherly examined in the article.

Keywords: *Ripeness theory, cultivation approach, Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, peace*

“Resolution has a tendency to concentrate upon the immediate and the shorter term...Transformation has deliberately included ‘the aftermath’ in its focus.”¹

- Christopher R. Mitchell

Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict: Conflict resolution or transformation?

The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict provides a revealing case through which to assess the construction of durable peace. Successive periods of military escalation, changing power asymmetry and sustained third-party involvement, repeatedly altered the peace process without producing an implemented settlement. Earlier periods of considerable pain did not consistently produce a negotiated settlement. The recent US-led mediation process and the creation of the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (henceforth TRIPP)² raise the question of whether TRIPP emerged because of ripe conditions or cultivated perceptions for peace. In other words, did peace become negotiable because parties perceived a Mutually Hurting Stalemate, or because a credible Way Out had been cultivated or because the interaction of both mechanisms? The analysis examines the mechanisms through which the arrangement emerged and whether it extends beyond immediate conflict management to the structures and relationships that have historically reproduced the conflict.

The distinction between negotiation receptivity and long-term transformation establishes the rationale for comparing ripeness theory with the cultivation approach. Ripeness theory developed by William Zartman indicates that parties become receptive to negotiation in the presence of the Mutually Hurting Stalemate (MHS) and a possible Way Out.³ Mutually Hurting Stalemate creates receptivity for parties to start negotiations, and a possible Way Out indicates parties shared perception that a negotiated solution is possible. The cultivation approach, on the other hand, developed by John Paul Lederach illustrates that durable peace requires not only institutional engagement but social involvement too. The author clarifies that peace cannot be

¹ Christopher Mitchell “Beyond Resolution: What Does Conflict Transformation Actually Transform?” *Peace and Conflict Studies* vol. 9, no. 1 (2002) 21, <https://doi.org/10.46743/1082-7307/2002.1020>

² Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Armenia. “Framework Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the United States of America on Strategic Cooperation Concerning the TRIPP”. May 26, 2026. https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2026/05/26/TRIPP_Framework/13971

³ I. William Zartman, *Negotiation and conflict management: Essays on theory and practice* (London: Routledge, 2009) 232-42

established in a single moment and despite state level interaction, conflict transformation requires social cooperation and long-term relationship building⁴.

Ripeness explains how an MHS pushes parties away from confrontation and a Way Out makes negotiation appear politically possible, but it offers limited explanation of how particular exit is constructed, why it becomes credible and why some third-party interventions succeed while others fail. The cultivation approach used in this article, however, addresses this explanatory gap. It concentrates on communication, relationships and institutional incentives through which the negotiated exit becomes credible⁵. Ripeness and cultivation are therefore not interchangeable descriptions of the same process; they identify different explanatory mechanisms. Ripeness primarily explains when parties become receptive to negotiation, while cultivation examines how that receptivity (and the perceived way out) may be produced, consolidated and institutionalised.

Accordingly, this article asks: to what extent can ripeness theory and the cultivation approach explain the emergence and transformative potential of TRIPP within the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process? It argues that ripeness theory provides a stronger explanation of timing. It identifies the conditions under which the parties became receptive to renewed negotiation but cannot provide a complete account of how the perceived Way Out acquired TRIPP's institutional and economic form. By contrast, the cultivation approach shifts attention to the production of the way out itself explaining how sustained third-party involvement, direct communication and external incentives contributed to the construction of that option.

Empirically, the article compares successive phases of mediation within the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, using official documents and secondary scholarship to assess the explanatory value of ripeness and cultivation. The following section reconstructs key developments of the conflict and the changing mediation before applying the two theoretical frameworks.

⁴ John P. Lederach, *The little book of conflict transformation* (Intercourse: Good Books, 2003) 17-27

⁵ John P. Lederach, *The little book of conflict transformation* (Intercourse: Good Books, 2003) 17-27

From Soviet Management to TRIPP

The roots of the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict extend back to the territorial claims accompanying short-lived independence of both republics between 1918 and 1920. Armenia and Azerbaijan emerged as independent republics in 1918, but Bolshevik expansion from 1920 and 1921 ended their independence and transferred unresolved territorial disputes under the Soviet Institutional Management. Zangezur, Nakhichevan and Mountainous Karabakh (also known as Artsakh) became objects of overlapping claims and contestation. While Bolshevik conquest replaced these interstate disputes with centralized Soviet management, it did not eliminate the territorial claims. On 5 July 1921, the Caucasian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party decided that Mountainous Karabakh would remain within the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, while receiving regional autonomy; the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), which was formally established in 1923⁶. The oblast had predominantly Armenian population but was institutionally subordinate to Soviet Azerbaijan. This arrangement resulted in the creation of a territorially bounded autonomy situated within the Azerbaijan SSR, leaving Armenian demands for unification and Azerbaijani claims to undivided sovereignty unresolved. During the Soviet period, Armenian residents and officials periodically petitioned the central authorities to transfer the oblast to Soviet Armenia, while Azerbaijani authorities resisted revision and Moscow repeatedly rejected these requests. This managed stability weakened under “perestroika”, the programme of political and economic restructuring introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev⁷.

On 20 February 1988, the NKAO regional Soviet requested the oblast’s transfer from the Azerbaijan SSR to the Armenian SSR and despite the rejection from Moscow public mobilisation continued⁸.

⁶ Arsené Saparov. “Why Autonomy? The Making of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region 1918-1925.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 2 (2012): 281–323. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41478346>

⁷ Artur Khachatryan, *Artsakh Negotiations, Volume I* (Yerevan: Lusakn Publication, 2025) 11-12, in Armenian: [Արթուր Խաչատրյան, *Արցախյան Բանակցություններ, Հատոր I* (Երևան: Լուսակն Հրատարակչություն, 2025), 11-12]

⁸ Gerard J. Libaridian, *Documents and facts on the region of Mountainous Karabakh 1918-1988*. (Cambridge: Toronto, 1988), 90-92.

The rejection resulted in mass mobilization, anti-Armenian violence in Sumgait and Baku, anti-Azerbaijani violence in Armenia and reciprocal population flight transformed a territorial dispute into national confrontation⁹.



Map 1: The South Caucasus Map and highlighted Nagorno-Karabakh region.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the conflict acquired both interstate and intrastate dimensions. The Armenian leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh declared an independent republic, while newly independent Azerbaijan tried to restore control over the former oblast. By the May 1994 ceasefire, Armenian forces in Karabakh controlled most of the former NKAO and seven surrounding Azerbaijani districts. The war produced mass displacement among Armenian and

⁹ Waal, Thomas de. *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*. (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 39-42.

Azerbaijani populations¹⁰ resulting in the creation of de facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic which remained unrecognized by any UN member state, including Armenia. The ceasefire therefore stabilized a large-scale warfare without reconciling territorial integrity, self-determination or security¹¹.

Following the situation, international mediation was organized principally through the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, after 1995 OSCE). Its Minsk process established in 1992 became the principal negotiating framework and from 1997 it was co-chaired by France, Russia and the United States¹². The most durable third-party formulation was the Madrid Principles, presented in 2007 and officially summarized in 2009, offering the return of territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan, an interim status of self-government, a corridor linking the region to Armenia and security guarantees¹³.

Although the Madrid Principles were never implemented, it provided three core components for negotiations which had been repeatedly discussed afterwards; status, territorial return and security. These elements of the Madrid Principles reappeared in a later negotiation formulation commonly described as the “Lavrov Proposal”. However, while direct communication between countries occurred, closed borders and weak societal contact provided unstable relational foundation for implementation of the proposed plans. The four-day war of April 2016 demonstrated that the ceasefire remained vulnerable to changing military asymmetry.

The territorial order established after the 1994 ceasefire was reversed by the war of 2020. On 27 September, large-scale war resumed, which has lasted 44 consecutive days. Military capabilities of the Azerbaijani armed forces and Turkish support enabled it to gain control of the surrounding districts and parts of the former NKAO, reversing the territorial asymmetry produced in the 1990s. Through the involvement of Russian Federation on November 9, 2020, immediate fighting ended without resolving the underlying conflict and Russian peacekeepers monitored the

¹⁰ UNHCR “UNHCR publication for CIS Conference – Forced to move by war or circumstance”, 1 May 1996, <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/unhcr-publication-cis-conference-displacement-cis-forced-move-war-or-circumstance>

¹¹ Broers, Laurence. “A Violent Unravelling.” In *Armenia and Azerbaijan: Anatomy of a Rivalry*. Edinburgh University Press, 2019, 33-39. <http://www.jstor.org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/stable/10.3366/j.ctvrs91nw.7> .

¹² OSCE, “OSCE Minsk Process and related structures”, <https://www.osce.org/mg>

¹³ OSCE “Statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries”, 10 July 2009, <https://www.osce.org/mg/51152>

Lachin corridor which became the only path connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh¹⁴. The war which is also known as “the 44-day war” transformed the conflict and regional stability.

Between 2021 and 2023, Russia, the EU and the US conducted parallel mediation procedures with Armenia and Azerbaijan. At Prague in October 2022, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to the UN Charter and the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration as the basis for mutual recognition of territorial integrity and sovereignty¹⁵. A further decisive escalation occurred on 19 September 2023, when Azerbaijan launched a military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh and local authorities accepted a ceasefire the following day. More than 100,000 ethnic Armenians were displaced to Armenia in less than one week¹⁶. Russian peacekeepers did not prevent the escalation, and these developments ended Armenian administration of Nagorno-Karabakh without resolving wider questions of security and borders.

Following Azerbaijan’s restoration of control over Nagorno-Karabakh territories and displacement of Armenian population, negotiations towards the institutionalization of relations between countries. This process marked a movement from Russian-led and OSCE mediation towards US facilitation. A new phase for peace process was marked on 8 August 2025 in the White House where Prime Minister Pashinyan and President Ilham Aliyev signed a joint declaration, witnessed by President Donald Trump. The declaration connected three processes; progression towards ratification of the treaty, a joint request to close the OSCE Minsk process and the opening of communications based on territorial integrity and sovereignty¹⁷. Armenia agreed to work with the United States and mutually determined third parties to establish a framework for the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity on Armenian territory¹⁸.

¹⁴ President of Russia “Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation”, November 10, 2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384>

¹⁵ The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia “Statement Following Quadrilateral Meeting between President Aliyev, Prime Minister Pashinyan, President Macron and President Michel”, October 6, 2022, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2022/10/07/Nikol-Pashinyan-Announcement/>

¹⁶ UNHCR “UN and partners appeal for 97 Million USD to respond to urgent needs of refugees and their hosts in Armenia”, October 7, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/un-and-partners-appeal-us-97-million-respond-urgent-needs-refugees-and-their>

¹⁷ The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia “Joint Declaration by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the United States of America on the outcomes of their meeting in Washington D.C., United States of America”, September 8, 2025, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2025/08/09/Nikol-Pashinyan-visit-US-declaration/>

¹⁸ Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia “Framework Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the United States of America on Strategic Cooperation Concerning the Trump Route for International

The Armenia-United States Implementation Framework described mutual connectivity across Armenia between mainland Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan, while linking Armenia to regional and international transport networks. The framework grants the development of company land-use rights and projects including road and rail links, oil and gas pipelines and electricity transmission. In case of reciprocal implementation, these arrangements could state interdependence through economic partnership and cooperation. These arrangements were formalized through Armenia-US Framework Agreement of May 2026¹⁹. If implemented reciprocally, they could foster economic connectivity and continued institutional interaction. TRIPP can therefore be considered as a US-supported framework attempting to institutionalize connectivity through economic cooperation within the wider peace process.

From Managed Deadlock to Asymmetrical Ripeness

The principal concern of ripeness theory examination for Armenian-Azerbaijan peace process is asking why parties become receptive to negotiated resolution at one moment rather than another. It is neither a theory of the origins of the conflict, nor it establishes whether a settlement is just. The narrower purpose of the theory is to identify the conditions under which continued confrontation no longer appears preferable to negotiation. The relevant question is not simply why the conflict endured, but why the proposal from the United States became negotiable or preferable in which other proposals repeatedly failed.

For Zartman, a ripe moment combines the perception of a Mutually Hurting Stalemate (MHS) with the perception of a way out. The MHS supplies the “push”, when each party accepts the situation from which unilateral escalation cannot deliver an acceptable victory. The Way Out supplies the “pull”, when parties perceive that a negotiated solution is possible. Although Zartman²⁰ calls the Hurting Stalemate mutual, it does not necessarily mean that the pain needs to

Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP)”, 26 May, 2026, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2026/05/26/TRIPP_Framework/13971

¹⁹ Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia “Framework Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the United States of America on Strategic Cooperation Concerning the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP)”, 26 May, 2026, https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2026/05/26/TRIPP_Framework/13971

²⁰ I. William Zartman, *Negotiation and Conflict Management: Essays on Theory and practice*, (London: Routledge, 2008), 232-44.

be equal or arise for the same reason. Mutuality lies in the shared recognition of blockage and cost, not in a symmetrical distribution of sufferings²¹.

Ripeness therefore becomes necessary but insufficient for the initiation of negotiation. A ripe condition might enable the initiation of negotiations, but it neither predicts that negotiation will start nor determines the outcome. For negotiation to progress, it is necessary for the vague Way Out to be transformed into Mutually Enticing Opportunity (MEO), a resolving formula which is more preferable from parties rather than status quo²². While interdependency is not a formal requirement of an MEO, it will force them to negotiate a better alternative than the status quo itself. The central question is whether TRIPP converted negative pressure by 2020 architecture into a sufficiently attractive formula for cooperation.

Further distinction between deadlock and stalemate sharpens the application. A deadlock describes bargaining process, while a stalemate refers to the conflict that neither party believes it can resolve unilaterally²³. This distinction is crucial because negotiations can be deadlocked while the wider conflict remained strategically unchanged. In the context of power asymmetry, a party expecting its position to improve may postpone the agreement, while weaker party may block progress to avoid institutionalization of the unfavorable decision-making conditions. Consequently, diplomacy itself cannot guarantee the MHS, while MHS itself cannot directly impose negotiations in case of unequal power distribution.

The parties were deadlocked over status and security (the status of the territory and security guarantees), but neither of the parties perceived the existing situation as intolerable to make compromise preferable. In discussions of failed resolving formulas, Zartman specifically includes Karabakh among cases where workable proposals were rejected because political leaders preferred the status quo and that external influence can insulate parties from the pain required for an MHS²⁴. The significance of third parties therefore lies not in their presence alone,

²¹ I. William Zartman, *Negotiation and Conflict Management: Essays on Theory and practice*, (London: Routledge, 2008), 232

²² I. William Zartman, *Negotiation and Conflict Management: Essays on Theory and practice*, (London: Routledge, 2008), 235-36

²³ Guy Oliver Faure, "Deadlocks in Negotiation Dynamics", in *Escalation and Negotiation in Intrnational Conflicts*, ed. I. William Zartman and Guy Olivier Faure (Cambrdige: Cambrdige University Press, 2005), 23-52.

²⁴ I. William Zartman, *Negotiation and Conflict Management: Essays on Theory and practice*, (London: Routledge, 2008), 243.

but in whether they preserve existing alternatives or provide a negotiated alternative comparatively more credible. In this application the situation can be developed through two dimensions; when international mediation becomes enough to prevent an MHS and results to the final resolution, or one party decides to abandon international mediation procedures creating deadlock for the second party. The initial phase of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict reflects the first scenario, where The Madrid Principles were central to negotiations, however, after the 44-day war it became evident that the conflict asymmetry had been transformed. Ripeness therefore helps to explain why the Minsk Process persisted without resolution, however, the absence of a shared perception occurred because waiting or the preservation existing gains were desirable for both sides.

While international mediation was present, the 2020 war demonstrated that the earlier efforts neither produced a mutually perceived stalemate nor an attractive resolving formula. Considering the opportunity, Azerbaijan altered the territorial and military balance, and the statement of 10 November 2020 stopped fighting through installation of a new Russian-mediated arrangement. This agreement resembled the agreeing formula of Zartman, where institutional settlement for resolving violence without resolving the underlying political conflict.

These developments also complicate claims that the conflict became ripe because both parties were equally exhausted. Armenia experienced acute military and humanitarian costs, while Azerbaijan retained the capacity to improve the position through force. The problem therefore becomes not that Armenia and Azerbaijan suffered unequally but that their assessments of the possibilities offered by further escalation remained different. Whether a ripe moment could be abrupt or develop throughout the conflict is associated in the third-party involvement in this conflict. Third parties can use their influence on the conflict to persist dependency of the parties, however, the alteration of geopolitical course can cause further difficulties in the relations with the mediator. In this scenario, third-party involvement can not only prevent an MHS but become the reason behind that. This formulation became more applicable to the case study, as the 2020 war and later the displacement of inhabitants from Nagorno-Karabakh in the presence of Russian peacekeepers created controversy towards the relations between Armenia and Russia.

Pashinyan's 2021 account provides evidence of the Armenian government's perception that

Russia's changing regional position has altered the geopolitical environment of the region²⁵. In this framework ripeness theory illustrates timing but becomes insufficient to specify the construction of proposed negotiating alternatives.

In the presence of asymmetrical ripeness, the parties approached to the Washington process under different pressures, yet both identified several advantages in a new framework. Armenia sought protection against further losses, while Azerbaijan could establish institutional recognition and connectivity. Hence, United States mediation translated power asymmetry into an institutional framework where both parties can receive different benefits converting abstract possibility of peace into a more credible Way Out. The peace proposal moved the perceived Way Out closer to a possible MEO by offering regional integration, trade and economic benefits while also preserving sovereignty of both sides. The design of TRIPP corresponded to Zartman's account of how Way Out can transform into a resolving formula. A resolving formula requires compensation and construction including reframing interests and expectations. TRIPP becomes a "corridor" of sovereign regulation, commercial partnership and third-party involvement.

Nevertheless, TRIPP should not yet be described as MEO. Its principal benefits remain prospective as either party finds unilateral pressure and force more attractive to cooperation, the perceived Way Out can narrow, and the ripe moment could be re-established. TRIPP itself does not address displacement and societal engagement and communications, as these issues illustrate deeper layer of peace establishment, which moves towards conflict resolution to conflict transformation. Ripeness theory, therefore, provides an explanation for conflict resolution. It explains why systematic negotiations did not produce settlement before 2020, however, it becomes insufficient to clearly identify why the military balance altered parties perceptions on peace establishment without generating symmetrical suffering, why a third-party capable of preventing an MHS became the cause of its creation and why the institutional presence of TRIPP cannot produce societal incentives for conflict transformation. Ripeness theory explains the opening of the door to the Washington process and TRIPP that made the passage through the door more attractive than the status quo. It reflects how conflict resolution can be achieved in the

²⁵ The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, "The origins of the 44-day war", January 4, 2021, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2021/01/04/Nikol-Pashinyan-04-01/>

presence of an MHS and power asymmetry, but whether the resulting structure can cultivate durable peace remains questionable.

Episode, Epicenter and Institutional Mediation: Conflict Transformation Approach

The analysis demonstrates that ripeness and the development of a Way Out or MEO may facilitate negotiated resolution, but neither is sufficient for conflict transformation. The presence of an attractive settlement formula can reduce the costs of confrontation without developing relationships, structures or narratives through which conflict has been reproduced. For this purpose, the conflict-transformation framework of John Paul Lederach will be considered to conceptualize peace as a multi-dimensional process. The term cultivation is used here as a shorthand for the intentional extended construction of relationships, institutions and incentives that can transform the context from which current developments arise.

The framework consists of five connected propositions, which help to assess and understand the peace process²⁶. First, an immediate dispute is only the episode of conflict. Deeper layer of the conflict such as historical, relational, structural and identity patterns is called “epicenter” in the theory. Secondly, analysis requires three lenses simultaneously, one for the presenting situation and one for underlying patterns and context and the one capable of connecting the two. Third, transformation must operate across epicenter, including personal, relational, structural and cultural dimensions of change. Fourth, peace is an evolving quality of relationships and not a temporary dispute. Lastly, the transformational platform must be both short-term responsive and long-term strategic.

A transformational approach requires to build an adaptive base at the epicenter of the conflict, also called as “platform”. A platform includes an understanding of various levels of the conflict process for addressing immediate problems and conflicts, process for understanding problems and a vision for the future. With this structure it becomes possible to generate a process that create solutions to short-term needs and at the same time work on long-term constructive change.

²⁶ John P. Lederach, *The little book of conflict transformation*, (Intercourse: Good Books, 2003), chapters 2-8.

The diagram presents this idea by adding to the process-structure escalation of conflict episodes with platform underlining it all. The process-structure spiral is seen as the epicenter of the conflict and the peaks or waves of the conflict as the episodes. The general rise and fall of the conflict and alteration processes provide a base from which peace process is generated.

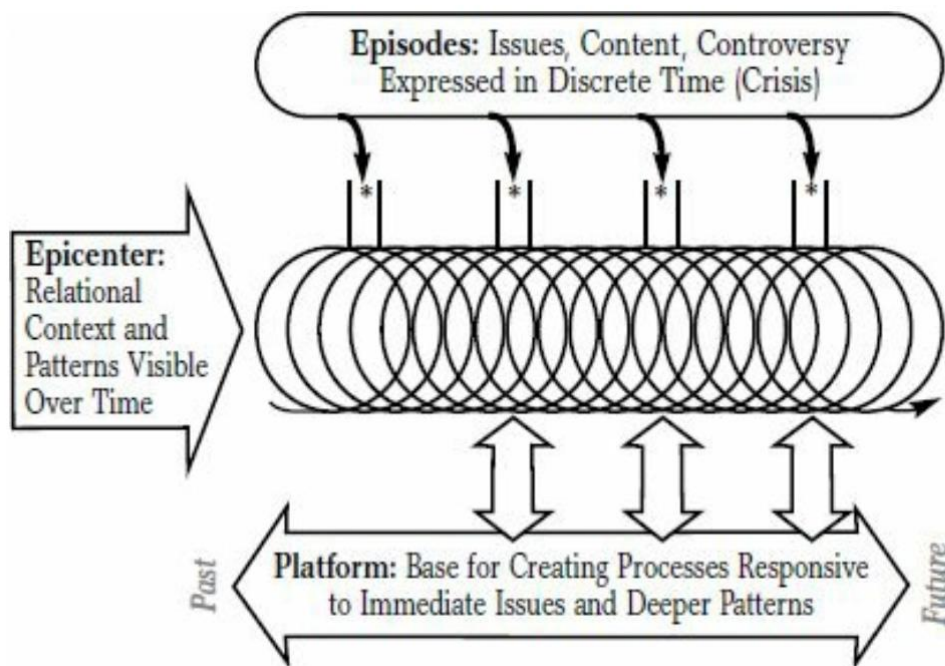


Diagram 1: Transformational Platform by John Paul Lederach with illustration of episodes, epicenter and platform

The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict provides a case for further analysis of this framework. TRIPP should be understood neither as an episode nor as the epicenter itself. It constitutes a potential transformational platform through which questions of connectivity and institutional communication may be linked to long-term changes in the relational and structural context of the conflict. It creates an institutional framework based on economic cooperation but does not comprehend to the relational development of the parties. That is why it acts as a platform, through which institutional and social cooperation should emerge. The episodes in the conflict illustrate core developments in the conflict and possible prediction after the emergence of TRIPP.

Despite, that there can be witnessed a change on conflict episodes, conflict epicenter develops through societal and historical components and refers to the initial causes which makes it to be unchanged. Therefore, the graphical interpretation of Lederach's transformational platform through the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict will have the following illustration (diagram 2).

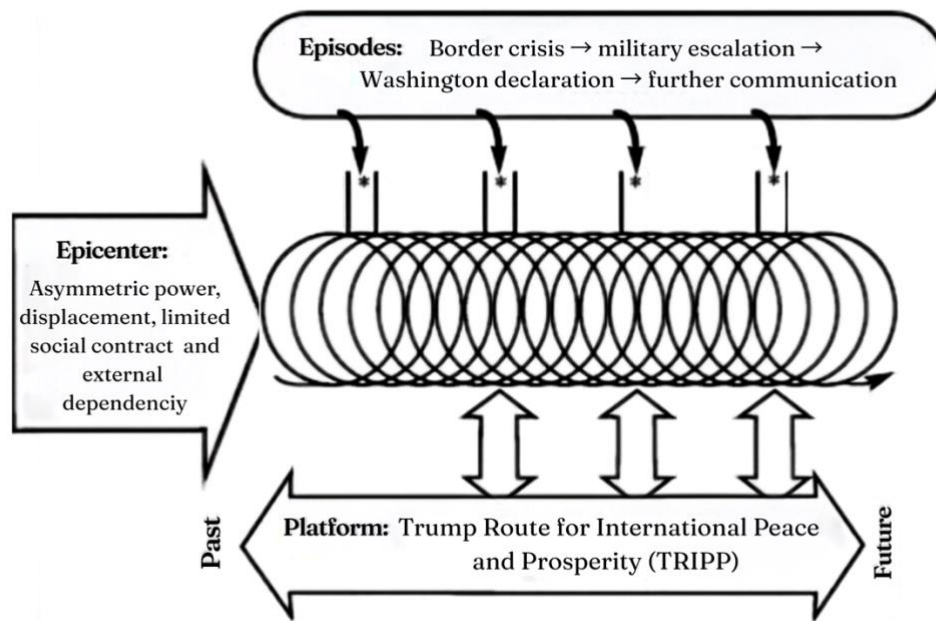


Diagram 2: Transformational Platform by John Paul Lederach with illustration of episodes, epicenter and platform in the context of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict

These propositions illustrate more demanding examination than simply asking whether negotiations produced an agreement or not. This distinction is particularly important for the Armenia-Azerbaijan case. TRIPP should not be considered successful cultivation only because official documents present it as peace establishing and prosperous. Therefore, an appropriate analytical question becomes not whether TRIPP is transformational in name, but which aspects of transformational platform it creates, and which dimensions of the conflict remain outside of it. In other words, which dimensions of the "epicenter" are addressed under the proposal, and which still need further development and in order to understand this paper will provide an empirical assessment through theoretical framework.

The emergence of TRIPP will be assessed across structural, relational, personal and cultural dimensions of change provided by the Lederach. The structural dimension is the most developed. The signed document reveals the establishment and development of transport routes, regulatory coordination, border management and dispute settlement. Through direct communication between states, reciprocal interdependency will be increased which could further enhance conflict transformation process. The relational dimension is present but narrower. The peace initialed agreement provides more autonomous Armenia-Azerbaijan communication as well as cooperation across energy field. However, the current architecture is primarily elite and technical. Enhancement of the relational component would require the involvement of business representatives, professional groups and civil society member to foster beyond state level communication. The personal and cultural dimensions are considerably weaker. The peace process currently is being established in the presence of missing persons, the displacement of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenian population and continuing of mutual discrimination. The published TRIPP instruments do not themselves establish sustained process for displaced communities or any regulatory frameworks for memory and acknowledgement. While the theoretical imbalance can be consequential, the conflict undermines a structurally weighted cultivation. It would be improper to indicate that conflict transformation has occurred, however, currently TRIPP provides ground for something more than Way Out, at the same time becoming insufficient for transformation.

The case also exposes a limit in applying cultivation to asymmetric peace establishment. In the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, territorial reconfiguration and displacement resulted in the situation where parties did not enter the Washington process from equivalent positions. A platform can therefore be adaptive and cooperative while also preserving asymmetrical power.

Overall, the cultivation approach has conditional applicability to TRIPP. The theory becomes sufficient to determine the usefulness of TRIPP for establishing institutional structural cooperation, including bilateral commissions, corporate governance through trade and infrastructure building. The evidence is strong for underlying emerging structural cultivation through elite functional relationships; however, it remains weak for cultural and societal transformation. It still remains insufficient to assess whether the emergence of TRIPP was a proposal for a self-sustaining peace. This conclusion also indicates the article's final claim.

Conflict resolution is essential for conflict transformation, but without social cooperation, the proposal still becomes a situation beneficial than MEO, as it establishes deeper peace process connections, while does not reach to become conflict transformation.

Conclusion

The article examines the extent to which ripeness theory and the cultivation approach explain the emergence and transformative potential of TRIPP within the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process. The final analysis indicates that neither framework independently provides a complete explanation. While together they provide a complementary account, where ripeness explains the timing of negotiating receptivity, while cultivation explains how a possible negotiation exit acquired institutional form.

Ripeness provides stronger indication of timing through explaining why systematic negotiations become failed in the presence of international mediation to displace the status quo. The cultivation approach provides better understanding of durable peace and the transformation of the institutional peace settlement into durable peace resolution.

The Washington process did not create an additional venue for negotiations, but it connected peace establishment with sovereign connectivity, direct communications through regional trade and economic integrity. While mutual receptivity to negotiations is not essential, mutual benefits from the proposal creates better ground for further cooperation. For Armenia TRIPP offers the prospect of sovereignty, built infrastructure and sustained US integration. For Azerbaijan, it offers connectivity with Nakhichevan region and across to a wider regional transportation route.

However, even if Way Out can be included as a condition of ripeness, it becomes insufficient to determine its credibility and explain the reasons behind the failure of one mediator and the success of another and how an initial agreement can maintain long-lasting peace.

This is where the contribution of the cultivation approach is more suitable as it examines whether existing institutions and relations are developed enough to sustain peace. From this perspective the significance of TRIPP moves beyond the creation of transport routes, it creates mechanism that could creation preferable status quo than the existing one, where continuation of peaceful relations becomes more beneficial for both sides. TRIPP is therefore best understood as a potential transformational platform rather than evidence that transformation has already

occurred. While the institutional framework is strong, the principal benefits remain prospective, in case any party finds the use of military capabilities more attractive.

Structural and institutional developments including reciprocal operation of transport and trade routes should be perceived with resolving relational disputes. Security progress would furtherly require operationalization of the peace process beyond elite communications maintaining personal and procedural progress. Conflict resolution may open a path towards transformation, but durable peace will depend on whether TRIPP changes the relationship and structures that reproduce the conflict and not whether it creates temporarily preferable settlement.

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