

The Role of Unofficial Diplomacy in a Peace Process

**Abstracts of Papers Presented at a Georgian-Abkhaz Conference
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FOREWORD

TESTING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT UNOFFICIAL DIPLOMACY:

THE PERSPECTIVES OF CITIZEN PARTICIPANTS

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The abstracts of papers presented in this internet publication is the result of the first year of research and conference activities funded by a grant from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to the University of California, Irvine. The papers were originally printed in the summer of 1999 in a publication of conference papers that we are distributing widely in the region. That publication is in the Russian language, making it accessible to the public on both sides, and promoting greater dialogue. This internet publication of the abstracts of March 1999 conference papers makes the research findings available to English-speaking experts in the international community. It is the first in a series of comprehensive, interdisciplinary research publications that will result from this project.

The objectives of the project are to (1) Promote constructive dialogue and interaction between citizens on both sides of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict (2) Contribute to theory on conflict transformation by enhancing methodologies for tracking how unofficial diplomacy impacts the stakeholders in this conflict; and (3) Disseminate the results in the region and the international conflict resolution community.

Since the project began in May 1998 we held eight parallel meetings in August, September, December 1998, and March and August 1999. We conducted three joint conferences in September 1998, March and August 1999. The parallel meetings were in Tbilisi and Sukhum/i, two joint conferences were in Sochi, Russia (the closest neutral site for both sides), and one was in Moscow, Russia. Since September 1997 a total of 27

Georgians and Abkhaz have participated at least once in joint meetings organized by UCI. Since September 1997 thirteen have been involved in all six of the bilateral meetings that UC Irvine has organized, and play an important role in helping newcomers adjust to the culture of our dialogues.

The articles that are summarized below are based on project participants' innovative and informative research on attitudes toward official and unofficial diplomacy among citizens on both sides and the potential and obstacles to resolving the conflict. It is the first body of research in this field that examines in such significant detail and from the perspective of insiders the experience of being a citizen diplomat. The research methods were in-depth and focus group interviewing, first person accounts, analysis of experiences with spontaneous and planned unofficial diplomacy initiatives, and reflection on the general context of the conflict.

An analysis of the results of these first studies indicates that unofficial diplomacy has made a major impact on all those who have participated, causing significant personal transformation, but it has not influenced public opinion in any tangible way. Findings show that most people questioned about these initiatives on both sides were unaware of the activities and uncertain about its value until they were interviewed. Among the main reasons for this limited public knowledge is that the participants share their experiences within a small circle of close relatives and friends. Media coverage of the events is extremely rare and goes mostly unnoticed. The articles in this publication provide valuable direction to the participants who are committed to continuing their efforts in the peace process and ensuring constructive transformation of the conflict. The lessons learned so far also can be helpful to people working in other conflict regions.

The next set of articles will be published in January 2000 and will be based on research that the participants presented at the August 1999 conference where they explored more frankly than in the past various sensitive issues that unofficial diplomats must tackle in order to be more successful in transforming the conflict. Such issues are the opposing versions of the history of the region, the myths and stereotypes that impede the peace process, and the competing visions of post-conflict arrangements.

We welcome your comments, opinions and suggestions for future research and practical measures that can enhance the constructive transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict and others around the world.

We would like to express gratitude to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for their generous support for this project, as well as to the funders of previous projects that laid the important groundwork--the Winston Foundation for World Peace, the University of California's Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, UCI's Global Peace and Conflict Studies, School of Social Ecology and Committee on Research, and private donors in Southern California. This project would not be possible without the tireless efforts of the Abkhaz and Georgian project coordinators, Arda Inal-Ipa and Paata Zakareishvili, and their colleagues who have participated in the meetings and contributed their articles. My thanks also go to Susan Allen Nan and Jay Rothman who work hard with the regional coordinators and myself to shape project activities. Others who deserve thanks for their valuable contributions to advancing this work are Barbara Atwell, Scott Bollens, Karen Bluestone, Joseph DiMento, Margery Farrar, Stephen Jones, Alexandra Krakovsky, John

Paul Lederach, Kelly Rozek, Wayne Sandholtz, Amy Stafford, Lynn Visson, Lori and Bob Warmington, and John Whiteley.

CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS

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Contemporary armed conflicts typically involve people who have recently been neighbors and co-workers, and take place in residential areas where it is impossible to draw a boundary between soldiers and civilians. Traditional diplomacy that was effective during the Cold War and shaped the structure of postwar Europe is not adequate to settle this "new generation" of conflicts, as Boutros Boutros-Ghali referred to them. We desperately lack new ideas and new approaches. An analysis of efforts to resolve relations between Abkhazia and Georgia shows that one reason for the lack of progress in the official negotiations is the underestimation of the possibilities of citizen or unofficial diplomacy. After all, those who we call ordinary people hold the key to peace. It would be naive to think that if the leaders of Abkhazia and Georgia sign a document outlining the contours of political and legal relations, the process of reconciliation will begin, the refugees will return home, and both communities will begin peaceful reconstruction. In fact the road to genuine peace is much more complicated, and wide sections of the public need to be involved in the effort. Unfortunately achievements in the field of conflict resolution, in the theory of conflict transformation, are not applied in the framework of the official negotiation process, and remain the domain of a very small group of experts. The latter know that the movement toward peace does not often come from the top down.

This article makes the following recommendations for dealing with contemporary conflicts:

1. Contemporary conflicts that directly involve the civilian population are difficult and probably impossible to settle within the framework of traditional diplomacy. In addition to high level officials the peace process must involve informal leaders, that is, leaders at the middle and lower levels.
2. Unofficial diplomacy should not be viewed as an alternative to the official negotiation process, but as a way to expand the peace process, to seeking alternative, nontraditional solutions. During these contacts between middle and lower level leaders of the opposing communities important work takes place to make profound changes in public awareness, to carefully analyze the causes of the conflict and to envision new possibilities and forms of coexistence between Georgia and Abkhazia.
3. The potential for citizen diplomacy can be realized only when the activities of official and unofficial diplomacy are coordinated, and the most progressive middle and lower level leaders are given some status. These leaders can then mobilize internal resources for peace.
4. In the Caucasus it is important to study and apply indigenous approaches to resolving conflicts and promoting reconciliation. Mediators who are respected members of the intelligentsia in other Caucasus territories can play a positive role.
5. Citizen diplomacy can have a greater influence on the peace process as democracy and civil society develop. Consequently, support for democratic institutions, especially an

independent mass media, and constant attention to human rights issues can ultimately promote stable peace.

6. The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict has a long history of injustices and mutual mistrust. It is important to encourage the efforts of the intellectual elite in both communities to jointly analyze the causes of the conflict and openly discuss the results of this analysis. Meetings of academics in the framework of citizen diplomacy that are properly mediated can help us find shared approaches to evaluating historical events. This will be an important contribution to the various trust building efforts of both sides.

EFFORTS TO NEUTRALIZE THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ CONFLICT THROUGH CITIZEN DIPLOMACY (BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE)

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This article shows the important role of bicultural citizens who are closely related to both sides, who know the situation well and, as a rule, have a vested interest in a peaceful settlement. It demonstrates how bicultural people can influence the process of easing tensions. It examines the bicultural author's fifteen years of experience working independently and with other people on many occasions using the methods of citizen diplomacy to neutralize the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. It is not possible to cover all the events that the author has participated in and observed. The article discusses only the main events typical of these efforts. The analysis of these factors and summary of experiences can hopefully inform future unofficial Georgian-Abkhaz diplomats and representatives of other conflict zones in developing better methods of citizen diplomacy.

The article concludes that it is the function of the government and official diplomacy to settle ethnic conflicts. Citizen (informal) diplomacy contributes to this process by creating favorable conditions for official structures. It can ease ethnic tensions, break down stereotypes and, consequently, neutralize a conflict, that is, promote the rejection of military action and a commitment to exclusively peaceful means of resolving a political struggle. Citizen diplomacy, however, is not the "younger sister" of official diplomacy and does not copy its methods. Informal diplomats have much wider opportunities, because their efforts are aimed not only at opponents in the other camp, but also at changing public opinion on their own side, among all sections of the population.

The approaches to citizen diplomacy are diverse, but the aim in all cases is to combat extremist public opinion. This creates the conditions to transform actions into a more politically acceptable form. It is up to the officials to find a final solution to the problem. When public opinion favors a peaceful settlement the officials are compelled to be more decisive in their efforts toward peace. Citizen diplomacy is successful to the degree that large numbers of people are involved in such activities. The positions that officials take are also an important factor.

In the Georgian-Abkhaz case citizen diplomacy was unable to prevent war. The forces that had either a direct or indirect stake in war were too powerful. The moral superiority of active peace advocates was not enough to combat these forces. We were not well organized. We did not have effective ways to shape public opinion. We could not widely

publicize our ideas and, consequently, could not quickly enough create strong support among the public. Politicians did more to promote the conflict than to ease tensions. Now that the worst has occurred and the peace efforts of official diplomats are not bringing results, it is necessary to continue and increase citizen diplomacy initiatives. We have far from exhausted the possibilities of these activities.

INDIGENOUS ABKHAZ APPROACHES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Abkhaz indigenous law reflects the people's national character, attitudes toward good and evil, punishment, justice, values, and taboos. Indigenous norms have religious and moral content. They are followed in Abkhaz families and communities. These norms are similar to those of other groups related to the Abkhaz in the North Caucasus, and to groups in mountainous regions of the Balkans.

Abkhaz society, dissatisfied with official law, maintains the practice of third party intervention through its reconciliation commissions and councils of elders that for over a hundred years have served as a buffer between the people and nontraditional state law. These practices can be traced back to previous centuries when Abkhazia was governed only by indigenous law.

This article examines the cultural and social psychological aspects of indigenous law that are most clearly reflected in criminal law, especially the practice of blood revenge, which is a form of dispute settlement in Abkhazia.

For successful reconciliation and mediation in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict it is necessary to take into account indigenous law. According to Abkhaz traditions, a mediator should have certain personal qualities, have positive experience transforming conflicts at various levels, enjoy the trust of the people, and be acceptable to both sides. It is necessary to include in mediation teams well known and respected members of neighboring Caucasus peoples who are influential leaders in their own societies. They must be equally acceptable to both sides.

Peoples of the Caucasus have a vital interest in peace, since any conflict in the region has the potential to escalate at any time. In such cases everyone is affected. Cultural and historical similarities can help Caucasus peoples use their own traditions of diverse means of third party intervention which in many ways are similar to universal standards in resolving conflicts based on democratic principles.

CITIZEN DIPLOMACY AS A PHENOMENON OF CAUCASUS CULTURE: ITS ROOTS AND SIGNIFICANCE

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The peacemaking efforts of the world community (as important as they may be) are inadequate to strengthen the negotiation process toward peace in the ethnopolitical conflicts of the Caucasus. This is because these facilitators are from various countries and represent political forces with diverse understanding of the Caucasus and interests in the region. Furthermore, the efforts alone of the leaders on both sides and other government structures are insufficient for success. Even if the leaders manage to agree to some mutually acceptable terms, which is highly unlikely because of the vastly polarized positions, an agreement can realistically be implemented only with the people's support. After all, the people played an enormous role in these conflicts as volunteer combatants who sided against one another based on ethnicity. Furthermore, these people know each other very well from civilian life. The people are a real force, including a military force, with which the politicians must contend.

Citizen diplomacy has always played an important role in Caucasus culture. This article looks at the cultural context in which citizen diplomacy has evolved in the Caucasus. It provides historical insights into contemporary attitudes toward identity, territory, and adversarial relationships in the region. The article shows how diplomacy in Caucasus culture has always been highly developed, an integral part of the fabric of culture, and functions effectively at all levels. Because of new values traditional citizen diplomacy no longer operates in the Caucasus the same way it once did. We cannot mechanically use what worked in the past. That culture has been undermined, but has not disappeared completely.

**THE ENVIRONMENT AS A TOPIC IN CITIZEN DIPLOMACY
IN THE CASE OF ABKHAZ-GEORGIAN POSTWAR RELATIONS**

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This article examines the role of such a significant topic as the environment in post-conflict confidence building measures intended to bring the positions of the conflictants closer together. Citizen diplomacy efforts are extremely difficult after the deadly war between Abkhazia and Georgia (1992-1993). This is because of the heavy losses on both sides, refugee issues, and great mistrust. The economic and information blockade against Abkhazia by the Russian Federation based on a decision of the CIS countries at the request of Georgia has further increased the recalcitrance of both sides. It does not help matters that international organizations that are supporting the development of civil society are not doing this even handedly. For instance, these organizations support the Abkhaz nongovernmental sector only in cases of joint Georgian-Abkhaz projects. This does not bring the sides closer, but increases the sense of injustice by the Abkhaz. This causes the Abkhaz to reject cooperation with Georgians, who, in turn become offended, and this furthers the gap between the two sides. Undoubtedly, this model can only lead to more deadly clashes.

My personal goal is to seek a common model of safe coexistence between the two divided societies through common efforts to solve environmental problems, in this case,

environmental problems in the Black Sea. Most organizations with whom I have been in contact talk a lot about the appeal of this topic in citizen diplomacy, but few actually implement any environmental projects. The University of California, Irvine, is an exception.

The only projects that can be successful are those that are symmetrical. In practice this has been impossible to achieve fully, so in fact these projects have been parallel. It is very important that the main parameters be equal, such as the number of participants and the budget. Symmetrical and parallel projects ensure equal partnership with the dominant force in the conflict, thus creating a favorable psychological environment for contact. However, this equal partnership is virtual and may lead, in time, to deformation of the corresponding sectors of a newly emerging civil society, even on the dominant side.

So far, even in symmetrically planned projects it has not been possible to actually work on any specific environmental problem. This is because eventually objective circumstances, (such as funding sources) undermine the symmetrical structure. Therefore, I propose another model for Black Sea environmental cooperation that would enable the two sides to cooperate on these issues together. This model would be to conduct joint activities within the framework of a regional environmental organization, such as the Black Sea Environmental Programme.

ATTITUDES TOWARD CITIZEN DIPLOMACY IN TBILISI, GEORGIA

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This study is based on focus group interviews with residents of Tbilisi, Georgia about citizen diplomacy efforts in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. It shows that while the Georgian population overall is not active around this issue, most people are willing to get involved in citizen diplomacy efforts under certain circumstances. Students who have already participated in citizen diplomacy, those who have Abkhaz relatives or lived in Abkhazia before the conflict (but are not refugees) are the most eager to be involved in citizen diplomacy.

Toward the end of our discussions, almost everyone, whether they thought citizen diplomacy was effective or not, became more active in talking about the ideas behind citizen diplomacy. This indicates that the actual participation in such discussion groups and in citizen diplomacy initiatives shapes a more positive attitude toward this movement. Almost everyone said that they would like to attend a meeting with Abkhaz, and cited specific examples of how during the war Abkhaz saved Georgians, and how Abkhaz and Georgians maintain contact today. They recalled their Abkhaz friends and acquaintances. Everyone was unequivocally against the conflict, wanted to acknowledge their mistakes, and expressed the hope that Abkhaz would do the same. It is necessary to use and activate this positive potential.

Since citizens are not well prepared for contact with Abkhaz it is important for organized citizen diplomacy groups from outside to initiate such activities. It is important to study public opinion and the attitudes of different social groups in order to effectively break

down the enemy image and shape public opinion. We should particularly focus on the younger generation, because it can play an important role in transforming the conflict. The population of Georgia and Abkhazia need more information about what citizen diplomacy is and the successes so far. The mass media must be encouraged to take a more active role.

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN PREVENTING AND RESOLVING ARMED CONFLICTS (THE CASE OF GEORGIA)

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The Georgian state still holds the main levers of influence in our society. The state controls most of the media and therefore circulates information that strengthens its positions. This information is insufficient to get a complete picture of developments. This impedes the people's ability to understand and take action on various issues. The government of Georgia does not show a desire to activate a discussion on the restoration of its territorial integrity. The reasoning is that there is too much difference of opinion in our society and an active discussion would promote conflict in the society. The government of the wealthy want to avoid this at any cost.

The main goal of nongovernmental organizations is to become more effective in efforts to help settle conflicts. These organizations can only assist this process. They cannot bring about a breakthrough. For that it is necessary for the governments to show good will, and for nongovernmental organizations to have complete freedom and sufficient funding to conduct their activities to shape public opinion. The peace initiatives of the nongovernmental sector should be supported and popularized in the press and in society at large. It is important for society to get rid of the enemy image.

Based on my recent experience in nongovernmental activities to solve the Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflicts, I believe that citizen diplomacy initiatives are undoubtedly useful, but the contradictory positions of these societies does not help the nongovernmental organizations to come to some common agreement that could bring us closer to a resolution of the conflict through multilateral cooperation. Our positions will come closer to one another only after the conflicting parties understand their genuine interests. After that we can cooperate to satisfy the needs of these societies, and this will lead to a final solution of the conflict.

ABKHAZ INDIGENOUS LAW AS A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF CITIZEN DIPLOMACY METHODS

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Abkhaz State Museum

This study examines the vast experience of indigenous law and citizen diplomacy practiced by the Abkhaz. Many elements of this experience can be applied not only to Abkhaz-Georgian relations, but also to world practice. One example is a legend that describes how a war was ended long ago between Abkhaz and Georgians. Warriors from

each side were at a stand off on opposite sides of the Inguri River. The battle was about to begin when the elders decided it would be better to have a duel. The Abkhaz chose a young man, and the Georgians selected an experienced soldier with graying temples. Both men took out their swords and approached each other. The Abkhaz immediately prepared for battle, then suddenly lowered his sword. His confused opponent stopped and asked why he put down his sword. The young man replied, "You're older than I am so I cannot raise my weapon first." They embraced as brothers, and a peace agreement followed.

Another example cited was about reconciliation between Abkhaz and a related neighbor, the Ubykhs. Hostility broke out between the two groups who were raiding each other's territory. No end was in sight. All attempts to make peace had failed. Some wise elders who "could reconcile fire and water" decided to put an end to the hostilities. The most highly respected elders from all over the western Caucasus came together and decided on a solution. They brought to a wide valley on the right bank of the Psou River 500 young Abkhaz women with infants and the same number of Ubykh mothers of infants. The women who had volunteered to participate were lined up across from one another, with their infants in their arms, and their eyes covered with blindfolds. They exchanged their babies and returned to their own villages with a child from the other side. This was done so that from then on revenge was impossible between the two peoples since with the exchange of children they were now related as if by blood. When the children would grow up this union would be even stronger. This site was named Joyful in honor of the historic event that took place there and the subsequent banquet and celebration of peace. The village of Joyful (Veseloe) stands there today.

Any conflict can be resolved, but it is necessary to wisely utilize the centuries old experience of folk traditions, including indigenous law and the specific mentality of the culture. These activities require complete sincerity and a heartfelt attitude toward the effort. Only in this case can the outcome be positive.

CITIZEN DIPLOMACY: REALITY AND ILLUSION

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This article examines the author's personal experience with citizen diplomacy efforts undertaken by Abkhaz and Georgians before, during and after the 1992-1993 war. It concludes that the role of citizen diplomacy in settling the conflict has been insignificant. The reasons are as follows:

1. The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict is ethnopolitical, since it arose over Abkhaz aspirations for political independence and Georgian plans to eliminate ethnic autonomous entities in order to establish a unitarian state. The contradictions between the ethnonational interests of the Abkhaz and Georgians gave rise to interethnic hostilities that were exacerbated during the war that resulted in thousands of human losses.
2. The peace process is making very slow progress. Negotiations at the political level often reach deadlocks. The unresolved state and legal relations and endless charges leveled against one another negatively impact the people's thinking and strengthen enemy stereotypes.

3. The economic blockade that Russia has enforced against Abkhazia at Georgia's request since 1994 has not made it possible to break down the enemy image.
4. Pressure leveled against Abkhazia by international organizations, the UN, OSCE, and the friends of Georgia now called Friends of the UN General Secretary, with the political, economic and financial assistance of Georgia have not made the Abkhaz more flexible. On the contrary, the people have become even more certain of the need to defend the independence and sovereignty of their country.
5. Federative relations between Abkhazia and Georgia that the latter rejected in 1992 (Shevardnadze stated on many occasions that his people, that is, Georgians, do not want federalism), and that what Abkhazia is being pressured to accept today cannot guarantee the security of the Abkhaz people.
6. Undoubtedly, ethnic hostilities and mistrust cannot vanish because of an edict, or even an official peace agreement. It is necessary to work hard toward this end by engaging in citizen diplomacy, among other activities. Trust between peoples is based on trust between individuals. Whether we are two neighboring sovereign states, or establish some form of confederation or union, we must do away with this enemy image that has become so strong in the people's consciousness because of this conflict, and not without the help of the mass media. If citizen diplomacy cannot break down such stereotypes throughout society, at least it should do what it can to decrease the number of "enemies." An enemy image is dangerous also because when an external enemy disappears, people begin looking for internal enemies and may organize witch hunts.
7. Citizen diplomacy may not play a visible role in settling the conflict, but it can be indispensable in transforming it from a conflict that is violent to one that is nonviolent. The people do not always support the political negotiations. The militants in both Georgia and Abkhazia fear that their side will make compromises. Voices are often heard in Georgia calling for a military solution. In this context it is important to use citizen diplomacy to reinforce the idea among the people that there is no alternative to peaceful means of solving all disputes.
8. The small role that citizen diplomacy plays is due to the generally unfavorable political context. The role of unofficial diplomacy in a complicated ethnopolitical conflict increases if politicians and citizen diplomats conduct parallel work and mutually reinforce each other. Even if informal diplomacy is unsuccessful it is still a way for people with peace initiatives to be active, and this may have an impact in the future. A participant in a youth meeting in Sochi (December 1-5, 1998) explained that she was there because "our generation will have to be the peacemakers. We are really tired of living in fear of those terrible events being repeated. Our greatest hope is that there be peace in all the world's hot spots."

THE REASONS WHY CITIZEN DIPLOMACY IS NOT VERY EFFECTIVE IN THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ CONFLICT

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This article is based on the results of a survey of the Abkhaz population in Sukhum to determine their knowledge of and attitudes toward citizen diplomacy efforts in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. The vast majority of those surveyed had little knowledge of these initiatives. About half believed that citizen diplomacy cannot settle the conflict, but most of them thought that these activities are useful to Abkhazia. Some said that the

absence of tangible results is because the movement is still too young. The most common reason given for participating in such activities was "to exchange reliable information." Some said their reason for participating was "to contribute to a positive solution" or "to promote dialogue." Others had a unilateral motive such as "to confirm my understanding of the situation" or "to state my position and give the other side a chance to reevaluate theirs."

Citizen diplomacy cannot be effective if only a small group of people seeks mutual understanding between the two peoples. The public on both sides of the conflict should be well informed about developments in the dialogue. If not, even the most successful dialogues will impact only the participants and not provide space for further development.

In order to better understand what is impeding the productive development of unofficial peacemaking it is necessary to look at the gap between traditional citizen diplomacy as it has been practiced historically, and contemporary unofficial diplomacy. This article identifies three main factors. First, the initiatives today are coming from international organizations that do not yet enjoy the people's trust. Second, historically citizen diplomacy was undertaken when society decided the time was ripe. Today representatives of distant political or research centers determine when yesterday's enemies should have their first contacts. This is long before society is ready for such activities. Third, the above two factors dictate the selection of the participants in contemporary unofficial diplomacy who are not always people that society respects and trusts the most. The participants of these first bilateral meetings are those few people who have a very strong emotional connection to the majority. The overall conclusion is that the society is not prepared well enough for peace activities.

There are other reasons why society is not sufficiently ready for a peace process:

(1) Ideological reasons. Soviet history and ideology taught us that enemies have always been external forces. We never thought about the fact that ethnic groups fought and then established peaceful coexistence. In the case of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict many people see the Georgians as an eternal enemy. (2) Psychological reasons. The inertia of war mentality when the people have approval to vent all their aggressive impulses that were pent up before the war. It is hard to give up this freedom of expression. (3) Stereotypical thinking of the citizen diplomats that slows down progress toward mutual understanding in the dialogues. Among these beliefs is that everything was fine before the war, so all we have to do is go back to how it was in the past. First, the problems we had in our relations before the war led us to war. Second, you can keep forcing a divorced couple to live together in the same apartment, but they will continue to fight if you don't get them to understand the reasons for the conflicts and change the nature of their relationship. (4) The authorities' interest in the reconciliation process. The interests of the authorities and society are intertwined. Citizen diplomacy can be successful only when the political conditions for reconciliation are desirable. As long as the possibility of a military solution exists, Abkhaz society will not fully support citizen diplomacy, since this process does not keep us ready to combat aggression. In order for soldiers to be good defenders of their country the enemy image is promoted.

Citizen diplomacy can serve as a good and reliable preventive measure. Overcoming stereotypes and enemy images among intellectuals definitely has effect over time. Citizen diplomacy cannot resolve a conflict, because the main means for this are in the

hands of the government and their legislative structures. Mini battles on neutral territory with wise and objective facilitators can serve as a delayed reaction vaccination that helps societies stand up to the regular provocational interventions of militants. Citizen diplomacy is like a sailboat that often goes against the wind even while it heads toward its goal, not always in a straight line, but through the development of civil society and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF THE EASTERN COAST OF THE BLACK SEA AND THEIR ROLE IN CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

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People of all nationalities are part of nature and at the same time are the summit of its development. Nature can exist without people, but people cannot survive one day without the environment. Our generation faces the Shakespearean dilemma: to be or not to be. We have the choice. Environmental problems are global in nature and disregard political borders. They are especially dangerous in such closed waterways as the Black Sea.

The prewar experience of joint research shows that when people have a shared goal they spend all their effort to reach that goal and have no time for conflicts. The world today is on the verge of great danger because of the terrible environmental conditions of the atmosphere and oceans. Only joint efforts can save the world. This has to become the main goal of today's generation.

This article proposes joint environmental research as a form of citizen diplomacy. It suggests that researchers work together to save the Black Sea. This can be accomplished only through joint efforts. Joint work will help bring people together and this will increase trust and mutual understanding. It is imperative to find a way for Abkhaz experts to take part in the international research programs on the Black Sea. Their absence creates a gap in our data bank. Since 1992 we have had no information about the Abkhaz coastal waters, or about the climate, rivers and general environmental conditions.

We must constantly inform the public about our joint work. This will increase trust in citizen diplomacy and keep them informed about environmental conditions.

OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL DIPLOMACY IN RESOLVING THE ABKHAZ-GEORGIAN CONFLICT

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This article analyzes the relationship between official and unofficial (citizen) diplomacy in resolving the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. At the official level both sides have a growing understanding of the need for dialogue. This has not resulted in a breakthrough, but

there has been some progress. Unfortunately, major progress depends on the positions and interests of the mediating parties. Therefore a broader dialogue is necessary. Despite disillusionment in the absence of a breakthrough, and frustration that Georgia and the world community have rejected Abkhazia's plea for an independent state, the search continues for common approaches. However, this takes time. Efforts of nongovernmental organizations in Abkhazia to engage in unofficial diplomacy have had results. In many respects these activities have surpassed the steps taken at the official level and have not had the abrupt zigzags. The number of people who are working for a peaceful solution to the conflict is increasing. Many people believe that unofficial diplomacy can introduce to the public at large humane approaches and proposals that will ease tensions and resolve issues through reasonable discussions. It does this by not directly tackling the opposing political positions of Abkhazia and Georgia. At the unofficial level of dialogue participants, as a rule, discuss tentative ideas. They do not propose solutions to the complex issues involved in a political settlement.

Citizen diplomacy meetings have varying outcomes. Few of them have positive results, often because of the methods. For instance, when facilitators organize a tightly structured meeting the participants are deprived of the ability to shape their own relationships. The negative aspects of this, as a rule, affect future steps for a long time to come. Confidence building is a very complex process. We are really cautious because we know that one wrong move can set back for many years the progress we have made in lessening ethnic hostilities between our peoples.

The nongovernment sector has played an important role in these efforts. In the past five years the influence of the nongovernmental sector in shaping public opinion has increased considerably. Despite the limited possibilities of the mass media, the ideas of the leaders of the nongovernmental sector have found their way into the community. Public opinion is often shaped on the streets, in cafes, and at public meetings. Building a civil society is a longterm process and a new phenomenon in countries of the former Soviet Union. We face many problems as we build a free society. So even small efforts taken today will pay off in the future. In order to turn an idea into a reality you have to first believe in it yourself. This takes time, people and effort.

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

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Nongovernmental organizations are typically active in citizen diplomacy in the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. Their primary motivation is to prevent further violence in efforts to settle the conflict. The goal of this article, based on the author's personal experience as a participant in this movement, is to analyze the context in which these initiatives have been undertaken, the goals and possible motivation of the participants, and prospects for the future.

Abkhaz society perceives Georgia as a constant source of threat to its safety. People accept the official negotiation process, but not necessarily unofficial meetings. This is because they appear to trust the government, but cannot always understand why Abkhaz private citizens should meet with Georgians if Georgia does not recognize our

right to self-determination. So, Abkhaz citizens participate in these events without the support of the public.

An important motivation of unofficial diplomats is the understanding that dialogue can create the prerequisites for mutual understanding and agreement both within their societies and for the sake of good neighborly relations between them. These meetings significantly fill the information gap about each other. Participants get a more realistic picture about how people in each of our societies is thinking about important issues. The most important result of citizen diplomacy is that a group of people has come to the forefront who believe that dialogue is the best way to achieve peace and security, no matter how long it takes.

It is naive to think that citizen diplomacy can solve the big problems and find the one right way to a settlement. This is not the goal anyway. This is evidenced by the fact that nongovernmental organizations have made so little progress in all these years. These meetings have resulted in joint activities around a very narrow scope of issues: the environment, particularly in the Black Sea, joint public opinion surveys, and joint research on the value of citizen diplomacy. Other initiatives have been somewhat artificial. They have not taken into account the realities, and have therefore remained on paper.

In order for these initiatives to have more impact it is necessary to increase the number of people who participate, and engage the mass media in publicizing information about these activities. It appears that Georgians are better informed about the results of these meetings primarily because the Georgian participants do not avoid the mass media. And the society is more open to the idea that such initiatives can bring about a settlement (even though the public may believe that preserving Georgia's territorial integrity is the only way to peace). Clearly there are also critics of this movement in Georgia, especially those who are calling for a settlement by force. Abkhaz society is much less optimistic about the usefulness of citizen diplomacy, and society has much less information about the movement. This leads to confusion about the purpose and results of unofficial meetings and more negative attitudes. I think that we have to trust the common sense of the people and inform them about these activities in order to prevent such misunderstandings.

Although officials do not hinder citizen diplomats, and sometimes have even helped with logistics, they do not show much interest in the results of the meetings. The decisions passed within the framework of the Abkhaz-Georgian negotiation process under the auspices of the United Nations are usually not implemented.

Certainly no directives, agreements and instructions can force two hostile peoples into reconciliation. Even if a political settlement were to be reached today, stability and security are possible only if the public agrees to one or another model. Furthermore, political decisions reflecting the aspirations of the people can only create a favorable foundation for restoring trust, but cannot ensure it or be a substitute. The restoration of relations is a long and sensitive process. The more opportunity that the two societies have to discuss the most vital issues the less chance there will be for violent solutions.

THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ CONFLICT AND THE ACTIVITIES OF NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: PAST EXPERIENCE AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

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The article covers various aspects of the activities of nongovernmental organizations. It focuses on the complex relationship between unofficial diplomacy engaged in by nongovernmental organizations, public opinion and the government. It concludes that integration in the Caucasus as a whole is impossible without the resolution of existing conflicts. Meanwhile, all-Caucasus movements create a favorable context for peace initiatives in hot spots. Despite external activity, the unofficial political activities of nongovernmental organizations have not yet become a significant influence on the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. This is because NGOs have not developed their independent alternatives to the official approach to settling the conflict and to Georgian-Abkhaz relations in general. The official approach so far is doomed to failure, because it is based on the philosophy that the government represents and expresses the will of an ethnic group. Nongovernmental organizations follow this same philosophy. Until they embrace the principles of a civil society and become a force that has to be reckoned with, they cannot have a tangible influence on transforming the conflict.

One of the most important functions of unofficial diplomacy for peace is to organize public pressure so that the conflicting parties listen to the people who want peace. These groups of people should create a broad peace coalition that would give moral authority to peace initiatives by various organizations, societies and churches. This is impossible in Abkhazia today. This is a problem of domestic politics, both in Abkhazia and Georgia. The organization of public pressure would be extremely painful, not because the officials are not inclined toward a peaceful solution, but because it would be viewed as a desire to limit the powers and rights of the state and the government. In Abkhazia nongovernmental organizations do not strive to organize pressure or coalitions. It is not because civil society is weak. It is because on a number of issues regarding relations with Georgia Abkhaz NGOs hold more extremist positions than the government. They feel it is their responsibility to build an independent state, and agree with the officials and with public opinion on the issues of secession and sovereignty. Meanwhile in Georgia there are strong sentiments to remove Abkhaz from Abkhazia. This is one reason for the continual terrorist acts conducted by Georgians in the Gal region, and frequent anti-Abkhaz newspaper articles that promote mistrust and hostility. That is why meetings with Georgians, whether official or unofficial, do not have the support of public opinion.

The role of insider partials is very important in citizen diplomacy, especially in small societies like Abkhazia where "everyone knows everyone else." People who are highly respected throughout the society can do much to transform public opinion and the peace process. So far no one has come forward to play that role. NGOs are in a position to be insider partials who can be more neutral mediators, but are impeded by their own militancy and nationalism.

The article stresses the urgent need to publicize widely the essence and nature of NGO peace initiatives, and to make sure that these activities are covered in the media.

The future of unofficial diplomacy conducted by nongovernmental organizations hinges on two factors: first, the degree to which the nongovernmental sector grows in each society; and second, the degree to which representatives of the nongovernmental sector are able to free themselves and the public from dominant ideologies and promote democracy and civil society.

PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS OF CITIZEN DIPLOMACY IN THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ CONFLICT

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The goal of the article is to study and analyze the personal experience of participants in citizen diplomacy. It is an attempt to examine the process from the inside, unfortunately, only on the Georgian side. The study is based on in-depth interviewing of participants using open ended questions. Four of the respondents have participated in meetings with Abkhaz once, while the rest have met on several occasions. Four of them belong to NGOs that focus on citizen diplomacy. Two are refugees from Abkhazia and the rest are from Tbilisi. All respondents have a higher education. Three are journalists. Four are women.

Most respondents admitted they were nervous before their first meeting because they expected tension on both sides. Each meeting began with alienation and tension. The atmosphere improved significantly in following meetings when they met with the same people. Nearly all respondents expected more trust and mutual understanding on the part of the Abkhaz, and expected more results. This is when they saw that the path of citizen diplomacy is long but sure and won't end even when the conflict is resolved.

All but two respondents said that their opinions about Abkhaz improved. Some said that this changed their attitudes about all Abkhaz, while others said that their positive attitudes were just about the particular individuals they met. All of them said they had a higher opinion of citizen diplomacy after participating in these activities, and wanted to continue the movement and increase the number of participants.

Almost all respondents feel that the cultures and traditions of Abkhaz and Georgians are very similar and related. They believe they share common interests in economic development, the environment, the Black Sea, and the Inguri Power Plant. The main common interest they all have is in peace.

All were unanimous in their opinion that meetings organized by a third neutral party are more effective than informal interaction. Meetings should be structured, follow a definite agenda, and have concrete goals. Only one respondent thought that it was better when Abkhaz and Georgians meet without mediators and with no agenda or structure. Most respondents said that the structure should not be too rigid, because it keeps the participants from getting closer. There should be enough time for informal contacts.

They feel that the facilitators make a big difference in a meeting's success. Sometimes a facilitator has excellent skills, but does not know the conflict at all, does not know the culture and mentality of either Abkhaz or Georgians. Respondents do not like it when facilitators come with recipes and don't give the participants a chance to express their

thoughts and emotions. They are not against some control over the process, but they don't want facilitators to interrupt important interaction. One respondent, however, said that he found it counterproductive when a facilitator deliberately provoked both sides to vent at the end of the meeting and everyone went home with negative emotions.

Some respondents believe it is helpful to meet with Abkhaz in the context of all-Caucasus meetings because it makes interaction between the two sides easier. Others disagree, and think that at these meetings the contact is inadequate and superficial.

Everyone thinks that in the first phase it is necessary to meet on neutral territory. Some think that it is good for small groups to meet in advanced countries so that both sides can see what they are depriving themselves of by not living in peace. In the second phase they should meet either in Sukhumi or Tbilisi, and later in other places. Respondents differ in their opinions about whether the movement has entered the second phase.

Experienced citizen diplomats say that more and more people should be involved in meetings. Groups should consist of people with experience and people who are new to the process. There should be continuity between meetings. One respondent said that these groups should be separate, because those with experience lose time by having to bring the new people up to speed. New people should be selected based on how well informed they are, their motivation, and commitment to work hard to solve the conflict.. Some think that the meetings are most effective when all the participants are in the same profession because they can work on concrete projects. They also believe that meetings of children, youth and women are extremely effective. Many respondents feel that it would be more effective to involve refugees from Abkhazia in citizen diplomacy meetings.

The respondents believe that unofficial and official diplomacy must act together, but do not do this well. They blame the officials, citizen diplomats and journalists. Citizen diplomacy should prepare the groundwork for official diplomacy by shaping public opinion. Respondents criticize citizen diplomats for not developing a way to impact official diplomacy. They say that in Georgia officials do not help citizen diplomacy, nor do they hinder it, and feel that Abkhaz officials hinder the process. Georgian citizen diplomats believe that Abkhaz come to meetings with instructions from the officials, and are not free to say and do what they want.

Georgian citizen diplomats must focus on a number of issues to improve the process of unofficial diplomacy:

- * Create a data base about international organizations and private individuals who participate in this process, about past and present projects, and their participants.
- * Develop a mechanism to coordinate the process.
- * Develop a strategy and tactics for citizen diplomacy in the Abkhaz-Georgian case.
- * Seek ways and means of cooperation with official diplomacy.
- * Establish close working ties with journalists.
- * Develop a strategy and tactics to influence accurate reporting.
- * Inform the public about these activities.
- * Improve the models of participation in meetings and projects.
- * Prepare people better for their participation in citizen diplomacy

* Increase the number of participants in the process.

GEORGIAN REFUGEES FROM ABKHAZIA: THEIR VIEW OF CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

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This article is about the opinions of refugees from Abkhazia toward citizen diplomacy efforts in the Abkhaz-Georgian peace process. The study was conducted in the framework of a psychological rehabilitation program conducted by the Foundation for the Development of Human Resources. We interviewed refugees from the Gali region in their compact settlements. We were interested in the general context of their urgent needs, and their short- and long-term plans. We talked to people for this study in focus group discussions.

Many refugees did not understand what the term "citizen diplomacy" meant. When they understood the concept they felt that these activities are very useful. They said that they would gladly be involved in this movement. However, they pointed out that those who do participate run into many problems. They are criticized and even threatened by other refugees. And they talk about the difficulties of reconciliation efforts since so much blood has been spilled.

Of the seventy people interviewed only two said they did not believe in the process of reconciliation. They maintained that other refugees just say they support reconciliation efforts because they want to go home, but in reality they feel much hatred.

In discussing efforts to rebuild trust between the two peoples some said that it was not up to the refugees to reach out to rebuild trust. Others said that it will take time to regain trust. Still others said that the people can trust each other if the politicians do not stir up hostilities.

Refugees did not have many concrete suggestions about how they might engage in citizen diplomacy. However, they recommended that there be meetings of elders, meetings of youth, and meetings of Abkhaz and Georgians during Easter, and during visits to cemeteries.

They talked about the need for mutual respect, to avoid calling each other names, and most importantly, to teach the younger generation to respect Abkhaz and Georgians.