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1. Introduction

The end of the Soviet Union was associated with the outbreak of various armed conflicts on its former territory. The former union's southern Caucasian republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia remain critically affected by these conflicts up to the present day. In the light of the history of the Soviet empire and its Russian predecessor, these trends are hardly surprising, given that this empire had resulted from centuries of conquest and been held together through a considerable degree of force and indeed, in some cases, brutality.

While territorial conflicts in the southern Caucasus in the late 1980s and early 1990s were mainly politico-ethnic in character, at the same time the deep historical "rootedness" of these conflicts was immense. This is especially true of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The difficulties in resolving this conflict also lie in the fact that – unlike a small number of specialists – the larger world public is for the most part unaware of its historical background. The present publication aims to make up for this lack of information. A large number of historical facts are presented here to a broad international readership for the first time.

This publication expressly argues in favour of a political and peaceful resolution of the conflict. A continuation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is liable to destabilise not only Armenia and Azerbaijan but also the entire region and to cause renewed armed hostilities. The author is convinced that there are several peaceful means of solving the conflict, with particularly critical roles being played by international organisations. Several possible scenarios are suggested to the reader.

Through the research presented here, the author wishes to help to bring to a German and international public an awareness of the historical context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

It is for the reader to decide whether the author has been successful in this aim. The author hopes that his readers will enjoy reading this book and also discover a few surprises along the way, as the author himself did while carrying out his research.