

HIGHLIGHT OF JOURNAL

The role of ideology in mass atrocities: The case of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan
Vugar Gurbanov



CAUCASUS STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES

Volume 1 • Issue 2 • Winter 2020

Armenia and Azerbaijan: Between Failed Peace and War

ARTICLES

Geopolitics and the Second Karabakh War
Damjan Krnjevic Miskovic

Western Blind Spot in the South Caucasus:
Chronicle of a War Foretold
Robert M. Cutler

Economic Potential of the Liberated
Territories of Azerbaijan: A Brief Overview
Rovshan Ibrahimov

Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict:
The Failure of Multilateral Diplomacy
Murad Muradov

Assessing Damage Caused by Illegal
Activities of Armenia to Azerbaijan in the Liberated
(Formerly Occupied) Territories
Javid Alyarli and Arzu Abbasova

BOOK REVIEW SERIES:

reviewed by **Murad Muradov**
"The Light that Failed: A Reckoning"
(authored by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes)

reviewed by **Mahammad Mammadov**
"The Brussels Effect: How the European Union
Rules the World" (authored by Anu Bradford)

COMMENTARIES

The Gordian Knot of the Armenia-Azerbaijan
Conflict and the Second Karabakh War:
Conclusions and Reflections
Esmira Jafarova

Turkey's Presence, Involvement and Engagement
in the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict: A Reflection on
Azerbaijani-Turkish Relations
Ayça Ergun

Violations of International Humanitarian
Law by Armenia in the Second Karabakh war
Nizami Safarov and Najiba Mustafayeva

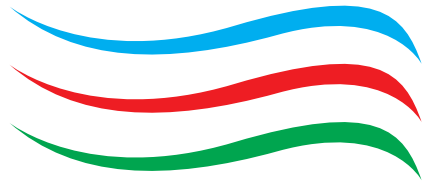
Ukrainian Discourse on the
Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict
Anna Korzeniowska-Bihun

International Response to the Second Karabakh War
Nina Miholjic

Exculpation of Armenian terrorism under
guise of the 'Armenian martyr'
Sama Baghirova

JOURNALISTIC DISPATCH

Dispatch from the Conflict Zone during
Azerbaijan's Patriotic War
Elmira Musazadeh



CAUCASUS
STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES

Volume 1 • Issue 2 • Winter 2020

Armenia and Azerbaijan:
Between Failed Peace and War

CAUCASUS STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES

Vol. 1 • No. 2 • Winter 2020

Armenia and Azerbaijan: Between Failed Peace and War



Publisher: Center of Analysis of International Relations

Responsible Editor: Ilgar Gurbanov

Type of Publication: Periodical (biannual)

Caucasus Strategic Perspectives is a Baku-based semi-academic foreign policy journal that discusses policymaking in and on the Caucasus as well as the region's role in the global context. Each issue of the journal will focus on a global or regional theme and includes perspectives from authors from different countries and backgrounds. The journal focuses largely on the Caucasus neighborhood, but does so with a global outlook. The journal of **Caucasus Strategic Perspectives** is issued by the Center of Analysis of International Relations in Baku.



Editorial Team

Editor-In-Chief: Farid Shafiyev

Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Esmira Jafarova

Executive Editor: Ilgar Gurbanov

Review Editor: Ilaha Chiragova

Proofreader: Tony Murfin

Designer: Intigam Mahammadli





Editorial Office

Baku Office:

Center of Analysis of International Relations
Mirza Ibrahimov street 8, Baku, AZ1005, Azerbaijan
Tel: (+994 12) 596-82-39
E-mail: editor.submissions@cspjournal.az

NOTICE: The content of articles published in Caucasus Strategic Perspectives does not represent any institutional viewpoint. The analysis and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Publishers and Editors. The Publishers and Editors accept only the responsibility of giving authors a chance to express differing analyses to engage in intellectual debate.

BOARD OF ADVISERS

Farid Shafiyev, Editor-in-Chief for Caucasus Strategic Perspectives and Chairman of the Center for Analysis of International Relations

Robert Cutler, Fellow in the Canadian Global Affairs Institute; Senior Research Fellow and Director, Energy Security Program, NATO Association of Canada

Hakan Yavuz, Professor of political science at the University of Utah

Giorgi Badridze, Senior Fellow at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies

Glen E. Howard, President of the Jamestown Foundation

Svante Cornell, Research Director, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Institute for Security and Development Policy & American Foreign Policy Council

Robert Austin, Associate Director, Centre For European, Russian And Eurasian Studies, University of Toronto

Stanislav Pritchin, Research fellow at the Center for Central Asia and Caucasus Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 1 • Issue 2 • Winter 2020

EDITOR'S NOTE	8
----------------------	---

HIGHLIGHT OF JOURNAL

"THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN MASS ATROCITIES: THE CASE OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN" Vugar Gurbanov	11
---	----

ARTICLES

"GEOPOLITICS AND THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR" Damjan Krnjevic Miskovic	35
--	----

"WESTERN BLIND SPOT IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: CHRONICLE OF A WAR FORETOLD" Robert M. Cutler	57
--	----

"ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF THE LIBERATED TERRITORIES OF AZERBAIJAN: A BRIEF OVERVIEW" Rovshan Ibrahimov	71
---	----

"ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT: THE FAILURE OF MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY" Murad Muradov	81
--	----

"ASSESSING DAMAGE CAUSED BY ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES OF ARMENIA TO AZERBAIJAN IN THE LIBERATED (FORMERLY OCCUPIED) TERRITORIES" Javid Alyarli and Arzu Abbasova	93
---	----

COMMENTARIES

"THE GORDIAN KNOT OF THE ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT AND THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR: CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS"
Esmira Jafarova 115

"TURKEY'S PRESENCE, INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT: A REFLECTION ON AZERBAIJANI-TURKISH RELATIONS"
Ayça Ergun 123

"VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW BY ARMENIA IN THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR"
Nizami Safarov and Najiba Mustafayeva 131

"UKRAINIAN DISCOURSE ON THE ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT"
Anna Korzeniowska-Bihun 143

"INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR"
Nina Miholjic 155

"EXCULPATION OF ARMENIAN TERRORISM UNDER GUISE OF THE 'ARMENIAN MARTYR'"
Sama Baghirova 167

JOURNALISTIC DISPATCH

"DISPATCH FROM THE CONFLICT ZONE DURING AZERBAIJAN'S PATRIOTIC WAR"
Elmira Musazadeh 175

BOOK REVIEW SERIES

"THE LIGHT THAT FAILED: WHY THE WEST IS LOSING THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY"
(authored by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes)
- reviewed by Murad Muradov 190

"THE BRUSSELS EFFECT: HOW THE EUROPEAN UNION RULES THE WORLD"
(authored by Anu Bradford) - reviewed by Mahammad Mammadov 199

Editor's Note

The current issue of the Caucasus Strategic Perspectives (CSP) journal entitled “*Armenia and Azerbaijan: Between Failed Peace and War*” is dedicated to the latest 44-days war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone with focus on different aspects of the conflict and the war. The CSP’s new issue includes 6 articles, 7 commentaries and 2 book reviews. In the framework of Armenia-Azerbaijan confrontation, the CSP’s current authors analysed the role of ideology, western media coverage, economic issues, illegal activities, multilateral diplomacy, international reaction, as well as humanitarian and geopolitical issues.

The new issue’s *Articles Section* starts with **Vugar Gurbanov’s** article of “*The role of ideology in mass atrocities: The case of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan*” which analyses in detail the ideological aspects of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict by focusing on mainstream Armenian concepts. His main argument is that the nationalist and exclusionary Armenian ideology with its indiscriminate “enemy” concept provides a substantial answer to the exercised brutality on a massive scale against those deemed “guilty.”

Damjan Krnjević Mišković’s article of “*Geopolitics and the Second Karabakh War*” examines the question of geopolitics of the Second Karabakh War with reference to Aristotle’s presentation of tragedy (entanglement, unravelling). Mišković argued that the strategic consequences of the return of geopolitics to international relations owing to the onset of a G-Zero world were prudentially understood by Azerbaijan and tragically misunderstood by Armenia.

Robert M. Cutler’s article of “*Western Blind Spot in the South Caucasus: Chronicle of a War Foretold*” explains how much it is the case that European and American diplomacy has declined to acknowledge new developments in the South Caucasus over the last quarter century. According to Cutler, the European and American information media also failed to inform their readerships about the facts of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and behind the conflict.

Rovshan Ibrahimov’s article of “*Economic Potential of the Liberated Territories of Azerbaijan: A Brief Overview*” narrates that after the liberation of Azerbaijan’s formerly occupied territories, the main task that now needs to be addressed is the restoration of those territories and the return of internally displaced persons to their homes therein. Ibrahimov provided the general assessment of the economic potential of the liberated territories.

Murad Muradov’s article of “*Armenia–Azerbaijan Conflict: The Failure*

of Multilateral Diplomacy” describes the failure of the long-term attempts to resolve the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan through the means of multilateral diplomacy. It shows that the OSCE Minsk Group has been unable to fulfil its mission and analyses the structural problems their attempts have had.

The joint article of **Javid Alyarli** and **Arzu Abbasova** titled “*Assessing Damage Caused by Illegal Activities of Armenia to Azerbaijan in the Liberated (Formerly Occupied) Territories*” touches upon Armenia’s illegal activities in Azerbaijan’s formerly occupied territories, primarily the level of damage caused during the entire period of the Armenian occupation. By highlighting the financial parameters and legal ramifications of the illegitimate actions, both authors find that an underlying political motive was cementing the Armenian occupation and promoting annexationism.

The new issue’s **Commentaries Section** commences with **Esmira Jafarova’s** commentary of “*The Gordian Knot of the Armenia–Azerbaijan Conflict and the Second Karabakh War: Conclusions and Reflections*” focuses on the most recent events in the run-up to the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan that lasted from September 27 to November 10, 2020, and offers some thoughts on the war itself and the myths and misperceptions associated with the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict.

Ayça Ergun’s commentary of “*Turkey’s Presence, Involvement and Engagement in the Armenia–Azerbaijan Conflict: A Reflection on Azerbaijani–Turkish Relations*” discusses Turkey’s position on the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict and provides an overview of the nature of the bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey and shows how they conditioned Turkey’s presence and involvement in this conflict.

The joint commentary of **Nizami Safarov** and **Najiba Mustafayeva** titled “*Violations of International Humanitarian Law by Armenia in the Second Karabakh war*” discusses international crimes committed by Armenia during the recent fighting, dubbed the Second Karabakh War. The authors provide a legal analysis of these international crimes and examine existing international mechanisms establishing the international criminal responsibility of the Armenian political-military leadership for the violation of international humanitarian law.

Anna Korzeniowska-Bihun’s commentary of “*Ukrainian Discourse on the Armenia–Azerbaijan Conflict*” highlights the Ukrainian discourse over the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict. The commentary focuses on both the Ukrainian mainstream political declarations and media perceptions of the Armenia–Azerbaijan clashes.

Nina Miholjčić’s commentary of “*International Response to the Second Karabakh War*” argues that the Second Karabakh War has changed the

balance of power in the South Caucasus with Turkey became a more important foreign stakeholder in the region, Russian presence remained strong in the South Caucasus, while the West experienced a significant weakening of its influence in this region.

Sama Baghirova's commentary of "*Exculpation of Armenian terrorism under guise of the 'Armenian martyr'*" argues that the role of the nationalist narrative plays a key role in the activities of Armenian diaspora in order to keep its dispersed community united. This commentary, in turn, posits that the same activities of the diaspora have had a strong influence on the emergence of Armenian radicalized groups.

The CSP's current issue also includes a *Journalistic Dispatch* from the war zone covered by brave Azerbaijani war correspondent **Elmira Musazadeh** titled "*Dispatch from the Conflict Zone during Azerbaijan's Patriotic War*" with compilation of photo shots from her field trip. Her emotional story narrates that from the very first day of the Second Karabakh War the Armenian armed forces deliberately and overtly resorted to targeting with constant artillery shelling the peaceful citizens, villages and cities in the front-line districts.

The new issue's *Book Review Series* includes comprehensive review of two books: (1) "The Light that Failed: why the West is Losing the Fight for Democracy" (authored by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes) reviewed by Murad Muradov and (2) "The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World" (authored by Anu Bradford) reviewed by Mahammad Mammadov.

Finally, on behalf of the CSP team, we hope this issue provides food for thought and contributes to and enriches the discussion on subject-matter issue.

Sincerely,
Farid Shafiyev
Editor-in-Chief of CSP Journal

The role of ideology in mass atrocities: The case of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan

Vugar Gurbanov*

This article attempts to explore the ideological aspects of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict by focusing on mainstream Armenian concepts. Its main argument is that the nationalist Armenian ideology provides a substantial answer to the exercised brutality. It draws on theoretical concepts including the role of ideology in perpetrating violence and looks into the main concepts of Armenian nationalism; these include the construction of “the enemy” and its image. The particular focus is on Garegin Nzhdeh’s ideas, which have constituted the bedrock of Armenian ideology since independence in 1991. The peculiarity of Nzhdeh’s vision is that some of his pertinent ideas were “successfully” tested in Zangezur in 1920. Against this ideological background, the article then presents two case studies from the military phase of the conflict which show that the brutality exercised went beyond military necessities and targeted the civilian population. The article concludes that Armenia’s exclusionary ideology, with its indiscriminate “enemy” concept, played a key role in producing brutality on a massive scale against those deemed “guilty.”

Keywords: Armenia, Azerbaijan, ideology, Nagorno-Karabakh region



* **Vugar Gurbanov** is graduate of the College of Europe (Belgium) and National Defense University (United States). This paper was initiated during fellowship at the United States National Defense University

Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 produced several conflicts in the South Caucasus, Moldova, and, recently, Ukraine. Patterns of violence, in particular against civilians, during each of these conflicts have shaped the degree of hostilities and consequently impacted on the conflict resolution processes, which still remain unresolved. More brutal and bloodier among these conflicts is the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict.

Conflicts in Georgia and Moldova also witnessed ethnic expulsions; nevertheless, not all Georgians and Moldovans were expelled from the territories controlled by the separatist entities in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria. Different from this, the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict witnessed ethnic and cultural cleansing of all the territories occupied by Armenia.

Factors that can explain the notorious brutality of the occupying forces against local Azerbaijani civilians remain academically under-discussed. An available perspective is that from an Armenian academic, Aleksandr Manasyan, who holds that the local Azerbaijani population “almost entirely participated in the blockade of and war against the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast/NKAO, that is they were not civilians.”¹ In the context of the Khojaly massacre, former

In the context of the Khojaly massacre, former President of Armenia Serj Sargsyan also used this argument, saying: “If civilian population stays there ... then it means that it also participates in the military actions.”

President of Armenia Serj Sargsyan also used this argument, saying: “If civilian population stays there ... then it means that it also participates in the military actions.”² It follows from this reasoning that the Azerbaijani population was considered as a legitimate military target.

Most academic research on this conflict is mostly about its roots and context as well as possible models for its resolution. Little attention has been paid so far to the reasons for and patterns of extreme brutality committed during the conflict. As Armenia’s forces advanced and militarily occupied the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan, why did they commit brutalities (massacres) against peaceful residents of those regions?

1 Manasyan, A. *Karabakhskiy konflikt: klyuchevie ponyatia i khronika*, (Yerevan: Noravank, 2005), p. 23.

2 Transcript of interview by Thomas de Waal with Serzh Sarkisian, then minister of defense of Armenia (former president of Armenia), 15 December 2000, 2012, Carnegie Endowment For International Peace. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/DeVaalinterview_r.pdf

The author of this article argues that the nationalist Armenian ideology provides substantial answers to the exercised brutality. To substantiate the article's argument, the author will first dwell upon the role of ideology in mass atrocities, followed by an analysis of the mainstream Armenian ideology: its core, adjacent, and other concepts that define its worldview. Against this background, the author will look back into recent history to illustrate this ideology in action. This, then, will set the stage for an analysis of Armenia's military operation from the perspective of the treatment of civilians, with a focus on two cases studies, Khojaly and Zangilan, which are assumed to showcase the role of the Armenian ideology in the perpetration of mass atrocities. The reasons for selecting these two cases are threefold: (1) The Khojaly tragedy took place in the initial phase of the conflict, whereas Zangilan was the last district occupied; (2) Khojaly and Zangilan (which borders Iran across the Araz river) were both besieged by Armenian forces and apparently did not pose any meaningful military threat; and (3) although Khojaly was within the former Autonomous Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, Zangilan was not part of it, but situated in Azerbaijan's border district with Armenia.

The author of this article argues that the nationalist Armenian ideology provides substantial answers to the exercised brutality.

Ideology and violence

The role of ideology in instigating violence and mass atrocities is a well-studied subject. According to Straus, recent academic literature in genocide studies mostly emphasizes the strategic and ideological causes of genocide.³ The core of the "strategic" approach is that mass atrocities are a result of war, which produces threat and violence to counter that threat. Atrocities take place because of: state (in)capacity in terms of unprofessionalism and lack of information to discern civilians from combatants; state preference to value one group of citizens while targeting the others; and tactics of war such as guerilla and (counter)insurgency.⁴

The strategic approach has certain merits in explaining atrocities, especially in highlighting the lack of professionalism of warring parties in conducting hostilities. However, several problems with the strategic approach are self-evident. First, war, as a kind of violent political

3 Straus, S., "'Destroy Them to Save Us': Theories of Genocide and the Logics of Political Violence," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24(4), 2012, 544-560, p.544.

4 *Ibid.*, pp.547-548.

interaction, is not in a position to explain the motivations and calculations of warring parties in conducting atrocities. Second, according to Straus, this approach leaves several questions unanswered, especially why a strategic objective is adopted of destroying civilian groups.⁵

In turn, the ideological approach to atrocities is explained in a more consistent way in the academic literature. According to Barbara Harff, a key variable in committing atrocities is an “exclusionary ideology,” which is “a belief system that identifies some overriding purpose or principle that justifies efforts to restrict, persecute, or eliminate certain categories of people.”⁶ Such an ideology acts on the mechanism of exclusion, which divides people into legitimate and illegitimate groups.⁷ Ben Kiernan concurs with Harff on ideology as the key ingredient and distinguishes four specific “preoccupations” that lead to genocidal violence: race, territorial expansion, religion, and cultivation.⁸ According to Straus, ideology puts forward explicit objectives “that carry the seeds of extreme violence.”⁹ The vision of ideology itself offers violence to achieve, inter alia, “a purified national community or a return to an idealized past.”¹⁰ Having examined the role of ideology in perpetuating violence, Leader Maynard identifies three proximate causal conduits, such as: (1) produce motivation to perpetuate violence; (2) provide legitimization to perceptions to allow violence before and at the time of execution; and (3) retrospectively postulate rationales on the execution or approval of violence.¹¹

Both Harff and Straus emphasize the role of elites in defining “objectives” and “enemies” on the way to perpetrating violence.¹² Michael Mann suggests a more nuanced and layered approach to perpetrators. According to him, three main layers of perpetrators exist, consisting of: “(a) radical elites running party-states; (b) bands of militants forming violent paramilitaries; and (c) core constituencies providing mass though not majority popular support.”¹³ This differentiation of

5 *Ibid.*, pp.547-548.

6 Harff, B., “No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955,” *The American Political Science Review*, 97(1), 2003, pp. 57-73, p.63.

7 Straus, S., *op. cit.*, p.549.

8 Gellately, R. and Kiernan, B., *The specter of genocide*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.29.

9 Straus, S. *op. cit.*, p.549.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Maynard, L., “Rethinking the Role of Ideology in Mass Atrocities,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26(5), 2014, pp.821-841, p.838.

12 Harff, B., *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63; Straus S., *op. cit.*, p.549.

13 Mann, M. *The dark side of democracy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 8.

perpetrators presents functional categories among those perpetrating atrocities: those who give orders; those who implement them; and those who support. This broad approach to perpetrators distributes the responsibility for violence across society and can partially explain the outcome of mass atrocities. Mann also highlights the function of ideology in binding together perpetrators in their goals. According to Straus, the ideological approach solves problems that the strategic approach was unable to address, in particular dealing with targeting civilians *en masse* during conflicts.¹⁴

Having tried to describe the role of ideologies in instigating mass atrocities and other crimes against civilian populations, the author will turn to outlining the mainstream Armenian ideology and its relationship to major extreme ideologies and will analyze its morphology.

Armenian ideology: Founder, logic, and concepts

Nzhdeh and the Armenian ideology

There is no single document titled as, or presenting, “the Armenian ideology.” However, the approach to the personality of Garegin Nzhdeh and his ideas by Armenia’s official institutions, political parties, armed forces, and diaspora organizations provides a substantive answer. Nzhdeh’s racial ideas were especially popular on the eve of and immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, i.e., during the war against Azerbaijan. Nationalism was mostly organized along the lines of his ideas and political organizations, including the then-ruling Armenian National Movement, entertained their audiences with Nzhdeh’s ideas.¹⁵ The Republican Party of Armenia (RPA), which controlled the country from 2008 to 2018, located Nzhdeh at the center of the national ideology. According to the “Core Values” section of the RPA’s program, the theory of Garegin Nzhdeh occupies “a substantial place” in the Armenian ideology.¹⁶ It should also be noted that Nzhdeh’s views also formed “the ideological basis of the Armenian Army.”¹⁷ A transnational, semi-clandestine Dashnak party, which expelled Nzhdeh for his radical views but later restored him, continues staunchly

14 Straus, S., *op. cit.*, p. 549.

15 Panossian, R., “The Past as a Nation. Three Dimensions of American Identity,” *Geopolitics* 7(2), 2002, pp.121-146, p.133.

16 Program of the Republican Party of Armenia, *Our Values*, 1999, available at: <http://www.hhk.am/en/program/> (accessed September 17, 2017).

17 Panossian, 2002, *op. cit.*, p.134.

to follow the nationalist ideology, both in Armenia and among the diaspora.¹⁸ The Tsegakron movement, established by Nzhdeh as a kind of youth organization of the Dashnak party, changed its name to Youth Federation of the Dashnak Party in order to hide its racism-based connotations¹⁹ and today operates in the United States.

To better understand Nzhdeh's ideas, it is expedient to look into his personal background and the historical context of his thinking to set the stage for summarizing the main tenets of his ideas. Garegin Nzhdeh (real surname Ter-Arutunyan) was born in 1886. He graduated from Bulgarian military school in 1907. Nzhdeh's political activity started when he became a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Dashnaksutyun. For engaging in revolutionary activities, he was imprisoned by Tsarist Russia. Nzhdeh participated in the First Balkan War against the Ottoman Empire in 1912, then returned to the Caucasus and was "pardoned" by Tsarist Russia on condition that he fight against the Turks in World War I.²⁰ During the short independence of Armenia in 1918–1920, Nzhdeh served as a local military commander who became notorious for his brutal actions against local Muslim populations, particularly in Zangezur. According to Razmik Panossian, this area was ethnically cleansed, which "enhanced the country's [Armenia's] demographic balance in favour of the Armenians."²¹

After Armenia lost its independence in 1921, Nzhdeh, as a member of the Dashnak party, devoted himself to organizing the Armenian diaspora in the West. Nzhdeh was inspired by Nazism in developing his *tsegakron* (literally, "race-religion") ideology. With Nazism on the rise in Germany and its ideology gaining purchase, Nzhdeh penned his "Tsegakronutyun as a victorious power" piece, published in Bulgaria in 1932, which served as a basis for his further activity. At the time, Nzhdeh's views were of such an extreme nature that he was "kicked out of the ARF in 1937 for his extremism, racist views, and sympathy for fascism."²² Later, the

18 Tololyan, Kh., "Terrorism In Modern Armenian Political Culture," *Terrorism And Political Violence* 4(2), 1992, p.112.

19 Arakelyan, D., "Karekin Njdeh: A Biographical Sketch," *Asbarez*, December 21, 2015, available at: <http://asbarez.com/143441/karekin-njdeh-a-biographical-sketch/> (accessed: October 17, 2017).

20 Lalayan, M., *Garegin Nzhde i ego uchenie. Istoriya dvijeniya Tsegakron*, (Yerevan: Republican Party of Armenia, 2004), p.4

21 Panossian, R., *The Armenians*. (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2006), p.255.

22 Panossian, R., "Post-Soviet Armenia: Nationalism and Its (Dis)Contents" in Lowell Barrington (ed.) *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation in Postcolonial and Postcommunist States* (University of Michigan Press, 2006), p.245.

ideological affiliation played its role in Nzhdeh becoming a Wehrmacht general, putting under German command a 30,000-strong Armenian Legion that fought in the Crimea and the Caucasus.²³ Owing to this collaboration, Nzhdeh was imprisoned by the Soviets in Bulgaria in 1944 and later died in prison.²⁴ However, after his death Nzhdeh was later restored by both the Dashnak party and the Armenian Government. In 1992, he was exculpated by the Armenian Prosecutor General, who acknowledged “his dedication to the cause of justice for his people.”²⁵

Nzhdeh's views as a subset of Nazism

The timing of the Nzhdeh's paper, developed in the 1930s, coincides with the rise of Nazism and fascism in Europe and the content of his writing leaves no doubt as to the impact of those ideologies on Nzhdeh in developing his ideas. Interestingly, Nzhdeh's ideology at the time was not embraced by all Armenians: “anti-Dashnaks called it [the ideology] ‘race worshipping.’ Sympathizers translated it as ‘devotees of the race,’ ‘followers of the race’ or ‘believers of the race.’”²⁶

To understand relationship of Nzhdeh with fascism and Nazism, it is important to explain, in a nutshell, what they stand for. Nazism and fascism have no universal appeal (like socialism or capitalism) as they are tailored to their own communities and, differently from some other secular ideologies, both are anti-intellectual and anti-rationalist in their approaches.²⁷ While many experts equate fascism and Nazism, there is no wide consensus that the two are identical.²⁸ For example, the United States Department of State in its statements does not use the two terms interchangeably, but differentiates between the two.

The two notions differ in some key aspects. Nazism's focus is on biological racism, whereas Fascist Italy was concerned with a cultural nationalism. Moreover, Nazism's conception of history is based on the conflict between races, in which the Germanic Aryan is superior,

23 Jerusalem Post, *Armenian monument to Nazi collaborator draws criticism*, June 17, 2016, available at: <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/armenian-monument-to-nazi-collaborator-draws-criticism-457072> (accessed: December 23, 2017).

24 Arakelyan, D., *op. cit.*

25 *Ibid.*

26 Panossian, 2006, *op. cit.*, p.301.

27 Schuman, F. “The Political Theory of German Fascism,” *The American Political Science Review*, 28(2), 1934, p.211.

28 The US State Department, Press Statement: Message on the 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE Day), May 8, 2020, available at: <https://www.state.gov/message-on-the-75th-anniversary-of-victory-in-europe-ve-day/> (Accessed: December 23, 2020).

the Negro is inferior, and the Jew is corruptive, while others are in between.²⁹ Fundamental to this conflict is an eternal struggle for survival and domination. Other races try to suppress and persecute Germans, in particular the Jews, who were seen as responsible for the defeat of Germany in WWI.

Like Nazism, Fascism draws its legitimacy from its nation, is preoccupied with perceived decadence, and aspires to the rebirth of the national spirit, culture, and society. Fascism emphasizes revolution in a sense of “hardening the character and purifying and energizing the community,” rather than remaking the social or economic system; the primary goal is forming a new fascist man.³⁰ Central to it is to foster “civic religion,” which brings together the nation “in a new common faith and loyalty.”³¹

Despite their differences, both fascism and Nazism share certain key features. Both ideologies accept violence as a means for restructuring their imagined society. For Fascism and Nazism, eternal struggle is essential to survive.³² In essence, Nazism and Fascism are revisionist ideologies designed to mobilize a mass base and rebuild their societies along the “third way.”

It should be also emphasized that Nazism was fully race-based while Fascism was initially silent on it and only later doctrinally adopted it (perhaps under Hitler’s influence). The main feature of the racist ideology is the superiority of one’s own race and the inferiority of “others.”³³ It follows that the “superior” race, as a matter of biology, has primary rights including the right to dominate and discriminate against “inferiors.” Another aspect of it is that “inferior races” are the source of continued threat to, and/or to blame for, the hardships and difficulties of the “superior races.” If, in the case of the Nazi Germany, Jews were guilty for “many contemporary evils,”³⁴ in the case of Nzhdehist Armenians, Turks are the main source of their hardships.³⁵ A sense of victimhood that justifies any action against perceived internal and external enemies is the third aspect of the racist ideology.

29 Schuman, F. *op. cit.*, p.218.

30 Griffin, R. and Feldman, M., *Fascism*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.374.

31 Payne, S. *A History of Fascism 1914–1945*, (University of Wisconsin, 1995), p.9.

32 Paxton, R. *The Anatomy of Fascism*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2004), p.20.

33 Guillaumin, C. *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology*, (Routledge, 1 edition, 1995), p.35.

34 Schuman, F. *op. cit.*, p.214.

35 Gamaghelyan, P. “Rethinking The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Identity, Politics, Scholarship.” *International Negotiation* 15 (1): 33-56, 2010, p.37.

For Nazism and Fascism, violence is doctrinal and gets inspiration from Darwinism (survival of the fittest). As history has shown, the fascist or Nazi ideology is a vivid example of the role of an exclusionary ideology in perpetrating mass atrocities. Nzhdeh’s ideas, as a subset of Nazism, also put a premium on violence and he refers to war as “one of the most vigorous expressions of human evolution.”³⁶

As history has shown, the fascist or Nazi ideology is a vivid example of the role of an exclusionary ideology in perpetrating mass atrocities. Nzhdeh’s ideas, as a subset of Nazism, also put a premium on violence and he refers to war as “one of the most vigorous expressions of human evolution.”

As Table 1 shows, Nzhdeh based his main ideas on the conception of Nazi Germany. At the same time, Nzhdehism, like Fascism refers to national revival – regeneration and necessity of “national religion.” However, differently from Fascism, which emphasizes “civic religion,” Nzhdehism’s national religion implies ethnic-based worldview. Table 1 below is designed to visibly compare Nzhdeh’s ideas with Nazism’s main tenets.

Table 1. Comparison of Nazism and Nzhdeh ideas

	Nazism ³⁷	Nzhdeh’s ideas ³⁸
1	Germany is superior - Better (Aryan) race; - Better blood.	Armenian people and mentality is Aryan - Devotion to the Armenian race and blood.
2	Anti-Semitism	Anti-Turkism ³⁹
3	The «others» persecute and suppress innocent Nazi-Germany - Germany is encircled and in danger - Germany must defend herself	Armenia is besieged by its age-old enemy - The enemy is determined to exterminate us; - Self-defense is our new religion.
4	War is the father of all things	War is one of the most vigorous expressions of human evolution

36 Danieliyan, È. and Nzhdeh, G. *Selected Works*, (Montreal, Quebec: “Nakhijevan” Institute of Canada (NIC), 2011).

37 The six points related to Nazism are an abridged version of the six Nazi dogmas identified by R. Eikstein (Rudolf Eikstein., “Ideologies in psychological warfare,” *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 37(3), 1942, pp.369-387.

38 Nzhdeh’s ideas and statements corresponding to these six points are drawn from his interviews and other works compiled in Danieliyan, È. & Nzhdeh, G., op. cit.

39 Armenian popular narrative equates Azerbaijanis with Turks. See, for example, Gamaghelyan, P., “Rethinking the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Identity, Politics, Scholarship,” *International Negotiation* 15(1), 2010.

5	The individual is unimportant	Individual is nothing beyond the content of the nation's life
6	The leader-principle	Elite is the most sacred of titles and the greatest responsibilities.

As can be seen from Table 1, like Nazism, Nzhdehism is a racially based ideology linking itself to the Aryan nation and devotedness to blood, with all associated elements of an eternal struggle for domination or extermination, a sense of victimhood, the existence of an enemy “guilty in all problems,” and a prevalence of war over peace. Therefore, violence and war are considered as necessary and noble, whereas peace is cowardice and a pause between wars.⁴⁰ At the time, Nzhdeh was “kicked out of the ARF in 1937 for his extremism, racist views, and sympathy for fascism,”⁴¹ but was later restored.

It is also important to note that the Table 1 is not a comprehensive list of all the concepts of Nazism and Nzhdehism but reveals the similarity of their underlying dogmas. Apart from these dogmas, Nzhdehism shares other concepts of Nazism, including the necessity of territorial expansion for national survival (see below).

Morphology of the Armenian ideology

Having examined the relationship of Nzhdeh’s ideas with Nazism/Fascism, it is time to turn to the core tenets of the Armenian ideology. Along with Nzhdeh’s ideas, the works of other Armenian ideologues will be also referenced. It should also be noted that G. Nzhdeh did not invent all these concepts but added to them special dimensions of anti-rationalism and mysticism (as all Nazi-inspired ideologies do) along with shaping and operationalizing them with a special sense of urgency.

The author used Freeden’s morphology framework as an analysis tool for distilling the main and adjacent concepts of the Armenian ideology. The author did not use Freeden’s category of “peripheral concepts,” as it might distract from the core purpose of this paper.⁴² Instead, the author introduced the “enemy concept” of the Armenian ideology, which derives from the main and adjacent concepts. These concepts sanction operational action on the basis of the “enemy concept” to achieve the visionary objectives of the Armenian ideology. An important

40 Danielyan, È. & Nzhdeh, G, op. cit..

41 Panossian, “Post-Soviet Armenia...,” 2006, op. cit., p.245.

42 Freeden, M., *Ideologies and political theory* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006.

point is that the concepts should, in this regard, not be understood as scientifically sound theoretical constructs, but rather as conceptualized myths, beliefs and utopian visions.

The core concept of the Armenian ideology is the establishment of “Greater Armenia,” a permanent theme of the All-Armenian agenda. Adjacent concepts to it are the (1) ancientness of the Armenian people; (2) racial supremacy of the Armenian people; and (3) Armenians as the “first Christian nation.” The “enemy concept” refers to Turkish (and by extension Azerbaijani) people as the source of Armenian problems. Closely interrelated with this is the alleged “Armenian Genocide,”⁴³ international recognition of which should bring “moral authority” to be used as a vehicle for achieving the core concept.

The core concept of the Armenian ideology permeates all main national discourses of Armenia and its diaspora. Nzhdeh made his contribution to this concept by bringing to it a layer of alarmist thinking. According to Nzhdeh, Armenia comprises 1/19th of historic Armenia. It is “deprived of all strategic points” and because of that it is not the “Motherland but a native corner.”⁴⁴ Armenians saw their historical lands as covering all territories “between the Kur river to the east, the Pontic mountain range to the north, the Euphrates river to the west and the Taurus Mountains to the south.”⁴⁵ According to Ayvazian, “‘Greater Armenia’ comprises Western Armenia (Eastern part of Turkey), Eastern Armenia (present-day Armenia), ‘Artsakh’, ‘Javakhk’ and ‘Nakhijevan.’”^{46, 47} According to him, Armenia exists “in three-time dimensions: in her historic, present and aspirational boundaries.”⁴⁸

The core concept of the Armenian ideology is the establishment of “Greater Armenia,” a permanent theme of the All-Armenian agenda.

The “Greater Armenia” concept has also become one of the most intensely discussed political topics at the national and diaspora levels since late 1980s. One of the first vocal messages in this regard was sent by the Armenian Democratic Party Leader, who declared in the

43 Genocide as a legal term requires recognition by judicial means. As the Armenian case has not been recognized as genocide in legal terms, I will use the term in quotation marks.

44 Danielyan, Ė. & Nzhdeh, G., op. cit.. p.27, 30.

45 Panossian, 2006, op. cit. p.34.

46 The controversial term of “Artsakh” used by Armenia is referred to the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, and “Javakhk” term to the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia, and “Nakhijevan” to the Azerbaijan’s Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

47 Ayvazyan, A., “Western Armenia vs. Eastern Anatolia,” *Europe & Orient* (Journal Of The Institute Tchobanian, Paris), No. 4, 2007, p.58.

48 Ibid.

Parliament in 1990, on the eve of the country's independence: "(W)e have always maintained that the territory of this Republic of Armenia is the nucleus of tomorrow's Greater Armenia."⁴⁹ The Declaration of Armenia's Independence of 1990 went further in identifying the vectors

The "Greater Armenia" concept has also become one of the most intensely discussed political topics at the national and diaspora levels since late 1980s.

of Armenia's expansion. It emphasized "reunification" with the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and "restoration of historical justice," thus hinting at territorial claims to other neighbors as well.⁵⁰ In the context of pan-Armenian objectives, in 2011 the current president of Armenia, Sargsyan, referred to his country's occupation of the Nagorno-Karabagh region as his generation's achievement (he used to be defense minister of the so-called "NKR") and, in this context, declared that every generation has its own duty.⁵¹

Reinforcing the claim to "Greater Armenia" are adjacent concepts, the main function of which is to showcase Armenian greatness in terms of history, origin, and religion. In this regard, Razmik Panossian provides a good overview of these concepts in the context of the Armenian identity in his article "The Past as a Nation," published in 2002. In the context of ancientness, as Panossian points out, the Armenian nationalists refer to this, along with indigenusness, as substantiation of their politics.⁵² Ancientness serves to lay claim to wider territories on the basis of alleged characteristics of indigenusness, such as that Armenians originated on the Armenian plateau, or even the claim that the "fatherland" of Indo-Europeans is the Armenian mountains or nearby territories. Based on a primordial approach to their national genesis, this approach claims that the Armenian people can be traced back to the sixth millennium BC.⁵³ As Panossian emphasizes, ancientness helped the nationalist discourse with vast material at the beginning of the conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region.⁵⁴

Related to ancientness is the concept of the "racial supremacy" of the

49 Astourian, S., "State, homeland, and diaspora: The Armenian and Azerbaijani cases," in Atabaki, Touraj, and Sanjyot Mehendale (eds), *Central Asia And The Caucasus*. (London: Routledge, 2004), p.83.

50 Government of Armenia, "Armenian Declaration of Independence," August 23, 1990, available at: <https://www.gov.am/en/independence/> (accessed: October 18, 2017).

51 Official Website of the President of Armenia, "In Tsakhkadzor President Sargsyan Met with the Participants of the 5th Pan-Armenian Olympiad and with the Students Sponsored by the Luys Foundation," July 23, 2011, available at: <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2011/07/23/news-1713/> (accessed: October 18, 2017).

52 Panossian, 2002, op. cit., p.131.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

Armenian people, the conceptual basis for which was laid by Nzhdeh, as explained above. For him, there are two supreme judges—God and the (Armenian) people.⁵⁵ By this statement, Nzhdeh elevates the Armenian people to the status of supreme judges and implicitly attaches supranational qualities to it. As put by Panossian, the three main components of Nzhdeh’s *tsegakron* ideology refer to the Armenian race “as a supreme force and being” with “the knowledge of being born from that force and being” and “loyalty to that force and being until death.”⁵⁶ Nzhdeh’s racial ideas were especially popular on the eve of and immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, i.e., during the war against Azerbaijan. Nationalism was mostly organized in line with his ideas and political organizations, including several parties, entertained their audiences with Nzhdeh’s ideas.⁵⁷ Panossian also makes a very important point by underlining that “racialist ideas remain important, and racial interpretations of Armenian identity are heard often in private (and almost always in the Armenian language).”⁵⁸ This aspect points to an important distinction from fascism or Nazism in terms of public communication. Whereas the former was adamant in “sincerely” communicating the essence of their ideology, the respective segments of the Armenian public, especially its elite, are careful not to discredit themselves in light of the international condemnation of all forms of discrimination, including racism.

The third concept—Armenians as “the first Christian nation”—is one of the most internationally communicated themes in the Armenian ideology. This is a clear political statement, since self-identifying as the first Christians is religiously unimportant because what matters is not when a person accepted the religion but how well and consistently one observes its main tenets and values. By articulating their religion, the Armenian elite try to connect themselves to the powerful Western countries. This approach is referred to as a “third force” concept, which implies relying on external great powers to achieve Armenia’s national goals because Armenia’s capabilities to accomplish those objectives are limited.⁵⁹

The “enemy concept” of the Armenian ideology is based on anti-Turkic view as the main factor in the way of achieving “Greater Armenia.”

55 Danielyan, É. & Nzhdeh, G., op. cit.

56 Panossian, 2002, *op. cit.*, p.132.

57 *Ibid.*, p.133.

58 *Ibid.*, p.132.

59 Astourian, S. op. cit., p.83.

Nzhdeh held the view that “Armenia is deprived of all strategic points,” is “besieged by its age old-enemy” and Turks will “at the opportune moment exterminate Armenianhood.”⁶⁰ According to this view, Turks played a destructive role in the history of Armenian because “[t]hey invaded the region along with other Turkic tribes in the 10th through 12th centuries and have been responsible for innumerable massacres and the colonization of indigenous peoples, including Armenians.”⁶¹ In this context the tragic events of 1915 are described as the culmination of Turkish misdeeds against Armenians.

The “enemy” concept was also fueled by a religious dimension in the context of Armenian claims to the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Nzhdeh fighting against the Ottomans and, later, the Turkish Republic during and after WWI was actually a process of building up “Greater Armenia” by conducting atrocities and ethnic cleansing against the Turkish or Azerbaijani populations. As this venture failed, Turks became the enemy to whom all guilt was ascribed. Nzhdeh believed that unfavorable peace conditions might lead to extermination and for Armenia: “it is a peace of slow annihilation in the contemporary dominating conditions of the Middle East.”⁶² By declaring vengeance against Turks, Nzhdeh outlined the “enemy” of all Armenians. His ideas were further developed by his supporters to conceptualize the “enemy” image of the Turks. In this regard, the final shape of this “enemy” concept was introduced by Musheg Lalayan, deputy to President Sargsyan of Armenia in the ruling Republican Party who labels Turks not only historical but also “biological enemy.”⁶³ As put by Gamaghelyan, the Armenian narrative equates Azerbaijanis with Turks and refers to the former also as Turks.⁶⁴

The “enemy” concept was also fueled by a religious dimension in the context of Armenian claims to the Nagorno-Karabakh region. In this regard, the notorious Armenian nationalist, Zori Balayan, drew parallels between Armenians and Moses, “for whom God was justice incarnate” (Searle-White 2001, 88–89). By locating Armenians on the justice side of the spectrum, their enemies are placed on the opposite—evil—side. To “uproot the evil” was also an objective put forward by priests during the war.⁶⁵ Contextualizing the Bible phrases “Thou shalt not kill” and

60 Danielyan, È. & Nzhdeh, G., op. cit., p.27.

61 Gamaghelyan, op. cit., p.37.

62 Danielyan, È. & Nzhdeh, G., op. cit., p.29.

63 Lalayan, M., op. cit., p.33.

64 Gamaghelyan, op. cit. p.37.

65 Tchilingirian, H., “Religious Discourse On The Conflict In Nagorno Karabakh,” *Occasional Papers*

“Love your neighbor,” Balayan concludes that “God understood that his commandments were worth nothing if evil was not punished.”⁶⁶ By this religiously covered statement, Balayan sent a clear instruction to his audience that fighting for Karabakh was equivalent to a religious duty. In the fascist/Nazi tradition of inferiorizing “others,” Balayan labels Azerbaijan as an “artificial buffer state” while claiming that there are no such people as “Azerbaijanis.”⁶⁷ As Joshua Searle-White puts it, “this is as direct a threat to identity as an actual physical attack, since it denies to the Azerbaijanis any sense of independent existence.”⁶⁸

Nzhdeh’s ideas in action

Ethnic cleansing of Zangezur

With Nzhdeh’s ideas prevailing in the main Armenian state and among political and diaspora institutions, Armenian policies became driven by the power of this exclusionary ideology vis-à-vis its perceived “enemies.” In this context, it should be no surprise that Armenia’s armed forces, equipped with Nzhdeh’s ideology, were motivated to perpetrate violence against enemy civilians as “illegitimate groups.” The scale and intensity of atrocities and ethnic cleansing in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other surrounding regions of Azerbaijan leave no doubt that it was nothing other than an intentionally designed policy to achieve “purified Armenian areas”—as the Nazis tried to do through the concept of Lebensraum. As confessed by former warlord, and later President of Armenia, Serj Sargsyan to British journalist Tomas de Wall, “our war somehow differed from others. We had it so that ethnic cleansing takes place. Otherwise was not possible.”⁶⁹

The scale and intensity of atrocities and ethnic cleansing in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other surrounding regions of Azerbaijan leave no doubt that it was nothing other than an intentionally designed policy to achieve “purified Armenian areas”

Mistreatment of civilians, including ethnic cleansing and atrocities committed in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other surrounding districts of Azerbaijan, have historical antecedents that took place

On Religion In Eastern Europe, 18(4), 1998, <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1721&context=ree>.

66 Searle-White, J., *Psychology of Nationalism*. (New York, NY, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp.88-89.

67 *Ibid.*, p.76.

68 *Ibid.*

69 de Waal, Th., 2012, *op. cit.*

during 1917 to 1920. It was the collapse of Tsarist Russia in 1917, when wars and interethnic violence ensued to define spaces for national states, that led to wars between Armenians and Georgians as well as Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

In this context, events in the Zangezur *uezd* during this period deserve special attention. As described by Richard Hovannisian, Armenian military forces expelled Muslims from central Zangezur “into the peripheries of the uezd, down to the steppes in the east, or across the Araxes River into Persia.”⁷⁰ According to Musheg Lalayan, two hundred villages settled by Turkish and Tatar (read: Azerbaijani) peasants “were returned to Armenians.”⁷¹ Razmik Panossian refers to those events as “ethnic cleansing” that “enhanced the country’s [Armenia’s] demographic balance in favour of the Armenians.”⁷²

Various Armenian authors have emphasized the importance of those events for Armenia and their role in Armenian thinking. First of all, Nzhdeh played a key role and personally commanded forces engaged in atrocities. Second, Zangezur was a bridge geographically linking Azerbaijan and Turkey. By taking control of this territory and ethnically cleansing the Azerbaijani population from there, Armenians solved one of strategic problems in Nzhdeh’s vision. In this regard, Musheg Lalayan considers the Zangezur events as “the most famous page not only in his [Nzhdeh’s] life but also in the whole Armenian history of the modern times.”⁷³ Third, the ethnic cleansing and atrocities in Zangezur paid off, as the British commander in charge of the region at the time accepted the status quo and changed Britain’s position by acquiescing to Armenian rule in Zangezur.⁷⁴

Replicating historical success: Ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh region and adjacent regions of Azerbaijan

As the Zangezur events described above confirm, along with Nzhdeh’s radical ideas, his military achievements in Zangezur back in 1920 also

70 Hovannisian, R. “The Armeno-Azerbaijani Conflict over Mountainous Karabagh, 1918–1919,” *The Armenian Review*, 24, 2–94, 1971, p.194.

71 Lalayan, M., op. cit., p.8.

72 Panossian, 2006, op. cit., p.255.

73 Lalayan, op. cit., p.5.

74 Hovannisian, op. cit., p.195.

had an appeal for Armenians. Unsurprisingly, Nzhdeh's ideas formed "the ideological basis of the Armenian Army."⁷⁵

Occupation of Khojaly

Khojaly is centrally located in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. To the south was Khankendi ("Stepanakert"); to the north, east, and west, Askeran—both, at the time of the Khojaly occupation, under Armenian control. It hosted the only airport in the region and served as the main railway and road transport hub of the region. This town was considered as a hindrance to further Armenian expansion in the region.

According to the "Memorial" report, the Armenian forces blockaded the town beginning in early autumn, 1991 (September 11 and October 1 were mentioned).⁷⁶ After this period, the only communication with the town was an occasional helicopter transport, which usually in-transported foodstuffs while out-transporting the sick, elderly, and women. Air communication was disrupted after a helicopter was shot down over Shusha city on January 28, 1992. As survivors recall, following the shooting down only two helicopters flew into Khojaly, on February 13, which evacuated mostly some women and children. According to Azerbaijani estimates, around 2500 people were still in town by the time of the Armenian attack.

Interviews with former Khojaly defenders reveal that the town had local self-defense teams comprising around 160-200 fighters.⁷⁷ Of them, around 20 were from the special police (OMON) who focused on the defense of the Khojaly airport. The fighters were armed mostly with light weapons (rifles, sub-machine-guns, machine-guns, and three grenade launchers). The Memorial Report indicates that "according to the information received from both sides there were three armored vehicles and 'Alazan' launcher in the town."⁷⁸ The report additionally cites "NKR" officials claiming that there were also two "Grad" multiple rocket launch systems. Interviews with surviving Khojaly defenders

75 Panossian, 2002, op. cit., p.134.

76 "Report of the Human Rights Center 'Memorial' on mass violations of human rights by armed groups during the seizure of the town of Khojaly in the night from February 25 to February 1992," in Russian, 1992, available at: <http://old.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/karabah/hojaly/index.htm> (accessed: November 1, 2017).

77 Interview with Shamil Sabiroglu, Recollecting Armenia's attack on Khojaly, conducted by Vugar Gurbanov (in person), Office of the Public Union on the Recognition of the Khojaly Genocide, Baku, December 12, 2015.

78 Report of the Human Rights Center "Memorial," op. cit.

Several Khojaly defenders and residents also stated that, before the final offensive on the town on February 25, the Armenian forces launched massive artillery attacks to test the response capability of the defenders.

do not confirm the presence of the Grad systems.⁷⁹ Moreover, according to them, one of the armored vehicles had broken down, while lack of diesel due to the blockade prevented operating those vehicles. Also, lack of supplies—munitions and guns—hamstrung the defenders’ resistance.⁸⁰ Several Khojaly defenders and residents also stated that, before the final offensive on the town on February 25, the Armenian forces launched massive artillery attacks to test the response capability of the defenders. According to these witnesses, as there were no available means to respond, the Armenian forces proved for themselves that the town defenders were defenseless against heavy weapons.⁸¹

The attack on Khojaly by the Armenian forces started on the evening of February 25, 1992. According to the Memorial Report, the Russian 366th Regiment, stationed in Khankendi, took an active role in the attack. The Armenian side confesses the participation of that regiment’s armored vehicles together with their crews.⁸² Human Rights Watch report also confirms the participation of 366th regiment personnel in the attack.⁸³ According to interviews with Khojaly defenders, about 40 armored vehicles and tanks participated in the attack.⁸⁴ Starting with heavy artillery shelling at about 23:00, the attacking forces entered the town from three directions and quickly broke the resistance of the defenders, which was confirmed by damage characteristic not of street fighting, but of artillery destruction.⁸⁵

As Khojaly was encircled from all sides by the Armenian forces, residents tried to flee the town via the northern part, through Askeran to Aghdam. According to the Memorial Report, the population left the town in two directions: (1) from the eastern part of the town to the north-east along the Gargar river, left west of Askeran (the Armenian side alleges this route was left as a corridor for population to leave the

79 Khojaly survivors (five persons), Recollecting Armenia’s attack on Khojaly. Interview by Vugar Gurbanov (in person). Office of the Public Union on the Recognition of the Khojaly Genocide, Baku, December 12, 2015.

80 Khojaly survivors (five persons), op. cit.

81 Ibid.

82 Report of the Human Rights Center “Memorial,” op. cit.

83 Human Rights Watch, “Azerbaijan: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh,” ISBN 1-56432-142-8, 1994, p.6, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/AZER%20Conflict%20in%20N-K%20Dec94.pdf> (Accessed: November 27, 2017).

84 Khojaly survivors (five persons), op. cit.

85 Report of the Human Rights Center “Memorial,” op. cit.

town); (2) from the northern part of the town to the north-east, right east of Askeran (it is assumed that a minor part of population tried to flee through this route). According to survivors, the population left the town in groups and had to walk about 8–12 km through Armenian-controlled lands to reach Aghdam city in Azerbaijan. The same report indicates that around 200–300 people did not leave the town but stayed in their houses.

The well-coordinated massive artillery shelling and follow-on attack by the Armenian army on the town of Khojaly was a tragedy that had “significant impact on military, political and moral dimensions on the situation in Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh region.”⁸⁶ The Memorial report further reveals that:

*Escaping people were dropping across Armenian outposts and were being shot at. A part of population managed to reach Aghdam, another part, mainly women and children (number not exactly known) froze to death during their escape in mountains; another part, according to accounts of those who reached Aghdam, was captured at Pirjamal and Nakhchivanik villages. There are accounts of exchanged Khojaly residents that certain number of hostages was gunned down.*⁸⁷

Azerbaijan’s official statistics provide details of the massacre. The Foreign Ministry website states the following:

*As a result, 613 persons were killed, including 106 women, 63 children and 70 elderly people. 1,275 inhabitants were taken hostage, while the fate of 150 persons remains unknown to this day. In the course of the tragedy 487 inhabitants of Khojaly were severely maimed, including 76 children not yet of age. 6 families were completely wiped out, 26 children lost both parents, and 130 children one of their parents. Of those who perished, 56 persons were killed with especial cruelty: by burning alive, scalping, beheading, gouging out of eyes, and bayoneting of pregnant women in the abdomen.*⁸⁸

Human Rights Watch estimated the number murdered at about 200 while

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “Khojaly Genocide,” 2017, available at: <http://mfa.gov.az/en/content/850> (accessed: November 25, 2017).

emphasizing that “as many as 500–1,000 may have died.”⁸⁹ It should be noted that some of the interviews with Khojaly survivors and town officials as well as journalists and others indicated higher figures. Some of them claimed that the number murdered was about 1500, while the 1275 hostages are only those freed through official channels; other people were freed through private channels by paying a ransom. A Khojaly town official indicated that Khojaly also hosted displaced persons from neighboring villages and some refugee Meskheti Turks from the Fergana Valley.⁹⁰ According to them, population registration documents were lost in Khojaly, which is why it was practically impossible to make an exact accounting. This also reveals that there might have been more than 2500 people in Khojaly on February 25, 1992.

In their respective reports mentioned above, Human Rights Watch refers to Khojaly as a “massacre,” whereas the Memorial report classifies it as “massive violence against the civilian population of the town.” If we take the official statistics as a basis of calculation, then the following picture emerges. More than 80% of the town’s population were either murdered, taken hostage, or remain missing. As indicated on the Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry website, many of the hostages suffered physical and psychological trauma as a result of mistreatment.⁹¹ A part of this mistreatment was the rape of women and girls, which was used to serve as “one of the tools of ethnic cleansing, a way to terrorize the Azerbaijani population and make sure that they did not come back to Armenia and Karabagh.”⁹²

Another proof of the culpability of the Armenian side is presented by the current President of Armenia. In his interview with a British journalist he explicitly admitted the violence against Khojaly civilians, stating that:

*Before Khojali, the Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us, they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]. And that’s what happened.*⁹³

89 Human Rights Watch, op. cit., p.6

90 Interview with Khojaly town official. Recollecting Armenia’s attack on Khojaly. Interview by Vugar Garbanov (in person). Office of the Executive Power of the Khojaly District, Baku, December 19, 2015

91 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “Khojaly Genocide,” op. cit.

92 Isgandarova, N., “Rape as a Tool against Women in War Rape as a Tool against Women in War: The Role of Spiritual Caregivers to Support the Survivors of an Ethnic Violence,” *Cross Currents* 63(2), 2013, pp.174-184, p.177.

93 De Waal, Th., *Black Garden*. (New York: New York University Press, 2003), p.172.

It would be no exaggeration to state that the Khojaly massacre continues to influence the social and political dynamics of the conflict. As rightly put by Thomas Goltz, “Khodjali has been turned into a horrible symbol of terror.”⁹⁴ Moreover, it has also become a symbol of lack of culpability for misdeeds in this conflict.

Occupation of Zangilan

Zangilan was the last Azerbaijani district to be occupied by Armenia during the 1991–1994 war. The district is located in the south-western part of Azerbaijan, bordering both Iran to the south across the Arax river and Armenia to the west. Located to the north was Gubadli, and to the east Jebrail—districts of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenian forces in August 1993.

Similar to any Azerbaijani border region with Armenia, Zangilan district was under fire during the conflict. The situation gradually worsened beginning in March 1993, when several villages were occupied. With the summer Armenian offensive, when the Fuzuli, Jebrail, and Gubadli districts were occupied towards the end of August, Zangilan also lost some territories. Most importantly, after this offensive Zangilan was almost encircled by Armenian forces and the Arax river, with no bridge to Iran. Soon, Armenian forces also occupied the Sighirt and Bartaz heights, which cut Zangilan off from any connection with Azerbaijani areas outside of Armenian control.⁹⁵ Before this happened, some military hardware, including two “Grad” artillery systems and a tank, was withdrawn from the district. According to eyewitness interviews, the districts still had around two hundred fighters and four tanks to withstand the Armenian attacks.⁹⁶

Having consolidated the recently occupied territories, the Armenian side concentrated the bulk of its forces against Zangilan. At the end of October, Armenian forces launched an offensive to occupy Zangilan

It would be no exaggeration to state that the Khojaly massacre continues to influence the social and political dynamics of the conflict. As rightly put by Thomas Goltz, “Khodjali has been turned into a horrible symbol of terror.”

94 Goltz, T., “The Successes of the Spin Doctors: Western Media Reporting on the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 32(2), June 2012, p.189.

95 Azerbaijan National Library Portal, “Information About Zengilan’s Occupation,” available at: <http://www.anl.az/zengilan.htm> (accessed: September 13, 2017).

96 Khojaly survivors (five persons), op. cit.

from three main directions: (1) from Armenia's Mehri region; (2) from Armenia's Gafan region; and (3) from the occupied Gubadli district of Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan National Library Portal). According to Human Rights Watch, Armenian forces were also attacking from the eastern side, the recently occupied Jebrail district⁹⁷. An ICRC official, Micheal Tschanz, also confirmed the presence of Armenian troops in Zangilan. According to him, "Armenians from Armenia have crossed the border and occupied some villages in Zangilan province."⁹⁸

Sources vary about number of residents in Zangilan by the time of offensive. According to information from the electronic portal of the Azerbaijan National Library, "34 thousand residents gathered along the Araz river" in Zangilan,⁹⁹ whereas a Human Rights Watch report indicates around 60,000 people, "overwhelmingly Azeri civilians with some soldiers were trapped in Zangilan."¹⁰⁰ According to eyewitnesses, as the Armenian offensive progressed, district defenders also focused on helping to organize the population to escape and avoid "another Khojaly genocide."¹⁰¹ The problem was that there was no land connection to Azerbaijan left for that retreat.

The Human Rights Watch report mentions a radio broadcast from the Armenians calling on the Azerbaijani population to flee the area before the launch of its offensive on October 23, 1993.¹⁰² Reportedly, some people could flee Zangilan via the Horadiz bridge, which was later destroyed by Armenian shelling¹⁰³. The only option was across the Arax river to Iran, even though there were no remaining bridges over it. According to multiple sources, under pressure not to face a second Khojaly genocide, the then Azerbaijani leadership had to request help from Iran, which accepted Zangilani residents and then transferred them to Azerbaijan. Iran also helped by stopping reservoir discharges to the Arax river to lower the water level so that the population could cross it with minimal losses.

As reported by Human Rights Watch, the attacking Armenian army

97 Human Rights Watch, op. cit., p.78.

98 Human Rights Watch, op. cit., p.56.

99 Azerbaijan National Library Portal, op. cit.

100 Human Rights Watch, op. cit., p.77.

101 Interview with Ismayilov Abbasgulu, Recollecting Armenia's attack on Khojaly, conducted by Vugar Gurbanov (in person), Baku, January 2016.

102 Human Rights Watch, op. cit., p.71.

103 *Ibid.*

perpetrated grave violations of international humanitarian law. According to the report, “(d)uring this offensive, they (Armenians) forcibly evicted the civilian population, took hostages, killed civilians with indiscriminate fire, and looted and burned civilian property.”¹⁰⁴ Eyewitness accounts given in the same report indicate that dead civilians “appeared to have been shot at close range.”¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

As predicted by the academic literature, any country or organization armed with an exclusionary ideology produces violence on a massive scale against those deemed guilty of standing in the way of its achieving imagined greatness, or for perceived misdeeds that are assumed to have created problems for a country or organization. The Armenian ideology brought into action by the Armenian ruling elite was, and still is, in line with this logic. First, this ideology helped to produce a sense of mission for the Armenian nationalists and mobilize them to action. Importantly, the current territory of the Armenian state is perceived to be only “a native corner” of greater Armenian territories that should be recovered. Second, it takes a confrontational approach towards most of its neighbors. Azerbaijanis and Turks, in particular, are viewed as the people to whom is ascribed guilt for “all historical injustice” that Armenia faces today. The claim to the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan stood first in the order of priority. This claim is a vital component of the sense of mission that Nzhdeh promoted. It wrongly securitized the issue for Armenia’s national security. War, in this context, is a justifiable option to aggrandize Armenia while the population of those territories is viewed as hostile, and that is why it is incompatible to live with Armenians. The Azerbaijani population in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region faced the destiny promoted by this ideology. The Khojaly and Zangilan cases clearly show that the employed military tactics of excessive brutality were directed not only against the military objectives of the Azerbaijani army, but against the whole population of the targeted regions.

It should be noted that, while this article attempts to provide certain broader explanations for the violence exercised against civilians during

104 Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p.69.

105 *Ibid.*, p.75.

the conflict, it fails to provide more empirical data on the subject. One reason is the lack of access to the relevant target group; another is the culture of denial and non-discussion of a “dark past.” The article also suggests other questions about the ideological perspectives on the Azerbaijani side and the role of those ideologies in the persistence of conflicts. However, the biggest added value of the article is potentially opening up a space for academic debate and, through that, helping to distill realities from unsubstantiated claims.

Geopolitics and the Second Karabakh War

Damjan Krnjevic Miskovic*

The question of how geopolitics bore upon the Second Karabakh War is examined with reference to Aristotle's presentation of tragedy (entanglement, unravelling). The strategic consequences of the return of geopolitics to international relations owing to the onset of a G-Zero world were prudentially understood by Azerbaijan and tragically misunderstood by Armenia. As a result, Yerevan committed geopolitical malpractice by mistakenly believing that entrenching its posture of clientelism would enable the perpetuation of its occupation of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region and the seven surrounding districts. In contrast, Baku harnessed the consequences of the ongoing transformation of the international system to entrench its position as a keystone state in the Silk Road region. This goes a long way towards explaining how Azerbaijan was ultimately able to ensure it alone would determine the time and manner of the restoration of its territorial integrity. Thus, geopolitical considerations and misunderstandings contributed greatly to the outcome of the Second Karabakh War. This will have enduring consequences for the emerging regional order of the Silk Road region.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Second Karabakh War, Silk Road region, keystone state, Azerbaijan, Armenia



* **Damjan Krnjevic Miskovic** is Director of Policy Research and Publications and Professor of Practice at Azerbaijan's ADA University, where he also serves as Senior Editorial Consultant to *Baku Dialogues*. He previously served as Senior Special Adviser and Chief Speechwriter to the President of the UN General Assembly (2012-2013), as a senior adviser to the president (2004-2007) and foreign minister (2007-2012) of the Republic of Serbia, and as Managing Editor of *The National Interest* (2002-2004) and is on an extended leave of absence as Executive Director of the Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development, a Belgrade-based think tank he co-founded in 2013.

Introduction

What caused the Second Karabakh War to start and end as it did? In other words, what were the proximate affronts and provocations, as well as the immediate grounds, that led to the effective cessation of a negotiation process, and how did this bear upon Azerbaijan's victory and Armenia's defeat? This question naturally raises another, namely, why is it that in the Second Karabakh War the West stayed away, the Minsk Group stayed irrelevant, the United Nations stayed unseen, Russia stayed put, Iran stayed out, China stayed silent, Israel stayed alert, and Turkey stayed at the ready? The above questions can be reformulated in the following generalized manner: why did the flow of the particular political events at issue, as experienced by both belligerents and onlookers, happen as it did and not otherwise? What judgments and miscalculations informed the thoughts and actions of decision makers?¹

To delve fruitfully into such and similar questions requires that we begin with a brief, preliminary examination of the nature of geopolitics. From this will emerge a consideration of the present and novel state of international relations, which in turn will enable us to uncover both the contours of an emerging order in the Silk Road region² and the leverage held by those states most responsible for its advent. Thus equipped, we shall be in a better position to examine more directly what sorts of considerations animated the speeches and deeds of the Second Karabakh War's protagonists, how these led to the terms of the armistice, and what boons and dangers lie ahead now that the guns have fallen silent.

A Middle Power emerges in a G-Zero world

Geopolitics consists of more or less prudential exercises in acceptable exceptions by major powers conducive to the continued operation of an international system. If a given international system precludes or

1 Parts of this essay draw on four recent works of mine: "Great Power Populism" (co-written with Gvosdev, N.K.), *The National Interest*, No. 167, May/June 2020, pp. 39-48; "Leveraging the Present: Geopolitical Takeaways for the Silk Road Region," AIRCenter Analysis Paper, September 2020, available at: www.aircenter.az/uploads/files/Damjan%20new.pdf; "Armenia Needs to Sue for Peace Now: The Alternative is Even Worse," *The National Interest*, October 5, 2020, available at: www.nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/armenia-needs-sue-peace-now-alternative-even-worse-170160; and "Back with a Vengeance: The Return of Rough and Tumble Geopolitics," *Orbis*, Vol. 65, No. 1, Winter 2021, pp. 118-135.

2 The Silk Road region is defined "loosely" in "Editorial Statement," *Baku Dialogues*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Fall 2020), p. 7 in the following manner: "the geographic space looking west past Anatolia to the warm seas beyond; north across the Caspian towards the Great Plain and the Great Steppe; east to the peaks of the Altai and the arid sands of the Taklamakan; and south towards the Hindu Kush and the Indus valley, looping down around in the direction of the Persian Gulf and across the Fertile Crescent." The term 'Silk Road region' is more historically accurate and inclusive than neologistic monikers such as 'Eurasia,' 'Great Caspian basin,' 'South Caucasus and Central Asia,' or whatever else scholars and bureaucrats have devised.

disallows such exercises of acceptable exception—defined as a succession of power manoeuvres understood in the context of the need to maintain equilibrium and legitimacy, operating according to a logic of restraint and proportioned reciprocity—it is either too rigid and hence ripe for renovation, or too amorphous and thus not really a system.

Geopolitics consists of more or less prudential exercises in acceptable exceptions by major powers conducive to the continued operation of an international system.

Our current global condition is such that, paradoxically, aspects of both are present. In a past age, Thomas M. Franck wrote that “in the international system, rules are not enforced and yet they are mostly obeyed.”³ Today, it would be more accurate to say that rules are not enforced and increasingly disobeyed—or, to put it in terms more familiar to international legal scholars: the applicable scope of *jus cogens*, out of which follow the *obligato erga omnes*, is narrowing in practice.

The gravity of the present condition is further compounded by the ironic fact that connectivity is becoming a catalyst for further dividing our world: the spectre of technological bifurcation hangs over a transforming international system, which, in turn, helps to explain the onset of de-globalization due to the rapid escalation of Sino-American tensions. All this has become a recipe for skyrocketing unpredictability and increased instability in a world characterized, in part, by the absence of acknowledged leadership.

In a recent *Baku Dialogues* essay, S. Enders Wimbush provided the following snapshot picture of the “churning” geopolitical situation:

*Russia is failing. Europe is breaking. America is withdrawing. China is stretching assertively. India is rising. Japan is arming. Iran is pre-revolutionary (again). Turkey is in therapy. The Middle East is, well, the Middle East.*⁴

Indeed, such a description of our present global predicament confirms the observation made by Ian Bremmer and Nouriel Roubini that “we are now living in a G-Zero world,” which they defined as “one in which no single country or bloc of countries has the political and economic leverage—or the will—to drive a truly international agenda.”⁵

Two strategic trade deals signed in December 2020 illustrate the

3 T.M. Franck, *The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 3.

4 Wimbush, S.E., “Eurasia 2040,” *Baku Dialogues*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Winter 2020-2021, p. 112.

5 Bremmer, I. and Roubini, R., “A G-Zero World,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 2, March/April 2011, p. 2.

veracity of the G-Zero paradigm, particularly the ongoing dearth of united Western leadership: the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) between China and 14 other Asian states (the ten ASEAN countries plus four treaty allies of the United States: Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) between China and the European Union. These represent the two largest trade deals in history and are natural companions to the China-led Belt and Road Initiative, which Andrew Michta of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies predicts will “effect a ‘grand inversion’”⁶ such that the contemporary Silk Road region will regain its place as a critical seam of international relations.

But perhaps the best—and certainly the most relevant, given the present subject of inquiry—illustration of the veracity of the G-Zero paradigm is what Vasif Huseynov, writing in the inaugural issue of this journal, has called the “geopolitical heterogeneity”⁷ of the contemporary Silk Road region. The predominant reality in this part of the world consists of a combination of formal treaties and informal understandings in which no single power dominates, equilibrium (but not necessarily equidistance) is maintained, and a general balance is kept. Over the past decades, the Silk Road region has come to serve increasingly as a significant political and economic crossroads between various geographies, an important intercessor between major powers, and a hard-to-avoid gateway between different blocks of states, regional associations, and civilizational groupings.

In other words, the Silk Road region is coming into its own as a fully-fledged subject of international relations that has kept moving cogently in the direction of establishing sturdier contours of a fledgling regional order by building upon classical balance-of-power principles. This has gone a long way to ensure that outside rivalries are kept at bay and in check.

Undoubtedly, an important prerequisite for the completion of such a regional order is the existence of a number of states of substantially equal strength, which can enable the Silk Road region to maintain and possibly deepen its own balance of power system, notwithstanding the G-Zero world paradigm. This is well on its way to being successfully executed, for at least five reasons. *First*, the unique complexities

6 A.A. Michta, “U.S. Alliances: Crucial Enablers in Great-Power Competition,” in Dakota L. Wood (ed.), *2021 Index of U.S. Military Strength*. Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 2020, p. 90.

7 Huseynov, V., “Vicious Circle of the South Caucasus: Intra-Regional Conflicts and Geopolitical Heterogeneity,” *Caucasus Strategic Perspectives*, Vol. I, No. 1, Summer 2020, p. 128.

involved in transporting hydrocarbons and other natural resources to market, as well as the infrastructure provisions necessary to facilitate trade, require a region-specific type of cooperation and compromise. *Second*, no state belonging to the region is strong enough to dominate the others, economically or otherwise, which encourages equilibrium. *Third*, virtually no state in the region is weak enough to succumb to crude attempts at domination without others aligning to significantly limit the depth and scope of said attempt. *Fourth*, no outside power truly behaves hegemonically, notwithstanding latent (or not so latent) desires or ambitions.

The *fifth* reason is perhaps the most interesting: the burgeoning set of arrangements characterizing the Silk Road region appear on their way to being anchored by what Giovanni Botero, a late 16th century political and economic thinker and diplomat, was the first to call “middle powers,” which he defined as states that have “sufficient force and authority to stand on [their] own without the need of help from others.”⁸ In Botero’s telling, leaders of middle powers tend to be acutely aware of the dexterity required to maintain security and project influence in a prudential manner beyond their immediate borders; and because of that, middle powers are apt to have facility in properly managing their finances and promoting trade and connectivity with their neighbours and their neighbours’ neighbours.

Unquestionably, Azerbaijan is one such middle power: a “strategic hub by virtue of being situated at a critical geographical fulcrum point of rapidly expanding transport and communication infrastructure.”⁹ Azerbaijan is in fact a rare contemporary example of successful national statecraft—rarer still when one bears in mind the fact that just thirty years ago the country was widely considered to be a failing or even failed state.¹⁰ The Silk Road region boasts at least two other middle powers: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Scholars such as Nikolas Gvosdev and Gregory Gleason, among

Unquestionably, Azerbaijan is one such middle power: a “strategic hub by virtue of being situated at a critical geographical fulcrum point of rapidly expanding transport and communication infrastructure.”

8 G. Botero, *Della Ragion di Stato* I:2.

9 Gleason, G., “Grand Strategy Along the Silk Road: The Pivotal Role of Keystone States,” *Baku Dialogues*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Winter 2020-2021, p. 160.

10 On Azerbaijan’s political development, see S.E. Cornell, *Azerbaijan Since Independence*, (M.E. Sharp: Armonk, 2011) and “Reform Behind a Static Façade,” *The American Interest*, October 17, 2019, available at: www.the-american-interest.com/2019/10/17/azerbaijan-reform-behind-a-static-facade. On Azerbaijan’s relations with Russia, see Valiyev, A., “Azerbaijan’s Foreign Policy Towards Russia Since Independence: Compromise Achieved,” *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2019, pp. 269-291; on Azerbaijan’s relations with Turkey, see Ergun, A., “Special, Exceptional, and Privileged,” *Baku Dialogues*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Winter 2020-2021, pp. 52-64.

others, have identified such middle powers—whose external relations embrace elements of both autonomy and restraint—as “keystone states” to denote the significant (and growing) strategic leverage they hold in giving coherence to, as well as orienting the direction of, a regional order.

Keystone states and the significance of 2008

Thus, we must add the following codicil to the definition of geopolitics provided at the beginning of this article: regional orders that build upon classic geopolitical balance-of-power principles can be established in a G-Zero world in the event they can be held together by middle powers, better described, given present circumstances, as keystone states. Gleason suggests that keystone states are coming to serve as trusted interlocutors, reliable intermediaries, and “critical mediators” between what Western political scientists call “status quo powers and revisionists.”¹¹ This integrative power is supplemented by the fact that, in Gvosdev’s telling, “an effective keystone state can serve as a pressure-release valve in the international system, particularly as the transition to conditions of non-polarity continues, by acting as a buffer and reducing the potential for conflict between major power centers.”¹² Non-polarity, Gvosdev specifies, is an

*active approach in which constant engagement with all the major stakeholders is a sine qua non. Non-polarity recognizes that in conditions of a G-Zero world no one power can establish and guarantee absolute security or impose a uniform set of preferences—and that to align exclusively with one major power increases, rather than reduces, insecurity by incentivizing other powers to then take action detrimental to one’s national interests.*¹³

We must now say a few words about the moment at which the G-Zero world came about, for Bremmer and Roubini do not do so explicitly. Its onset is traceable back to events that took place in the third quarter of 2008, made manifest over a period of only forty days that began in August 2008 with the Russo-Georgian conflict and the Kremlin’s correct judgment that the West could not make a credible attempt to

11 Gleason, op. cit., pp. 148, 156.

12 Gvosdev, N.K., “Keystone States: A New Category of Power,” *Horizons*, No. 5, Autumn 2015, p. 120.

13 Gvosdev, N.K., “Geopolitical Keystone: Azerbaijan and the Global Position of the Silk Road Region,” *Baku Dialogues*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Fall 2020, p. 31.

prevent or reverse it, as that would mean going to war with Russia.¹⁴ The second and last stage of the onset of the G-Zero world came not even two months later, when Lehman Brothers went into bankruptcy. This last rapidly cascaded into a collapse of Western stock markets and the onset of a global financial recession.

The logic of a G-Zero world has effectively replaced the dominant unipolar conception of international relations, predicated on the embrace of the idea of the “end of history” championed on both sides of the Atlantic since the end of the Cold War.¹⁵ The cardinal point is that that forty-day period in 2008 represents the moment in which the credibility of the West cracked on two critical fronts: great power politics and international economics. This called into question, in a fundamental way, the West’s claim to primacy in global leadership, which rested not insignificantly on predictability, prosperity, and a “monopoly on patronage.”¹⁶

At least two facts serve to illustrate the weight of the 2008 moment. *First*, remedial efforts to overcome the effect of the economic crash could not have succeeded without significant non-Western participation—an unprecedented turn of events. *Second*, the criteria for membership in the new institutional arrangements that were hastily arranged at the time in response to the West’s financial collapse—most notably the establishment of the G20—did not involve having liberal democracy as a form of government. What mattered most was having cash in one’s state coffers, coupled with the willingness to spend it in the pursuit of geopolitical expeditions beyond one’s borders.

It so happens that there is a not insignificant correlation—one that goes back at least to the time of Thucydides—between a state having cash in its pocket and the ambitions of its leaders to play an active and influential geopolitical role in world politics. After the events of 2008, the field became wide open owing to the lessening of the

14 For a detailed account of the Russo-Georgian conflict from an American perspective, see P. Baker, *Days of Fire: Bush and Cheney in the White House* (New York: Doubleday, 2013), pp. 602-605. The situation in which Georgia found itself in 2008 is strongly reminiscent of the one in which Hungary found itself in 1956. On this, see P. Lendvai, *One Day That Shook the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) and H.W. Brands, *Cold Warriors: Eisenhower’s Generation and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). Both Lendvai and Brands contrast the American liberation rhetoric of anticommunist ideology with a policymaking process characterized by realist geopolitical considerations that left no space for the provision of any sort of tangible assistance to Moscow’s Hungarian opponents.

15 See Fukuyama, F., “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, No. 16, Summer 1989, pp. 1-18; R. Cooper, *The postmodern state and world order* (London: Demos, 2000); R. Cooper, “The post-modern state,” in Mark Leonard (ed.), *Re-Ordering the World* (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2002), pp. 11-20; and Cooper, R., “Imperial Liberalism,” *The National Interest*, No. 79, Spring 2005, pp. 25-34. Cf. Krauthammer, C., “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 1990-1991, pp. 23-33.

16 Cooley, A. and Nexon, D.H., “How Hegemony Ends,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 99, No. 4, July/August 2020, p. 147.

aforementioned constraints. From this came to be derived the following strategic takeaway for much of the rest of the world: the West could not solve international problems by itself anymore—even problems primarily of its own making.

At the time, most Western decision makers did not grasp the scope of the paradigm shift this triggered, although most everyone else did (including Azerbaijan, Turkey, and of course Russia, but tragically, as it turns out, not Armenia)—namely, the return of geopolitics.

Geopolitical snapshot

From all this, we see the following: present geopolitical circumstances are such that this is the first time in centuries that an evident vacuum of power is not being filled, in part because no state or alliance of states believes it could see a reasonable rate of return on its investment even in making a successful play for the mantle of global leadership, much less actually assuming it. This last calculus has only grown in the wake of extremely costly measures, hopefully successful, that have been taken by states to reduce the likelihood of the onset of a full-scale economic depression due to the myriad restrictions put in place to mitigate against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Six other observable geopolitical trends have now risen to the surface, which, taken together, provide the remaining elements of the geopolitical background conducive to properly assess and understand both the beginning and end of the Second Karabakh War. *First*, options are progressively narrowing for the West, yet this has not resulted in what the Germans call *Torschlusspanik*. *Second*, many of the major players are becoming increasingly detached from ‘Western liberal democracy’ without much remorse or embarrassment. *Third*, a lack of respect, even disdain, characterizes the perceptions of virtually all the major players towards one another. *Fourth*, few of the major players, irrespective of their regime type and political form, are ready to commit to working in concert to establish agreed terms framing a workable international system predicated on a realistic, common assessment of a new global balance of power. *Fifth*, the major players will have fewer resources at their disposal to fund their ever-deepening rivalries. *Sixth*, a whole set of issues requiring a broad and robust multilateral approach (most obviously sustainable development, including climate change, as well as cyber

security, nuclear proliferation, and so on) is already receiving a suboptimal amount of attention.

Under such circumstances, those who still insist on an ‘international community’¹⁷ predicated on a set of normative convictions held in common, the existence of a shared approach to policy questions, and an acceptance of burden-sharing in the name of solidarity—on assigning substantial weight to an ‘international community’ greater than that offered by, say, Hans Kelsen¹⁸—are in reality speaking of “mere wind and void.”¹⁹ This becomes rather obvious once Amitai Etzioni’s definition of ‘community’ is brought forth: “a shared moral culture and bonds of affection.”²⁰ At best, the ‘international community’ can be understood as “the arena for minimizing conflict and maximizing common interests in deference to the minimum common denominator.”²¹ Cynics, of course, would add that

the idea of international community, though it presents itself as the general interest of all its constituent parts, is in fact the preoccupation of a subset of international actors whose claim to speak for all is highly dubious. [...] The international community is [...] the voice of classically liberal normative aspiration: what the world should be like. [...] This comes in many guises, from various forms of cosmopolitanism and universalism on one side to various particular iterations such as American exceptionalism or Western civilization on the other.²²

17 The promotion of the concept of an ‘international community’ in both theory and practice is vast. Consider Kofi Annan’s vision of an ‘international community’ as described in a 15 September 1999 speech to a conference of NGOs organized by the UN Department of Public Information entitled “Meaning of International Community” (SG/SM/7133, PI/1176). Annan drew on this speech in composing his March 2000 manifesto, *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: UN Department of Public Information, 2000), which should be understood as the precipitating cause that led to the September 2005 endorsement of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine as part of the World Summit Outcome document adopted by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/60/1), and which represents the pinnacle of a norm-based understanding of the ‘international community.’ See also Ellis, D.C., “On the Possibility of ‘International Community,’” *International Studies Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1, March 2009, pp. 1-26; Kritsiotis, D., “Imagining the International Community,” *European Journal of International Law*, Vol 13, No. 4, 2002, pp. 961-992; and H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society, Second Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

18 H. Kelsen, *Principles of International Law* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1952), pp. 110-111: “All the states are members of the international community constituted by general international law, and hence are subject to that law; and a state may, without losing its character as a state, be a member of an international community constituted by particular international law, i.e., by a treaty to which the state is a contracting party.”

19 Isaiah 41:29.

20 A. Etzioni, *From Empire to Community: A New Approach to International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 49.

21 Haas, E.B., “International Integration,” *International Organization*, Vol. 15, No. 3, Summer 1961, p. 392.

22 Lindberg, T., “Making Sense of the ‘International Community,’” *Working Paper of the International Institutions and Global Governance Program of the Council on Foreign Relations*, January 2014, p. 11, 15-16.

...in a G-Zero world, the ‘international community’ is giving way to a nascent international system in which states find ways to coexist and reach agreement on mutually-accepted regulations to facilitate transactions.

However that may be, in a G-Zero world, the ‘international community’ is giving way to a nascent international system in which states find ways to coexist and reach agreement on mutually-accepted regulations to facilitate transactions.

What does any of this have to do with the Second Karabakh War? Let us see if we can pull some of the strands together.

Entanglement

The Second Karabakh War that began on 27 September 2020 marked the start of what Aristotle famously called the tragic unravelling or dénouement (*lusis*)²³ of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan that originated in February 1988.²⁴ In the intervening decades, the one constant has been the Armenian occupation of about 20 per cent of the internationally-recognized territory of Azerbaijan: the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the seven surrounding districts. Yerevan’s effective capitulation—enshrined in the November 10, 2020, armistice statement²⁵ signed by President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of Armenia, and President Vladimir Putin of Russia—for all intents and purposes ended the occupation: today, no contingent of Armenian troops is present anywhere in Azerbaijan.²⁶ As a result, Azerbaijan has become a nation whole, free, and at peace for the first time in its modern history. Through a prudent combination of limited warfare and active diplomacy, Aliyev accomplished a feat that no other leader anywhere in the world has been able to achieve in the 21st century: the restoration of a country’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. And he did so, it must be added, against the diplomatic objections voiced by the ‘international community.’

We must underline that even Armenia did not legally admit its own occupation in the dual sense that it neither formally recognized the

23 Aristotle, *Poetics* 1455b25-ff and 1460b6-ff.

24 “The first bullet released by me in February 1988 was released for the security of the Armenian people” Balasanyan, V., “Dear Compatriots, The First Bullet...” Facebook post, December 1, 2020, 11:50 PM. Available at: www.facebook.com/412749769529573/posts/874138043390741/?d=n.

25 Kremlin.ru, *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> (accessed January 3, 2021).

26 Neither the lingering presence of Armenian holdouts that for various reasons reject the tripartite statement, nor the possibility of guerrilla (or terrorist) cells operating in Armenia or the liberated territories, are likely to represent a serious, long-term threat.

ethnic Armenian secessionist regime installed in the Nagorno-Karabakh region nor did it formally annex the territory. Thus, it can be credibly said that no one seriously disputed that these lands were occupied illegally; and that virtually no one disputed that they needed to be returned: four UN Security Council resolutions and various OSCE documents²⁷ directly related to the conflict made this clear, as did the formal positions of all the major powers, not to mention the rest of the world. The fact that Armenia had totally cleansed the occupied lands (and not only the occupied lands) of its pre-war ethnic-Azerbaijani population had obviously not helped its claim of victimhood or remedial justice, either.²⁸ (It may also be relevant to note that Armenia is itself now the most ethnically homogeneous country in both the Silk Road region and the OSCE space.)²⁹ The bottom line was this:

Armenia did not legally admit its own occupation in the dual sense that it neither formally recognized the ethnic Armenian secessionist regime installed in the Nagorno-Karabakh region nor did it formally annex the territory. Thus, it can be credibly said that no one seriously disputed that these lands were occupied illegally; and that virtually no one disputed that they needed to be returned.

irrespective of ancient grievances, a convoluted historical record, and whatever other vagarious claims have been put forward, the situation was unambiguous: Yerevan's military occupation of these lands had to come to an end, and the hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijani civilians ethnically cleansed from those same lands had to be allowed to return to their homes.

The Armenian irredentist claim to the Nagorno-Karabakh region (but not the seven surrounding districts, which were conquered outright out of a combination of desiring to establish a security buffer and precipitating an Armenian colonization effort) was based on falsely

27 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, "Documents of International Organizations on The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict", 202, available at: www.mfa.gov.az/files/shares/Documents%20of%20international%20organizations.pdf; Aniarc.am, *Madrid Principles – Full Text*, 29 November 2007, April 11, 2016, available at: www.aniarc.am/2016/04/11/madrid-principles-full-text (both sources accessed January 2, 2021).

28 With regard to the Azerbaijani territories occupied by Armenian forces between the two Karabakh Wars, the census data presented by the occupier in 2005 indicates that 6 individuals were identified as Azerbaijani (and 125 as "other") out of a total of 137,737; the census data presented by the occupier in 2015 indicates that 0 individuals were identified as Azerbaijani (and 50 as "other") out of a total of 145,053.

29 Evidence of the extreme ethnic homogeneity of Armenia is extrapolated from the "Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (HIEF) version 2.0 dataset for the year 2013" (the latest year contained in the dataset) compiled by Lenka Dražanová and archived in the Harvard Dataverse (available at: dataverse.harvard.edu). The HIEF is an ethnic fractionalization index for 165 countries across all continents. The ethnic fractionalization index corresponds to the probability that two randomly drawn individuals within a country are not from the same ethnic group. Armenia's ethnic fractionalization score (EIndex) for 2013 is 0.045. Only six other countries ranked lower in 2013: Japan (0.019), North Korea (0.02), Bangladesh (0.025), Tunisia (0.03), Egypt (0.041), and Jordan (0.044). The HIEF dataset does not include the following OSCE participating States: Andorra, Holy See, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, and Montenegro. For an overview of the dataset, see Dražanová, L., "Introducing the Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (HIEF) Dataset: Accounting for Longitudinal Changes in Ethnic Diversity," *Journal of Open Humanities Data*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2020.

equating self-determination with the avowed right of secession: the former falls within the scope of international law whereas the latter does not. And the reason is simple: the avowed right of secession directly infringes on the right of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Moreover, by construction, self-determination is subordinate to sovereignty and its corollary, territorial integrity. In the rough-and-tumble of geopolitics, there are three basic ways to counter this subordination: by treaty (when the aggrieved state signs away its legal territory), by a decision of the UN Security Council (essentially imposing a transfer of lands from one country to another, a highly theoretical possibility), or by force and conquest (maintenance of occupation). Armenia knew full well that the first and second options were effectively impossible, and thus had opted, since 1988, for the third. Now this last, too, has run its course.

The Armenian irredentist claim to the Nagorno-Karabakh region was based on falsely equating self-determination with the avowed right of secession

There seem to be at least two immediate causes that resulted in the onset of the dénouement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. *First*, Yerevan's increasingly agitated advocacy of the false equation of self-determination and secession, as discussed above. One saw this in terms of statements coming out of Armenia in the past few years that made it clear that Yerevan was no longer interested in participating in good-faith negotiations that would have as their strategic objective the end of the military occupation of the sovereign lands of Azerbaijan (this will be discussed below). *Second*, this was matched, increasingly, in terms of actions on the ground: incremental increases in the bellicosity of ceasefire violations and provocations. The attack at dawn on September 27, 2020, perpetrated by Armenian forces, that resulted in a number of Azerbaijani deaths in Azerbaijan proper was judged by Baku to have been a step too far: the strategic patience of Azerbaijan was brought to an end after decades of fruitless talks led by the 'international community' aimed at peacefully and multilaterally reversing a military occupation.

Obviously, Azerbaijan had been preparing for this eventuality: Baku's counterstrike was not a spur-of-the-moment reaction. But there was nothing politically, legally, or morally wrong with its chosen course of action: the country acted well within its right of "inherent" self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter in a manner that brings to mind the words of the Athenian ambassadors at Melos, as reported by Thucydides so very long ago: "neither laying down the law, nor being the first to use it as laid down, but taking it as it is and will be forever

when we have left it behind, we use it, knowing that you and others, if you became as powerful as we are, would do [the] same.”³⁰ These words should be seen as particularly apt given that these same Athenians had travelled to Melos with the intention to find agreement and avoid war.³¹ So, of course, Azerbaijan took pains to ensure the steady improvement of its military capabilities and worked diligently to lock in the strong, virtually unconditional support of Turkey that made it harder for other geopolitical actors to exert undue pressure on Azerbaijan to stick to fruitless negotiations, and so on. But again, the emphasis needs to be put on Yerevan’s evident and categorical unwillingness to bring the occupation to an end peacefully, through negotiations. This is the fundamental point.

Thus, Yerevan’s words and its resulting actions led directly to the Azerbaijani counterattack. Yerevan did not think Baku would respond decisively to what amounted to a war of attrition, in part because it overestimated the extent of its own external backing. This is obviously a failure of Armenian statecraft and, frankly, the leadership in Yerevan had it coming.

We can be justified in delivering such a harsh judgment on the basis of even a cursory examination of the July 2020 military flare up at the uncontested, *de jure* border between the two states, which took place near critical energy and transportation infrastructure nodes. During this intense period Armenia was very publicly told by Russia and others that it could not invoke the protections under Article IV of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).³² Instead of understanding this to mean that it could not rely on the unconditional support of its main treaty ally and should therefore return in earnest to the negotiating table, Yerevan threatened to attack the network

30 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* V:105.

31 For an authoritative interpretation of the Melian dialogue and much else besides, see L. Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 184-ff. Cf. Bruell, C., “Thucydides’ View of Athenian Imperialism,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 68, No. 1, March 1974, pp. 11-17.

32 On 14 July 2020 Armenia’s permanent representative to the CSTO Permanent Council Viktor Biyagov stated, “The existing situation is a cause of attention and concern for the entire Organization and for each of its member states, since it’s an attempt of direct aggression against one of the members of the Organization in the zone of responsibility of the Organization. We call on our allies to demonstrate solidarity and support in line with the nature of the CSTO Charter. This unprecedented situation becomes a serious test for each of us and for the entire Organization.” The call went unheeded. This statement should be read in light of the refusal of the CSTO to even hold an emergency meeting to address the July 2020 clashes. The CSTO took the same position during the Second Karabakh War, as of course did Russia itself. On October 7, 2020, Putin stated on Rossiya24 that “we have certain obligations as part of the [CSTO] treaty. Russia has always honoured and will continue to honour its commitments. [...] It is deeply regrettable that the hostilities continue, but they are not taking place on Armenian territory.” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was even more explicit, saying Russia’s obligations under the CSTO “do not extend to Karabakh.” For the Putin and Peskov quotes, see “Russia’s Security Guarantees for Armenia Don’t Extend to Karabakh, Putin Says,” *Moscow Times*, October 7, 2020.

of oil and gas pipelines that run from Azerbaijan through Georgia into Turkey and from there into EU territory (Bulgaria, Greece, and Italy).³³ This was understandably interpreted by Azerbaijan—but also by Turkey and all the other strategic energy partners—as representing a clear and present danger to their respective core national interests and nascent regional energy security arrangements designed to ensure a diversification of supply from Russia.³⁴ It stands to reason that Moscow took unkindly to such threats for the simple reason that their execution would have set a dangerous precedent for Russia’s own pipeline network in places such as Ukraine.

But this is far from the whole story: it is not enough to point the finger at Armenia. The principal outside mediators—the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group (Russia, France, and the United States)—are also at fault: there was a formal negotiation process, launched in 1992, that had essentially produced no concrete results on the ground, in the sense that the occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the seven surrounding districts had not come to an end, Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) had been prevented from exercising their right of return, and so on. In other words, for nearly three decades—including more than a decade since the onset of the G-Zero world—the Minsk Group led negotiations the objectives of which were clearly and unambiguously set down on paper. The ‘international community,’ in the form of the Co-Chairs, gave themselves the responsibility of leading a defined process to achieve a defined result, and yet the conflict remained frozen since the 1994 ceasefire was put into effect by Russia: none of the Minsk Group’s defined objectives had been achieved—not even close. Thus, their actions or inaction—whether by design or not—resulted in the perpetuation of a status quo that was the opposite of the agreed objectives. So, this is why it is not enough to just point the finger at Yerevan.

33 During the Second Karabakh War, Armenia followed through on its threats to take aim at Azerbaijan’s infrastructure network. For a partial chronology of these attacks, see Hajiyev, H., “Attacks by Armenia against Azerbaijani civilians and critical infrastructure should not be overlooked,” *Euractiv*, October 16, 2020, available at: www.euractiv.com/section/azerbaijan/opinion/attacks-by-armenia-against-azerbaijani-civilians-and-critical-infrastructure-should-not-be-overlooked (accessed January 2, 2021).

34 During an interview with Turkish broadcaster Habertürk on October 14, 2020, Aliyev stated, “Armenia is trying to attack and take control of our pipelines. [...] If Armenia tries to take control of the pipelines there, I can say that the outcome will be severe for them.” Had Armenia’s attacks been successful, it seems a near certainty that Turkey would have intervened directly in the war. Although no evidence has emerged in public, it seems likely that what almost certainly amounted to a ‘red line’ was communicated by Ankara to Moscow at the highest level; if so, it is equally likely that the Kremlin would have communicated this to the Armenian leadership. The fact that Armenia ceased trying to target Azerbaijan’s energy and transport infrastructure around this time lends credence to this speculation.

Unravelling

And so we come to the start of the dénouement of the war. Objectively, the solution to the conflict was predicated upon the return of the aforementioned occupied lands by Armenia to Azerbaijan: that is what the various documents of the ‘international community’ indicated, particularly those of the UN and OSCE. This result could have been achieved through diplomacy—through negotiations—or through war. It is a truism of contemporary political science to affirm that the former is preferable to the latter, of course. And this was indeed the option that had been pursued by Azerbaijan in good faith for decades. The problem was that this good faith was not only unreciprocated by Armenia, but it was instrumentalized and abused—most recently in the past few years. Yerevan simply believed that it could stall indefinitely, all the while entrenching its occupation. All appearances that a breakthrough was approaching turned out to be illusory or duplicitous. And instead of adhering to the lesson contained in the age-old maxim *quieta non movere*, Armenia continued to provoke and violate the ceasefire (of course, Azerbaijan did so too). This took place in parallel to various incendiary remarks by Armenia’s leadership that Azerbaijan rightly interpreted as constituting the abandonment of the pursuit of a peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflict within the previously agreed framework. Five examples will suffice for present purposes. *One*, in late October 2018, Pashinyan told then U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton, “those who determine whether to resolve the Karabakh conflict or not are the people of Armenia, the people of Artsakh,³⁵ and the diaspora because this is a pan-Armenian issue.”³⁶ *Two*, in late March 2019, Armenia’s then defence minister David Tonoyan called on the country to prepare for the pursuit of a “new war for new territories” hours after Pashinyan had held his first official meeting with Aliyev in Vienna.³⁷ *Three*, in mid-May 2019, Pashinyan repudiated the Madrid Principles, thereby rejecting the existence of a documentary

The ‘international community,’ in the form of the Co-Chairs, gave themselves the responsibility of leading a defined process to achieve a defined result, and yet the conflict remained frozen since the 1994 ceasefire was put into effect by Russia: none of the Minsk Group’s defined objectives had been achieved—not even close.

35 The controversial term “Artsakh” is used by Armenians and their supporters to denote the secessionist, self-proclaimed entity that operated on the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan during the occupation, which effectively came to an end as a result of the Second Karabakh War.

36 Socor, V. “How Yerevan Walked Away From the ‘Basic Principles’ of Karabakh Conflict Settlement,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Volume: 17 Issue:168, November 25, 2020, available at: <http://jamestown.org/program/how-yerevan-walked-away-from-the-basic-principles-of-karabakh-conflict-settlement/> (accessed: January 10, 2021).

37 Aravot.am, David Tonoyan. ‘Territories for Security’ format will no longer exist (translated from Armenian), March 30, 2019, available at: <https://www.aravot.am/2019/03/30/1032523/> (accessed: January 10, 2021).

Yerevan simply believed that it could stall indefinitely, all the while entrenching its occupation. All appearances that a breakthrough was approaching turned out to be illusory or duplicitous.

basis for resolving the conflict.³⁸ *Four*, in early August 2019, Pashinyan declared, in occupied Khankendi no less, that the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the seven surrounding districts were a part of Armenia,³⁹ which Baku interpreted as being tantamount to a political declaration of Yerevan's intent to formally annex Azerbaijan's sovereign territories. And *five*, right after the July 2020 military flare up at the international border between the two states, Pashinyan stated that

the "Azerbaijani myth that their army can defeat the Armenian Army" in order to force Armenia to "make concessions has vanished. [...] Azerbaijan's position that the negotiations are the continuation of war and they should help to address military objectives at the negotiation table undermines the meaning of the whole peace process."⁴⁰ In short, the aggressor kept pushing the aggrieved party and the mediators did nothing in response. No wonder that Azerbaijan judged the situation to no longer be tenable. Frankly, by the start of the Second Karabakh War, Armenia had no leg to stand on—no just cause to complain.

Thus, both on the field of battle and at the negotiating table, Armenia overplayed its hand; Yerevan lost, in part, because the "Pashinyan government became a hostage of its own nationalist rhetoric"⁴¹ while failing to adopt what a South Korean political scientist may have been the first to term a "porcupine defence."⁴² One cannot help but be reminded of the pitiful lamentation of Prometheus as he helplessly contemplated his *moira*: "To my friends, I am a spectacle of pity. [...] I stopped mortals from foreseeing doom [...] I drugged them with blind hopes."⁴³ Azerbaijan won for two basic reasons. *First*, because it had patiently built up its military prowess (a topic that is beyond the scope

38 News.am, *Armenia's Pashinyan rejects Madrid Principles for resolving Karabakh conflict?*, May 10, 2019, available at: <https://news.am/eng/news/511864.html> (accessed: January 10, 2021).

39 Pashinyan's exact words were "Artsakh is Armenia, period." Asbarez, 'Artsakh is Armenia,' *Says Pashinyan during Stepanakert Rally*, August 5, 2019, available at: <http://asbarez.com/183673/artsakh-is-armenia-says-pashinyan-during-stepanakert-rally/> (accessed: January 10, 2021).

40 Lragir.am, *July victories took us to new level of resilience: PM Pashinyan*, July 23, 2020, available at <https://www.lragir.am/en/2020/07/23/75141> (accessed January 10, 2021).

41 Zeynalova, L., "Glen E. Howard: Fighting in Nagorno Karabakh going quite badly for Pashinyan", *Trend*, October 2, 2020.

42 Chae-Ha, P., "A Grand Strategy for Korea's Defense," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 1:2, 1989, pp. 192-193, defines the aforementioned defence posture thusly: "the basic concept must be that since we would obviously be the loser should they invade us (because of their enormous size and military might), we have to do everything within our power to deter such an invasion. While we could not overcome an invasion [...], we have to sharpen our military expertise and systems mainly in terms of accuracy, so that they are as effective as the poisonous quills of a porcupine. If we are perceived not to be such an easy pushover, they will be less likely to attack us, just like the little porcupine which most larger and better-equipped hunters usually avoid."

43 Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 248-252.

of this article); and *second*, because its leadership fully understood the transformed geopolitical circumstances in play as a result of the onset of the G-Zero world in which no single country or durable alliance of states proffers a coherent set of ideas or policies that amount to a credible and confident claim to international leadership. The resulting global power vacuum, characterized by centrifugal geopolitics at the level of the great powers, was able to be supplemented by efforts to establish a centripetal regional order of the sort described above and held together by, *inter alia*, an Azerbaijan that increasingly conducted itself in accord with the precepts of a middle power or keystone state. And this gave Azerbaijan a strategic advantage the significance of which Armenia somehow did not fathom.

Thus, both on the field of battle and at the negotiating table, Armenia overplayed its hand; Yerevan lost, in part, because the “Pashinyan government became a hostage of its own nationalist rhetoric”

By war’s end, Aliyev had been able to secure recognition from those that matter most that Azerbaijan has been geopolitically lifted up, as it were, to the level of an independent power—one that is now indisputably a direct and level participant in regional affairs that is poised to take on the role of an autochthonous guarantor of peace, security, and prosperity in the Silk Road region. There is undoubtedly a certain irony that Azerbaijan achieved this by consenting to the presence of Russian and Turkish troops on Azerbaijani soil. To wit: the November 10, 2020, tripartite statement provides for a “peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation” composed of 1,960 regular Armed Forces personnel (and equipment), whose presence is guaranteed to last five years. In this context, we should note, however, that the Russian military has maintained a continuous presence in the South Caucasus from around the time of the French Revolution, with the exception of a few short years following the October Revolution. The weight of this fact should be measured against another clause of the tripartite statement and what came afterwards. The clause reads thusly: “In order to increase the effectiveness of control over the implementation of the agreements by the Parties to the conflict, a peacekeeping centre shall be deployed to exercise control over the ceasefire.” We note that there is no mention of Turkey. However, one day later (on November 11, 2020), Russia’s defence minister stated that a “a memorandum was signed [with Turkey] to establish a Joint [Monitoring] Centre to control the ceasefire and all hostilities in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.” Shortly thereafter (on November 17, 2020), the Turkish parliament authorized

the deployment of Turkish Armed Forces personnel as well as civilians to this centre for up to one year. We can make two observations on the basis of the above events. *First*, their arrival in Azerbaijan at the very end of 2020 represents the first time in a century that Turkish troops are durably deployed in the South Caucasus. *Second*, this represents the first time *tout court* that non-Russian troops are deployed in the South Caucasus with the perspicuous consent of Russia, which had for two centuries held a monopoly on this matter in this part of what Moscow used to call its ‘near-abroad.’

We are now in a better position to affirm that the November 10, 2020, armistice statement represents the emancipation of Azerbaijan. More broadly, it represents a paradigm shift in the Silk Road region: certainly, Putin achieved important tactical gains for his country; yet, ironically,

By war’s end, Aliyev had been able to secure recognition from those that matter most that Azerbaijan has been geopolitically lifted up, as it were, to the level of an independent power

he appears to have been unable to prevent a country whose name is most conspicuously absent from the document in question from emerging as the principal strategic beneficiary (alongside the victor, of course) of the region’s now evident geopolitical heterogeneity. One could say that, henceforth, plenipotentiary discourse in the South Caucasus will be conducted primarily in Slavonic and Turkic locutions. States in which English, French, and German (not to mention

Persian) are spoken as native languages can hardly be expected to play decisive roles in whatever peace process may follow.

In practice, this will almost certainly constrict dramatically the heretofore central role of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs and all but guarantees the irrelevance of the Madrid Principles that the ‘international community’ long championed through ultimately ineffective diplomacy. This situation was set in motion primarily by Armenia, as discussed above, although obviously the result turned out to be the opposite of what Yerevan had in mind. Namely, for the first time in decades, the operative document accepted by the two belligerents to the conflict is silent on the self-determination question—what the Madrid document called the “final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh.” The November 10, 2020, document also stipulates the construction of “new transport links [...] to connect [Azerbaijan’s] Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and the western regions of Azerbaijan” so as to provide for the “unobstructed movement of persons, vehicles, and cargo in both directions.” On this basis one would be hard-pressed to deny that the Madrid Principles or any other Minsk Group document no longer represent the framework for

the peaceful settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In writing about tragedy, Aristotle speaks of the moment of reversal: the inflection point (*eschaton*) of misfortune, as it were, that marks the onset of the tragic unravelling.⁴⁴ Armenia failed to see that its maximalist position was no longer tenable, certainly not in 2020—an inexcusable act of geopolitical malpractice on the part of the leadership in Yerevan that naturally produced the sort of response one would expect from the leadership of any serious, strategically conscious, and geopolitically literate keystone state such as Azerbaijan. Simply put, Armenia was outmatched, outgunned, and out-maneuvered. And it has only itself to blame for, in effect, having bluffed itself into a corner from which it could not extricate itself. We thus agree with two assessments offered recently by Princeton’s Michael Reynolds: “Armenian statecraft [...] revealed itself as a mix of delusional self-confidence and naïve sentimentality” and “Armenia’s example perhaps suggests that historical trauma coupled with limited experience of sovereignty can lead states voluntarily to pursue self-destructive policies.”⁴⁵

Strategic takeaway

At the end of the day, the consequences of the onset of the G-Zero world, which precipitated the return of geopolitics, were misunderstood by Armenia and understood by Azerbaijan.

For Yerevan, the strategic takeaway went something like this: as Karabakh is to Armenia, so South Ossetia (or Abkhazia, or the Donbass, or Crimea—take your pick) is to Russia. In other words, geopolitics in the South Caucasus will remain primarily within the referential purview of the traditional suzerain, who will remain on the side of Armenia. The national interest consists in entrenching a posture of clientelism and supplication towards the sole arbiter that truly matters,

44 See the previous reference to Aristotle’s *Poetics* in light of 1460b6, 1460b22, and 1461b24 in the same work, in which *lusis* and *luein* are given the meaning not of ‘unravelling’ but of ‘solution (or ‘solve’) or ‘resolution’ (or ‘resolve’). When all this is put together with 1454a37, where *lusis* connotes ‘interpretation’ (or ‘analysis’), it would imply that tragedies contain in themselves their own unmistakable interpretation: that the *eschaton* is foreshadowed by the *desis* that becomes the *lusis*. Such an understanding is wholly consistent with the events that produced Armenian *hubris* in the period 1988–1994, the resultant complacency with the status quo established by the 1994 ceasefire, the blindness to subsequent geopolitical change brought on by the events of 2008 (see the section of this essay entitled “Keystone states and the significance of 2008”), and the fantastic hope in the temporal sempiternity of the frozenness of the conflict. In this one finds what Aristotle calls the “lesson of tragedy” (*pathei mathos*): the mistaken demand men make that their particular understanding of justice must prevail in the world (see 1453a8-23).

45 Reynolds, M.A., “Confidence and Catastrophe: Armenia and the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War,” *War on the Rocks*, January 11, 2021, available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2021/01/confidence-and-catastrophe-armenia-and-the-second-nagorno-karabakh-war/> (accessed: January 10, 2021).

which will engender it to demonstrate solidarity and support for a state dedicated to the expression of nearly unconditional loyalty. The country must continue to rely on this great power to maintain the status quo of occupation while feverishly encouraging its diaspora to convince rival great powers that genuine outreach on the part of Armenia to each of them will be forthcoming shortly.

For Baku, in contrast, the strategic takeaway from the onset of the G-Zero world went something like this: in continuing to reach out to the world, Azerbaijan will not allow itself to become dependent on any single line of access to the outside world. The country will strategically harness the fact that most of the world's great powers look at the Silk Road region—specifically, the South Caucasus—and conclude that they have intrinsic national security and economic interests. And it will take advantage of the fact that there is tension between those same great powers in terms of how they each define their respective interests in this part of the world by managing relations between them in such a way as to ensure that Azerbaijan becomes a subject of the international system instead of a mere object of great power rivalry. As Machiavelli put it, “one should never fall in the belief you can find someone to pick you up.”⁴⁶ This strategic takeaway has been aptly translated into contemporary scholarly terminology by Ilgar Gurbanov. Writing in the inaugural issue of this journal, he “conceptually classified” Azerbaijan’s foreign policy posture in the following manner: careful bandwagoning, pragmatic balancing, strategic hedging, finding a balance of interests, predictability, and strategic patience.⁴⁷ From such considerations emerged a bedrock principle of Azerbaijan’s national strategy: to ensure it becomes sovereign and strong enough so that it—and it alone—may determine the time and manner of the restoration of its territorial integrity.⁴⁸

And thus came about the liberation of the Azerbaijan’s occupied territories, which took place against a global background of an international system characterized by the return of rough-and-tumble geopolitics in our G-Zero world and an emerging local reality in which keystone states such as Azerbaijan are working to establish an order in the Silk Road region strong enough to counter great power aspirations to

46 N. Machiavelli, *The Prince* XXIV.

47 Gurbanov, I., “Relevance of Non-Alignment for Azerbaijan’s Foreign and Security Policy,” *Caucasus Strategic Perspectives*, Vol. I, No. 1, Summer 2020, p. 16.

48 Such a strategy may be formulated in Machiavellian terms thusly: only by having recourse to “one’s own arms” (*Prince* VI, XIII) can *lo stato* become its own master in both peace and war thanks to the prudential execution of *virtù* and the opportunity provided by *fortuna*, whose vicissitudes may thereby be tamed (*The Prince* XXV) by its “most excellent” leader.

continue treating this part of the world as a mere object of international relations. Now the onus has been put by Baku on the domestic task of reconstruction and renewal, with revanchism contained and war crimes allegations being investigated; perhaps, one day soon, circumstances in Yerevan will be such that the difficult, yet necessary, undertaking of reconciliation may begin in earnest.⁴⁹

This would, of course, require Yerevan to accept its battlefield and diplomatic losses while focusing its energies on securing the dividends of peace that it can enjoy by choosing to integrate into the Silk Road region's nascent order. Azerbaijan can encourage this by an increased demonstration of magnanimity and goodwill towards a defeated adversary and permanent neighbour, especially with regard to economic incentivization and greater sensitivity on questions having to do with identity. On the other hand, Armenia could opt to rebuff such entreaties by choosing to pursue a strategy aiming to overturn the definitive result of the Second Karabakh War. This article has sought to demonstrate the futility of that option, whose success would be predicated on the instauration of novel geopolitical circumstances that Yerevan simply does not have the capability to engender, much less set in motion. (One could add that such striving, indifferent to anything other than its object, namely revenge, is truly unbecoming of a nation “dedicated to the strengthening and prosperity of the fatherland”—to quote from the preamble of the Armenian constitution.)

Yet there are Armenians in positions of power or influence who nonetheless believe the opposite. By way of conclusion, here is what, at a minimum, this sort of thinking would need to entail in practice. *First*, the sudden discovery of massive hydrocarbon deposits in Armenia or the country's rapid transformation into the Singapore of the Silk Road region. *Second*, the aptitude to safely push Turkey back out of the South Caucasus. *Third*, the ability to incentivize the ‘international community’—or, more accurately, the West (e.g., the U.S., NATO, the EU, France, and Germany)—to engage in the region more seriously than it ever has. And *fourth*, the wherewithal to entice Russia to actively and exclusively support Armenia's maximalist position by any means

For Baku, in contrast, the strategic takeaway from the onset of the G-Zero world went something like this: in continuing to reach out to the world, Azerbaijan will not allow itself to become dependent on any single line of access to the outside world.

49 One recent formulation, used in the context of Azerbaijan's nascent policy towards the liberated territories, is “the ‘three Rs’: re-construction, re-integration, re-population.” See Stevens, C., “For Azerbaijan, what comes after the military victory?,” *Eureporter*, January 8, 2021, available at: <https://www.eureporter.co/world/azerbaijan-world/2021/01/08/for-azerbaijan-what-comes-after-the-military-victory/> (accessed: January 10, 2021).

necessary—up to and including a readiness to engage in an offensive military campaign against Azerbaijan (and almost certainly Turkey) for the sake of land it has consistently recognized as being Azerbaijan’s sovereign territory. We cannot leave it unsaid that a necessary prerequisite to the successful instauration of these novel geopolitical circumstances on the part of Armenia would be the wholesale political isolation, economic constriction, and military disassembly of Azerbaijan. We can therefore only hope that sagacity and common sense prevail in Yerevan, for it would truly be foolhardy for Armenia to henceforth advocate, much less pursue, policies that would compound the effects of what amounts to a capitulation by burdening another generation of its citizens with the perpetuation of illusions and the reality of poverty.

Western Blind Spot in the South Caucasus: Chronicle of a War Foretold

Robert M. Cutler*

The Second Karabakh War showed how much it is the case that European and American diplomacy has declined to acknowledge new developments in the South Caucasus over the last quarter century. The European and American information media also failed to inform their readerships about the facts of the conflict and behind the conflict. This failure extends generally also to their experts and policy communities. The article analyses three of these failures: (1) the facile repetition that the conflict is based in religion, (2) the significance of Armenian prime minister Pashinyan's rejection of the Madrid Principles, and (3) the protestations that there was "no military solution." The inspection and criticism of the mass and specialized media must continue, in order to expose errors and old ways of thinking that harm the everyday lives and the futures of the peoples of the region. The Armenian leadership and political class, including the diaspora, must likewise cease to propagate unreal characterizations of the situation. These, sometimes willful, errors create false images of the realities on the ground, from which only mistaken actions can proceed.

Keywords: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh region, Western media, narrative, conflict



* **Robert M. Cutler** is Fellow at Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

Introduction

The Second Karabakh War has revealed the bankruptcy of the sort of grand strategic thinking, all too typical of so many influential European and American commentators and politicians, that still refuses to acknowledge new developments in the South Caucasus over the last quarter century and assumes an understanding of the interests of regional actors on the basis of the facile templates of old stereotypes.¹ The War has equally revealed errors, so chronic as to resemble biases, even on the part of those who are not “strategic thinkers” *per se*, but

The War has equally revealed errors, so chronic as to resemble biases, even on the part of those who are not “strategic thinkers” per se, but who should have more perceptive and balanced views thanks to their long-time, closer familiarity with the region.

who should have more perceptive and balanced views thanks to their long-time, closer familiarity with the region. Many of these are journalists or members of the “policy community.”

Indeed, one largely unremarked characteristic of the Second Karabakh War—which remains, in fact, an enormous blind-spot—is how great was the failure of the European and American information media, both mass and elite, adequately to inform their readerships, both about the facts of the conflict and about the facts behind the conflict. This general subject is vast and under-researched, although systematic techniques exist

for developing it, based upon the comparative study of media systems. One recent article, barely the tip of iceberg, is indicative. It surveys a small number of academic conferences, panels, and so forth (which it puts under the category of “events”) where the Azerbaijani view is typically underrepresented if it is represented at all. In addition, it reviews briefly some works (and tweets) of selected reporters and commentators.²

The authors of that article establish the categories of “would-be journalists,” who “have failed to cover the situation in its entirety, only shedding light on one side of the conflict”; and of “‘experts’” who “actively [published] anti-Azerbaijani op-eds in various media outlets, ... openly carrying out one-sided, uninformed pieces spreading misleading anti-Azerbaijani narratives,” or who otherwise “participated in the information war, spreading anti-Azerbaijani sentiment and supporting [the] Armenian governmental position.” The article

1 Cutler, R.M., “The Second Karabakh War and Western Strategic Thinking,” The Russia File (blog), *The Kennan Institute, The Wilson Center*, January 5, 2011, available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/second-karabakh-war-and-western-strategic-thinking> (accessed January 19, 2021).

2 The Greater Middle East, *Neglecting the Voice of Azerbaijan in the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict*, January 11, 2021, available at: <https://tgme.org/2021/01/neglecting-the-voice-of-azerbaijan/> (accessed January 19, 2021).

presents only a limited number of some of the worst examples, which nevertheless remain typical, in content if not in form, of the great majority of European and American press coverage and commentary.

In the present article, I take an approach that complements the one in that article. Rather than focusing my discussion on individual writers, I choose individual topic-themes.³ Analytically, it is possible to problematize further such research and to differentiate the topic of study according to readership-targeting, i.e., who are the people most likely to read and be influenced? Here, there are three categories: (1) the mass public, (2) the informed or educated public, and (3) the policy and political elites, including their advisors. Clearly, any press item may be directed at more than one readership, but usually there will be one that is its principal target.

The present article, owing to its brevity, does not distinguish explicitly among these different types of articles, but that may be implicitly evident to the reader. One of the difficulties of such a short study is that there are so many topic-themes that are candidates for analytical attention, and they are so interrelated with one another, that some of the exposition must be devoted simply to laying out some of the facts that are neglected.

What is clear is that the general failure of European and American diplomacy to assist in putting an end to the recent fighting in eastern Azerbaijan grew out of just such a general view that failed to be cognizant of the actual situation in the South Caucasus. Any hope of participating constructively in peace-building following the end of the conflict situation must first recognize the facts now on the ground (and the past facts from which they developed) and the disastrous effect, now evident, of the Armenian diaspora's strategic worldview for Armenians who actually have to live in Armenia.

What is clear is that the general failure of European and American diplomacy to assist in putting an end to the recent fighting in eastern Azerbaijan grew out of just such a general view that failed to be cognizant of the actual situation in the South Caucasus.

³ One theme not addressed here, but about which books could be and probably will be written, is the politically sensitive issue of the destruction of cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh region. The sensitivity is suggested by the fact that it took several days and a concerted effort by Azerbaijani diplomacy to get international media even to acknowledge the Armenian shelling of civilian neighborhoods in Ganja and elsewhere, even though the evidence was absolutely plain. For example, it is incontestable that, in the three hours leading up to first agreed ceasefire (noon local time on October 11), Armenian forces unleashed an unceasing barrage of fire on Azerbaijani positions, which did not stop; and in the night, about 2 a.m. local time, a civilian apartment building in Ganja, Azerbaijan's second largest city, was hit by an explosion. This was only the most egregious of such acts: Armenian forces had previously targeted the city and its civilian neighbourhoods at the beginning of the month, along with the city of Mingachevir, which hosts a dam, reservoir and the largest hydro-electric power generation facility in the country, originally commissioned in 1953 and modernized only two years ago. Yet the international media paid attention only when it became more convenient to pay attention than to ignore it.

A prime example: France's unforced error

Unforced errors by European and American actors regarding the recent hostilities are hardly limited to journalists and other analysts. The EU tried to keep a peripheral approach towards the conflict's resolution, limiting its rhetoric to supporting the diplomatic activities of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. Unlike in the cases of Ukraine and Georgia, the EU was not willing to name Armenia as the aggressor, but sought instead to maintain a "balance" between the terms "territorial integrity" and "self-determination."

France's recent discrediting of itself as a diplomatic interlocutor, however, is especially striking. The EU's diplomacy in the region has, as a whole, always tilted heavily in Armenia's favor, mainly because France is one of three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group mediating between the conflicting parties.

France's recent discrediting of itself as a diplomatic interlocutor, however, is especially striking. The EU's diplomacy in the region has, as a whole, always tilted heavily in Armenia's favor, mainly because France is one of three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group mediating between the conflicting parties. The numerous Armenian Diaspora in France has long been very influential in this regard; however, even observers previously sympathetically tilted to the Armenian side have admitted that France's recent conduct has stripped away any pretension to impartiality.⁴

The most recent example of such bias is the recent vote by both houses of the French legislature, even after the conflict was over and the Armenian side had fully capitulated to Azerbaijani terms, to encourage the French government to "recognize" the separatist regime established by Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.⁵ However, the most egregious own goal dates back to the very start of the hostilities in late September. In a public statement, France's President Emmanuel Macron blamed Turkey for "disinhibiting Azerbaijan regarding what would be a *reconquest of Nagorno-Karabakh, something that we would never accept*" (emphasis supplied). He added: that, "*I say to Armenia and to Armenians, that France will play its role,*" clearly meaning that he would exert efforts to prevent Azerbaijan's "reconquest."⁶

4 The Defense Post, *France Struggles to Retain Karabakh Sway After Armenia Defeat*, November 27, 2020, available at: <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/11/27/france-karabakh-armenia-defeat/> (accessed January 19, 2021).

5 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, *French National Assembly Joins Senate to Call for Recognizing Independent 'Artsakh' Republic*, December 3, 2020, available at: <https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/12/03/french-national-assembly-joins-senate-to-call-for-recognizing-independent-artsakh-republic/> (accessed January 19, 2021).

6 Le Progrès, *Karabakh: Emmanuel Macron attacks Turkey* (translation from French), September 30, 2020, available at: <https://www.leprogres.fr/defense-guerre-conflit/2020/09/30/karabakh-emmanuel-macron-s-en-prendre-la-turquie> (accessed January 19, 2021).

This was a most remarkable declaration. Even more remarkable was the absence of analysis or contextual commentary pointing out that (1) the international community and the United Nations, through numerous Security Council Resolutions, had never failed to affirm that Nagorno-Karabakh region is an integral part of the internationally recognized territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan; and (2) Article 51 of the United Nations Charter empowered Azerbaijan to self-defence regarding its own territory. Most other Western diplomatic leaders, in fact, formally acted as if they recognized these points; by and large, they did not contradict those propositions.

Western political commentators and analysts, however, misinformed their publics, and in some cases their politicians, by failing even to mention these generally under-recognized facts. Even after Azerbaijan's military victory finally reminded them that this was the case, they tended to pass over in silence these fundamental aspects of international law as applied to the Second Karabakh War. Such blindness, in fact, long antedates the Second Karabakh War. Because of it, there was greater diplomatic surprise than necessary at the renewal of fighting in the Azerbaijani territories then occupied by Armenian forces. All this could have been foretold and, in fact, it was—for example, by Jirair Libardian, who was senior advisor to Armenia's President Levon Ter-Petrosyan from 1991 until the latter resigned in 1997.⁷

Western political commentators and analysts, however, misinformed their publics, and in some cases their politicians, by failing even to mention these generally under-recognized facts. Even after Azerbaijan's military victory finally reminded them that this was the case, they tended to pass over in silence these fundamental aspects of international law as applied to the Second Karabakh War.

More examples: Popular distortions and misapprehensions

The most scandalous error, marketed through the media even though few really appeared even to believe it, was, perhaps, the thoroughly discredited trope about Nagorno-Karabakh region (“Mountainous Karabakh”) being a “Christian–Muslim conflict.” This theme was more evident at the beginning of the conflict, when Armenian prime minister Nikol Pashinyan himself played the religious card, implying that the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was even “a clash of civilizations.”⁸ It seems that this theme dissipated over time as

7 Libardian, J. “A step, this time a big step, backwards,” *Aravot*, September 1, 2020, available at: <https://www.aravot-en.am/2020/09/01/263436/> (accessed January 19, 2021).

8 Pashinyan: “It is no longer merely the Karabakh issue, nor a security issue of the Armenian people. It is now an

more information (though not always of higher quality) about the militarization of the actual conflict became better emphasized. Nevertheless, a mere glance at the flood of press coverage reveals the durability of this facile distortion, as it reappeared in an “Explainer” in a major popular American magazine and in the editorial statement of a once-great national U.S. newspaper,⁹ as well as among the inside-the-Beltway commentariat who should certainly know better.¹⁰

I do not mean to criticize American reporting and commentary in particular, but there is just so much of it.¹¹ This error can be found in European coverage of the conflict as well. It is not clear how widely this was believed, and it was not necessarily a definition that motivated a large segment of the readership one way or another. But it indexes the laziness of Western coverage and the preference for the familiar over the unfamiliar, even if the familiar is wrong.

One of the worst and most irresponsible takes of this sort was by no less than a retired US Navy admiral and former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, who has now, however, passed to executive and

issue of international security, and today, the Armenian people are defending also international security, assuming what may be a new historic mission” (emphasis supplied). Quoted in official Armenian government (@armgov) tweet, which calls Armenia the “last remaining obstacle on the way of continued Turkish expansion towards the North, North East, and East,” 4:44AM, October 1, 2020, available at: <https://archive.is/FUbiO> (accessed January 19, 2021).

9 Blakemore, E. “How the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been shaped by past empires”, *National Geographic*, October 15, 2020, available at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/10/how-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-shaped-by-past-empires/>; The Christian Science Monitor, “In Nagorno-Karabakh ‘peace,’ a bitter conflict remains unresolved”, November 12, 2020, available at: <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/2020/1112/In-Nagorno-Karabakh-peace-a-bitter-conflict-remains-unresolved> (both sources accessed January 19, 2021).

10 Rubin, M. “Israel’s Azerbaijan Mistake”, *The National Interest*, November 29, 2020, available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/israel%E2%80%99s-azerbaijan-mistake-173476/>; Davies, N.J.S. “How Can Americans Support Peace in Nagorno-Karabakh?”, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, October 15, 2020, available at: <https://fpif.org/how-can-americans-support-peace-in-nagorno-karabakh/>; Palmer, J. “Why Are Armenia and Azerbaijan Heading to War?”, *Foreign Policy*, 28 September 2020, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/28/why-are-armenia-azerbaijan-heading-to-war-nagorno-karabakh/>; Movesian, M. “Christian Armenia under Attack”, *First Things*, October 5, 2020, available at: <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2020/10/christian-armenia-under-attack/>; Cookman, L. “For Armenians Fleeing Nagorno-Karabakh, ‘Losing It Is Everything’”, *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2020, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/20/armenians-fleeing-nagorno-karabakh-bitter-peace/>; Movesian, M. “Armenia’s Future”, *First Things*, December 11, 2020, available at: <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2020/12/armenias-future/> (accessed January 19, 2021); Rubin, M. “Biden shouldn’t rejoin UNESCO without serious reforms after Azerbaijan antics”, *Washington Examiner*, December 17, 2020, available at: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/biden-shouldnt-rejoin-unesco-azerbaijan> (all sources accessed January 19, 2021).

11 Among the rare correctives are: Shafiyev, F. “Armenia-Azerbaijan Propaganda War and American Media Bias”, *Modern Diplomacy*, December 26, 2020, available at: <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2020/12/26/armenia-azerbaijan-propaganda-war-and-american-media-bias/>; Bin Ali, M. and Si Xing Theresa, Ch. “Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Religious Strife? – Analysis”, *Eurasia Review*, October 27, 2020, available at: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/27102020-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-a-religious-strife-analysis/>; Cutler, R.M. “Without Russian Aid to Armenia, Azerbaijan Has the Upper Hand in Nagorno-Karabakh”, *Foreign Policy*, October 9, 2020, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/10/09/russia-aid-armenia-azerbaijan-putin-nagorno-karabakh/>; Cutler, R.M. “What is behind the Nagorno-Karabakh flare-up? And how can it be resolved?”, *Al Jazeera English*, October 19, 2020, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/10/19/what-is-behind-the-nagorno-karabakh-flare-up> (all sources accessed January 19, 2021).

counselling roles with The Carlyle Group and McLarty Associates (and who writes opinion columns for Bloomberg). “The Turks dislike the Armenians and support their fellow Muslims in Azerbaijan,” he wrote. Headlines for articles cannot be blamed on the authors, but the headline of his did not much exaggerate his argument, screaming, “War in the Caucasus will spread to Russia and Turkey.”¹² This was more likely the idea of Stavridis’s editor at Bloomberg Opinion, who wanted to sell the article to his subscribers. (It is always necessary to consider the role of editorial interventions in the interpretation of such sources.)

NGOs appear not so much to have fallen into the trap of calling the conflict a “religious conflict,” but their perceptions are often equally distorted in other ways. Just a few years ago, for example, in contrast to Stavridis’s catastrophism, a prominent transnational NGO with long experience of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict hypothesized in mid-2018 that “improved Russia-Turkey relations might at least open opportunities to head off new outbreaks of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh.” Their argument lacked any reasoned motivation but merely extrapolated a sort of wishful thinking predicated upon the general warming of Russian–Turkish relations since 2016, even as it ascribed opposing interests to them. Not only did this NGO fail to explain why or how such cooperation might occur, but this sort of evaluation is also typical of the perspectives of the Great Powers (and those that would like to believe that they are great powers) that fail to attribute any autonomous agency to the South Caucasus states themselves.¹³

And yet the analytical characteristics of this NGO report were, under the guise of objectivity, subtly one-sided and tendentious. The examples are numerous, and here are only a few: (1) the “escalation” of the April 2016 military hostilities, was “facilitated by Baku’s beefed-up military capabilities,” rather than by Moscow’s policy of making low-interest “loans” to Yerevan for the purchase of Russian weapons systems at domestic Russian rather than international prices; (2) Yerevan’s motivation for its arms build-up was “mostly to deter another Azerbaijani offensive,” rather than, for example, “to secure its occupation of Azerbaijan’s internationally recognized territories”; (3) the failure of the Turkish–Armenian rapprochement in 2009 was

12 Stavridis, J. “War in the Caucasus will spread to Russia and Turkey”, *Japan Times*, October 4, 2020, available at: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2020/10/04/commentary/world-commentary/war-caucasus-russia-turkey> (accessed January 19, 2021).

13 International Crisis Group, “Russia and Turkey in the Black Sea and the South Caucasus”, Report No. 250 / Europe & Central Asia (Brussels: International Crisis Group, June 28, 2018), available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/250-russia-and-turkey-black-sea-and-south-caucasus> (accessed January 19, 2021).

due to Turkey’s insistence that the occupied territories around the Nagorno-Karabakh region should be returned to Azerbaijani control—failing to mention that this was an important element of the Madrid Principles, to which Armenia had formally agreed. The enumeration could be continued.

When these misrepresentations are not willful, they arise from disregarding the local players on the ground, treating them as objects rather than subjects. It was clear in 2020 that Russia and Turkey, the two regional powers, were effective precisely because they recognized and respected the autonomy of the two combatant sides. Distant observers like Stavridis write as if they are blinded by patterns from the past, or worse still patterns from other regions unthinkingly projected onto the South Caucasus. One result of this lack of focus on present-day realities—whether at the international, the regional, or the subnational level—is to vitiate the development of mutually cooperative non-zero-sum approaches to the real problems that affect people living in the region on the ground.

What Europeans and Americans still don’t understand about the Madrid Principles

Azerbaijan was patient for over a generation. With Armenia, it subscribed to the Madrid Principles for a settlement, proposed by the Minsk Group more than a decade ago. It is of interest to review that those principles called for: (1) returning the seven occupied districts

The Azerbaijani military operation accomplished most of these objectives of the Madrid Principles. Armenia could have acted to implement the Principles over the years, but instead it acted so as to give every reason to believe that there was never any intention to evacuate the seven occupied districts of Azerbaijan.

around Nagorno-Karabakh region to Azerbaijani control, (2) giving Nagorno-Karabakh region an interim status that would provide “guarantees for security and self-governance,” (3) linking it with Armenia by a corridor, (4) determining its final legal status “through a legally binding expression of will,” (5) returning all refugees and displaced people to their former places of residence, and (6) putting in place a peacekeeping operation.¹⁴

Under Russian mediation, the so-called “Kazan formula” was in 2011 adjoined to the Madrid Principles. Under it, Armenia would return five occupied districts to Azerbaijan at first, later followed by the last two

¹⁴ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, “Statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries,” July 10, 2009, available at: <https://www.osce.org/mg/51152> (accessed January 19, 2021).

(Lachyn and Kelbajar, which border Armenia proper). Azerbaijan would, in return, lift its economic blockade of Armenia. Agreements on economic and humanitarian cooperation and demilitarization would be signed, and peacekeepers would be deployed.

The Azerbaijani military operation accomplished most of these objectives of the Madrid Principles. Armenia could have acted to implement the Principles over the years, but instead it acted so as to give every reason to believe that there was never any intention to evacuate the seven occupied districts of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has declared that the region will, at most, share a cultural autonomy with about 30,000 ethnic Armenians living mostly in Baku and Ganja, but that it will have no autonomous administrative status.

All these facts are pertinent to the present discussion, because *they are also passed over mostly in silence* by Western commentary. And while Western press correspondents made occasional reports about how even political opposition inside Azerbaijan had unified behind President Ilham Aliyev, nowhere—not even among Western news correspondents based in Yerevan—was there any discussion of the domestic political situation in Armenia. It is therefore proper to review that situation briefly here. It is, therefore, pertinent to summarize the facts that contextualize Armenian state behaviour.

The country's current prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, came to power, as a result of regime change, in what resembled a “velvet revolution,” in May 2018. He was initially conciliatory toward Azerbaijan and gave the impression that he was ready to discuss difficult issues; but that never happened. For, when he failed to come through on promises made to the Armenian electorate (which, if realized, would have mitigated Armenia's isolation and moderated its heavy dependence on Russia), Pashinyan became himself a victim of Armenian domestic politics. His impulsiveness did not help, as when he put on trial a personal friend of Russia's President Vladimir Putin, the former President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan (for “overthrowing the constitutional order of Armenia”), as well as his country's former Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan (for embezzlement), who had jailed Pashinyan in 2009 and was Kocharyan's hand-picked successor.

Pashinyan became his own hostage, trapped by the irredentist nationalist rhetoric that he had to espouse in order to survive in domestic politics; and this led him to disaster in the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, specifically in Nagorno-Karabakh region. As in a vicious circle, that

Pashinyan became his own hostage, trapped by the irredentist nationalist rhetoric that he had to espouse in order to survive in domestic politics; and this led him to disaster in the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, specifically in Nagorno-Karabakh region.

political development further strengthened the already strong populist and militarist sentiment in Armenian society. Perhaps the culmination of this irrationality (before the actual war itself started) was Pashinyan’s articulation of territorial claims against Turkey. This occurred through his public comments on the 1920 “Treaty of Sèvres,” which never entered into force and was replaced by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.

The Treaty of Sèvres had been the Allies’ attempt, after World War I, to liquidate the Ottoman Empire and distribute its territories; in that division, Armenia

would have received lands now part of Turkey, in its northeast. In August 2020, barely a month before military hostilities would break out, Pashinyan, celebrating the centenary of the Treaty of Sèvres, qualified its terms as “historical fact” and called them “historical justice.” This signified that, as head of government, he was claiming, for the Armenian state, lands that have been part of Turkey for 100 years.¹⁵

In early August 2019, in a speech in Khankendi, Pashinyan declared that “Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenia, and that is all.” In words akin to a verbal annexation, he declared that the territories were part of Armenia itself.¹⁶ No Armenian politician had said that since the war in the early 1990s, first, because it was political dynamite (since the territory was internationally recognized to be part of Azerbaijan), and second, because Armenia sought to maintain the fig leaf of “independence” of the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic” from Armenia proper.

Because Western observers appeared to pay no attention at all to this series of declarations and acts, and because they may have lacked even the background to understand them had they paid attention, they failed to appreciate that Pashinyan’s declaration, and his proposition of seven new conditions for negotiations with Azerbaijan, represented a

15 Moreover, this declaration followed, by just under a year and a half, the declaration to the Armenian community in New York by his defense minister Davit Tonoyan, regarding Azerbaijani land: “As the minister of defense, I announce that this [old] format, territories [in exchange] for peace, I have rephrased it. We are doing the opposite—a new war for new territories.” Just over a year later, in July–August 2020, came the attacks in Azerbaijan’s northwest Tovuz region, 100 miles from Nagorno-Karabakh region, which had been peaceful for over 26 years. Lragir.am, We Do the Opposite – New War for New Territories: Minister Tonoyan’s Tough Statement, March 30, 2019, available at: <https://www.lragir.am/en/2019/03/30/71511> (accessed January 19, 2021).

16 Kucera, J. “Pashinyan calls for unification between Armenia and Karabakh,” *Eurasianet*, August 6, 2019, available at: <https://eurasianet.org/pashinyan-calls-for-unification-between-armenia-and-karabakh> (accessed January 19, 2021). This citation of Kucera is not an endorsement of his work; indeed, his reporting and interpretation are typically among the most tendentious of long-time writers on the region. In this case he cites the Russian-language Azerbaijani news site Haqqin.az, so that he is not obliged himself to say (although the uncritical citation amounts to endorsement) that Pashinyan is “more radical and intransigent” than Kocharyan even had been, indeed, “unhinged and categorical.”

rejection of the OSCE Mink Group-proposed Madrid Principles, according to which the territories' final status would be the product of negotiations. They equally failed to note that this was the first Armenian government that failed to pay the Madrid Principles at least lip-service.

As negotiations languished over the years, Azerbaijan periodically warned that the use of force would be a last resort if the peace process was exhausted; but no one took Baku seriously.

They further failed to understand that, whereas the Madrid Principles called for the eventual participation of both the Armenian and the (ethnically cleansed) Azerbaijani communities of the Nagorno-Karabakh region in those negotiations, Pashinyan now demanded that Armenian representatives from the region should participate on an equal basis with Armenia and Azerbaijan themselves, and without their ethnic Azerbaijani counterparts.¹⁷ They were therefore incapable of understanding the significance of Pashinyan's subsequent overt rejection of the Madrid Principles, as represented by his proposing seven new conditions for negotiations with Azerbaijan.

As negotiations languished over the years, Azerbaijan periodically warned that the use of force would be a last resort if the peace process was exhausted; but no one took Baku seriously. This resort to force finally occurred after Armenia overtly and unilaterally rejected the Madrid Principles and provoked armed clashes at the front line. Even after the hostilities began, Western diplomats and spokesmen were insisting that "there is no military solution to the conflict."¹⁸ This false estimation of the situation was based in ignorance, wishful thinking and, probably half-consciously, embarrassment at their inability to do anything about the facts being established on the ground. Of course, there was a military solution, and Azerbaijan implemented it.

17 Jafarova, E. "'Velvet Populism' Ends Decade-Long Discussion Of The Madrid Principles," *Eurasia Review*, September 18, 2020, available at: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/18092020-velvet-populism-ends-decade-long-discussion-of-the-madrid-principles-oped/> (accessed January 19, 2021).

18 The examples are myriad, from both official, semi-official, and unofficial sources: on the Iranian side, Fars News Agency, *Official: No Military Solution for Nagorno-Karabakh Issue*, October 7, 2020, available at: <https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/13990716000815/Official-N-Military-Slin-fr-Nagr-Karabakh-Isse>; the Canadian foreign minister, quoted in Levon Sevunts, "'Stay out' of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Canada tells Turkey," *Radio Canada International*, October 9, 2020, available at: <https://www.rcinet.ca/en/2020/10/09/stay-out-of-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-canada-tells-turkey/>; the Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman, quoted: "Zakharova: There is no military solution to the conflict in Karabakh, and Moscow does not agree with Ankara on this issue," *Sputnik*, November 9, 2020, available at: <https://archive.is/wip/pVTnM>; US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, quoted in Reuters Staff, *Pompeo urges Armenia, Azerbaijan to cease hostilities*, October 27, 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-armenia-azerbaijan-usa-idUSKBN27C215>; the US Mission to the OSCE, "Statement regarding the Conflict In and Around Nagorno-Karabakh," October 29, 2020, available at: <https://osce.usmission.gov/statement-regarding-the-conflict-in-and-around-nagorno-karabakh/>; retired US Ambassador Carey Cavanagh, "There is no military solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," *Al Jazeera English*, October 19, 2020, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/10/19/there-is-no-military-solution-for-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict> (all sources accessed January 19, 2021); uncountable other examples also exist in non-English languages.

The way forward

What can we conclude from these circumstances? First, the previously-mentioned article on The Greater Middle East website observes that “the exclusion and marginalization” of Azerbaijani views and experience only “creates more obstacles towards reaching peace within the region.” J. Libardian has emphasized the blind alley into which successive Yerevan regimes have led themselves. Without overtly accusing the Armenian diaspora of malign influence, he describes, how the Armenian government behaviour “relie[d] on dreams rather than hard facts” and “started by the conclusion that corresponded to our dreams, and then asked only those questions that confirmed our conclusions.” In perhaps the most acute indictment, he diagnoses: “We adjust political strategy to our wishes, to what will make us feel good about ourselves rather than take into consideration the simple facts that collectively make up the reality around us.”¹⁹

As Libardian explains, in the Armenian worldview, the defeat appears catastrophic and world-historical. Yet it occurred because this worldview, self-contained and divorced from reality, and encouraged by a diaspora that need not suffer its consequences,²⁰ blinded Armenian politics and society to the actual changes in the region and the world over the last

Armenian society had failed to understand that 30 years made a difference for Azerbaijan. It was as if the entire Armenian political class believed that Azerbaijan was still in the midst of a civil war, with a weak central government having poor diplomatic outreach

25 years: the rise of Azerbaijani state power, the shift of Russian sentiment, and the powerlessness of that diaspora when push came to shove. This worldview, Libardian wrote, still imprisons Armenian society, which remains unable to recognize how or why the defeat occurred, and incapable even of formulating questions that might lead to real answers.

Partisan sentiment is diffused throughout Armenian society, he observes, making strategic thinking impossible, thus trapping it in an ideological hall of mirrors. He is clearly correct that Armenian society

19 Libardian, J. “What Happened and Why: Six Theses,” *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, November 24, 2020, available at: <https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/11/24/what-happened-and-why-six-theses/> (accessed January 19, 2021); see also his interview by G. Atanesian, “Mnogie dumali, chto voina – eto zabava: Zhirair Liparitian o porazhenii Armenii i budushchem Karabakha,” *BBC News Russian Service*, November 30, 2020, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-55132269> (accessed January 19, 2021). A recent interview is by T. Rowley, “Salvage: a conversation on Nagorno-Karabakh,” *openDemocracy*, December 8, 2020, available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/salvage-conversation-nagorno-karabakh/> (accessed January 19, 2021).

20 Collard, R. “The Armenian Diaspora Is Giving Armenia an Edge in Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Foreign Policy*, October 17, 2020, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/10/17/armenia-diaspora-nagorno-karabakh-azerbaijan> (accessed January 19, 2021).

had failed to understand that 30 years made a difference for Azerbaijan. It was as if the entire Armenian political class believed that Azerbaijan was still in the midst of a civil war, with a weak central government having poor diplomatic outreach and few English speakers, and a newly established defence ministry disposing of few weapons. Clearly, that was not the case, and it should not have been necessary to lose a war catastrophically in order to learn the lesson: if it is yet learnt.

How to exit this dead-end? Many supposedly wise international diplomatic observers, not excluding NGOs and some governments, insist either on a return to the Minsk Group forum, which has lost all credibility, as explained above; or on some other multilateralized settlement.²¹ Interlocutors are all well and good, and external guarantees may be necessary in the long run, but the only real way out of this dead-end for the Armenian political class is “reality therapy.”²²

The best thing that any interlocutor could do, rather than passing messages back and forth between Baku and Yerevan, would be gently to insist on, and to facilitate, the Armenian leadership beginning to speak directly with the Azerbaijani leadership, rather than relying on intermediaries. These two peoples are neighbours who have intermingled and intermarried for centuries, and they will still be living with each other after all the interlocutors have gone home.

Beyond the practical work of post-war rehabilitation of the land and peoples at the present moment, the best thing that external powers can do is to promote this face-to-face and bilateral cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and between their leaders and their political executives in particular. The two sides must engage in practical cooperation on all levels. It is natural to begin with the smallest steps, such as cooperation on border delimitation and demarcation, which is, in fact, now occurring. Azerbaijan and Turkey, both separately and together, have made many concrete offers to the Armenian leadership for economic cooperation over the last 15-20 years.

It is up to the Armenian leadership and political class to decide whether or not to engage in this reality therapy. The alternative is the perpetuation

21 International Crisis Group, “Improving Prospects for Peace after the Nagorno-Karabakh War,” Briefing No. 91 / Europe & Central Asia (Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 22, 2020), available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/nagorno-karabakh-conflict/b91-improving-prospects-peace-after-nagorno-karabakh-war> (accessed January 19, 2021).

22 Cutler, R.M. “Looking Beyond Armenia’s Defeat in Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Central Asia–Caucasus Analyst*, December 7, 2020, available at: <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13652-looking-beyond-armenias-defeat-in-nagorno-karabakh.html> (accessed January 19, 2021).

of the impoverishment and suffering of the Armenian people inside Armenia, in which the influential diaspora, however, do not share. At the same time, experts must continue the inspection and criticism of the mass and specialized media in order to expose errors and old ways of thinking that harm the everyday lives and the futures of the peoples in the region by creating false images of the real situation on the ground, from which only mistaken actions can proceed.

Economic Potential of the Liberated Territories of Azerbaijan: A Brief Overview

Dr. Rovshan Ibrahimov*

The autumn of 2020 was marked by an important and historic event for Azerbaijan: the country managed to restore its territorial integrity from Armenian occupation by military means. This conflict had existed shortly from before Azerbaijan gained independence until September 2020. After the liberation of Azerbaijan's occupied territories, the main task that now needs to be addressed is the restoration of those territories and the return of internally displaced persons (IDP) to their homes therein. Indeed, for the return of IDPs, it is necessary to create an appropriate environment, including stable and comfortable conditions. The economic component of the liberated territories will play a vital role. To this end, it is important to conduct a review of the economic potential of the territories that have now completely returned to the sovereign control of Azerbaijan. The article will provide a general assessment of the economic potential of the liberated territories. The data that have been used in this research were mostly accumulated before the occupation of these territories by Armenia. With the possibility of new, in-depth geological exploration, these areas may present new economic opportunities. Nevertheless, this commentary does not set out to analyse how these resources could or should be used.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh region, economic potential of liberated territories, IDPs.



* **Dr. Rovshan Ibrahimov** is Professor in Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. This work was supported by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2021 ©

Introduction

For about 30 years, the territories of the southwestern part of Azerbaijan have been occupied by Armenia. Therefore, the liberation of these territories was the main priority of both the domestic and the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. For many years, Azerbaijan tried to resolve the conflict peacefully, conducting negotiations mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group's co-chair countries (France, the Russian Federation, and the USA). However, Armenia deliberately delayed the resolution of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, thereby trying to preserve the status quo established after the 1994 ceasefire agreement. At that time, Armenia occupied not only the territories of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), but also seven surrounding adjacent districts, thus forcing their entire local population to leave their homes and making them IDPs in their own country.

The counteroffensive launched by the Azerbaijani Army on the 27 September in response to the Armenian forces' armed provocations at the frontline enlarged its scope of operation to a 44-day-long, all-out war, dubbed the “Patriotic War” or “Second Karabakh War”. This created a new reality: the formerly occupied territories were returned. The next stage will be the return of IDPs to their homeland in accordance with the trilateral statement signed by the heads of state of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia on 10 November.

During the entire period of the occupation, the Armenian military forces and illegal residents completely plundered and wiped out all settlements in the region. In addition, they mined huge areas of those territories to make them dangerous for Azerbaijanis to move through after the liberation. In short, a lot of work is needed on demining activities and rebuilding destroyed cities, towns, and villages.

Another question is how the migrants will return to their native lands and what they will be occupied with there. After all, over 30 years, many IDPs have become resettled in new places and formed more or less stable livelihoods. Thus, it is important to determine the economic potential and the possibilities of the liberated territories, so that resettlement is not only a call of patriotic need, but also of economic expediency.

At the same time, the liberated territories will enable Azerbaijan to strengthen its economic opportunities and accelerate the growth of the well-being of its citizens as this region is rich in natural resources, the

development of which is an additional impetus for expanding the country's economic portfolio. This article will provide information on the economic potential of the liberated territories and analyse their possible uses. The purpose is to assess the overall potential; there will be no discussion of how the opportunities of the newly acquired territories can be realized.

State of affairs regarding the liberated territories and IDPs

Until 9 November, the day when hostilities ceased with the mediation of Russia, Azerbaijan had already achieved on its own the liberation of the districts of Fuzuli, Jebrayil, Gubatli, Zengilan, and (partially) Khojavend, as well as the city of Shusha, which is the cultural capital of Azerbaijan. After the parties announced a ceasefire on 10 November, the Armenian armed forces left three more regions: Agdam, Kalbajar, and Lachin. A total of 13,198 km² were released (out of Azerbaijan's total territory of 86,600 km²). At the moment, Azerbaijan fully controls about 10,000 km², and in the remaining 3,100 km² of territory, where the Karabakh Armenians are now located, Russian peacekeeping forces are deployed for a period of five years. The gradual reinforcement of Azerbaijan's control in these territories will take place in further stages.¹

After the liberation of the occupied territories, the question of their restoration and ensuring the return of Azerbaijani IDPs is the key task. In total, 890 settlements (cities, towns, and villages) were destroyed by the Armenian military aggressor. In addition, it will take a long time to clear the territories of landmines and unexploded ordnance. According to an estimate by ANAMA, this may take about 3–5 years, and the full completion of all such works will take about 10 years.²

The restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is of great economic importance, as the occupation caused great damage to the economic sector. For 30 years, Azerbaijan has not had the opportunity to access

The liberated territories will enable Azerbaijan to strengthen its economic opportunities and accelerate the growth of the well-being of its citizens as this region is rich in natural resources, the development of which is an additional impetus for expanding the country's economic portfolio.

After the liberation of the occupied territories, the question of their restoration and ensuring the return of Azerbaijani IDPs is the key task.

1 Ibrahimov R., "Voda, les, zoloto- ekonomicheskij potencial osvobodennix territorij Azerbaycana," *CCBS.news.ru*, December 16, available at: <https://ccbs.news.ru/article/2351/> (accessed: December 28, 2020).

2 FED.az, *ANAMA: It's not necessary to wait 10 years to return to the liberated territories* (translation from Azerbaijani), November 29, 2020, available at: <https://fed.az/az/qarabag/anama-iscaldan-azad-edilen-erazilerezinsanlar-daha-tez-qayidacaq-94314>, (accessed: December 15, 2020).

the resources available in these territories. In 1994, the total number of Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia was 243,682 people; from Central Asia, 49,239 (Meskhetian Turks who were forced to leave their homes

The restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is of great economic importance, as the occupation caused great damage to the economic sector.

owing to the outbreak of interethnic conflict in Central Asia. The tragedy of the Meskhetian Turks did not end with this: after they found a new home in Azerbaijan, they then became IDPs because of Armenian military aggression.); as well as 611,293 IDPs resulting from the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan's territories.³ Thus, more than 900,000 refugees and IDPs for a long period did not have the opportunity for full-fledged economic activity. Although, many of them were

employed and received a monthly state allowance, this kind of non-standard social orientation of budget revenues was also a serious burden for the national economy. A large amount of funds were allocated to provide for this social stratum of the country's population.

Thus, the government provides a monthly allowance for 496,557 IDPs.⁴ The government also pays for utilities such as electricity, natural gas, water, and household waste. Medical care and treatment are also provided free of charge. In addition, the State pays for the education of students from IDP families studying in higher educational institutions, and provides schoolchildren from the same group with free textbooks. There are also other services that are free, such as exemptions from the fee for the issuance of an identity card and from notarial fees when buying or selling property.⁵ In addition, at State expense, many houses were built to improve the living conditions of IDPs. Thus, back in 2007, Azerbaijan managed to destroy the last tent camp for IDPs, where they had had to live in the most difficult of conditions. Since then, according to the state programme, more than a hundred townships have been built for them. Overall, about 7 billion manat (around US\$4.12 billion) were spent on resolving the problems of IDPs.⁶

3 Preslib.az, *Armyano-Azerbaycanskiy Nagorno-Karabaxskiy Konflikt*, Administrative Department of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, available at: <http://files.preslib.az/projects/azerbaijan/rus/gl7.pdf> (accessed: December 15, 2020), p. 55.

4 Apa.az, *The number of IDPs with increased monthly benefits has been announced*, (translation from Azerbaijani), 26 February 2020, Available at: https://apa.az/az/sosial_xeberler/ayliq_muavineti-artirilan-mecburi-kockunlerin-sayi-aciqlanib-523288, (Accessed: December 16, 2020).

5 Idp.az, *Privileges*, (translation from Azerbaijani), Available at: <http://idp.gov.az/az/content/7/parent/21>, (Accessed: December 17, 2020).

6 Prezident.az (2019), İlham Aliyev received chairman of the State Committee for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, (translation from Azerbaijani), 18 November 2019, <https://prezident.az/articles/34479>, (December 17, 2020).

Natural resources of the liberated territories

The Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan have significant natural resources that, when developed, will enable Azerbaijan to boost its economy and improve the well-being of its citizens. As a result of the occupation, 647,900 hectares of fertile land were destroyed: most of this land is suitable for growing various agricultural products. For example, before the war, 199,000 hectares of land were used for crops.⁷ In total, 1.7 million hectares of land were occupied. Now, this huge area has been reclaimed for the agriculture of Azerbaijan, and it will also be possible to re-establish the entire production chain, from growing crops to processing and producing industrial and agricultural products. This means new job places for the citizens of Azerbaijan who will return to their homes. For example, before the occupation during Soviet times in the Jebrayil and Fuzuli districts, local residents were engaged in viticulture, animal husbandry, grain growing, silkworm breeding, and vegetable and fruit growing.⁸ It should be noted that, during the entire period of occupation, Armenia illegally used these territories for agricultural purposes. In his popular address on December 1, 2020, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev said that Armenia was growing wheat on tens of thousands of hectares of land in Agdam, Fuzuli, Jebrayil, and Zengilan districts. Armenia harvested up to 90,000 tons of wheat per year in the formerly occupied territories; only a little more wheat is produced in Armenia itself, just 100,000 tons per year. Also, despite the fact that many vineyards were destroyed, viticulture was still practised in some areas of the formerly occupied territories.⁹

In addition, the part of the Lesser Caucasus mountain range that was under occupation has a large forested area: about 246,700 hectares, including 13,197 hectares of valuable forests.¹⁰ This factor is very significant for Azerbaijan, since only 12% the country's territory is covered by forest, which is below the world average. There are nature reserves on the territories of both the liberated Zengilan and Lachin districts (Basitchay and Lachin, respectively). In the Basitchay reserve,

The Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan have significant natural resources that, when developed, will enable Azerbaijan to boost its economy and improve the well-being of its citizens.

7 Preslib.az, Armyano-Azerbaycanskiy Nagorno-Karabaxskiy Konflikt, ibid, p.57.

8 Report.az, *27 years passed since occupation of Fuzuli and Jabrayil*, August 23, 2020, Available at: <https://report.az/en/karabakh/27-years-passed-since-occupation-of-fuzuli-and-jabrayil/>, (Accessed: December 17, 2020).

9 Youtube.com, President Ilham Aliyev addresses the people, (translation from Azerbaijani), December 1, 2020, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGiynYxJXvs&t=1492s>, (Accessed: December 18, 2020).

10 Ecoreform.az, *Chto Predveshaet Osvobojdeniye Okkupirovannix Territoriy dlya Ekonomiki Azerbaycana*, Available at: <http://www.ecoreform.az/contact-us>, (Accessed: December 18, 2020).

there is a forest of plane trees (listed in the “Red Book” of Azerbaijan) where the age of some trees reaches more than 500 years. Unfortunately, during the occupation, Armenia massively felled centuries-old trees that were then used for the industrial purposes of Azerbaijan, mainly for the production of furniture.

The liberated territories are also rich in minerals. There are 155 deposits of minerals there, including five gold deposits (according to the estimates available from the years before the occupation, there are about 132 tons of gold in these deposits).¹¹ Zod-Soyudlu, the largest gold deposit of Azerbaijan, is located on the border between Armenia and the Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan (74% or 219 hectares of the field are located on Azerbaijan’s side, 26% on that of Armenia). The total volume of industrial reserves of the Zod-Soyudlu field in the Kalbajar district is estimated at 112.5 tons and the minimum output of ore mined from this deposit is 0.8 grams per ton.¹²

It should be noted that, before the return of the Kalbajar district, the Armenian occupiers illegally mined gold reserves therein. GPMGold, a subsidiary of Russian GeoPro Mining Ltd, has been mining ore in Soyudlu village since 2007.¹³ Earlier, Canada’s First Dynasty Mines tried to conduct similar activities in Soyudlu; in 1998, it bought out the remaining 50% of shares from the Armenian Ararat Gold Recovery Company, thus bringing its block of shares to 100%. The total gold production of GPMGold from this deposit amounted to 130,000 ounces. The Armenians also exploited the Aghduzdag and Tutkhun gold deposits, both located in the Kalbajar region, with estimated reserves of more than 13 tons.¹⁴

The liberated territories also have significant deposits of mercury (1,900 tons), lead (40,000 tons), copper, and zinc.¹⁵ According to the calculations of previous years, in the territory of the Kalbajar district alone, the total quantities of existing mercury deposits in Aghyatag, Levchay, and Chorbulag were 850 tons; in Gamishli and Aghgaya more than 200 tons; and the Chilgazchay and Narzanli large mercury deposits

11 Ecoreform.az, *ibid*.

12 Azertag.az, Rauf Hajiye: *Damage to nature and monuments of Kalbajar region will be calculated in a short time and appropriate measures will be taken* (translation from Azerbaijani), December 1, 2020, available at: https://azertag.az/xeber/Rauf_Haciye_Kelbecer_rayonunun_tebietine_ve_abidelerine_vurulmus_ziyan_qisa_muddetde_hesablanacaq_ve_muvafig_tedbirler_gorulecek (accessed: December 19, 2020).

13 Omarov V., “Cruel exploitation of Karabakh and adjacent regions occupied by Armenia,” *Sia.az*, August 24, 2020, available at: <https://sia.az/az/news/social/822274.html> (accessed: December 22, 2020).

14 Nuriyev Q., “Azerbaijanskiy Klondayk: Armyane Doljni Vozmestit Usherb ot Ekspluatatsii Mestorojdeniy v Karabakhe,” *Report.az*, October 10, 2020, available at: <https://report.az/ru/energetika/azerbajdzhanskij-klondajk-armyane-dolzny-vozmestit-usherb-ot-ekspluatatsii-mestorozhdenij-v-karabahe/> (accessed: December 23, 2020).

15 Ecoreform.az, *ibid*.

are located in Lachin district. Many of these deposits were illegally used by Armenia. In this connection, the Azerbaijani government intends to invite international audit companies to carry out an independent audit in order to calculate the total damage that can be presented to the international courts for claiming compensation from Armenia.¹⁶

At the same time, during the occupation period of the southeastern regions by Armenia, Azerbaijan was deprived of the use of about 14 deposits of coloured and decorative stones, such as jasmine, agate, onyx, jasper, pyrite, pemphigoid, cad, etc. In addition, the region has 19 deposits of various kinds of facing stone and other deposits suitable for the production of construction materials, such as cement raw materials, building stone, pumice and volcanic ash, clay, building sand, gypsum, anhydride and clay gypsum, perlite, obsidian, and vermiculite.¹⁷

For example, in the Jebayil district, there is practically everything that is needed for construction:

a cube-stone can be mined in the Toulouse deposit, the reserves of which are estimated at 2.296 million m³. There are 4.672 million m³ of clay in Garajaly, plus at least four deposits of cement raw materials with total reserves of 6.644 million m³ available in Geyarchin-Veisalli. In addition, there are deposits of sand, crushed stone, gypsum, and other construction materials in the region.¹⁸

All of this will be of particular importance in the period when the liberated territories are being restored. Building materials can be produced directly in the region, which will reduce the cost of construction materials needed for rebuilding and can create new jobs. In addition, the use of local construction materials will contribute to the ability to restore the region's authentic architectural style.

The liberated territories of Azerbaijan are also very rich in water resources, which provide a very significant contribution to Azerbaijan's limited water reserves.

Water and energy potential of the liberated territories

The liberated territories of Azerbaijan are also very rich in water resources, which provide a very significant contribution to Azerbaijan's limited water reserves. Given the fact that, lately, the problem of supplying the country with fresh water was becoming critical, these resources will be most useful.

¹⁶ Youtube, President Ilham Aliyev addresses the people, ibid.

¹⁷ Ecoreform.az, ibid.

¹⁸ Preslib.az, Armyano-Azerbaycanskiy Nagorno-Karabaxskiy Konflikt, ibid., p63.

Back in the 1970s, on the initiative of Heydar Aliyev, then First Secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan (equivalent to the capacity of a leader of Azerbaijan), the Sarsang reservoir was built (at the moment, the reservoir falls within the region where the Russian peacekeepers are deployed) on the Tartar River, with a total capacity of 560 million m³, as well as the Sugovushan reservoir, with a capacity of 80 million m³ for irrigation and energy purposes. The area of the Tartar river basin is 2,650 square kilometres, and the river is 184 km long, with an average water flow of 23.1 cubic meters per second. This is the largest river in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and is of great importance for the economy of Azerbaijan, as it is used for both agricultural and industrial needs.¹⁹ The Sarsang reservoir will provide irrigation opportunities for agricultural land in six regions of Azerbaijan with a total area of about 100,000 hectares.²⁰ During the occupation of the Azerbaijani lands, these areas were deprived of the opportunity to receive water from the reservoir because, during the sowing season, Armenians cut off the water supply, releasing it only in the winter, which was causing flooding for the agricultural land of these districts. Currently at the Sugovushan reservoir, the necessary works are already being carried out to ensure the irrigation of land during spring, which will create the conditions for the irrigation of another 15,000 hectares of land. Immediately after the liberation of the village of Sugovushan, for the first time in 28 years, water was released from the reservoir to the Terter, Goranboy, and Yevlakh districts.²¹

In the south, in the Jebrayil and Zengilan districts, the Khudaferin reservoir on the Araz River, which is used jointly with Iran, was also released. This reservoir will enable the irrigation of about 75,000 hectares of land. According to some estimates, the volume of this reservoir is 1.6 billion m³. The liberated territories also have underground sources of drinkable water that can provide a daily volume of up to two million m³.²²

The significance of these water resources is reinforced with the capacity for energy production from hydropowerplants. In the occupied territories, there are, including those built later by the Armenian occupiers, about 34 hydroelectric power plants (HPP). The largest among them are the Sarsang HPP, with a generation capacity of 50 MW, and the Khudaferin

19 Azertag.az, Rauf Hajiyev: Damage to nature and monuments..., ibid.

20 Ecoreform.az, ibid.

21 Report.az, *Spustya 28 let Voda iz Suqovushana Pushena v Reku Terter*, October 9, 2020, available at: <https://report.az/ru/karabakh/spustya-28-let-voda-iz-sugovushana-pushena-v-reku-terter/> (accessed: December 25, 2020).

22 Ibrahimov, R., ibid.

HPP (102 MW), which is being built on the Araz river in collaboration with Iran.²³ In addition, there are plans to construct the Maiden Tower HPP, which will also be located on the Araz river. It should be noted that the construction of the Khudaferin and Maiden Tower HPPs was agreed back in 1982 as a joint project between the USSR and Iran. However, a new agreement was concluded directly between Azerbaijan and Iran in 2016. In fact, the construction of the Khudaferin HPP was completed by Iran, but it has not yet begun operation. Equal value from water and electricity supply is expected. It is anticipated that the profits from the sale of electricity generated by the Khudaferin and Maiden Tower HPPs will be divided equally between the two countries.²⁴

About 39.6% of the total geological reserves of mineral waters (120 sources of various compositions and medicinal values) of the Republic of Azerbaijan fall within the liberated territories. This means that the potential supply of mineral water is in the order of about 7,800 m³ per day. Among these, the Istisu (Kalbajar district), Turshsu (not far from the city of Shusha), and Syrlan (Shusha city) springs are of particular importance. This mineral water is distinguished by its chemical composition and it is a natural remedy for many diseases. Before the conflict there was a large resort and sanatorium at the Istisu spring as well as a mineral water bottling plant, which were completely destroyed during the occupation. The water from the Turshsu and Syrlan springs is believed to treat various internal diseases.²⁵

The presence of many mineral waters in this region makes it possible to develop a curative tourism destination, along with the existing tourist potential. It will be possible to develop many other types of tourism in the region by mobilizing other indigenous elements such as religion, cooking, ecotourism, and healing. For the latter, the restoration and construction of new hospitals and sanatoriums is necessary, which will attract not only Azerbaijani citizens, but also foreign tourists.

The presence of certain reserves of oil and natural gas in these territories is also known. In short, their estimated reserves in the liberated territories are estimated at 200 million tons and 250 billion m³, respectively.²⁶ Although these areas comprise rough, mountainous terrain, thanks to new technologies, their extraction can become possible and economically

23 Ibrahimov R., *ibid.*

24 Krivosheev K., "GES, Kotoraya Jdala Konsa Voyni, "B" Posetil Gidrouzel s Tyajeloy Sudboy", *Kommersant*, December 9, 2020, Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4605407#id1986968?> (Accessed: 2 January, 2021)

25 Ecoreform.az, *ibid.*

26 Interfax.com.ua, *Zapasy nefiti v Karabakhe otsenivayutsya v 200 mln t, gaza - 250 mlrd kub. m - AN Azerbaydzhana*, December 14, 2020, Available at: <https://interfax.com.ua/news/economic/709809.html>. (2 January, 2020).

viable, which will create new jobs, provide the region with additional energy sources, and increase the export of hydrocarbon resources.

Conclusion

The natural potential of the liberated territories is enormous. Considering how important they were for the Armenian economy, it has become clear that Azerbaijan will make the most of the restored opportunities. According to some estimates, the use of natural resources in the territories formerly occupied by Armenia will enable Azerbaijan to extract up to an additional 30% of its GDP. Now these resources will give a big impetus to the economy of Azerbaijan and will also contribute to the early return of local residents (former IDPs) to their homeland.

Moreover, the development of these territories will create positive opportunities for Armenia as well. Indeed, according to the Statement of 10 November, there are projects that will positively affect the development of regional cooperation, which will create interdependence between the countries and therefore reduce the likelihood of potential conflicts in the future. In accordance with the ninth paragraph of the Statement, “all economic and transport links in the region shall be restored.” For the first time since independence, Armenia has the opportunity to become part of a long-established regional economic system. In the case of a constructive approach and the rejection of revanchist ideas, Armenia will receive significant dividends for its economy from the new arrangements.

In addition, the statement assumes the restoration of existing and construction of new transport and communications links between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of this country, links that pass through the territories of the Republic of Armenia. Owing to the occupation of the southern districts (Fuzuli, Jabrail, and Zengilan), all ground communications had been interrupted. If this transport route starts operating, a positive effect will be provided not only for Azerbaijan, but also for Armenia, which will have the opportunity to escape regional isolation, as well as to gain access to regional transport links with Azerbaijan and, through Nakhichevan, Turkey.

Restoring its territorial integrity will enable Azerbaijan to fully use the economic potential of this region, which will positively affect the well-being of its citizens and will also become an additional impetus for regional cooperation in the South Caucasus, where Armenia was intentionally isolated during the years of the ongoing conflict.

Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict: The Failure of Multilateral Diplomacy

Murad Muradov*

This article describes the failure of the long-term attempts to resolve the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan through the means of multilateral diplomacy. It shows that the OSCE Minsk Group has been unable to fulfil its mission and analyses the structural problems their attempts have had. Then, the article proceeds to question the validity of the liberal concept of global politics and its ability to resolve conflicts, arguing that, in the case of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, multilateral diplomatic efforts could actually have made matters worse instead of improving them. It reveals that attempts to stimulate the conflict parties to achieve a consensus were futile owing to the fundamentally skewed status quo and, in reality, only motivated Armenia to continue doing nothing and trying to normalize the fact of territorial occupation. The article also points up the failure to apply similar legal standards to the Nagorno-Karabakh and other separatist conflicts in the post-Soviet space and Eastern Europe. Finally, it evokes the realist concept of diplomacy and reviews its fundamental pillars, arguing for a case that their application in the foreign policy of the conflicting states might have helped them to achieve much better conflict-resolution dynamics.

Keywords: Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, democratic peace, conflict resolution, political realism, OSCE Minsk Group, multilateral diplomacy



* **Murad Muradov** is Deputy Director at the Topchubashov Center (based in Baku, Azerbaijan).

Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict: Negotiations

Outside observers often find it difficult to understand why the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict has been so intractable and resisted peaceful resolution. There is a complex combination of several complicating factors: the exclusive and radical version of nationalism preached by the Armenian side; the absence of local mechanisms of civil representation and dispute resolution that could help to establish a dialogue between the two communities; and the factor of Russia, which has capitalized on the hostile status quo to entrench the dependence of both Azerbaijan and Armenia on its security guarantees. All these factors have formed a rock-solid perception in the minds of both peoples and their national elites that the conflict has no viable or acceptable resolution. However, and perhaps most importantly, the ultimate culprit has been the blatant failure of diplomatic efforts, both at the level of the international community and among regional actors.

Given the highly adverse dynamics on the ground, the only viable hope for a breakthrough had always rested with a proactive and principled position of the larger international community regarding the issue. However, this hope would never come to fruition.

Given the highly adverse dynamics on the ground, the only viable hope for a breakthrough had always rested with a proactive and principled position of the larger international community regarding the issue. However, this hope would never come to fruition. Back in 1992, when the conflict was still in the phase of expansion, the OSCE called for the convening of a special conference to mediate between Azerbaijan and Armenia and help them in finding a solution.¹ The body that came to be formed in 1994 was dubbed the Minsk Group, from the place of its first gathering. Now, 28 years later, it has still to show any tangible successes for inclusion

in its resumé. Even the 1994 ceasefire agreement, which unfortunately remained the single most successful episode in the Armenia–Azerbaijan negotiations, was largely mediated by Russia.²

Since then, the Minsk Group, co-chaired by Russia, the USA, and France, has become known for one particular skill: muddling through and avoiding any meaningful and innovative ideas. In fact, since the 2000s, the only mission of the group was to monitor the situation along the Line of Contact (LoC), while the absence of permanent international observers was a breeding ground for constant ceasefire violations that further

1 OSCE Minsk Group, “Who We are”, available at: <https://www.osce.org/minsk-group/108306> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

2 Povazan, M., “Russian Foreign Policy Towards and Influence on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict,” *Russian Council of Foreign Relations*, November 9, 2020, available at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/blogs/martinpovazan/russias-foreign-policy-towards-and-influence-on-the-nagornokarabakh-co/> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

plagued diplomatic efforts. The frequent, fruitless visits and grudgingly similar statements made for many years by Andrzej Kasprzyk, the OSCE Special Representative in the Minsk Group for 23 years, became an increasingly irritating factor in Baku in the environment of rising tensions and a growing sense of unfairness regarding the status quo. In an article written as far back as 1996, a US Special Representative for Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations, John Maresca, pointed out the perennial weaknesses of the Minsk Group, which was kept too low-key in its status, represented little political will of the countries that were supposed to stand behind it, and was constantly ridiculed and pushed back by high-level Russian authorities.³ However, its format and mandate have remained unchanged ever since.

The relative calm that reigned in the conflict zone between 1994 and 2014 was often presented as a success of diplomacy, which completely ignored the fact that this calm mainly had to do with the unwillingness of the both parties to risk a renewal of hostilities as well as the specificities of the unipolar global order that posed very difficult obstacles to the use of power. As soon as this order started to show cracks after the Russian occupation of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia in 2008, the whole balance of power shifted and it suddenly turned out that large-scale violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone is possible and the Minsk Group is poorly equipped to prevent it. Given the growing polarization in the world between major centres of power, the fact that the three Co-Chairs of the Group have retained miraculous unanimity on the peace process⁴ attests not to its success, but rather the careless and superficial attitude of the international community, as big countries simply did not bother to clash over a relatively “unimportant” matter. The reactions of the co-chair countries during the 44-day war exemplified the reasons why the Group could not be an efficient tool. For instance, France’s President Emanuel Macron rather boldly endorsed Yerevan by promising “not to accept Azerbaijan’s attempts to re-conquer Nagorno-Karabakh” (without offering means to do it

The relative calm that reigned in the conflict zone between 1994 and 2014 was often presented as a success of diplomacy, which completely ignored the fact that this calm mainly had to do with the unwillingness of the both parties to risk a renewal of hostilities

3 Maresca, J., “Lost Opportunities in Negotiating the Conflict over Nagorno Karabakh,” *International Negotiation*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Jan. 1996), pp. 471-499.

4 Markedonov, S., “Russia and Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: a Careful Balancing,” *ISPI*, March 12, 2018, available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/russia-and-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-careful-balancing-19832> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

peacefully),⁵ and the USA seemed not to be particularly bothered.⁶

The United Nations has been no better at finding a way out of this impasse. The Security Council was seemingly very active during the most intensive phase of the war in 1993 and issued four resolutions (numbers 822, 853, 874, and 884) that emphasized commitment to the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and called for the withdrawal of the Armenian occupying forces from the Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Gubadly, and Zangilan regions.⁷ However, these benign declarations would not materialize. The Western mediators, in the case of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, instead of pressuring Armenia to demonstrate constructiveness in the negotiations, simply decided to freeze the conflict until better times, which, as is now clear, would never come.

The international community's lukewarm efforts to resolve the conflicts in the South Caucasus, perceived as a deep backwater, represented an obvious contrast to its active position on the Yugoslavian wars, which were unfolding in the immediate vicinity of the West. In the above-mentioned article, Ambassador Maresca openly claims that the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process was left by the West to Russia as a consolation prize, as it took the biggest one: Yugoslavia.⁸ These double standards left a lasting scar on the societies and political elites of Azerbaijan and Armenia and imposed significant obstacles to their normal development. In Azerbaijan, this attitude instilled a conviction of the profound injustice of the world order, as well as its inability to be inclusive and serve the most pressing needs of small nations. It has been widely perceived that calls for peace and reconciliation without putting any pressure on Armenia to make the necessary compromises—liberating at least the seven adjacent districts around Nagorno-Karabakh region and starting the process of the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their homeland—merely disguised a cynical worldview in which conflicts and suffering that do not immediately harm big powers do not really matter.

In Armenia, getting away unpunished after having gained three times more territory than initially planned and having committed a number of war

5 Daily Sabah, *We Won't Accept Azerbaijani Control in Nagorno Karabakh, Macron says*, September 30, 2020, available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/we-wont-accept-azerbaijani-control-in-nagorno-karabakh-macron-says> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

6 Safi, M. & Borger, J., "US silence on Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict reflects international disengagement", *The Guardian*, October 4, 2020, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/04/us-armenia-azerbaijan-nagorno-karabakh> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

7 U.S. Department of State Archive, "1993 UN Security Council Resolutions on Nagorno-Karabakh", available at: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/or/13508.htm> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

8 Maresca, J., "Lost Opportunities in Negotiating the Conflict over Nagorno Karabakh," *International Negotiation*, Vol.1, No.3 (Jan. 1996), pp. 471-499.

crimes created a growing sense of “justice by force”: the normalisation of the conflict outcomes by the mere fact that the world makes no tangible efforts to resolve it. These feelings among Armenians gradually led to the triumph of the maximalist position that they have no need to compromise at all. This “double movement” in the conflicting countries narrowed down the negotiation space until, in the 2010s, it was no longer possible for Azerbaijani and Armenian leaders to find a common language. After several years of intensive diplomatic work that culminated in the Key West talks, where the conflicting sides were very close to an ultimate solution (though the proposed solutions were rejected by Azerbaijan owing to its final outcomes for the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity), the level of engagement of the international community started to recede. In the almost 20 years since then, the peace process became less and less substantive, and after the 2012 Sochi meetings between the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, it was not paid even lip service. That is why, in his first statements after the escalation of violence, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the ultimate failure of the old formats, which have utterly discredited themselves.

There has also been a multiple intersection of different, often contradictory, narratives and strategies that distorted the proper resolution process for the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict. Probably due to the fact that Armenia is a small, economically feeble state, the fact that its behaviour towards the Nagorno-Karabakh region mirrors that of Russia in Abkhazia, South Ossetia (at least before their “recognition” in 2008), and Donbass has largely passed under the radar of global opinion, although, in the latter cases, the West was happy to side with Georgia and Ukraine against the obvious aggression of a much larger and more powerful state. Yerevan managed to capitalize on this cognitive dissonance, building an image of a country that, being three times smaller than its rival in terms of both territory and population, had been constantly threatened and cornered, thus arguing that the Karabakh movement was a “struggle for liberation” of a brave, small people. This narrative worked well, with the audience largely unaware of the complex regional realities and thus preferring to contextualize the regional conflicts within the abstract frameworks of postcolonialism and Orientalism. Later, the Armenian side also started to employ the rhetoric of the “clash of civilization” that grew popular in the 2000s with the global war against terror declared by the USA and the general destabilization of the Middle

The relative calm that reigned in the conflict zone between 1994 and 2014 was often presented as a success of diplomacy, which completely ignored the fact that this calm mainly had to do with the unwillingness of the both parties to risk a renewal of hostilities

East. For the right-wing public, Yerevan was happy to play out the narrative of a “heroic Christian nation” guarding European values in this exotic corner of the world.^{9, 10}

Hence, the Western public never came to properly assess the human toll of the conflict, the fact that the human rights of Azerbaijanis were being viciously violated, or to appreciate the cynical power play of Russia here. And so it never developed a strong lobby for a proactive position on Karabakh, as happened with the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. This stance pushed Yerevan to a more uncompromising position in the negotiations and, at the

Hence, the Western public never came to properly assess the human toll of the conflict, the fact that the human rights of Azerbaijanis were being viciously violated, or to appreciate the cynical power play of Russia here.

same time, made it oblivious to the growing geopolitical and diplomatic isolation of Armenia, in contrast to Baku. So, at the time when Yerevan had the most pragmatic reasons for rejecting its maximalist ambitions, it had the least willingness to do so. This trend can explain why the last 10 years of the negotiations have been so disappointing.

Hence, the second Karabakh war (September 27–November 9, 2020) has been primarily an outcome of the chronic mismanagement of the peace process.

Abstract and toothless calls for peace in a situation in which the status quo is deeply skewed in favour of one party at the expense of the other in reality encouraged the aggressor, which was able to pose as peace-loving for the simple reason that it had already gained everything that it wanted, by force; and, at the same time, alienated the losing side, whose calls for restorative justice could be easily presented as “aggressive”. The promotion of pacifism in such a situation legitimizes post factum the use of force and “the right of force”. Although some politicians and experts warned, for many years, that this approach was unsustainable, only now is the international community starting to recognize the risks it bears. So, in order to prevent the conflict from further escalating and prevent other “boiling” conflicts from such unfortunate developments, international mediators must deploy qualitatively better efforts than they have done for the 26 years that have passed and stop engaging in self-deception by confusing the lack of war with peace and equating Armenia and Azerbaijan, which had been in an inherently unbalanced position.

9 Tchilingirian, H., “Religious Discourse on the Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh,” *George Fox University*, August 1998, available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1721&context=ree> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

10 Mnatzakanyan, A., “Why Nagorno Karabakh Matters,” *New Eastern Europe*, April 14, 2020, available at: <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2020/04/14/why-nagorno-karabakh-matters/> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

Liberal approach to conflict resolution and its failure

Assessing the failed peace process now, when we have already left a short but intensive second war behind us, we can further review the fundamental concepts of international relations that have been thoroughly tested by this conflict. Most interestingly, it enables us to compare the presumptions of both liberal and realist approaches to diplomacy and conflict resolution.

The liberal paradigm, which was at the peak of its dominance in the 1990s, at the time of the First Karabakh War (1988–1994) and active international efforts to reach a sustainable peace, rests on the notion of democratic peace—the idea that democratic countries have very few incentives to fight each other and in fact almost never do so. When applied to the wider world (which, to a large extent, remained and remains outside the “democratic community”), this concept stipulated that the global domination of predominantly Western democracy would play a positive role in strengthening peace. It was assumed that democratic countries, having an innate interest in sustainable peace across the world, would be efficient in resolving violent conflicts and mitigating global security threats through their joint efforts.¹¹ The idea of the “liberal world order” relies on the notion that, since win-win, mutually beneficial cooperation between sovereign states is perfectly possible,¹² rationally governed states, through having the example of such cooperation before them, would sooner or later accept these rules.

And the case of current Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who initially came to power on a liberal agenda and promised to boost the peace process, only switching to aggressive speeches and intransigent actions a year later, failing even to comply with the traditional niceties maintained by the leadership of Azerbaijan and Armenia and ultimately provoking a new, large war with Azerbaijan,¹³ is telling in that democracy and liberalism may, in the end, not be necessary (or even helpful) in resolving ethnic conflicts.

During the war and in its immediate aftermath, Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly emphasized that the point often made by foreign diplomats and politicians that the “conflict does not have a

11 Daalder, I. & Lindsay, J., “Democracies of the World, Unite,” in R. Art and R. Jervis (eds), *International politics and contemporary issues* (9th edition, Pearson, 2009), pp.567-577.

12 Dayer, T., “The Alleged Failure of Multilateralism in Syria: a Realist Trap,” *E-International Relations*, May 11, 2017, available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/05/11/the-alleged-failure-of-multilateralism-in-syria-beyond-a-realist-trap/> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

13 Socor, V., “How Yerevan Walked Away from the Basic Principles of Karabakh Conflict Settlement,” *The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 17 Issue: 168, November 25, 2020, available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/how-yerevan-walked-away-from-the-basic-principles-of-karabakh-conflict-settlement/> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

During the war and in its immediate aftermath, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly emphasized that the point often made by foreign diplomats and politicians that the "conflict does not have a military solution" was clearly wrong.

military solution" was clearly wrong.¹⁴ In saying this, Aliyev actually hinted at the perennial problem of the peace process, particularly in cultivating this misguided belief. This thinking, supposed to save the populations from the horrors of a new war and ensuing losses and destruction, in fact made a resumption of hostilities inevitable. This tragic twist of history occurred primarily because the assurances about a non-military solution convinced Yerevan, and Armenian society at large, that it could maximize its utility by simply pretending to pursue substantive negotiations. This approach mistakenly assumed that both parties prioritized

achieving peace with each other but failed to take into consideration the fundamental asymmetry between the post-war outcomes for Armenia and Azerbaijan. Whereas Armenia received much more than it had initially intended (the territory of the seven occupied districts surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh region was twice as large as the former autonomous region itself), Azerbaijan had lost too much ever to be able to accept these results. Thus, every negotiated consensus would have involved a certain degree of de facto loss for Yerevan that it did not want to accept (although it continues to pay lip service to the "inevitability" of a peaceful settlement). This situation skewed the hierarchy of interests of Armenia, and later Azerbaijan as well, thereby pushing down prospects for a peaceful solution. This was further exacerbated by a trend of reversal in the two countries' relative economic, political, and military power: thanks to its energy revenues, Baku came to thoroughly outdo Yerevan in terms of its capacities, thus making the unfavourable status quo all the less tolerable.

As John Ruggie observed, multilateralism, in its pure form, is highly demanding: it coordinates relations among states based on "generalized principles of conduct" requiring that all states abide by the same rules.¹⁵ The efficiency of normative multilateral diplomacy is contingent upon the legitimacy of these very norms, which can be achieved only if all members of the community are committed to observing them. However, the West has failed to act in a fully consistent pattern when it comes to post-Soviet conflicts. A certain unevenness in the EU's approach towards the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, on one side, and the conflicts

14 The Ministry of Transport, Communication and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "President Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation", November 10, 2020, available at: <https://mincom.gov.az/en/view/news/1046/president-ilham-aliyev-addressed-the-nation-> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

15 Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, M., "The global crisis of multilateralism", *In the Long Run*, July 4, 2018, available at: <http://www.inthelongrun.org/articles/article/the-global-crisis-of-multilateralism/> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, and Donbass, on the other, has been much talked about and has produced some resentment in Azerbaijani society and its leadership. For example, the EU–Armenia Action Plan contained a reference to the need to pursue “conflict settlement efforts on the basis of international norms and principles, including the principle of self-determination of peoples”, whereas the EU–Azerbaijan Action Plan pointed to the “support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized border” of Azerbaijan.¹⁶ This seemed to imply that Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity was not inviolable after all, contrasting with the EU’s action plans with both Moldova and Georgia, whereby the bloc’s support for their territorial integrity was unambiguous.¹⁷ After the EU’s adoption of comprehensive sanctions against Russia for its violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, Baku has many times raised the question why there had been no sanction measures against Yerevan, even symbolic ones.¹⁸ The frequent use of the term “disputed territories” concerning Karabakh has also served to somehow indicate that its legal status is undetermined. The failure to assess Armenia’s position based on these norms produced a backlash against this process in Azerbaijan and triggered Baku to consider alternative options. Hence, we can conclude that Western attempts at Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict resolution have fallen victim to inconsistency and an unwillingness to apply similar rules and principles in various cases. In their recent piece, Grgic and Knoll-Tudor recognize that Europe has ultimately been unable to project any influence in the South Caucasus region and its prestige has suffered immensely because of the resumption of hostilities, thereby making the EU’s collective weakness apparent.¹⁹

Realist approach

What remains to us is to conduct a brief thought experiment considering the application of the principles of classic “realist” diplomacy to the resolution of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict instead of an inconsistent,

16 EEAS, “EU–Azerbaijan Action Plan,” available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/pdf/pdf/action_plans/azerbaijan_enp_ap_final_en.pdf (accessed: December 12, 2020)

17 Popescu, N., “How Europe Became Marginalized in Nagorno Karabakh,” *European Council of Foreign Relations*, October 13, 2015, available at: https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_how_europe_became_marginalised_in_nagorno_karabakh/ (accessed: December 12, 2020).

18 Metbuat.az, *Samad Seyidov: Armenia’s being away sanctions absolutely nonsense*, March 18, 2015, available at: <https://metbuat.az/news/65892/samad-seyidov-armenia-s-being-away-sanctions-absolutely-nons.html> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

19 Grgic, B. and Knoll-Tudor, B., “What Role for the EU in Post-War Karabakh,” *Euractiv*, December 18, 2020, available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/azerbaijan/opinion/what-role-for-the-eu-in-post-war-karabakh/> (accessed December 12, 2020).

multilateral approach. The seminal work of political realism, *The Future of Diplomacy* by Hans Morgenthau, stipulates the fundamental principles of foreign policy and negotiations viewed through this paradigm's prism.

One of these principles states that, if a country's vital interests can be safeguarded without the attainment of its objectives, the latter must be abandoned.²⁰ This principle, if applied to Armenian foreign policy, directly exposes its fundamental faults. Official Yerevan, and subsequently Armenian public opinion, have been insisting that the continuing occupation of Azerbaijani territory is a prerequisite for protecting Armenian security and restoring "historical justice", thus failing to distinguish between the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia as it is de jure recognized; what Laurence Broers, in his recent book, called "the augmented Armenia", a vision based on the vague and speculative notion of "historic territories" that views Nagorno-Karabakh region as the inalienable "living space" of the Armenian nation.²¹ For this reason exactly, Yerevan had been, by all means, escaping from complying with demands to de-occupy at least the seven Azerbaijani districts and pretending that these demands did not exist or were subject to negotiation.

This echoes another maxim of political realism: "The Objectives of foreign policy must be defined in terms of national interest and must be supported with adequate power. The national interest of a peace-loving nation can only be defined in terms of national security."²² The big trap of an overambitious diplomacy is that it makes the state its captive: to ensure national support, successive governments have to gradually raise the register of their rhetoric and lose flexibility even when it is necessary to maintain core security interests. At the same time, the unrealistic assessment of their own country's position prevented Armenians from realizing that, for Azerbaijan, the interwar status quo had been a compromise among fundamental interests and the immediate return of at least seven districts did not constitute an aggressive intention, but a *sine qua non*, given Azerbaijan's regional standing and capacity.

Thus, Armenia faced a new war that inflicted colossal human, military, and economic losses. Moreover, years of domination of the distorted security narrative have now put domestic stability in Armenia in question as society perceives the proper demarcation of the border as an Azerbaijani offensive

20 G. Morgenthau, "The Future of Diplomacy," in R. Art and R. Jervis (eds), *International politics and contemporary issues* (9th edition, Pearson, 2009), pp. 104-114.

21 Broers, L., *Armenia and Azerbaijan: Anatomy of a Rivalry* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 98-99.

22 G. Morgenthau, "The Future of Diplomacy," in R. Art and R. Jervis (eds), *International politics and contemporary issues* (9th edition, Pearson, 2009), pp.104-114.

into Armenian territory and the government seems to be unable to soothe the panic. Hence, unwillingness to limit its demands in line with its realistic capacity has cost Armenia serious damage to her fundamental national security. The fate of Armenia evokes still another of Morghentau's maxims: "A nation that sets itself goals it has not the power to attain may have to face the risk of war on two counts: dissipating its strength and still not be able to deter the rival."²³

Moreover, years of domination of the distorted security narrative have now put domestic stability in Armenia in question as society perceives the proper demarcation of the border as an Azerbaijani offensive into Armenian territory and the government seems to be unable to soothe the panic.

We can clearly see now that the failure to find a mutually acceptable resolution to the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict and the second war in the region have been, to a great extent, due to the fact that Armenia's foreign policy had never taken into account the structural realities of regional politics or the basic interests of Azerbaijan and has grossly overestimated its own capacity to entrench the de facto occupation of a large chunk of Azerbaijani territories. In sum, Yerevan's foreign policy did not fit the axioms and demands of the realist paradigm. Otherwise, Armenia may have been much more prone to agree on a compromise solution. Against this backdrop, the attempts of the international community to resolve the conflict within the framework of multilateral diplomacy and the principle of abstaining from violence were utterly unsuccessful. In fact, this approach might even have done more harm than good as it created a false impression of "normalizing" the occupation in Armenia and reducing the incentives to switch to a realistic foreign policy. In fact, the first attempts to make the parties talk to each other and resolve their hostilities in a horizontal dialogue were taken by the Baltic democratic movements 30 years ago, even before a full-fledged war in Karabakh started and mutual perceptions as enemies had not yet become entrenched. Later on, there was quite an intensive dialogue at the civil society level in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Still, all these attempts failed to affect the course of events.²⁴

When there is a bitter, unresolved interstate conflict, an appeal to values risks making the parties to the conflict even more stuck in their own truth, ignoring the challenges and opportunities that lie outside of this carefully constructed bubble. Moreover, the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, as well as some other unresolved conflicts, exposed another dangerous weakness of multilateral diplomacy: although it creates its own legitimacy with an

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Balciunas, A., "How Baltics tried and failed to end war in Nagorno Karabakh," *Euractiv*, October 27, 2020, available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/azerbaijan/news/how-baltics-tried-and-failed-to-end-war-in-nagorno-karabakh/> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

appeal to universal values and norms, the principle of impartial mediation it implements is actually borrowed from classic diplomacy; which is why, in fact, a values-based approach cannot be impartial when there are clear violations of international law and cannot equalize the aggressor with its victim. Otherwise, it becomes just a toothless version of classic diplomacy. This reality has now been acknowledged by many authors in reaction to multiple cracks emerging in the liberal paradigm of global politics.²⁵

Conclusion

We have seen that the multilateral approach to the resolution of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict has failed and it can now be argued that this very approach has structural weaknesses that dramatically compromise its efficiency. On the one hand, commitment to non-violent resolution and appeal to common values instead of establishing trust encouraged the aggressor, Armenia, and convinced it of the secure character of the status quo; on the other hand, the big Western powers have been unable or unwilling to apply the same values and principles to different conflicts around the region. This practice runs directly against the basic tenets of liberal international relations theory: establishing an international community sharing common values and sticking to common rules, and thus contributes to diminishing trust in the peace process and making peace elusive.

At the same time, we have seen that Armenia’s position regarding the status quo, when analysed through the prism of the realist paradigm, was unsustainable and bound to engender a major escalation. In reality, this paradigm looks like a playbook for any government of Armenia that would be genuinely interested in ensuring its fundamental security and achieving a conflict resolution based on reasonable compromises. So, it can be concluded that, if Yerevan somehow had to deal with Azerbaijan on its own, outside the multiple diplomacy frameworks, it may have been much more prone to such a policy. This finding casts significant doubt on whether the liberal global order is more favourable to peace and less conflictual. Rather, multilateral frameworks should be an extension of nations’ foreign policies, based on the principles of power and security concerns.

25 Narlikar, A., “Rebooting multilateralism? Lessons still to be learned,” *Global Policy*, September 29, 2020, available at: <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/29/09/2020/rebooting-multilateralism-lessons-still-be-learned> (accessed: December 12, 2020).

Assessing Damage Caused by the Illegal Activities of Armenia to Azerbaijan in the Liberated (Formerly Occupied) Territories

Javid Alyarli* and Arzu Abbasova**

The liberation of Azerbaijan's Armenian-occupied territories as a result of 44 days of war laid bare a rarely-discussed topic – the damage caused to Azerbaijan due to Armenia's illegal activities in the formerly occupied territories. Therefore, this paper seeks to touch upon some of these activities; however, its primary focus is on ascertaining the level of damage caused during the entire period of the Armenian occupation. By highlighting the financial parameters and legal ramifications of the illegitimate actions, the article finds that an underlying political motive was cementing the Armenian occupation and promoting annexationism. In fact, the new reality being created on the ground was being used at the diplomatic table by the Armenian government to drive the negotiating process down a blind alley. Meanwhile, an economic aspiration encapsulated gaining financially through the cultivation of agricultural land, use of water resources for electricity production, export of mineral and natural resources, and even drug trafficking. The paper reveals that a military purpose was also pursued latterly with the recruitment of mercenaries and foreign fighters by Armenia. The article concludes that identification of the amount of direct and collateral damage is likely to provide the beginning of a strong legal basis for demanding compensation.

Keywords: Armenia, occupation, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh region, damage, illegal activities



* **Javid Alyarli** is researcher affiliated to Baku State University and holds a Master's degree in China Studies from Zhejiang University, China.

** **Arzu Abbasova** is Dual Degree Master's Candidate in International Security and International Relations between Sciences Po Paris, France, and the London School of Economics, United Kingdom.

Introduction

Since the end of the First Karabakh War in 1994, Armenia has striven through all possible means to strengthen the results of the unlawful use of force and create a mechanism for benefiting politically, economically and militarily from the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan. To that end, several illegitimate activities were implemented, ranging from the illegal settlement of Armenians and foreign nationals of Armenian origin in Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region and its adjacent districts to the illegal restoration and construction of economic infrastructure, exploitation of resources, as well as the purposeful removal of the cultural identity of Azerbaijan.

The illegal settlement of ethnic Armenians in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan progressed to the deployment of terrorists and mercenaries, largely from Middle Eastern countries, therein.

The illegal settlement of ethnic Armenians in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan progressed to the deployment of terrorists and mercenaries, largely from Middle Eastern countries, therein. In parallel, drug cultivation and trafficking provided funding for financing and maintaining Armenian control in the occupied lands. Along with cultivating Azerbaijani lands for private gain and supplying the subordinate separatist regime created in those territories and itself with food, Armenia also destroyed agricultural facilities and irrigation systems. Besides the pillage of the mineral and natural resources of Azerbaijan, extensive infrastructure changes were made to enable transporting extracted metals, thereby leading to the overexploitation of various mines and damage to the ecosystem. Moreover, the cultural, historical and religious heritage of the formerly occupied territories was exposed to either damage, destruction or alteration of architectural styles with the purpose of erasing the Azerbaijani identity of the region.

To pursue these actions, the government of Armenia and Armenian private companies provided financial support to the subordinate illegal entity in Nagorno Karabakh.¹ Alongside other private funding organizations, the "Armenia Fund" has hitherto raised over US\$372.9 million through annual telethon events since 1992.²

To assess the amount of damage inflicted to Azerbaijan through illegal

1 Asbarez, *Strong Economic Growth Reported in Artsakh*, December 26, 2014, available at <https://asbarez.com/130231/strong-economic-growth-reported-in-artsakh/> (accessed: November 16, 2020).

2 Asbarez, *More than \$35 Million Raised in Armenia Fund Telethon*, November 28, 2008, available at <https://asbarez.com/59644/more-than-35-million-raised-in-armenia-fund-telethon/>; Massis Post, *Telethon 2020 Raises \$22.9 million*, November 26, 2020, available at <https://massispost.com/2020/11/telethon-2020-raises-22-9-million/> (both sources accessed: November 16, 2020).

activities, various calculation methodologies can be applied, ranging from the four-category investigation developed by the World Bank to a two-step process evaluating the direct and collateral damage. Although the official amount of damage is not currently available, estimates in 2000 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the amount of damage caused to Azerbaijan ran to US\$5.83 billion.³ Nonetheless, the up-to-date level of havoc caused by Armenia is likely to be much higher, considering the exploitation of agricultural and water resources, depletion of mineral and natural resources, and destruction of cultural facilities over subsequent years as well as the recent casualties that occurred during the Second Karabakh War and, lately, the houses burnt in the formerly occupied Kalbajar, Aghdam, and Lachyn districts before their handover to Azerbaijan's control. This paper aims to uncover Armenia's illicit activities implemented in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the purposes lying behind them, with a focus on the amount of damage inflicted on Azerbaijan. Considering that in the First Karabakh War (1992–1994) the Armenian armed forces had already caused destruction or damage to some agricultural and natural resources and cultural, historical, and religious facilities of Azerbaijan, the article widens the duration of the research, starting from 1992 and covering the entire period of the occupation.

Illegal settlement of Armenians in the previously occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Following the forceful displacement of nearly 750,000 Azerbaijanis in the First Karabakh War, Armenia gradually conducted the resettlement of the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan.⁴ Such a repopulation strategy was a coordinated and intentional effort by the Armenian government to create a new reality on the ground, that is, a new demographic situation to maintain the status quo, impose a fait accompli, and prevent the prospects of a return of Azerbaijani internally displaced persons (IDP).⁵ From a military

Such a repopulation strategy was a coordinated and intentional effort by the Armenian government to create a new reality on the ground, that is, a new demographic situation to maintain the status quo, impose a fait accompli

3 United Nations Development Programme, "Azerbaijan Human Development Report 2000," March 9, 2001, available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/azerbaijan_2000_en.pdf pp. 53–57 (accessed: January 11, 2021).

4 United Nations, "General Assembly Adopts Resolution Reaffirming Territorial Integrity of Azerbaijan, Demanding Withdrawal of All Armenian Forces," Press Release, March 14, 2008, available at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2008/ga10693.doc.htm> (accessed: November 16, 2020).

5 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "Report on the Illegal Economic and Other Activities in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan," 2016 (accessed: November 16, 2020).

perspective, however, such calculated settlements and “manning” of the cities also aimed to provide support (both physical, logistical, and technical) to the army in case of war, as former defence minister of Armenia, Seyran Ohanyan, stated in an interview.⁶

In 2001, a 10-year strategic settlement plan identifying geographical objectives was prepared that aimed to bring 36,000 people to the formerly occupied territories and build infrastructure for them costing up to US\$120 million.⁷ Between 1994 and 2004, 7,263 Armenian families (18,500 people) were settled in formerly occupied districts including Lachyn, Gubadly, Zangilan, Kalbajar, Jabrayil, and Fuzuli districts and Shusha town.⁸ Yet, as recently as 2018, US\$800,000 were allocated for constructing new houses and developing settlements in the region.⁹ Indeed, the Armenian state and diaspora have been directly involved in implementing different projects to encourage a flow of Armenian families to these areas. The repopulation project of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, along with initiatives from the diaspora, including the Lebanon-based “Artsakh Roots Investments” company, “Armenian General Benevolent Union”, “Cherchian Family Foundation”, and others, have for years been implementing resettlement projects and providing construction materials for renovating buildings to the new settlers.¹⁰

A particular direction in this resettlement strategy has been encouraging ethnic Armenians from Syria and Lebanon to move to these lands. The outbreak of the Syrian war created a massive wave involving the transfer of about 11,000 ethnic Armenians from Syria to Lachyn, Gubadly, Jabrayil, and Zangilan districts. This transfer was facilitated by the Armenian government’s “Help Your Brother” programme, which also raised funds for housing construction.¹¹ Thus, on November 7, 2020,

6 Avetisyan, A. “‘Enhanced security’: Armenian settlers in Nagorno-Karabakh,” *OC Media*, October 3, 2018, available at <https://oc-media.org/features/enhanced-security-armenian-settlers-in-nagorno-karabakh/> (accessed: December 29, 2020).

7 Baghdasaryan, E. “Repopulation is an essential question for all Armenians,” *Hetq.am*, June 25, 2007, available at <https://hetq.am/en/article/6744> (accessed: December 15, 2020).

8 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “Report on the Illegal Economic and Other Activities in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan,” 2016 (accessed: November 16, 2020); Balkhian, S., “The Housing Conundrum: Syrian Armenians in Armenia,” *The Armenian Weekly*, January 14, 2014, available at <https://armenianweekly.com/2014/01/14/the-housing-conundrum-syrian-armenians-in-armenia/> (accessed: November 16, 2020).

9 International Crisis Group, *Digging out of Deadlock in Nagorno Karabakh*, December 20, 2019, available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/nagorno-karabakh-conflict/255-digging-out-deadlock-nagorno-karabakh> (accessed December 28, 2020).

10 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “Report on the Illegal Economic and Other Activities in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan,” 2016 (accessed: November 16, 2020).

11 *Ibid.*

upon the liberation of the Zangilan district from the Armenian occupation, several items of documentary proof listing the names of 60 Syrian-Armenians (representing 19 families) settled therein were found in a building used by the National Security Service of Armenia.¹² As an incentive, Syrian families settling in the formerly occupied territories were exempt from paying maintenance fees.¹³ Further, such incentives included: covering settlement costs; financial assistance for setting up small businesses; 6,000 m² land allocation to each member of the settled family; exemptions from paying utility bills for 5 years; etc.¹⁴ Following the recent explosion at the Port of Beirut on August 4, 2020, the Armenian government had voiced its will to relocate Lebanese-Armenians to those territories. Along with the approval of assistance programs worth 25 million drams (equal to US\$51,000), 100–150 families were then accepted for moving to the formerly occupied territories, while the first Armenian family was reportedly settled in Shusha town on September 10, 2020.¹⁵ Such short-sighted policies not only drove the peace prospects into a dead end but also put these civilians in a dangerous limbo, as was seen at the end of the Second Karabakh War.

The outbreak of the Syrian war created a massive wave involving the transfer of about 11,000 ethnic Armenians from Syria to Lachyn, Gubadly, Jabrayil, and Zangilan districts.

Although the final number of illegally built settlement projects is still unknown, looking at the fact-finding mission reports from the then-occupied territories might help to understand the extent of such a target-oriented policy of Armenia. Against this backdrop, the OSCE's 2005 fact-finding mission's report showed notable evidence of Armenian settlements in the [then] occupied territories of Azerbaijan.¹⁶ With that report, the Minsk Group noted that “[p]rolonged continuation of this situation could lead to a fait accompli that would seriously complicate the peace process” and further urged “to avoid changes in the demographic structure of the region, which would make more difficult any future

12 Apa, Hikmat Hajiyev: *Another evidence of the illegal settlement policy pursued by Armenia in our occupied territories for many years, emerged*, November 7, 2020, available at <https://apa.az/en/foreign-news/Hikmet-Hajiyev-Another-evidence-of-the-illegal-settlement-policy-pursued-by-Armenia-in-our-occupied-territories-for-many-years-emerged-334941> (accessed: November 16, 2020).

13 Caucasian Knot, *Armenian students from Syria to study for free in Nagorno Karabakh universities*, November 9, 2012, available at <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/22841/> (accessed: December 29, 2020).

14 Avetisyan, A. “‘Enhanced security’: Armenian settlers in Nagorno-Karabakh,” *OC Media*, October 3, 2018, available at <https://oc-media.org/features/enhanced-security-armenian-settlers-in-nagorno-karabakh/>.

15 Huseynov, V., “Armenian Resettlement From Lebanon to the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan Endangers Peace Process,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, September 23, 2020, available at <https://jamestown.org/program/armenian-resettlement-from-lebanon-to-the-occupied-territories-of-azerbaijan-endangers-peace-process/> (accessed: January 11, 2021).

16 “Report of the OSCE Fact-Finding mission to the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan Surrounding Nagorno Karabakh,” available at http://www.partnership.am/res/General%20Publications_Eng/050317_osce_report1.pdf (accessed: December 29, 2020).

efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement.”¹⁷ Similarly, another Minsk Group fact-finding mission report (2010) revealed that about 14,000 Armenians lived in the seven [then] occupied districts around the Nagorno-Karabakh region and called on the Armenians “to avoid any activities in the territories [...] that would prejudice the final settlement or change the character of these areas.”¹⁸

The expulsion of indigenous Azerbaijanis from the then-occupied territories not only violated their human rights and property rights, but also caused significant implications for the psychological state and mental health of IDPs. Although the construction of residential complexes to accommodate all IDPs started since 1993, the majority of IDPs lived in harsh conditions in refugee camps and public premises for many years. According to UNDP data from 2000, of 789,832 IDPs, 18.7% of families resided in camps (tents), 19.1% in railway wagons, 23.3% in schools, 16.6% in hostels, and 1.4% in sanatoria and camps for children. Having spent the early years of an IDP life in such places, many children suffered from dystrophy: similarly, 30.5% of youngsters between the ages of 6 and 59 months were diagnosed with chronic malnutrition, while 46% were anaemic. Nearly 13.2% of IDP women were exposed to various diseases ranging from malaria to tuberculosis, anaemia, diabetes, hypertonia, heart disease, etc. Moreover, IDPs and refugees during that period faced a shortage of medical equipment and instruments as well as medicines.¹⁹

Involvement of mercenaries and foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs)

The illegal settlement of Syrian and Lebanese nationals was accompanied by the involvement of mercenaries to fight in the Armenia–Azerbaijan war zone, given that Armenia had a longstanding alignment with terrorist organizations such as the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG), along with frequent unofficial contacts with the PKK and its Syrian wing, YPG. Some reports attest that, before the start of the Second Karabakh War, about 300 militants belonging to the “Kurdistan

17 European Parliament, “Letter of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to the OSCE Permanent Council on the OSCE Minsk Group Fact Finding Mission to the Occupied territories of Azerbaijan Surrounding Nagorno Karabakh,” available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/fd/dsca20050413_11/dsca20050413_11en.pdf (accessed December 17, 2020).

18 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “Report on the Illegal Economic and Other Activities in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan,” 2016 (accessed: November 16, 2020).

19 United Nations Development Programme, “Azerbaijan Human Development Report 2000,” March 9, 2001, available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/azerbaijan_2000_en.pdf, pp. 53-57 (accessed January 11, 2021).

Workers' Party" (PKK) terrorist organization were transferred to the Nagorno-Karabakh war zone.²⁰ Moreover, several sources, including Radio France International, depicted fighters joining from Lebanon, Syria, and Latin America to fight on the side of Armenia.²¹

Azerbaijan's intelligence services revealed data on flights taken from Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, to Yerevan on September 9 and 19, as well as on October 8 and 13, 2020, carrying about 300 passengers each time.²²

Moreover, on October 6, 2020, the State Security Service of Azerbaijan released a recording of a conversation among foreign mercenaries, including members of the PKK, taking part in the armed hostilities on Armenia's side against Azerbaijan.²³

Armenian militias were mainly recruited and trained by a military volunteer formation called VoMA. VoMA was created by Russian-Armenian citizen Vladimir Vartanov and others in 2014, and it consists of 1,300 participants, 445 of whom come from the Armenian diaspora,²⁴ and involves members of ASALA, PKK, and other terrorist groups.²⁵ Having 53 camps, VoMA, with the expertise of PKK militants conducted guerrilla-style training encompassing infantry tactics, emergency combat medical training, and alpinism for Armenian "volunteers" aged between 18 and 55 to fight in the complex mountainous reliefs and harsh climates.²⁶ "After finishing accelerated courses of military

The illegal settlement of Syrian and Lebanese nationals was accompanied by the involvement of mercenaries to fight in the Armenia–Azerbaijan war zone, given that Armenia had a longstanding alignment with terrorist organizations

20 Middle East Monitor, *Turkey: Armenia transports hundreds of PKK militants to fight Azerbaijan*, September 30, 2020, available at <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200930-armenia-transport-hundreds-of-pkk-militants-to-fight-azerbaijan/> (accessed November 20, 2020).

21 Radio France International, *Dans le Haut-Karabakh, les volontaires arméniens découvrent la guerre*, October 4, 2020, available at <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/europe/20201003-le-haut-karabakh-les-volontaires-arm%C3%A9niens-d%C3%A9couvrent-la-guerre> (accessed November 20, 2020).

22 UN General Assembly, "Letter dated 18 November 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General," December 4, 2020, Available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/343/35/PDF/N2034335.pdf> (accessed: December 16, 2020)

23 Azernews, *State Security Service intercepts radio talks of terrorists participating in military operations against Azerbaijan* [VIDEO], October 6, 2020, available at <https://www.azernews.az/nation/170135.html> (accessed: November 20, 2020)

24 Azertag, *Azerbaijani Prosecutor General's Office launches criminal case against those who established terrorist organizations in occupied territories*, November 3, 2020, available at https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Azerbaijani_Prosecutor_Generals_Office_launches_criminal_case_against_those_who_established_terrorist_organizations_in_occupied_territories-1632619; VoMA ("Voxj Mnalu Arvest" – "the art of survival") Center, available at <https://www.voma.center/en> (both sources accessed: December 27, 2020)

25 Barkey, H.J. and Fuller, G.E., "Turkey's Kurdish Question", *Carnegie Corporation of New York: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict*, 1998, p:32, available at https://media.carnegie.org/filer_public/c5/3f/c53f7ed9-172e-45b0-95a2-88a3d4f19351/ccny_book_1998_turkey.pdf (accessed: November 20, 2020)

26 VoMA - The Art of Staying Alive (translation from Armenian), Facebook, December 13, 2016, 00:55 am,

training, our battalion under the command of the Armenian Defense Ministry will be sent into combat actions in the assigned territories,” the VoMA Center wrote.²⁷ During the Second Karabakh War, 300 volunteers were reportedly recruited by VoMA to take part in the war against Azerbaijan.²⁸ A charter flight was also organized from Moscow to Yerevan and free tickets were offered to those unable to afford them.²⁹

Apart from citizens of Middle Eastern countries, a group of Greek citizens consisting of 80 people (of whom 50 were of Armenian origin) with combat experience in NATO missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo, and, later, about 500–800 more Greek nationals were reportedly brought in to participate in military operations.³⁰ Moreover, French nationals of Armenian origin, including a leader of the extreme right-wing group Zouaves Paris (ZVP), Marc de Cacqueray-Valmenier, who describes himself as a “fascist”, announced they were joining the military operations against Azerbaijan alongside Armenian forces.³¹ Foreign nationals of other countries ranging from Russia to the USA³² were also listed among “volunteers” and included the so-called “Bagramyan battalion” (well-known for its cruelties against the civilian population since 1993) consisting of ethnic Armenians from the Abkhazia region of Georgia.³³

available at <https://www.facebook.com/vomacenter/photos/%D5%B8մա-ն-հայտարարում-է-ձմեռային-նազմաուսումնական-գործառնական-մասին-որը-կանցկացվի-մեր/1264367113602696/>; Elliott, R., “Diaspora Armenians train to protect Artsakh,” the Armenian Weekly, October 28, 2020, available at <https://armenianweekly.com/2020/10/28/diaspora-armenians-train-to-protect-artsakh/> (both sources accessed: November 20, 2020)

27 Leonov, S., “Armenia recruits mercenaries for the war in Nagorno-Karabakh,” *The Greater Middle East*, October 14, 2020, available at <https://tgme.org/2020/10/armenia-recruits-mercenaries-for-the-war-in-nagorno-karabakh/> (accessed: December 16, 2020)

28 Ibid; News, Recruitment of terrorists by Armenians via “VoMa” shows Armenia’s loss – Russian expert, November 4, 2020, available at <https://news.az/news/recruitment-of-terrorists-by-armenians-via-voma-shows-armenias-loss-russian-expert> (accessed: January 11, 2021)

29 Ibid.

30 Antonopoulos, P., “Greek City Times Exclusive: “I cannot watch what is happening and not fight” – Approximately 80 Greeks going to Artsakh battlefield,” *Greek City Times*, October 1, 2020, available at <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/10/01/greeks-going-to-artsakh-battlefront/>; Greek City Times, *Former non-commissioned officer: “I’m going to Artsakh with 500-800 Greeks to crush the Turks* (translation from Greek), available at <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/10/03/former-non-commissioned-officer-im-going-to-artsakh-with-500-800-greeks-to-crush-the-turks/?amp> (accessed: November 28, 2020)

31 Daily Sabah, *French Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh to fight Azerbaijan*, October 7, 2020, available at <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/french-armenians-in-nagorno-karabakh-to-fight-azerbaijan/news> (accessed: November 28, 2020); Liberation, *Extreme droite : le patron des Zouaves Paris part combattre au Haut-Karabakh*, October 30, 2020, available at https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/10/30/extreme-droite-le-patron-des-zouaves-paris-part-combattre-au-haut-karabakh_1803962 (accessed: November 29, 2020)

32 Seidman, L., “Bound by duty and love, some L.A. Armenians are joining the battle lines in their homeland,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 9, 2020, available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-09/armenia-azerbaijan-los-angeles-artsakh-war-connections> (accessed: November 29, 2020)

33 Minval, *Sukhumi — Karabakh: tranzit terroristov prodolzhayetsya*, November 6, 2020, available at <https://minval.az/news/124053297>; Ibid. (accessed: November 29, 2020)

Drug trafficking

Yet, unsurprisingly, a surge in organised crime has occurred in tandem with drug trafficking in the formerly occupied territories, causing a worrying security risk. As Howard and Traugher³⁴ noted, owing to the nonexistence of taxation regulations, drug trafficking and trade have constituted a great revenue extraction sphere in this area. Drug trafficking has for years not only undermined stability in the region, but has also created a security vacuum providing a space for transnational security challenges.³⁵ Indeed, the US State Department's International Narcotics Control Strategy Reports³⁶ have recurrently noted that the South Caucasus has become a transit corridor and part of the "Balkan route" as it is situated along the route from Afghanistan to Europe. Within its collaborative efforts with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to prevent drug trafficking, Azerbaijan has noted several times that the occupying Armenian Armed Forces controlling its lands were profiting from these illegal activities. Notably, this was also confirmed in the World Drug Report of 2010,³⁷ which stated that "hindering drug law enforcement over Azerbaijan's 132 km long border with the Islamic Republic of Iran is the existence of uncontrolled territories due to an unresolved conflict."

Although Armenia has denied these reports,³⁸ as German³⁹ argues, "there is little doubt that in an area that lies on a key transit route between Asia and Europe the lack of a stable law enforcement regime, combined with porous borders, could facilitate the development of criminal activities such as drugs smuggling from Central Asia to the markets of Europe." Notably, a study conducted by the Azerbaijan National Anti-drugs Propaganda Office, acting within the framework of the UNDP, stated that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is not only a heaven for drug traffickers, but these lands are also exploited for the cultivation of narcotic plants.⁴⁰

34 Howard, R.D. and Traugher, C.M., "The 'new silk road' of terrorism and organized crime: the key to countering the terror-crime nexus," *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency*, 2008. pp.371-387.

35 German, T., "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia: Security Issues in the Caucasus", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol 32 No 2, 2012. pp.216-229.

36 US Department of State, "International Narcotic Control Strategy Reports", available at: <https://www.state.gov/international-narcotics-control-strategy-reports/>.

37 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "World Drug Report 2010," 2010. pp. 56. available at https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf (accessed: December 28, 2020)

38 Armenpress, *Alik Sargsyan Says News on Drug Production in Nagorno Karabakh Speculations*, July 6, 2011, available at <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/657663/> (accessed: December 29, 2020).

39 German, T., "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia: Security Issues in the Caucasus", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol 32 No 2, 2012, p. 224.

40 Azernews, *Occupied Nagorno Karabakh seen as a regional hub for drug trafficking*, September 4, 2013,

Moreover, confirmation of these claims came right after the liberation of Fuzuli district, where the Azerbaijani Army found a major drug plantation and laboratory, publishing a video of it.⁴¹

Damage to agricultural and water resources

The end of the First Karabakh War led to the loss of 1,226,674 hectares, including 139,336 ha of irrigated lands, 34,600 ha of vineyards and orchards, 127,000 ha of fertile lands, 70% of summer pasture, and a total of 4.1 million ha of Azerbaijan’s agricultural lands, which accounted for the production of 14.3% of the nation’s grain, 31.5% of grapes, 14.5% of meat, 17.1% of milk, 19.3% of wool, and 17% of silkworms before the occupation.⁴² Thus, Armenia made the most use of the agricultural potential of these territories, illegally, to cover its food and consumption demands. So, in 2019, 228,000 hectares were harvested in Armenia, whereas, in the formerly occupied territories, there were 89,000 hectares of sown area providing 25% of Armenia’s grain supply.⁴³

Armenia has not only enjoyed benefits to its economy from its illegal control of Azerbaijan’s territories, but also inflicted damage on some of the agricultural resources of those lands.

Armenia has not only enjoyed benefits to its economy from its illegal control of Azerbaijan’s territories, but also inflicted damage on some of the agricultural resources of those lands. In particular, more than 6,000 manufacturing, agricultural, and other kinds of factories and plants were pillaged, while 30 irrigation systems, including irrigation channels with a total length of 1,200 km, were destroyed.⁴⁴ In addition, flocks of 244,000 sheep, 69,000 cattle, as well as the Aghdam horse collective farm’s Karabakh pedigree horses were driven out of Karabakh and 206,600 cubic meters of valuable timber species were looted to Armenia. Moreover, more than 311 agricultural enterprises, 145 newly

available at <https://www.azernews.az/nation/58955.html>. (accessed: December 24, 2020).

41 Azertag, *Armenian drug plantation and laboratory found in Fuzuli*, October 15, 2020, available at https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Armenian_drug_plantation_and_laboratory_found_in_Fuzuli_VIDEO-1614553 (accessed: December 14, 2020).

42 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “Socio-economic consequences of Armenia’s aggression against Azerbaijan,” available at <https://mfa.gov.az/en/content/112/socio-economic-consequences>; Department of Economic and Social Geography of BSU, *Damage caused to Agriculture of the region, Azerbaijan. az*, available at <https://azerbaijan.az/en/related-information/126> (accessed: November 20, 2020).

43 Turan, *Consequences of Loss of Karabakh for Armenian Economy*, December 17, 2020, available at <https://www.turan.az/ext/news/2020/12/free/analytics/en/131009.htm> (accessed: December 20, 2020).

44 Reliefweb, *Letter from Azerbaijan to the UN SG: Report on Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan and recent developments (A/58/594-S/2003/1090)*, November 13, 2003, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/armenia/letter-azerbaijan-un-sg-report-armenian-aggression-against-azerbaijan-and-recent> (accessed: December 20, 2020).

established wine farms, over 7,000 hydraulic pumps, and 40 pumping stations were demolished.⁴⁵

During 28 years of occupation, electricity lines with a total length of 14,500 km; 2,500 electrical transformers; 2,300 km of water pipes; 240 km of sewerage lines; and 160 water basins were destroyed in these territories.⁴⁶ Moreover, the Sarsang reservoir built on the Tartar river (in the previously occupied part of Tartar district) that provided irrigation water for more than a hundred thousand hectares of fertile lands for six districts of Azerbaijan was purposefully blocked or its flow reduced during the summer months, but opened during spring and autumn to cause damage to Azerbaijan's agricultural lands by creating artificial floods.⁴⁷ Moreover, such malicious mismanagement of the floodgates aimed to deprive the local people of Azerbaijan's Tartar district of drinking water.⁴⁸

On December 12, 2015, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's (PACE) rapporteur, Milica Marković, submitted a report emphasizing that a lack of regular technical maintenance for over twenty years on the Sarsang reservoir had caused several impairments, including the loss of use of irrigation infrastructure for the border regions of Azerbaijan, shortage of water for irrigation, poor quality of potable water, flooding, soil erosion, a lack of productivity in agriculture, etc.⁴⁹ Upon publication of the report, PACE adopted Resolution 2085 requesting the immediate withdrawal of the Armenian forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the surrounding districts of Azerbaijan to enable access for independent engineers and hydrologists to conduct thorough on-the-spot research. The document also included an appeal to the Armenian authorities to cease using water resources as tools of political influence.⁵⁰

45 Ibid.

46 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "Socio-economic consequences of Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan," available at <https://mfa.gov.az/en/content/112/socio-economic-consequences> (accessed: November 20, 2020).

47 Azernews, *Armenia carries out eco-terrorism against Azerbaijan*, October 23, 2020, available at <https://www.azernews.az/nation/171302.html> (accessed: December 19, 2020).

48 Shikhali, I., and Safarova, D., "Azerbaijan: Can a Water Reservoir Help Resolve the Karabakh Conflict?," *Eurasianet*, March 22, 2016, available at <https://eurasianet.org/azerbaijan-can-a-water-reservoir-help-resolve-the-karabakh-conflict> (accessed: December 19, 2020).

49 Marković, M. "Inhabitants of frontier regions of Azerbaijan are deliberately deprived of water," *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, December 12, 2015, available at <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=22290> (accessed: December 23, 2020).

50 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. "Inhabitants of frontier regions of Azerbaijan are deliberately deprived of water," Resolution 2085, January 26, 2016, available at <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=22429&lang=en> (accessed: December 25, 2020)

Armenia masterfully used and exploited the resources of the occupied lands for its own economic benefits.

Overexploitation of mineral and natural resources

Armenia masterfully used and exploited the resources of the occupied lands for its own economic benefits. Owing to the existence of 15 metallic and 51 non-metallic mines, including 155 deposits of precious minerals, metals, building materials as well as strategic metals such as gold, mercury, copper, and other natural resources, Armenia had quickly become one of the world’s leading precious metal exporters through illegal exploitation of, particularly, mineral resources.⁵¹ According to reports for the year of 2019, the volume of the mining industry amounted to 47 billion drams (over US\$89 million).⁵² An International Crisis Group Report⁵³ notes that mining products extracted in the territories were transported to Armenia for sale. For instance, the recorded statistics for gold produced in Armenia between 1994 and 2012 reveal a sharp rise from 100 kg to between 3,000 and 4,000 kg.⁵⁴

Both Armenian and foreign companies were directly involved in the exploitation of the natural resources through supplying relevant technology and machinery.

Both Armenian and foreign companies were directly involved in the exploitation of the natural resources through supplying relevant technology and machinery. Base Metals, a subsidiary of Armenian Vallex Group, exploited the Gyzybulag and Demirli copper mines, causing their depletion. As a result of the excessive exploitation of the Gyzybulag mine near Heyvaly village in the formerly occupied Kalbajar district, the mine was depleted in 2012 after having 3 million tons (out of 3.2 million tons) extracted during its 10 years of illegal management.

Base Metals, which has come to be recognized as the single largest private employer and “taxpayer” for its illegal activities in the region (paying an average of \$8.3 million USD⁵⁵) has further exploited the Heyvaly (*Drmbon*) reserves since 2001 and quickly exhausted them through producing 20,000 tons of ore.⁵⁶ As a result, a bigger project was initiated

51 Baghirov, O. “Illegal Economic Activities in the Armenia occupied territories of Azerbaijan,” *Caucasus International Journal*, Vol 9 No, 1/2, 2019, pp. 27-36; *ibid*.

52 Hergnyan, S., “Fate of Artsakh’s Kashen Mine, a Major Taxpayer, Remains Unclear,” *Hetq*, December 11, 2020, available at <https://hetq.am/en/article/125270> (accessed: December 26, 2020).

53 International Crisis Group, “Improving Prospects for Peace after the Nagorno Karabakh War,” December 22, 2020, available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/nagorno-karabakh-conflict/b91-improving-prospects-peace-after-nagorno-karabakh-war> (accessed January 1, 2020).

54 NarcoKarabakh, *Where did all the gold go*, Chapter 19, available at <https://narcokarabakh.net/en/stories/ch19> (accessed: December 26, 2020).

55 Azatutyun, *New Mining Complex Inaugurated in Karabakh*, January 5, 2016, available at <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/27468929.html> (accessed: December 20, 2020).

56 Musayelian, L. “Armenian Mining Giant to Expand Karabakh Operations,” *Azatutyun*, March 20, 2012, available at <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/24522183.html> (accessed December 26, 2020).

at the Kashen deposit (containing an estimated 17 million tons of ore) where Vallex Group invested US\$130 million to build new facilities for its mining operations and employed 1,400 people.⁵⁷ Suren Karayan⁵⁸ (at the time Minister of Economic Development and Investment of Armenia) stated that Vallex Group paid more than US\$40 million into the government budget of Armenia in 2016. Between 2009 and 2017, Vallex Group declared US\$177.5 million in profits from the then-occupied territories' metal deposits. (Owing to such illegal activities Azerbaijan has already applied to Interpol.⁵⁹) Furthermore, since 2007, GPM Gold, a subsidiary of GeoProMining, has been extracting ore from Soyudlu gold mine (which has 155 tons of deposits) located in formerly occupied Kalbajar district.⁶⁰ Moreover, Gold Star Company, financed by Swiss Armenian businessman Vartan Sirmakes (who is also the co-founder of the Swiss luxury brand Frank Muller), has earned most of its profits from the exploitation of a gold mine near Vejnaly village in Zangilan district. Several other foreign companies, including Haik Watch, Jewelry Co, and Deccan Gold Mines Ltd, have for years operated in the formerly occupied territories, particularly in Shusha city, Lachyn, and Kalbajar districts.⁶¹

Indeed, an International Crisis Group⁶² report noted that a profitable scrap metal industry in the (formerly) occupied territories has been operated through “dismantling infrastructure, housing and other pre-war structures for the resale of metal, bricks and building materials”. The report goes on to say that such practices might “simply be termed as either robbery or the purposeful and irreversible dismantling of community structures to impede the return of pre-war inhabitants”.⁶³ Moreover, the irreversible dismantling has not been limited only to mass destruction but also includes extensive economic and transport

57 Asbarez, *New Mining Complex Inaugurated in Karabakh*, January 5, 2016, available at <https://asbarez.com/143995/new-mining-complex-inaugurated-in-karabakh/> (accessed December 20, 2020).

58 Miningsee, *\$700 million invested by Vallex Group in Armenia's mining industry over past two decades*, June 22, 2017, available at <https://www.miningsee.eu/700-million-invested-vallex-group-armenias-mining-industry-past-two-decades/>. (accessed: December 13, 2020).

59 Gafarli, T. “Unscrupulous profiteers of Armenia's Nagorno Karabakh occupation,” *Anadolu Ajansi*, November 12, 2020, available at <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-unscrupulous-profiteers-of-armenia-s-nagorno-karabakh-occupation-/2041427> (accessed: December 15, 2020).

60 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “Report on the Illegal Economic and Other Activities in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan,” 2016 (accessed: November 16, 2020).

61 Apa, *Azerbaijan opens criminal case against foreign companies illegally operating in occupied territories*, March 4, 2017, available at https://apa.az/en/Nagorno%20Garabagh/xeber_azerbaijan_opens_criminal_over_illegal_a_-257039 (accessed December 14, 2020).

62 International Crisis Group., “Nagorno-Karabakh: Viewing the Conflict from the ground,” September 14, 2005, available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/166-nagorno-karabakh-viewing-the-conflict-from-the-ground.pdf> (accessed: January 10, 2021) p. 14.

63 *Ibid.*, p.14.

infrastructure changes to serve the needs of Armenia, the Vardenis–Aghdere and Kapan–Hadrut highways being examples.

Moreover, exploiting natural resources through mining has not only brought easy profits to Armenia, but has also systematically supported an increase in the labour flow to the formerly occupied territories and has undoubtedly had long-term demographic effects. It was noted that due to the Aghdere (“Martakert”) mine alone, the total number of people employed in those territories rose from 41,000 in 2007 to 50,300 in 2014.⁶⁴ That is to say, illegal mining was indeed a motive for encouraging more settlement in the formerly occupied territories.

Moreover, exploiting natural resources through mining has not only brought easy profits to Armenia, but has also systematically supported an increase in the labour flow to the formerly occupied territories

Nevertheless, the importance of the exploitation of such deposits for Armenia came to the surface, particularly when tension arose around the Zod Gold Mine after the recent war. The Zod (in Armenian, Sotk) gold-ore field is located on the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia; both sides of the field were subjected to exploitation by Armenia until the end of the Second Karabakh War. Yet, according to the trilateral statement of November 10, the Armenians had to leave Kalbajar district and give up the Soyudlu-

Zod gold deposit (on the Azerbaijani side) containing around 112 tonnes of gold, which also left the Sotk field (Armenian side; the largest gold mine in Armenia) out of use.⁶⁵ Vahe Davtyan, an Armenian political analyst, explaining the gravity of giving up the Zod mine, said that, besides the fact that “GeoProMining Gold Company which manages the [Zod] mine, is one of the largest taxpayers in Armenia, [with its closure] the work of ‘Ararat’ gold recovery plant is called into question. At the same time, South Caucasian Railway is in danger of being paralyzed, more than 50% of the turnover of which is the transportation of ore from ‘Sotk’ to ‘Ararat’.”⁶⁶

Throughout the 28 years of occupation, the national resources of Azerbaijan, including nearly 280,000 hectares of forests (accounting

64 Asbarez, *New Mining Complex Inaugurated in Karabakh*, January 5, 2016, available at: <https://asbarez.com/143995/new-mining-complex-inaugurated-in-karabakh/> (accessed: December 20, 2020).

65 Zargaryan, R., “The Sotk gold mine is currently unoperational” (Translation from Armenian), *Azatutyun*, December 3, 2020, available at: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30982009.html>; Azertag, *War will cause serious damage to mining industry of Armenia*, October 19, 2020, available at https://azertag.az/en/xeber/War_will_cause_serious_damage_to_mining_industry_of_Armenia-1618247 (accessed: December 26, 2020).

66 JamNews, *Gold deposit on new Armenian-Azerbaijani border-whose mine is it?*, November 28, 2020, available at: <https://jam-news.net/sotk-gold-mine-struggle-for-mine-armenia-nagorno-karabakh-azerbaijan/> (accessed: December 27, 2020)

for 1/4 of the country's total forested area), two national parks and four national nature reserves, as well as 200 fossils, had also remained under Armenian control. More than 110,000 hectares of land were demolished as a result of fires between 2006 and 2016, posing threats to the unique flora and fauna of those areas.⁶⁷ In addition, those fires in Fuzuli and Jabrayil destroyed pasture covering 10,000 hectares, while 550 hectares of land were damaged in Tartar district⁶⁸ and 15 rare species destroyed in the Garachuka and Nargiztepe natural areas in the Khojavend district. In total, 21 endemic Azerbaijani species, along with hundreds of rare and endangered plants, were eradicated as a result of Armenian aggression.⁶⁹

Moreover, as a consequence of the overexploitation of mineral resources, a massive deforestation has also been recorded in the affected areas. For instance, 20–30 ha of forest had to be cut down for the Gyzybulag mine, while this figure reached 3–4 ha in the case of the Demirli open-pit copper mine.⁷⁰ In Kalbajar district, 968 hectares of *Corylus colurna*, included on the IUCN Red List, as well as 200 medicinal plants were shredded and sold abroad.⁷¹ Also, the state-protected Bashitchay State Reserve in Zangilan district and trees and shrubs in the Gulluce, Garvand, and Goytapa areas of Aghdam district were among the wreckage of Armenian aggression.⁷²

Destruction of cultural heritage

During the period of the Armenian occupation, the historical and religious heritage and cultural identity of Azerbaijan in the then-occupied territories were exposed to change or destruction. Even during the Second Karabakh War, 4 mosques and churches, 15 cemeteries, and more than 50 school buildings were damaged as a result of Armenia's disproportionate shelling of civilian settlements.⁷³ Among these

67 Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, "Damage posed to the environment and natural resources in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" (translation from Azerbaijani), available at: http://eco.gov.az/frq-content/plugins/pages_v1/entry/20190823174831_88765600.pdf (accessed: January 11, 2021)

68 Mustafayeva, A., and Garayev, R., "Legal Aspects of Reparation for Damage Caused to Azerbaijan as a Result of Armenian Aggression," *IRS Heritage*, No. 14, 2013, pp. 51–61 (accessed: December 31, 2020)

69 Zerkalo, *Armyanskiye okkupanty unichtozhili 82 vida endemikov Kavkaza*, 19 October 2020, available at: <https://zerkalo.az/armyanskiye-okkupanty-unichtozhili-82-vida-endemikov-kavkaza/> (accessed: January 11, 2021)

70 Paremuzyan, L., "Base Metals Launches Second Mine in Artsakh; An Open-Pit Operation," *Hetq*, 3 July 2013, available at: <https://hetq.am/en/article/27846> (accessed: December 26, 2020)

71 *Ibid.*

72 *Ibid.*

73 *Apa, 4 mosques and churches, 15 cemeteries, more than 50 school buildings damaged as a result of Armenian provocation*, November 13, 2020, available at: https://apa.az/en/nagorno_garabagh/4-mosques-and-churches-15-cemeteries-more-than-50-school-buildings-damaged-as-a-result-of-Armenian-provocation-335437 (accessed: January 11, 2021)

damaged facilities are the 1887 Russian Orthodox Church “Alexander Nevsky”, the 14th century “Imamzadeh” Religious Complex, the Azerbaijan State Agrarian University, the Music College in Ganja city, as well as the Sheikh Baba mausoleum in Fuzuli district.⁷⁴

This figure increases significantly when cataloguing the entire 28-year duration of the occupation. Thus, 927 libraries housing 4.6 million books; 808 cultural centres; 85 music and art schools; and over 102,757 museum

During the Second Karabakh War, 4 mosques and churches, 15 cemeteries, and more than 50 school buildings were damaged as a result of Armenia's disproportionate shelling of civilian settlements.

exhibits hosted in 22 museums, 4 state galleries, 4 theatres, 2 concert halls, 8 cultural and recreation parks were damaged, while famous Azerbaijani carpets, historical jewellery and sculptures, and memorial objects of famous Azerbaijani persons were looted by Armenia to sell abroad.⁷⁵ Also, a report published on November 12, 2020, encapsulated the evidence of Armenian aggression towards 2,645 historical-culturally significant buildings; 1,814 architecturally significant ones; 747 of archaeological significance; 64 garden and park monuments; and 376 paintings.⁷⁶

The multi-ethnic and multicultural features of Azerbaijan had allowed all artefacts of religious heritage to be represented in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and its surrounding districts, including, but not limited to, mosques, churches, monasteries, and temples—until 1992, when the territories were occupied by the Armenian Armed Forces. Essentially, Armenia’s policy of the purposeful removal of the cultural identity of the region has annihilated 63 mosques totally and 4 of them partially.⁷⁷ Importantly, religious sites were subjected to the “Persianization” of their architectural style, replacing key Azerbaijani-Muslim elements.⁷⁸

74 Trend, *Religious communities strongly condemn Armenia's missile attack on Azerbaijan's Ganja*, October 14, 2020, available at <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3316745.html>; Lmahammad, A., “Old Orthodox church in Ganja damaged in Armenian missile attack,” *Azernews*, October 13, 2020, available at: <https://www.azernews.az/aggression/170598.html>; Azertag, *Armenian vandalism against historical and religious monuments of Azerbaijan*, October 8, 2020, available at: https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Armenian_vandalism_against_historical_and_religious_monuments_of_Azerbaijan-1608221 (accessed: January 11, 2021)

75 Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “A briefing was held in the topic of the crimes Armenia conducted against the historical and cultural heritage” (translation from Azerbaijani), October 28, 2020, available at: <http://mct.gov.az/az/umumi-xeberler/13291>; Karabakh.org, *Damages to Azerbaijani culture as a result of Armenian occupation*, available at: <https://karabakh.org/conflict/aggression/damages-to-azerbaijani-culture-as-a-result-of-armenian-occupation/> (accessed: December 24, 2020).

76 Ali, S., “Report on destruction by Armenians of Azerbaijani historical, cultural monuments presented,” *Trend*, November 11, 2020, available at: <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/society/3333116.html> (accessed: December 24, 2020).

77 Azvision, *63 mosques destroyed in Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent regions*, November 11, 2020, available at: <https://en.azvision.az/news/134762/-63-mosques-completely-destroyed-in-nagorno-karabakh-and-adjacent-regions-.html> (accessed: December 24, 2020).

78 AzStudies Collective, *Documenting destruction of Azerbaijani cultural heritage*, December 19, 2020, available

For instance, in Shusha town, a cultural centre of Azerbaijan, the Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque was labelled with the sign “Persian Mosque”, while the town’s Mamavi mosque was engraved with the Armenian cross and writings in Arabic characters.⁷⁹

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s visit to Aghdam (a formerly occupied district) on November 22, 2020, illuminated the level of destruction for the first time through the lenses of local and international media.⁸⁰ International journalists, including a well-known French photographer, Reza Deghati, described the district as the “Hiroshima of the 21st Century” after seeing the ruins.⁸¹ Among the acts of cultural terror are the vandalization of Aghdam’s Juma (Friday) Mosque by turning it into a pigsty and the destruction of the Bread Museum in Aghdam.⁸² Matthew Bryza, a former US ambassador to Azerbaijan, stated, “when I last visited the district of Agdam, no structure was intact ... [e]verything was taken, completely, by the Armenian side.”⁸³

Even during the destruction of Azerbaijan’s cultural heritage in the formerly occupied territories, Armenia was advertising the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan as a “tourist destination” and organizing illegal tourist visits to propagate its subordinate separatist regime. In this regard, international agencies were recruited to encourage foreign nationals to travel to the region.⁸⁴

at: <https://azstudies-editor.medium.com/documenting-destruction-of-azerbaijani-cultural-heritage-16cff8f3648b> (accessed: December 27, 2020).

79 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “Damage to cultural heritage,” available at: <https://mfa.gov.az/en/content/114/damage-to-cultural-heritage>; *ibid.* (accessed: December 27, 2020).

80 “Azerbaijan: Aghdam buildings in ruins following the withdrawal of Armenian troops,” Ruptly, Youtube video, November 22, 2020, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-rcnc8IHNM> (accessed: December 27, 2020).

81 Deghati, R., “#Agdam, the Hiroshima of 21 century I found that statue almost one kilometre from where it used to stand in front of the city Theatre. I could not find his head. Find more about following me on Instagram an Facebook #Azerbaijan #Agdam #Karabakh,” Twitter, December 7, 2020, 2:02 am., available at: <https://twitter.com/rezaphotography/status/1335706304854241284> (accessed: December 27, 2020).

82 Rehimov, R., “Mosque turned into pigsty under Armenia’s occupation,” *Anadolu Agency*, October 22, 2020, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/mosque-turned-into-pigsty-under-armenias-occupation/2015903> (accessed: December 27, 2020).

83 Synovitz, R., “Analysis: Nagorno-Karabakh War Transforms the Legacy of Azerbaijani President Aliyev,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, December 17, 2020, available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/nagorno-karabakh-legacy-azerbaijani-president-aliyev/31006302.html> (accessed: December 27, 2020).

84 Arka News Agency, *Armenia and Artsakh participate at TTG Incontri tourism exhibition*, October 10, 2014, available at http://arka.am/en/news/tourism/armenia_and_artsakh_participate_at_ttg_incontri_tourism_exhibition/; Armen Press, *‘Artsakh’ presented at Paris international tourism expo in separate pavilion*, October 1, 2014, available at: <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/778416/artsakh-presented-at-paris-international-tourism-expo-in-separate-pavilion.html>; Hetq, *Armenia and Artsakh To Be Represented at World Travel Market 2013*, November 4, 2013, available at: <https://hetq.am/en/article/30454> (accessed: December 14, 2020).

Financial aspects of the damage

In order to assess the damage caused to Azerbaijan, various relevant methods can be applied. According to the methodology of the World Bank, the calculation of the damage is conducted according to four aspects: (1) damage to property and infrastructure, (2) damage as a result of human loss and living an IDP life, (3) damage created with economic results, and (4) damage to human development.⁸⁵ Another procedure for identifying the amount of damage involves two steps: (1) evaluating direct losses with a special emphasis on the destroyed infrastructure; (2) identifying collateral damage, focusing on lost opportunities and ancillary benefits.⁸⁶ Based on the identification of the total amount of damage, Armenia will be held accountable before the international courts for paying compensation.⁸⁷ In this regard, the European Court of Human Rights, the 1950 “European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms”, and the Geneva Conventions can provide legal ground for suing Armenia.⁸⁸

In 2018, estimates from a preliminary forensic examination carried out to determine the amount of material damage amounted to US\$818.88 billion.⁸⁹ Although the official estimate of the total damage to date is yet to be released, according to various initial estimates from Azerbaijan, the amount of compensation Armenia will have to pay for damage amounts to between US\$1.2 and US\$1.3 trillion; each formerly occupied region suffered nearly US\$6–8 billion worth of damage.⁹⁰ Gevorg Kostanyan, a former prosecutor general of Armenia, said that European lawyers have

85 Vahid, F., “Procedure for calculating damage caused to Azerbaijan as a result of Armenian occupation promulgated,” *Apa.az*, November 27, 2020, available at: https://apa.az/en/nagorno_garabagh/Procedure-for-calculating-damage-caused-to-Azerbaijan-as-a-result-of-Armenian-occupation-promulgated-336438.

86 Azertag, *Vusal Gasimli: Armenia will be held responsible under international law*, November 11, 2020, available at: https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Vusal_Gasimli_Armenia_will_be_held_responsible_under_international_law-1640871 (accessed: December 13, 2020).

87 Turan, *Armenians to Pay Compensation for Damage to Occupied Regions – İlham Aliyev*, November 17, 2020, available at: <https://www.turan.az/ext/news/2020/11/free/politics%20news/en/129963.htm>; President.az, *Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation*, Events, December 1, 2020, available at: <https://en.president.az/articles/48205> (accessed: December 14, 2020).

88 Huseynov, V., “Azerbaijan Demands Compensation From Armenia for Destruction of Previously Occupied Territories,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, Vol. 17, Issue 177, December 14, 2020, available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-demands-compensation-from-armenia-for-destruction-of-previously-occupied-territories/> (accessed: December 15, 2020).

89 Apa, *Azerbaijan’s damage from Armenian occupation surpasses \$818 billion*, March 14, 2018, available at: https://apa.az/en/nagorno_garabagh/xeber_azerbaijan___s_damage_from_armenian_occupa_-272480 (accessed: January 11, 2021).

90 Isabalayeva, I., “The amount of damage Armenia caused to Azerbaijan may be close to US\$1.3 trillion - Expert” (translation from Azerbaijani), *Trend*, November 18, 2020, available at: <https://az.trend.az/business/3336339.html>; Apa, *Posol Azerbaydzhana v Moldove: Provoditsya rabota po obespecheniyu vyplaty usherba, prichinnogo nashey strane Armeniyey*, November 25, 2020, available at: <https://apa.az/ru/vnesnyaya-politika-azerbaydjana/Posol-Azerbaydzhana-v-Moldove-Provoditsya-rabota-po-obespecheniyu-vyplaty-usherba-prichinnogo-nashey-strane-Armeniej-430259> (both sources accessed: January 11, 2021).

calculated the value of damage at above \$50 billion USD.⁹¹ Notably, the calculation made by one foreign expert is close to that of his Azerbaijani counterparts at US\$1.1 trillion.⁹²

The settlement of foreign nationals of Armenian origin in the formerly occupied territories at the expense of expelling around 750,000 indigenous Azerbaijani people has caused Azerbaijan to allocate a significant amount of finance to ensure the social welfare of IDPs since 1993. According to data received from the State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons of Azerbaijan, between 1993 and 2018, 7.1 billion manat (over US\$4 billion) were allocated for the improvement of living conditions of IDPs.⁹³ Furthermore, 111 state-of-the-art multi-story residential complexes were built to accommodate more than 60,000 families (over 300,000 people) in 30 cities and districts of Azerbaijan by May 2020.⁹⁴ Also, as of the first quarter of 2019, 496,436 IDPs were provided with a single monthly allowance.⁹⁵

The economy of Azerbaijan was also deprived of benefit from the rich agricultural resources of the formerly occupied territories. Given that agriculture in the Azerbaijani territories (excluding the formerly occupied territories) contributed 5.72% of Azerbaijan's GDP in 2019, the intermountain and foothill plains and plateaus suitable for agriculture in the liberated territories will enable grain-growing, fodder production, viticulture, and tobacco, potato, and cotton growing, as well as dairy and meat production.⁹⁶ Moreover, the destruction of irrigation systems during

The settlement of foreign nationals of Armenian origin in the formerly occupied territories at the expense of expelling around 750,000 indigenous Azerbaijani people has caused Azerbaijan to allocate a significant amount of finance to ensure the social welfare of IDPs since 1993.

91 News, *Gevork Kostanyan: Po etomu dokumentu na Armeniyu nalozheno obyazatelstvo v razmere boleye chem na 50 mlrd. Dollarov*, November 12, 2020, available at: <https://news.am/rus/news/612951.html> (accessed: January 11, 2021).

92 Apa, *The discussion on the methodology and initial assessment of the damage caused by Armenian occupation to Azerbaijan was conducted at the UNEC* (translation from Azerbaijani), November 16, 2020, available at: https://apa.az/az/sosial_xeberler/UNEC-d-Ermnistan-iscalinin-Azrbaycana-vurdugu-zrrin-metodologiyasi-v-ilkin-qymtIldirmsi-il-bagli-muzakir-aparilib-615426 (accessed: January 11, 2021).

93 State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "IDPs: State Care: President," available at: <http://idp.gov.az/en/care//parent/21> (accessed: December 29, 2020).

94 MehribanAliyeva.az, *President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva attend the inauguration of the residential complex Gobu Park-3 developed for IDP families*, May 28, 2020, available at: <https://mehriban-aliyeva.az/en/news/node/848371> (accessed: December 29, 2020).

95 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN Office and other International Organizations, Ref: 0861/12/19/20, "Azerbaijani government builds residential complexes for IDPs," November 25, 2019, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/Azerbaijan.pdf> (accessed: December 29, 2020).

96 Plecher, H., "Azerbaijan: Share of economic sectors in the gross domestic product (GDP) from 2009 to 2019," *Statista*, November 18, 2020, available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/457577/share-of-economic-sectors-in-the-gdp-in-;Ibid>.

the First Karabakh War caused losses to five adjacent districts through the absence of irrigation and loss of revenues amounting to US\$53.5 billion of financial damage.⁹⁷ Armenia inflicted on Azerbaijan damage valued at US\$4.4 billion through appropriation of the mineral waters of Kalbajar district⁹⁸ and US\$265.3 billion in environmental damage due to the exploitation of natural resources and the destruction of the flora and fauna system.⁹⁹ Lastly, the value of the general damage to cultural objects amounts to roughly US\$6.71 billion.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, Armenian companies' involvement in the illicit exploitation of the mineral and natural resources of Azerbaijan is an act of robbery; hence the private gains of entities could be assessed as financial damage. The Prosecutor General's Office of Azerbaijan issued criminal proceedings against Base Metals CJSC owing to its illegitimate profits (between 2009 and 2017) to a total of 301.9 million manat (nearly US\$177.5 million) in Vejnaly village of Azerbaijan's Zangilan district.¹⁰¹

Legal aspects of Armenia's activities in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Firstly, Armenia's policy of artificially changing the demographics of the formerly occupied territories constitutes a flagrant breach of international humanitarian law, notably the Geneva Conventions (1949); Article 85(4) (a) of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions; the Fourth Geneva Convention for the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949); Principle VI of the Nuremberg Principles (1950); and Article 8(2) (b)(8) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998).¹⁰²

Secondly, several international documents, including Article 5 of the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries (1989) prohibit and condemn the recruitment

97 Baghirov, O., "Economic Impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," *International Policy Digest*, April 12, 2017, available at: <https://intpolicydigest.org/2017/04/12/economic-impact-of-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict/> (accessed December 29, 2020).

98 Isabalayeva, I., "Azerbaijan discloses amount of damage caused by Armenia by exporting its mineral water," *Trend*, December 22, 2020, available at: <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/business/3353890.html#:~:text=The%20Armenians%20caused%20damage%20to,22>.

99 Azertag, *Azerbaijan suffered \$265 billion environmental damage as a result of Armenian aggression*, February 11, 2016, available at: https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Azerbaijan_suffered_265_billion_environmental_damage_as_a_result_of_Armenian_aggression-926394.

100 Ministry of Culture, "Brief Information on Material and Moral Damage Caused to Azerbaijan Culture as a Result of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict", Azerbaijan, available at: <https://azerbaijan.az/en/related-information/127> (accessed January 11, 2021).

101 Trend, *Persons illegally exploiting gold deposits in Karabakh put on int'l wanted list*, November 2, 2020, available at: <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3327837.html> (accessed December 29, 2020).

102 Ibid.

of foreign nationals to the territories of another sovereign country for military purposes.¹⁰³ Furthermore, UNSC Resolution 2396 (2017) calls on Member States to take appropriate actions regarding suspected terrorists and their accompanying family members including by considering appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration measures; while another UNSC Resolution—2462 (2019)—encapsulates a demand to all States to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts or providing any form of support to those involved in them.¹⁰⁴

Thirdly, there are some international documents identifying legal implications for the mismanagement of water installations and pollution of the resources. Pursuant to Principle I of the Dublin Statement (1992), effective water management should involve a holistic approach, linking the land and water uses across the whole of a catchment area or groundwater aquifer, while Principle IV reasserts the basic right of all human beings to have access to clean water and sanitation.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Armenia's refusal to participate in the preparation of the PACE report on the Sarsang reservoir could be evaluated in accordance with the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (1991), which asserts that parties to the protocol are responsible for the provision of reports on the scrutinization of the environmental, including health, effects of various activities.¹⁰⁶

Fourthly, illegitimate activities against the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan represent a violation of international humanitarian law, in particular the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970).¹⁰⁷ To authenticate the cultural erosion conducted in the occupied territories, Azerbaijan invited UNESCO to send missions to the occupied territories in 2008 and

103 United Nations, "International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries," December 4, 1989, available at: https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1989/12/19891204%2008-54%20AM/Ch_XVIII_6p.pdf (accessed: January 11, 2021).

104 United Nations, "United Nations Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017)," December 21, 2017, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N17/460/25/PDF/N1746025.pdf?OpenElement>; United Nations, "United Nations Security Council Resolution 2462 (2019)," March 28, 2019, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/090/16/PDF/N1909016.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: January 11, 2021).

105 UN Documents, "The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development," International Conference on Water and the Environment, January 31, 1992, available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/h2o-dub.htm> (accessed: December 25, 2020).

106 The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, "Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context," available at: <https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/cia/documents/legaltexts/protocolenglish.pdf> (accessed December 26, 2020).

107 *Ibid.*

2015; nevertheless, all the requests failed to be implemented owing to Armenia's efforts in preventing this mission.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

During the 28 years of occupation, Armenia has consolidated its control in the occupied territories through facilitating various illegal activities that can be described within three rationales: political, economic, and military. Concerning political aspirations, the Armenian government had fallen into an illusion that the repopulation of those territories could serve the promotion of annexationism through the artificial change of the demographics of the then-occupied districts and erasure of the Azerbaijani cultural identity of the region. Also, purposeful illegal resettlement incentives tried to change the “on-the ground reality” to gain an advantage at the diplomatic table while Armenia continued to imitate negotiating for a peaceful solution.

Economic interests were realized through ensuring a contribution to the economy of Armenia from the rich resources of the territories. Armenia has supplied itself with sufficient resources, such as food and electricity, through the cultivation of land and construction of hydropower plants to exploit water resources. Moreover, the extraction of natural resources, particularly gold, copper, and precious stones, as well as illicit drug trafficking and narcotic substance cultivation, have brought enormous financial benefit to the country.

Lastly, the recent war uncovered the military motive behind the illegitimate actions of Armenia, which was the transfer of foreign terrorist fighters and mercenaries from Middle East countries as well as Greece, France, Russia, the United States, and Georgia to the conflict zone.

The liberation of the occupied territories attached a new item to the agenda of future negotiations between two countries: that is, concerning the damage instigated by Armenia and the associated possible compensation, unofficially estimated at between US\$50 billion and US\$1.3 trillion. Yet, although the level of impairment has sometimes been visible through concrete evidence, an on-the-spot investigation is necessary to illustrate the exact amount of overall damage. Nevertheless, the reality is that profiting from all these illegal activities for years has now come back to hit COVID affected and war-torn Armenian economy.

108 Apa, Hikmat Hajiyev: *Protection of cultural heritage is a universal obligation and should not be used by UNESCO for political purposes*, December 28, 2020, available at: https://apa.az/en/nagorno_garabagh/Hikmat-Hajiyev-Protection-of-cultural-heritage-is-a-universal-obligation-and-should-not-be-used-by-UNESCO-for-political-purposes-339036 (accessed: December 27, 2020).

The Gordian Knot of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict and the Second Karabakh War: Conclusions and Reflections

Esmira Jafarova*

The year 2020 was to become a decisive time for the three-decades-long Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. The 44-day-long war between Armenia and Azerbaijan resulted in the liberation of the Azerbaijani territories that had been under occupation by the armed forces of Armenia for nearly 30 years. The negotiation process, under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group since 1992, did not yield any tangible results in terms of facilitating a final resolution of the conflict. This commentary will focus on the most recent events in the run-up to the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan that lasted from September 27 to November 10, 2020, and will offer some thoughts on the war itself and the myths and misperceptions associated with the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. The war was brought about by the unconstructive position and denialism of the leadership of Armenia across the entire duration of the peace process, which over the last two years, since the ascension to power of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, acquired a new dimension as he ramped up purposeful political and military provocations against Azerbaijan. The 44-day war undermined many myths and changed perceptions in regard to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, some of which will be highlighted in this work.



* **Esmira Jafarova** is Board Member of the Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center) based in Baku.

Azerbaijan's 44-day-long Patriotic War

September 27, 2020, was the very fateful day and the tipping point in the history of the almost 30-year-old, lingering conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan declared that it had launched a counteroffensive in response to provocation by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, which, using large-calibre weaponry, mortars, and all kinds of artillery, initiated an intensive shelling of the positions of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces along the front line as well as the populated areas of Qapanli village of Terter, Chiragli and Orta Garvend villages of Aghdam, Alkhanli and Shukurbeyli villages of Fuzuli, and Jojuq Merjanli village of Jabrayil districts.

The negotiations towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict that started in the early 1990s under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group were unsuccessful, owing to the maximalist and unconstructive position of Armenia, which refused to liberate Azerbaijan's occupied territories and feigned engagement in the peace talks.

Azerbaijan substantiated the legitimacy of its counteroffensive according to its right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter—fighting a foreign threat within its internationally recognized territories.

It should be remembered that Armenia continued to occupy the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan for about three decades, in blatant disregard to the norms and principles of international law, including the four UN Security Council Resolutions (822, 853, 874 and 884) that, in 1993, demanded an immediate, unconditional, and full withdrawal of all occupying forces from the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan.

The negotiations towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict that started in the early 1990s under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group were unsuccessful, owing to the maximalist and unconstructive position of Armenia, which refused to liberate Azerbaijan's occupied territories and feigned engagement in the peace talks.

Over the preceding two years, after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan came to power, Armenia did everything possible to destroy the negotiation process and embraced ever-stronger militaristic rhetoric. At a rally in the occupied Azerbaijani territories, specifically in Khankendi, he declared that “Karabakh is Armenia and period”¹ and then embarked on numerous political and military provocations against Azerbaijan that, among others, included the revival of a dangerous

1 Jafarova, E., “What is Happening with Peace in Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict?” *Columbia Journal of International Affairs*, 5 April 2020, available at: <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/what-happening-%E2%80%9Cpeace%E2%80%9D-armenia-azerbaijan-conflict> (accessed: December 14, 2020).

miatsum (unification) ideology² in regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan; the organization of so-called “parliamentary and presidential elections” in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan; and Pashinyan’s visit to the historic Azerbaijani city of Shusha in May 2020 to conduct the so-called “inauguration” ceremony for the illegal regime established therein. These provocations, doubtlessly also inspired by Armenian (now former) Defence Minister David Tonoyan’s vow in early 2019 to wage “new wars for new territories,” acquired more dangerous proportions with the attack against the Tovuz district of Azerbaijan in July 2020, the expansion of illegal settlements of foreign people in Azerbaijan’s occupied territories and the rejection of the Madrid Principles that demanded the return of the occupied territories to Azerbaijan—principles that had been endorsed by both sides and the mediators.

From the outset of the 44-day-long war, lasting from September 27 to November 10, Azerbaijan’s military superiority was clear. Within the first couple of days the Azerbaijani army managed to break the defences of the Armed Forces of Armenia around Fuzuli and overcame the so-called “Ohanyan Line,” considered to be one of the strongest fortifications installed by Armenia’s army in the occupied Azerbaijani territories.

Moreover, from the early days of this war, Azerbaijan demanded that Armenia must finally withdraw its military forces from the occupied Azerbaijani territories, fully and unconditionally; and, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 853, issue a timetable for the de-occupation of Azerbaijani lands. This was laid down as an important precondition for Azerbaijan’s suspension of its military counteroffensive. Armenia, however, resisted and opted for the continuation of military operations instead.

One of the most heart-rending parts of this war became Armenia’s behavior toward Azerbaijani civilians. The country’s leadership opted to avenge its losses on the battleground on peaceful civilians and cities far beyond the theatre of military hostilities. Repeated, indiscriminate attacks against Azerbaijan’s cities, including Ganja, Barda, Tartar,

Azerbaijan demanded that Armenia must finally withdraw its military forces from the occupied Azerbaijani territories, fully and unconditionally; and, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 853, issue a timetable for the de-occupation of Azerbaijani lands.

2 Kucera, J. “Pashinyan calls for unification between Armenia and Karabakh,” *Eurasianet*, August 6, 2019, available at: <https://eurasianet.org/pashinyan-calls-for-unification-between-armenia-and-karabakh> (accessed: November 27, 2020).

One of the most heart-rending parts of this war became Armenia's behavior toward Azerbaijani civilians. The country's leadership opted to avenge its losses on the battleground on peaceful civilians and cities far beyond the theatre of military hostilities.

Gadabay, Beylagan, Goranboy, Aghjhabadi, and Khizi using SCUD, Tochka-U, and Smerch-type missile systems and multiple rocket launchers killed more than 90 and injured over 400 civilians.³ The attacks against Ganja and Barda were the deadliest, with the former suffering three bombardments and the latter two, including the single most deadly attack on civilians of the war. These attacks also inflicted damage on Azerbaijan's civilian infrastructure, and Armenia made further attempts to strike and demolish Azerbaijan's critical energy infrastructure. This persistent intent was vividly highlighted in Armenia's

missile attacks on the city of Ganja. In addition to killing civilians, these also posed a threat to strategic energy infrastructure in the famous "Ganja Gap."⁴

There were three humanitarian ceasefires—on October 10, 17, and 26—negotiated in Moscow, Washington, and Geneva, respectively: all three of which were immediately violated by Armenia, followed by the latter's missile attacks against Azerbaijani civilians.

The coda to this war, therefore, also came very fast. In the early hours of November 10, a trilateral peace declaration was signed by the Russian Federation, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The declaration, which reflected Armenia's practically complete capitulation

Azerbaijani armed forces managed to liberate over 300 population centers, cities, villages, and strategic heights. The liberation of Shusha on November 8 became the tipping point that broke the back of Armenia's resistance. Shusha, besides wielding immense emotional and cultural significance for Azerbaijan, is also located on a strategic height, a plateau that is elevated above the surrounding residential areas. There is a saying: "Whoever controls Shusha, also controls Karabakh."

The coda to this war, therefore, also came very fast. In the early hours of November 10, a trilateral peace declaration was signed by the Russian Federation, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The declaration, which reflected Armenia's practically complete capitulation, obliged Armenia to return to Azerbaijan all remaining occupied territories, while peacekeepers from the Russian Federation were to be deployed along the line of contact

3 Prosecutor General's Office of Azerbaijan, "Latest News for 30.11.2020 Crimes Committed Against the Civilian Population of Azerbaijan", November 30, 2020, available at: <https://genprosecutor.gov.az/az/post/3234> (accessed: December 14, 2020).

4 Coffey, L. and Nifti, E. "Why the West Needs Azerbaijan," *Foreign Policy*, May 28, 2018, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/28/why-the-west-needs-azerbaijan/> (accessed: December 14, 2020).

between the armed forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan that existed at the moment of signing.

The peacekeeping forces are to be deployed for five years—with a possible extension for another five—in parallel with the withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia, and this will be monitored by a Joint Center where both Russian and Turkish military personnel will be present on an equal footing. Azerbaijan’s Kalbajar, Aghdam, and Lachyn districts were to be returned to Azerbaijan on November 15 (later extended to 25), November 20, and December 1, 2020, respectively. All Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) had to be returned to the liberated areas under the supervision of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. At the time of writing, Aghdam, Kalbajar, and Lachyn districts were already liberated; Russian peacekeepers had been deployed; and the Turkish parliament had approved sending military personnel to start their work in the Joint Center. The Center will be located in Aghdam district of Azerbaijan.

Myths and changed perceptions

The war debunked myths around the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, thereby changing some perceptions in this regard. First, the myth that “*there could be no military solution to the conflict*” was shattered altogether. This mantra was repeated throughout the peace process mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, which unfortunately played into Armenia’s hands as it maintained its occupation of Azerbaijani territories and enjoyed impunity due to the lack of international pressure for its violation of international law.

Azerbaijan, in contrast, always emphasized that, if the peace process did not yield results, it would also attempt to regain its territories through military means. President Ilham Aliyev reiterated many times, in numerous interviews with the world’s media during these 44 days, that the inability of the international community to pressure Armenia to de-occupy Azerbaijani lands and the absence, across three decades, of a tangible solution through peaceful means to this persistent conflict warranted this military solution. Moreover, the behaviour of Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan over the last two years, which involved clear political and military provocations against Azerbaijan, ushered in this war.

Azerbaijan, in contrast, always emphasized that, if the peace process did not yield results, it would also attempt to regain its territories through military means.

Above all, the failure of diplomacy and peace process mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group stands as an unfortunate example of the inability of international mediation efforts, good offices, and facilitation work to live up to expectations regarding peaceful solutions to conflicts; instead, they gave way to military action that proved to offer a more effective shortcut to achieving the final resolution of the most intractable conflict. The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict was certainly an intractable one that lingered for over three decades; one that witnessed the triumph of military means over diplomacy and negotiations to deliver a tangible conflict resolution. The statement issued by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs on December 3, 2020, added little to the already sealed *fait accompli* brought by the trilateral agreement of the leaders of Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Having had to embrace the new reality, the statement by the Co-Chairs stressed that “the Co-Chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group call upon Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue implementing fully their obligations under the November 9 statement, in Nagorno-Karabakh region and the surrounding districts, as well as their previous ceasefire commitments.”⁵ Later, in mid-December, the three OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs also visited the region and their meeting with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, was rather sobering. The President openly stated that, over the 28 years of Minsk Group mediation, the latter unfortunately failed to deliver a final solution to the conflict and the new reality created in the aftermath of Azerbaijan’s successful military counteroffensive has to be accepted by everyone.⁶

Another myth, widespread in Armenia after the first Karabakh war of 1988–1994, was that “Azerbaijanis cannot fight.” This was also utterly destroyed.

Secondly, another myth, widespread in Armenia after the first Karabakh war of 1988–1994, was that “Azerbaijanis cannot fight.” This was also utterly destroyed. In particular, the capture of Shusha ended all speculation about the combat capability of the Azerbaijani soldier. On December 3, 2020, Azerbaijan announced that its military personnel losses during the military operations 2,855 by January, 18, 2021.⁷

Although the number was higher than ever experienced by Azerbaijan since the first Karabakh War in 1988–1994, including during the four-day war in 2016 and the Tovuz provocation in July,

⁵ OSCE, “Joint Statement by the Heads of Delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries,” December 3, 2020, available at: <https://www.osce.org/minsk-group/472419> (accessed: December 14, 2020).

⁶ President.az, *Ilham Aliyev receives OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs from France and U.S.*, December 12, 2020, available at: <https://en.president.az/articles/48908> (accessed: December 14, 2020).

⁷ Azertag.az, *Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Defense discloses updated list of servicemen martyred in Patriotic War*, January 18, 2021, https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Azerbaijans_Ministry_of_Defense_discloses_updated_list_of_servicemen_martyred_in_Patriotic_War-1661379

experts concur that the number of martyrs incurred by the Azerbaijani armed forces were moderate for such a vast counteroffensive, mostly owing to the usage of drones that guaranteed superiority in the airspace. For comparison, Armenia's losses stood, in a preliminary estimate, at 2,996.⁸ However, this number could change following the process of exchange of bodies and identification of burnt corpses.

This war, which international military experts often refer to as a “fifth generation war,” will therefore also be remembered because of the widespread use of military drones by Azerbaijan that enabled the minimization of casualties among military personnel. The use of drones against Armenia's military positions in many ways predetermined the outcome of the war. The myth about the invincibility of Armenia's army that was born after the first Karabakh war and persisted through three decades was thus also undermined. Armenia underestimated Azerbaijan's military might.

Last, but not least, the myth about “*time is working against Azerbaijan*,” since the younger generation would not have ownership over Karabakh, also proved to be utterly wrong. During these 44 days Azerbaijanis, including the generation born after the First Karabakh War, demonstrated an unprecedented level of unity and solidarity that surprised many onlookers. All political forces within the country were also united around the purpose of restoring the country's territorial integrity. Time did not work against Azerbaijan: quite the contrary, thirty years of occupation consolidated Azerbaijanis' sense of national unity and self-preservation.

Many perceptions regarding the conflict resolution process, and generally about the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, also changed as a consequence of the destruction of these myths. Azerbaijan finally restored its territorial integrity and its victory on the battleground, as well as on the diplomatic front, was celebrated by jubilant crowds all over Azerbaijan.

Conclusions and Perspectives for the Future

The 44-day war exposed entrenched myths and misperceptions that for years had persisted around the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict. The three myths— (1) “*there could be no military solution to the conflict*”, (2)

⁸ Armedia.am, *Provedena sudmedekspertiza tel 2996 voyennosluzhashikh: minzdrav Armenii*, December 11, 2020, available at: <https://armedia.am/rus/news/90405/provedena-sudmedekspertiza-tel-2996-voennosluzhashchikh-minzdrav-armenii.html> (accessed: December 14, 2020).

“*time is working against Azerbaijan*”, and (3) “*Azerbaijanis cannot fight*”—were all proven irrelevant. The war also opened a new page in the history of independent Azerbaijan and the entire South Caucasus region. However, for these opportunities to be fully explored, the dark pages of the past should be fully closed. A fresh start requires fresh thinking as a starting point.

In the coming years, Azerbaijan has pledged to embark on demining, reconstruction, and the return of IDPs. Armenia, quite the reverse, is in the midst of political tumult and confrontations, accompanied by public discord and cabinet resignations in the wake of its capitulation. Azerbaijan has also vowed to hold Armenia accountable for all war crimes, ecological terror, and damage inflicted on Azerbaijan for the entire duration of the conflict and to demand reparations. It seems that there are still many pending issues to be solved before security and harmony finally settle on the region.

On December 10, 2020, Azerbaijan celebrated its military victory over Armenia in a solemn parade ceremony that was also attended by the president of the Republic of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Apart from being a wonderful and prideful moment in the history of independent Azerbaijan, the messages delivered by the Presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan in the aftermath of the parade heralded the dawn of a new era in the South Caucasus. More specifically, both presidents announced that they are ready for a constructive post-conflict engagement with Armenia. This new cooperation platform announced by the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Turkey may include all six countries in the region, including Armenia, provided that the latter also demonstrates equal willingness to give a chance to fresh thinking and build trustful and mutually beneficial relationship with Turkey and Azerbaijan, having abandoned its expansionist and irredentist aspirations.⁹

The ghosts of the past should, at last, be turned into opportunities for development and cooperation and Armenia should also be interested in embarking on this journey and finally reject the militaristic, nationalistic, and revanchist ideology that for decades denied the South Caucasus any chance for peace and prosperity.

9 Jafarova, E. “Expanding Regional Partnerships Following Second Karabakh War,” *Anadolu Agency*, December 15, 2020, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/analysis-expanding-regional-partnerships-following-second-karabakh-war/2077665> (accessed: December 16, 2020).

Turkey's Presence, Involvement and Engagement in the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict: A Reflection on Azerbaijani-Turkish Relations

Ayça Ergun*

The aim of this commentary is to discuss Turkey's position on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. It provides an overview of the nature of the bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey and shows how they conditioned Turkey's presence and involvement in this conflict. It particularly focuses on the Turkish stance during the Second Karabakh War and discusses future implications for security building in the South Caucasus. The commentary argues that the bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey are special, exceptional, and privileged. Recent Turkish support to Azerbaijan has contributed to the deepening of these bilateral relations and will pave the way to a more diversified and institutionalized setting for further cooperation.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Turkey, Karabakh War, Turkey in the South Caucasus.



* **Ayça Ergun** is associate professor at Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara, Turkey. She is the vice-chair of the Center for Black Sea and Central Asia (KORA) at METU.

Introduction

The bilateral relationship between Azerbaijan and Turkey is exceptional. This has been a well-known pattern since Azerbaijan's declaration of independence in 1991.¹ Both countries enjoy a special type of bilateral relationship inspired by ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic affinities, frequently voiced in the motto "one nation, two states." It must be admitted that neither country has necessarily taken this motto for granted, and they have invested significantly in the diversification and intensification of their relationship in all fields, including energy and transportation projects, construction, trade, education, and academic cooperation. The exceptional nature of the relationship is not only a

*"One nation, two states."
It must be admitted that
neither country has
necessarily taken this
motto for granted, and they
have invested significantly
in the diversification and
intensification of their
relationship in all fields*

product of the political elites' choices and initiatives. There is strong sensitivity, sympathy, and trust in both countries' public opinion regarding one another. The Azerbaijani public has an increased awareness and knowledge of issues relating to Turkish society, politics, and culture. Only a limited circle in Turkey has extensive and informed knowledge on Azerbaijan, yet the Turkish public has developed a very strong sense of emotional attachment to Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijanis and was particularly attentive, interested,

and concerned during the Second Karabakh War. Consequently, public opinion surveys reveal that Azerbaijan is considered as the Turkey's best ally and the country most trusted by the Turkish public.²

The origins and basis for the motto "one nation, two states" lie, firstly, in common historical, cultural, religious, and linguistic attributes. Although interaction between the two societies was extremely limited during the Soviet period, these commonalities were preserved in the national memories, and remembered and highlighted in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The initial Turkish support to Azerbaijani statehood through the recognition of its independence and unconditional support in the Second Karabakh war revitalized those national memories. Secondly, both Azerbaijan and Turkey

1 Comprehensive accounts identified numerous aspects of bilateral relations relating to different dimensions. See Cavid Veliyev (2020), *Azerbaycan–Türkiye Stratejik Ortaklığı*. İstanbul Ötüken; Murad İsmayilov and Norman A. Graham (eds) (2016), *Turkish–Azerbaijani Relations*. Oxon: Routledge. Elnur Soltanov (2016), "Brothers in Arms of Brothers in the Dark?" in Murad İsmayilov and Norman A. Graham (eds) (2016), *Turkish–Azerbaijani Relations*. Oxon: Routledge; Araz Aslanlı and Vefa Kurban (2016), "Türkiye–Azerbaycan İlişkileri ve Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları," *Marmara Turcic Studies Journal*, 3 (1); Fariz İsmayilzade (2005), "Turkey and Azerbaijan: The Honeymoon is Over," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 4 (4).

2 Türk Dış Politikası Kamuoyu Araştırmaları Algısı (June 17 2020), available at https://www.khas.edu.tr/sites/khas.edu.tr/files/inline-files/DPA2020_BASIN%5B1%5D.pdf.

share a historical “other” and threat; that is, the Armenians. Historical grievances that could not be overcome were revived by the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict. Thirdly, Azerbaijan and Turkey share common geostrategic and economic interests in the region. The maximization of those interests can be best seen in joint initiatives in the fields of energy and transportation. Diversified economic initiatives and increased investment opportunities have created an economic interdependence between the two countries. Finally, bilateral relations have a strong societal basis that consolidates and fosters government policies. Turkey’s position in the Second Karabakh War was conditioned with reference to these factors.

The aim of this commentary is to provide an overview of Turkish support for Azerbaijan and discuss the implications of this for bilateral relations and security building in the South Caucasus. I argue that the bilateral relationship between Azerbaijan and Turkey is special, exceptional, and privileged. Recent Turkish support to Azerbaijan has contributed to the deepening of this relationship and will pave the way to a more diversified and institutionalized setting for enhanced cooperation.

The Turkish position in the Second Karabakh War

Turkey’s support of Azerbaijan in the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict is unquestionable. Turkey’s rejection of building up diplomatic relations with Armenia until the return of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan was considered extremely precious by the Azerbaijani side. This pattern is very well known. Turkey’s commitment to the Azerbaijani cause in this conflict and its position in all regional and international platforms has been consistent. Yet there had been a slight change in terms of Turkey’s reaction to the conflict by July 2020, when the Armenians attacked the Tovuz district of Azerbaijan. One can argue that, although the current Turkish support can be seen as a natural continuation of the existing discourse, the Second Karabakh War provided yet another opportunity for both countries to intensify and deepen their existing brotherhood, cooperation, and strategic alliance. Therefore, Turkey’s engagement in the conflict was not different in terms of content; nevertheless, it was much more visible, assertive, and proactive compared with the country’s previous stance. On July 12, 2020,

Therefore, Turkey’s engagement in the conflict was not different in terms of content; nevertheless, it was much more visible, assertive, and proactive compared with the country’s previous stance.

Turkey immediately reacted and responded to the Armenian aggression towards Azerbaijan. Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a strong statement. In a press release, it was stated that Armenia had embarked on "*adventurism for aspirations beyond its own capacity*" and "*Turkey will continue, with all its capacity, to stand by Azerbaijan in its struggle to protect its territorial integrity.*"³

In the preceding days, Turkey's stance was just another act in the name of fraternity and friendship. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, and Minister of National Defense Hulusi Akar all made very strong statements supporting Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and asking Armenia to stop its aggression and leave Azerbaijan's occupied territories. Between July and September 2020, the two countries conducted joint military exercises based on the Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support (2010) and rendered their unconditional relationship more visible. These joint exercises also had a symbolic meaning: to show an emphatic act of solidarity between Azerbaijanis and Turks and, in a way, to intimidate Armenia. This can also be interpreted as yet another example of the two countries' overlapping economic, security, and strategic interests.

On September 27, 2020, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense reported the active shelling of Azerbaijani villages by Armenian armed forces stationed in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Following reports of civilian deaths, Azerbaijan launched a counteroffensive operation along the entire Line of Contact (LoC). After almost three decades of Armenian occupation, Azerbaijan found a suitable opportunity to liberate its internationally-recognized territories. This opportunity has been realized in a geostrategic context where the Russian Federation showed rather a silent consent to Azerbaijan's legitimate military move within its sovereign borders and reservations in terms of supporting Armenia's wrongful conduct beyond its borders. Turkey became more proactive, thereby redefining its position in the South Caucasus as a prominent security actor. Moreover, Azerbaijan demonstrated a more consolidated statehood and empowered military capacity compared with the early years of the post-Soviet period. Therefore, both domestic factors and regional context facilitated Azerbaijan's military operations in its own territory.

3 Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "No: 149, Press Release Regarding the Armenian Attack on Azerbaijan," July 12, 2020, available at: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-149_-azerbaycan-a-yonelik-ermeni-saldirisi-hk.en.mfa (accessed: January 8, 2021).

Azerbaijan's move was supported by very high-level declarations from Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that the “*Turkish nation stands by its Azerbaijani brothers as always with its all resources and strengthen its solidarity.*”⁴ Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that “*Azerbaijan will surely use its right of self-defense to protect its people and its territorial integrity. In this vein, Turkey fully supports Azerbaijan with unwavering solidarity. We will stand by Azerbaijan whichever way it prefers.*”⁵ Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu summarized this statement, saying, “*We stand by dear Azerbaijan in the field and on the table.*”⁶ Similarly, Turkey's Defense Minister Hulusi Akar stated that they would stand by their “*Azerbaijani Turkish brothers with all resources till the end.*”⁷ Thus, Turkish support, which used to be more contextual, became continuous and persistent.

Not only the content but also the level of Turkey's support has changed to a great extent. The Turkish side openly declared that they would like to contribute to the process on “the table,” which implied engagement with conflict resolution and peace building. Turkey has already been providing support to Azerbaijan on all international and regional platforms. There is nothing new in this; however, Turkey's stance in this conflict has become more proactive, assertive, and involved since September 2020. Moreover, while consistently expressing and underlining their moral and political support of Azerbaijan, Turkey's official representatives have frequently highlighted that Azerbaijan was fighting alone on the battlefield and rejected alleged Turkish direct involvement in military operations. It should, however, be noted that the Turkish army and military schools have provided train-

while consistently expressing and underlining their moral and political support of Azerbaijan, Turkey's official representatives have frequently highlighted that Azerbaijan was fighting alone on the battlefield and rejected alleged Turkish direct involvement in military operations.

4 Anadolu Ajansı, *President Erdoğan: Turkish nation stands by its Azerbaijani brothers with all means* (translation from Turkish), September 27, 2020, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turk-milleti-tum-imkanlariyla-azerbaycanli-kardeslerinin-yanindadir/1987256> (accessed: January 15, 2021).

5 Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “QA-94, Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in Response to a Question Regarding the Armenian Attacks on Azerbaijan Which Started This Morning,” September 27, 2020, available at: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-94_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-a-karsi-baslattigi-saldiri-hk-sc.en.mfa (accessed: January 8, 2021).

6 Anadolu Ajansı, *Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu: We stand by Azerbaijani on the field and at the table* (translated from Turkish), September 27, 2020, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/disisleri-bakani-cavusoglu-sahada-ve-masada-can-azerbaycan-in-yanindayiz/1987611> (accessed: January 8, 2021).

7 Anadolu Ajansı, *Minister of National Defense Akar: We will be with our Azerbaijani Turkic brothers until the end* (translated from Turkish), September 27, 2020, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/azerbaycan-cephe-hatti/milli-savunma-bakani-akar-sonuna-kadar-azerbaycan-turku-kardeslerimiz-in-yaninda-olacagiz/1987230> (accessed: January 8, 2021).

Even a glance at Azerbaijani social media accounts shows the Turkish flag emoji frequently used alongside the Azerbaijani one. One could frequently observe the use of the both countries' flags side by side in the major cities of Azerbaijan.

ing to the Azerbaijani army for a couple of decades. This has obviously contributed to the formation of a well-trained, strong army in Azerbaijan compared with that of the early years of the 1990s and established a generation of a military elite who remains in close collaboration. Although direct Turkish military involvement was denied by both Azerbaijani and Turkish representatives, indirect support exists in the education and training provided to the Azerbaijani army throughout recent years.

During his visit to Baku, Çavuşoğlu stated that, although Turkey and Azerbaijan were two separate states, they would act as one when necessary.⁸ The Turkish public watched the news from Azerbaijan during the entire period of the war and the media coverage was much more extensive than in any period since Azerbaijan's independence. Even a glance at Azerbaijani social media accounts shows the Turkish flag emoji frequently used alongside the Azerbaijani one. One could frequently observe the use of the both countries' flags side by side in the major cities of Azerbaijan. Public celebrations after the trilateral statement of November 10, 2020, were held with both Azerbaijani and Turkish flags on display. On December 10, 2020, the victory of Azerbaijan was celebrated in Baku with the participation of President Erdoğan and with his military officers marching in the victory parade in Baku.

Turkey's engagement in the Second Karabakh War provided it with a more empowered position and status in the South Caucasus. This can also be interpreted as the definition a new role due to the country's strengthened presence in the region. The existing situation provided a new challenge for Turkish foreign policy: to redefine its proactive engagement in regional matters. It seems that the result has been successful, as Turkish military forces became part of the peace observation mission in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. They will fulfill the role of balancing Russian power in the region, as the presence of Russian peacekeeping forces on Azerbaijani territory has raised concerns within Azerbaijani society and has also been noted by international commentators.

⁸ Milliyet, *Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu let no one find our support for Azerbaijan odd* (translation from Turkish), October 2, 2020, available at: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/disisleri-bakani-cavusoglu-azerbaycana-destegimizi-kimse-yadirgamasin-6320484> (accessed: January 15, 2021).

Conclusion

The results of the Second Karabakh war consolidated the national identity and the nation- and state-building processes of Azerbaijan. The country will not only enjoy a more secure place in the region but is also significantly empowered. After the statement of November 10, the immediate initiatives by the Azerbaijani government to restore and, as far as possible, rebuild the newly liberated territories are signifiers of the long-awaited desires of both state and society, and also act to underline the restoration of territorial integrity. The process of peace building will no doubt be long. However, the current status quo provides a strong basis for the preservation of security and stability in the region.

As of 2020, the bilateral relations are not only privileged, but have also deepened during and after the Second Karabakh War. The moral and political

As of 2020, the bilateral relations are not only privileged, but have also deepened during and after the Second Karabakh War. The moral and political support of Turkey to Azerbaijan resulted in enhancing the relationship.

support of Turkey to Azerbaijan resulted in enhancing the relationship. The continuous dialogue between Azerbaijan's President İlham Aliyev and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as well as the respective ministers of foreign affairs and defense, showed evidence of this new deepening. Turkey's presence in Azerbaijan will definitely increase because of the observation center, and Turkey will perhaps be one of the first candidates to contribute to the rebuilding of the liberated territories of Azerbaijan.

After the Second Karabakh War, relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan have evolved. The existing special and privileged relationship has turned into a further deepened one.⁹ Both parties' commitment to strengthened bilateral ties, diverse joint initiatives and the consideration of multi-actor, multi-level institutional relations is much stronger than ever before. An important asset that also determines the nature of the bilateral relations is societal support. This rare asset should not be taken for granted and its potential should be revealed. Strong mutual sympathy in public opinion in both Azerbaijan and Turkey supports the will and policies of the ruling elites. For the further consolidation and institutionalization of this, some important initiatives can be considered, particularly in the fields of education, media, and civil society. Diversification of policies and tools will also eventually contribute to strengthening the bilateral ties.

⁹ Ayça Ergun "Special, Exceptional and Privileged Azerbaijani Turkish Relations", *Baku Dialogues*, 4 (2) (winter 2020–2021), pp. 52-64.

CAUCASUS STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES

Following the liberation of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the existing situation is also a new test for Turkey in its immediate neighborhood. This is a test of its ability to strengthen its role in the region and to become a more prominent security actor. The balance of power in the South Caucasus will largely be determined by the nature of the relationship between Russia and Turkey. Whether cooperation or competition will dominate the scene is yet to be seen.

Violations of International Humanitarian Law by Armenia in the Second Karabakh war

Dr. Nizami Safarov* and Dr. Najiba Mustafayeva**

The most recent large-scale military provocation of Armenia against Azerbaijan on September 27, 2020, was responded to by the Azerbaijani side with a successful counteroffensive operation that culminated with Armenia's capitulation and the restoration of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This commentary discusses international crimes committed by Armenia during the recent fighting, dubbed the Second Karabakh War. As will be shown, Armenia intentionally and systematically targeted Azerbaijani civilians through the delivery of missile and bomb strikes on cities situated outside of the war zone as well as using prohibited weapons in severe violation of international humanitarian and human rights laws. Armenia also recruited children to participate in military operations against Azerbaijan. The authors provide a legal analysis of these international crimes and examine existing international mechanisms establishing the international criminal responsibility of the Armenian political-military leadership for the violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Keywords: Armenia, Azerbaijan, conflict, international crimes, war crimes, terrorism, humanitarian law



* **Dr. Nizami Safarov** is member of Parliament (Milli Mejlis) of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

** **Dr. Najiba Mustafayeva** is expert on International Law and Human Rights

Introduction

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan started at the end of the 1980s, following Armenia's territorial claims on Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory, the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and, in parallel, the systematic expulsion of ethnic Azerbaijanis from the Armenian SSR. The conflict gradually evolved into a full-scale war and, during the period 1992–1993, considerable territories of Azerbaijan fell under Armenian occupation, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts. In 1993, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted four resolutions (822, 853, 874, and 884) demanding the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian military forces from the occupied Azerbaijani territories. Despite the legally binding nature of the UNSC resolutions, they remained unimplemented for almost three decades.

Since 1992 the OSCE has engaged in efforts to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict through a specially created institute, the OSCE Minsk group, co-chaired by the United States of America, France, and the Russian Federation. By ignoring diplomatic efforts for the resolution of the conflict, the policy of the Armenian side vividly testified to its intention to secure the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories that it had captured through military force and in which it had carried out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale.¹ The destructive position of the Armenian side and the political unwillingness of the co-chair states led to a situation in which the political process had stalled. Interested as it was

By ignoring diplomatic efforts for the resolution of the conflict, the policy of the Armenian side vividly testified to its intention to secure the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories that it had captured through military force and in which it had carried out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale.

in preserving the status quo through the continuation of the military occupation of Azerbaijani territories and prolonging the conflict resolution process, Armenia undertook military provocations against Azerbaijan throughout the 30 years of the conflict, as a result of which Azerbaijani civilians were killed and injured.

The most recent provocation by Armenia (since the four-day April 2016 skirmishes that began with a deliberate offensive by Armenia and ended with a counteroffensive by Azerbaijan) was committed in July 2020 in the direction of the Tovuz region of the Azerbaijan–Armenia international border, where Armenia attempted to create a new period of tension

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, "The Report on the Illegal economic and other activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan," 2016, available at: mfa.gov.az/files/file/MFA_Report_on_the_occupied_territories_March_2016_1.pdf (accessed: November 15, 2020)

and involve third states in this conflict.² Following this event, in August 2020,³ Armenia sent the sabotage-reconnaissance group to the (now former) line of contact separating Azerbaijani and Armenian forces in the occupied territories in order to commit terrorist acts against the Azerbaijani civil population as well as attacking Azerbaijani military personnel. As President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, suggested, “Armenia [was] preparing for war.”⁴

Thus, on September 27, 2020, Armenian armed forces once again subjected the positions of Azerbaijani armed forces to intensive shelling from large-caliber weapons, mortars, and artillery installations along the entire length of the front line, including the human settlements situated in the front-line zone.⁵ Guided by the right to self-defense provided by the article 51 of the United Nations Charter, Azerbaijan launched a counter-offensive operation, as a result of which four of seven adjacent districts (Fuzuli, Jabrail, Zengilan, Gubadli), as well as the historic city of Shusha with its sacramental value for the Azerbaijani people, were liberated from Armenian occupation by the Azerbaijani army during 44 days of military operations. On November 10, 2020, a statement implementing a complete ceasefire and a cessation of hostilities in the conflict zone was signed by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, thus ending the Armenia–Azerbaijan war with Armenia’s capitulation and its further withdrawal from the Azerbaijani districts of Kalbajar, Agdam, and Lachin.

From the beginning of the recent escalation, the Armenian side intentionally targeted the Azerbaijani civilian population in cynical violation of the norms and principles of international humanitarian and human rights laws. Armenia targeted civilian settlements in the Azerbaijani cities of Ganja, Mingachevir, Goranboy, Tartar, Barda,

From the beginning of the recent escalation, the Armenian side intentionally targeted the Azerbaijani civilian population in cynical violation of the norms and principles of international humanitarian and human rights laws.

2 Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan, “The units of the armed forces of Armenia committed a provocation in the Tovuz direction of the front,” July 12, 2020, available at: <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/the-units-of-the-armed-forces-of-armenia-committed-a-provocation-in-the-tovuz-direction-of-the-front-31441.html> (accessed: November 17, 2020)

3 Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan, “The commander of the sabotage-reconnaissance group of the armed forces of Armenia taken prisoner,” August 23, 2020, available at: <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/the-commander-of-the-sabotage-reconnaissance-group-of-the-armed-forces-of-armenia-taken-prisoner-31949.html> (accessed: November 17, 2020)

4 News.az, *President Ilham Aliyev: Armenia is preparing for war*, September 25, 2020, available at: <https://www.news.az/news/president-ilham-aliyev-armenia-is-preparing-for-war> (accessed: November 20, 2020).

5 Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan, “Armenian armed forces committed large-scale provocations along the entire length of the front,” 27 October 2020, available at: <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/armenian-armed-forces-committed-large-scale-provocations-along-the-entire-length-of-the-front-32311.html> (accessed: November 19, 2020)

and Shamkir that are situated fully outside of the war zone. These provocative and bloody acts were committed despite the announcement of a humanitarian ceasefire that was agreed during a meeting of the Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers in Moscow, with the mediation of Russia, on and after October 10, 2020.

The intentional killings of Azerbaijani civilians committed by the Armenian political-military leadership on a periodical basis are war crimes and crimes against humanity: international crimes that the world community intended to eradicate, after the Nazi atrocities committed during the Second World War, through the creation of the United Nations. They vowed “never again” to allow the horrors of that war to be repeated in the history of mankind.⁶ Now, 75 years later as the world community celebrated the victory over fascism, Azerbaijani civilians were under attack from Armenian military forces that can be classified as international crimes, thereby threatening the international peace and security that humanity has sought to achieve through consideration of the tragic experience of the Second World War.

This paper will analyze the international crimes committed by Armenia against Azerbaijani civilians during the Second Karabakh war. The authors will provide a comprehensive legal assessment of these acts in the framework of international humanitarian law as well as through a comparative analysis of existing precedents in the international criminal courts.

War crimes committed by Armenia against Azerbaijani civilians

The end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century was marked by the creation of the concept of war crimes through the codification of customary international law in the field of the law of armed conflict, today known as international humanitarian law. In 1899 and 1907, the Hague Conventions prohibiting the use of certain means and methods of warfare were adopted. These documents, along with the Geneva Conventions of 1949, address the issues of the conduct of warfare and war crimes. The latter are milestone international documents protecting people who do not take part in military actions and were adopted in order to limit the barbarity of war.

Notably, war crimes were the *corpus delicti* for the commission of

⁶ Mustafayeva, N., “Azerbaijani civilians are under Armenian military attacks: Time to live up to ‘never again’”, *Modern Diplomacy*, October 21, 2020, available at: <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2020/10/21/azerbaijani-civilians-are-under-armenian-military-attacks-time-to-live-up-to-never-again/> (accessed: November 21, 2020).

which German Nazis and Japanese military leaders were convicted by the Nuremberg and Tokyo international military tribunals, respectively, which were established after the Second World War. Since then, the international community has made several attempts to formulate a single, comprehensive definition of war crimes; in fact, the most recent of these found expression in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the form of grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, specifically through acts against persons or properties protected under these documents. Among these acts, Article 8(a) of the Rome Statute mentions willful killing, torture, or inhuman treatment; willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health; extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity; compelling a prisoner of war or other protected person to serve in the hostile state's armed forces; depriving such people of their rights of fair and regular trial; unlawful deportation; and the taking of hostages.⁷

Article 8(e) of the Statute addresses other serious violations of laws and customs applicable in international armed conflicts as war crimes, such as, among others, intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population as a whole or against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities; intentionally directing attacks against civil objects which are not military objects; intentionally launching an attack in the knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects or widespread severe environmental damage; or attacking or bombarding cities, villages, and buildings that are undefended and not military objectives.⁸

Furthermore, it should specifically be mentioned that both the Geneva Conventions (and Additional Protocols to them) and Rome Statute of the ICC represent the codification of the norms of customary international law, meaning that the rules contained in them are legally binding for all states, regardless of their ratification by them.

Evidently, after the sad historical experience of the Second World War, the international community decided to unite its efforts to respond collectively to new threats to international peace and security. However, this intention has been shattered through the barbarian acts committed by Armenia against Azerbaijan's civilian population.

Thus, the second largest city of Azerbaijan, Ganja, came under heavy

⁷ International Criminal Court, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 8, 1998, available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resource-library/documents/rs-eng.pdf> (accessed: November 23, 2020)

⁸ Ibid.

The intentional killing of Azerbaijani civilians committed by the Armenian political-military leadership is a war crime, representing a cynical violation of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, as well as the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and, in particular, the Fourth Geneva Convention that urges the protection of civilians in wartime.

missile fire from the military forces of Armenia several times during the recent escalation; this resulted in the deaths of 26 civilians and injuries to more than 100. It is worth mentioning that the city of Ganja, with a population of 500,000, was located fully outside the battlefield. Armenian military forces used OTR-21 Tochka-U and SCUD-B/Elbrus ballistic missiles and chose the night hours to commit bloody atrocities against as many of the civilian population as possible.

The intentional killing of Azerbaijani civilians committed by the Armenian political-military leadership is a war crime, representing a cynical violation of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, as well as the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and, in particular, the Fourth Geneva Convention that urges

the protection of civilians in wartime.

Another Azerbaijani city, situated far away from the war zone, that was twice bombarded by Armenian missile attacks since the beginning of the recent phase of the war is the city of Barda. These atrocities, which involved using prohibited cluster munitions, resulted in the deaths of 21 civilians and injuries to more than 80. This fact was confirmed and condemned by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Both organizations analyzed photos of cluster weapons remnants (“Smerch” cluster munition and “Smerch” parachute-retarded high-explosive fragmentation rockets) and made the following statement: “There’s a reason these brutal weapons are banned by an international treaty, and using them in a city center shows flagrant disregard for civilian life and international law [...] Armenia should immediately cease using cluster munitions or supplying them to Nagorno-Karabakh.”⁹ Amnesty International, which also verified pictures of fragments of 9N235 cluster munitions that were fired into the city of Barda by the Armenian army, declared that “the firing of cluster munitions into civilian areas is cruel and reckless, and causes untold death, injury and misery.”¹⁰

Despite the fact that Armenia is not a signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008) that prohibits this type of weapons and

9 Human Rights Watch, “Armenia: Cluster Munitions Kill Civilians in Azerbaijan,” October 30, 2020, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/30/armenia-cluster-munitions-kill-civilians-azerbaijan> (accessed: December 2, 2020)

10 Amnesty International, “Armenia/Azerbaijan: First confirmed use of cluster munitions by Armenia ‘cruel and reckless’,” October 29, 2020, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/10/armenia-azerbaijan-first-confirmed-use-of-cluster-munitions-by-armenia-cruel-and-reckless/> (accessed: December 2, 2020).

demands their clearance, as well as assistance to victims, it is still bound by the rules of international customary law in the field of international humanitarian law as well as the Geneva Conventions (1949). Taking into account the widespread intangible consequences for, and enormous long-lasting damage to, the civil population, the use of such prohibited types of weapons also represents a mass and severe violation of international human rights law.

Furthermore, considering the fact that systematic targeting of the civilian population is a traditional tactic of the Armenian side, the recent bloody attacks are also legally assessed as crimes against humanity, which were prosecuted for the first time after the Second World War by the Nuremberg and Tokyo international tribunals, followed by the *ad hoc* tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda established by the UN Security Council at the beginning of the 1990s.¹¹ These international trials brought under international criminal responsibility, *inter alia*, crimes committed by individuals against humanity and widespread and systematic attacks against a civilian population.

According to statistics provided by the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan on crimes committed by the Armenian Armed Forces against Azerbaijani civilians from 27 September 2020, 94 civilians were killed and more than 400 were injured. Among the civilians killed by Armenian missile attacks in residential areas outside of the war zone that had no military targets within them were 12 children.¹² These barbarian acts are vivid evidence of the cynical violation not only of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, but also the Convention on the Rights of Child, which is based on the principles of the UN Charter and supports the worldwide recognition of human dignity and human rights for all.

Despite the fact that Armenia is not a signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008) that prohibits this type of weapons and demands their clearance, as well as assistance to victims, it is still bound by the rules of international customary law in the field of international humanitarian law as well as the Geneva Conventions (1949).

According to statistics provided by the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan on crimes committed by the Armenian Armed Forces against Azerbaijani civilians from 27 September 2020, 94 civilians were killed and more than 400 were injured.

11 The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), available at: <https://www.icty.org/>; The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, available at: <https://unictr.irmct.org/> (accessed: December 18, 2020)

12 Prosecutor General's Office of Azerbaijan, "Latest news for 16.11.2020 - crimes committed against the civilian population of Azerbaijan," October 16, 2020, available at: <https://genprosecutor.gov.az/az/post/3212#gallery> (accessed: November 14, 2020).

Child soldiers in the Armenian armed forces

The barbarian act of child killing is not the only crime committed against children by the Armenian political-military leadership. Armenia also recruited children to participate in military operations against Azerbaijan in gross violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan made an appeal to international intergovernmental organizations over this international crime following video material spread on social media that supplied well-defined evidence of this fact.¹³ It is noteworthy that this is not the first time that this practice has been applied by the Armenian political-military leadership. Thus, the “Child Soldiers Global Report” contains facts on the recruitment of children under 18 years old to the Armenian Armed Forces, as well as child involvement in military training and schools.¹⁴

Thus, by recruiting and using child soldiers Armenia has seriously violated the provisions of international treaties to which it is a party; acts that are, in fact, legally assessed as war crimes.

In fact, the participation of “child soldiers” in armed conflicts is, as well as being an illegal act, at the same time a confirmation of the inhuman nature of those war criminals who recruit minors into armed formations and incite them to actively participate in hostilities.¹⁵ Thus, by recruiting and using child soldiers Armenia has seriously violated the provisions of international treaties to which it is a party; acts that are, in fact, legally assessed as war crimes.

Considering the special vulnerability of children, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols to them contain a list of provisions that provide this category of people with legal protection. Furthermore, international humanitarian law prioritizes the protection of children in situations of armed conflict, providing both general and special protection. In particular, the latter is guaranteed by Article 77 of Additional Protocol I, according to which “children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault.” The Protocol obliges parties to the conflict to provide children “with the care and aid they require, whether because of their age or for

13 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, “Information of the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan,” October 27, 2020, available at: <https://un.mfa.gov.az/files/file/letters/Letter%20to%20UNSG%20on%20the%20use%20of%20child%20soldiers%20by%20Armenia%20A-75-553%20Eng.pdf> (accessed: November 17, 2020)

14 Refworld.org, “Child Soldiers Global Report 2001 – Armenia”; “Child Soldiers Global Report 2004 – Armenia,” available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/49880616c.html>; <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4988067924.html>, 2001, 2004, (accessed: December 9, 2020)

15 Safarov, N., “İspolzovaniye detey-soldat v voorujennom konflikte – mejdunarodnoye prestupleniye,” *Inews.az*, October 26, 2020, available at: <https://1news.az/news/nizami-safarov-ispol-zovanie-detey-soldat-v-vooruzhennom-konflikte-mezhdunarodnoe-prestuplenie> (accessed: November 12, 2020)

any other reason.”¹⁶ Similar protection is also provided under Article 4(3) of Additional Protocol II.¹⁷ At this point it should be specifically mentioned that the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions were the first international legal documents regulating situations relating to the participation of children in armed conflicts.

Thus, Additional Protocol I explicitly provided for the rule, contained in article 77(2), according to which “the Parties to the conflict shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, the Parties to the conflict shall endeavor to give priority to those who are oldest.”¹⁸

A more categorical wording was included in article 4.3(c) of Additional Protocol II, according to which “children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities.”¹⁹ Children directly involved in armed conflict are entitled to combatant status.²⁰ Under the additional protocols, child combatants under the age of 15 are entitled to more favorable treatment as they continue to enjoy the special protection afforded by international humanitarian law (Additional Protocol I, Art. 77(3); Additional Protocol II, Art. 4.3(d,1)).

Reference can also be made to Convention No. 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (1999), according to which the use of children as soldiers is one of the worst forms of child labor. Thus, Article 3 of

16 International Committee of the Red Cross, “Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts” (Protocol I), Article 77, June 8, 1977, available at: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=8F7D6B2DEE119FBAC12563CD0051E0A2> (accessed: November 25, 2020).

17 International Committee of the Red Cross, “Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), Article 4(3),” June 8, 1977, available at: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=F9CBD575D47CA6C8C12563CD0051E783> (accessed: November 25, 2020)

18 International Committee of the Red Cross, “Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), Article 77(2),” June 8, 1977, available at: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=8F7D6B2DEE119FBAC12563CD0051E0A2> (accessed: November 25, 2020)

19 International Committee of the Red Cross, “Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), Article 4.3 (c),” June 8, 1977, available at: <https://ihldatabases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=F9CBD575D47CA6C8C12563CD0051E783> (accessed: 27 November, 2020).

20 Safarov, N., *op. cit.*

the Convention completely prohibits forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflicts.²¹ Armenia ratified this Convention in 2006 and bound itself by legal obligations to comply with its provisions, which have been blatantly violated by the Armenian political-military leadership.

Special provisions for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict are also included in the previously mentioned Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Optional Protocol to it (2000), dedicated to the involvement of children in armed conflicts. Thus, Article 38 of the Convention explicitly instructs States parties to take “all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities” (Article 38.2) and, in the case of recruitment among those persons “who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavor to give priority to those who are oldest” (Article 38.3).²²

A stricter approach than the Convention is followed by the Optional Protocol, which provides that “States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces who have not attained the age of 18 years do not take a direct part in hostilities.”²³ Furthermore, Article 2 of the Convention obliges state parties to “ensure that persons who have not attained the age of 18 years are not compulsorily recruited into their armed forces.”²⁴ In accordance with Article 4 of the Optional Protocol, “armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years.”²⁵ Moreover, the Protocol binds state parties with the obligation “to take all feasible measures to prevent such recruitment and use, including the adoption of legal measures necessary to prohibit and criminalize such practices.”²⁶

21 International Labor Organization, “Convention (No. 182) concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor, Article 3,” June 17, 1999, available at: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C182 (accessed: November 26, 2020)

22 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 38.3,” November 20, 1989, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (accessed: November 26, 2020)

23 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict,” May 25, 2000, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/opaccrc.aspx> (accessed: November 26, 2020)

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

It should not be overlooked that the prohibition on the participation of children in hostilities that is applied in armed conflicts is established by the practice of states as a rule of customary international law. In his report on the establishment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the UN Secretary General explicitly stated that the provisions of Article 4 of Additional Protocol II have long been considered as norms of customary international law. Moreover, these illegal actions represent a type of war crime that gives rise to international criminal responsibility.

It should not be overlooked that the prohibition on the participation of children in hostilities that is applied in armed conflicts is established by the practice of states as a rule of customary international law.

In this respect, according to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), among the illegal acts that, being grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, constitute war crimes, is “conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities” (Article 8(2)(b)(xxvi)).²⁷

Notably, the first conviction by the ICC, on March 14, 2012, against Congolese militia leader Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, was related to “the war crimes of enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15 years and using them to participate actively in hostilities” in the Democratic Republic of the Congo between July 2002 and December 2003.²⁸

Also worthy of mention is the Charter of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which addressed the issue of war crimes in the recruitment of children under the age of 15 into armed forces or military groups and the use of them to participate actively in armed conflict, illegal acts which represent serious violations of international humanitarian law. The Charter defined these as falling within the criminal jurisdiction of this international tribunal, set up by the government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations.²⁹

One of the most significant cases before the Special Court was the case of the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, who was sentenced on May 30, 2012, to a 50-year-imprisonment sentence for war crimes committed during the 1991–2002 civil war in Sierra Leone. Moreover, the ex-president became the first former head of state since the World

27 International Criminal Court, “Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,” 1998, available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resource-library/documents/rs-eng.pdf> (accessed: November 29, 2020)

28 International Criminal Court, “The Prosecutor v. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, ICC-01/04-01/06,” available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/drc/lubanga> (accessed: November 29, 2020)

29 International Humanitarian Law, “Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone and Statute of the Special Court for Sierra Leone,” January 16, 2002, available at: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/605?OpenDocument> (accessed: November 29, 2020)

War II to be convicted of war crimes, including the enlistment and conscription of children under 15 years of age into armed forces or groups and using them to participate actively in hostilities.³⁰

Legal precedents of this kind should be a strong signal to Armenian war criminals who recruit children as soldiers, since no official status or position in the state or military hierarchy is immune from criminal prosecution, which makes punishment inevitable.

Conclusion

By joining the Geneva legal instruments, Armenia undertook a legal obligation to comply with the Conventions in the fields of human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as their Protocols under any circumstances. However, as analyzed in this article, in practice there was a total violation of the entire set of rules enshrined in international humanitarian law.

Armenia intentionally and systematically targeted Azerbaijani civilians through the delivery of missile and bomb strikes on cities situated outside of the war zone, as well as using prohibited cluster munitions.

Furthermore, recruiting children into the military forces Armenia violates not only the Geneva Conventions but also landmark international human rights treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, as well as Convention No. 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of The Worst Forms of Child Labor.

The world community, which successfully achieved, in its comparatively recent history, a revolutionary shift from impunity to international accountability for international crimes, should today live up to its vow of “never again,” as innocent Azerbaijani people have suffered from the fascist conduct of the Armenian political-military regime. As discussed in this article, the legal precedents of international military tribunals are vivid evidence of the fact that the international community commands sufficient legal mechanisms to hold Armenian criminals accountable for the international crimes committed. In fact, the cost of impunity would be a threat to international peace and security, which mankind seeks to achieve through consideration of the tragic experience of human history.

30 Special Court for Sierra Leone, “The Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor,” available at: <http://www.rscsl.org/Taylor.html> (accessed: November 27, 2020)

Ukrainian Discourse on the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict

Anna Korzeniowska-Bihun*

When the conflict escalated in the Nagorno-Karabakh war zone in September 2020, different opinions emerged in Ukraine on how the clash should be understood and which of its sides Ukraine should support. Most Ukrainian commentators compared the legal situation of the occupied territories belonging to Ukraine to the occupied territories belonging to Azerbaijan. This is why Kyiv officially stands for Baku. Nevertheless, Ukraine's support is limited to a diplomatic declaration only. Apart from the official position, there are also individual voices in Ukraine demanding either Kyiv's greater involvement in helping Azerbaijan or, on the contrary, support for Armenia. The Ukrainian discourse on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict does not have to coincide with the assessments of the parties directly involved in the clash, because the Ukrainians interpret Caucasian events through the lens of the Ukrainian-Russian war. This paper highlights the Ukrainian discourse over the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. The commentary focuses on both the Ukrainian mainstream political declarations and media perceptions of the Armenia-Azerbaijan clashes.

Keywords: Nagorno-Karabakh region, Donbas, Crimea, hybrid war, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine



* **Dr. Anna Korzeniowska-Bihun** is Co-founder and scientific secretary of the Academy of the East - Independent Research Center (Warsaw, Poland).

Introduction

When the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia intensified in September 2020, the world community reacted to it in a rather typical and predictable way. The majority of countries either remained silent or voiced their concerns and appealed for returning to negotiations on the resolution of the conflict. In the latter case, their diplomatic notes were dominated by trite clichés such as “negotiations serve as a warranty

A radical change of political language in Kyiv occurred only after the Russian annexation of the Crimea and the outbreak of the war in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

for peace”, “strengthening confidence”, “mutual understanding”, etc. Nevertheless, several states have stood up for one or another side of the conflict. Ukraine was among them with its open support for Azerbaijan. The Ukrainian position, however, was not so unambiguous in the earlier stages of the conflict. A radical change of political language in Kyiv occurred only after the Russian annexation of the Crimea and

the outbreak of the war in the Donbas region of Ukraine. The reason is apparent: Ukraine has started associating the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan with its own territorial problems.

Onset of support

Going back to the beginning of the 2010s, the formula of Kyiv’s political declaration did not differ much from the ones heard among the international community today, except for some peculiarities. The first mention of Nagorno-Karabakh was registered in an announcement of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of 15 March 2011 in which the Ukrainian MFA recommended that the country’s citizens “*refrain from visiting ... the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan*”.¹ A careful reading shows Ukraine’s attitude towards Nagorno-Karabakh region’s territorial affiliation to Azerbaijan. Such administrative identification of the Nagorno-Karabakh region as within Azerbaijani state borders is presented in Ukraine’s next warnings addressed to its citizens travelling through the Caucasus.² It suffices to compare the Ukrainian documents with, for example,

1 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, “On the security situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan” (translation from Ukrainian), March 15, 2011, Available at: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/291-shhodo-bezpekovoji-situaciji-u-nagirno-karabaskomu-regioni-azerbajdzhanskoji-respubliki> (Accessed: December 16, 2020).

2 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, “Recommendations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Citizens of Ukraine Planning a Trip to Azerbaijan” (translation from Ukrainian), November 1, 2012, available at: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/4-rekomendatsii-mzs-gromadyanam-ukraini-yaki-planuyut-poizdku-do-azerbaydzhan> (accessed: January 9, 2021)

Russian diplomatic notes that contain only general phrases such as “the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict”, “regulations in Nagorno-Karabakh” or “the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast”. The latter is a fragment of consular touristic information addressed to the Russian citizenship. The only connecting link between the Nagorno-Karabakh region and any internationally recognized state is included in the warning: “*It should be taken into account that citizens who have visited the territory of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast and seven adjacent administrative districts without special permission from the Azerbaijani authorities are refused entry to Azerbaijan in the future*”.³ Against this background, the Ukrainian discourse around the Nagorno-Karabakh region seemed beneficial for Azerbaijan, although not directly articulated.

The next interesting diplomatic note, dated 5 June 2012 and concerning potential business contracts between Ukraine and Azerbaijan, mentioned that “*An important issue that was discussed during the talks was the prospects for resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, especially in the context of Ukraine’s chairmanship in the OSCE in 2013*”.⁴ This was a promise that gave clear hope not for a full conflict resolution, but for restoring the problem to its correct international proportions using diplomatic means. Especially since that would happen under the aegis of Ukraine, which remained virtually neutral but was well versed in the relations prevailing in the post-Soviet space. A year later, during the Ukraine’s presidency of the OSCE in December 2013, the Heads of Delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries and the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia issued a Ministerial Statement in which they agreed to continue working together on the peaceful resolution of the conflict.⁵ Ukrainian diplomacy was very satisfied that such a document was approved, but no specific actions followed from this. In spite of the great hopes placed in that statement, it turned out to be another general diplomatic expression that in no way brought the problem closer to a solution. This was a clear sign of Ukraine’s lack of political will to move beyond the *status quo* of the protracted conflicts. However, the Ukrainian authorities were

3 Konsulskiy informatsionniy portal, “Azerbaydzhan,” Available at: https://www.kdmid.ru/docs.aspx?it=/Азербайджан.aspx&lst=country_wiki (accessed: December 13, 2020).

4 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, “Negotiations were held between the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Kostiantyn Hryshchenko and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan E. Mammadyarov” (translation from Ukrainian), June 1, 2012, available at: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/2198-u-ramkah-oficijnogo-vizitu-do-azerbajdzhansykoji-respubliki-ministra-zakordonnih-sprav-ukrajini-kgrishhenka-vidbulisy-peregovori-z-glavuju-zovnishnyopolitichnogo-vidomstva-azerbajdzhansy> (accessed: December 16, 2020).

5 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, “Ministerial Statement,” December 6, 2013, available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/7/109348.pdf> (accessed: December 16, 2020).

undoubtedly more interested in tightening economic cooperation with Azerbaijan than with Armenia.⁶

Nagorno-Karabakh region, Crimea and Donbas

The situation started to change in 2014, when the annexation of the Crimea took place. Since then, declarations supporting Azerbaijan have been heard in Ukrainian political discourse. First and foremost, this was a response to Azerbaijan's support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Simultaneously, Ukraine–Armenia relations have deteriorated. The main reason is that Armenia voted against the resolution of the UN General Assembly that declared the Crimean referendum illegal.⁷

Armenia's vote was, on the one hand, influenced by Ukraine's position of not recognizing the so-called "independence" of the separatist regime established by Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, but considers it as a part of Azerbaijan. On the other hand, it happened because Armenia is interested in maintaining good relations with Russia, which it treats as a guarantee of security (which, in retrospect,

The situation started to change in 2014, when the annexation of the Crimea took place. Since then, declarations supporting Azerbaijan have been heard in Ukrainian political discourse. First and foremost, this was a response to Azerbaijan's support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

seems less obvious). It is also worth recalling that Ukraine denies the so-called "Armenian Genocide". The reasons were clearly explained by the Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Vasyl Bondar, in his letter to Ukrainian state authorities on 26 March 2020. Apart from the argument used so far by Ukraine that the "events that took place in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 do not fit the definition of the term 'genocide' adopted by the UN on December 9, 1948",⁸ Bondar stated that Armenia, as an area of Russian influence, is "constantly voting against resolutions important for Ukraine and did not recognize the Great Famine."^{9,10} Last but not least,

6 Avetisyan, LV, "Genesis and prospects of the development of Armenian-Ukrainian cooperation" (translation from Ukrainian), *Politychne zhytya*, 2016, p. 77.

7 The United Nations, "Territorial integrity of Ukraine: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly," March 27, 2014, available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/767565?ln=en> (accessed: January 10, 2021).

8 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, "On measures to commemorate the tragic events in the Ottoman Empire on April 24, 1915" (translation from Ukrainian), March 26, 2020, available at: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2020/08/6/7112934/> (accessed: December 16, 2020).

9 Great Famine (Ukrainian: Holodomor) – an artificially created famine in Soviet Ukraine in 1932/33 that killed millions of Ukrainians.

10 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, "On measures to commemorate the tragic events in the Ottoman Empire on April 24, 1915" (translation from Ukrainian), op. cit.

Bondar openly admitted that Turkey is a strategic partner of Ukraine, and Kyiv did not intend to raise issues that could affect the dynamic Ukraine–Turkey dialogue.¹¹

Ukraine's choice of realpolitik combines its territorial and strategic interests with those of Azerbaijan.

Ukraine's support for Azerbaijan has caused discontent on the Armenian side. This has manifested, among other signs, in protests in front of the Ukrainian embassy in Yerevan, where demonstrators threw objects at the Ukrainian diplomatic post.¹²

Ukraine's choice of *realpolitik* combines its territorial and strategic interests with those of Azerbaijan. It is sufficient to follow the subsequent statements of the Ukrainian MFA that have appeared in various phases of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict. After the Russian annexation of the Crimea and the beginning of the war in Donbas, all Ukrainian diplomatic notes have repeatedly expressed Ukrainian support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. For example, the Ukrainian MFA's comment, dated 5 April 2016, on the aggravation of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict reads as follows: "*Ukraine supports a sustainable political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, based on full respect of the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders*".¹³ Now, when the conflict has escalated, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, has also emphasized that "*We have consistently supported the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, just as Azerbaijan supported our territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders, and this principle remains unchanged for us*".¹⁴

Moreover, when the Azerbaijani side was outraged because of a TV programme called 15 Republics reporting the unauthorized visit¹⁵ of journalists from the Ukrainian channel 1+1 to the Nagorno-Karabakh

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ukrayinska Pravda, The Embassy of Ukraine in Yerevan was doused with borscht because of the statement of the Foreign Ministry on the conflict with Azerbaijan (translation from Ukrainian), July 15, 2020, available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2020/07/15/7259463/> (accessed: December 26, 2020).

¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, "Comment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine in connection with the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (translation from Ukrainian), April 5, 2016, available at: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/5440-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-ukraine-comment-on-the-aggravation-of-nagorno-karabakh-conflict> (accessed: December 16, 2020).

¹⁴ Ukrinform, Kuleba voices Ukraine's position on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, September 30, 2020, available at: <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-polytics/3109149-kuleba-voices-ukraines-position-on-nagornokarabakh-conflict.html> (accessed: December 16, 2020).

¹⁵ The programme was broadcast on November 23, 2014. There is no information on when the journalists violated the Azerbaijani law. Judging by the season of year shown in the video, it was summer 2014.

region of Azerbaijan without the necessary permissions from Baku, the Ukrainian embassy in Baku immediately expressed regret over the Ukrainian citizens' behaviour and emphasized the unchanging position of the Ukrainian government, saying:

*Officially Kyiv has always supported and will continue to support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders. Therefore, this video should be considered a personal vision of the situation of individual journalists of a Ukrainian television channel.*¹⁶

Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelensky, announced that Ukraine would not provide military assistance to any country.¹⁷ In this way, he ended all speculation triggered by a member of parliament (MP) for his party, Lyudmila Marchenko. During her interview with the Ukrayina 24 television channel, she spread information that Ukraine was ready to assist Azerbaijan both in humanitarian and military terms.¹⁸ Her statement also met with a strong reaction from Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba. Nonetheless, the Ukrainian foreign minister seemed more concerned about the responses of the Azerbaijani and Armenian minorities in Ukraine than about the international repercussions.¹⁹ Ukraine, which is in a state of hybrid war with the Russian Federation and understands Russian mechanisms of playing out ethnic conflicts, is trying not to upset the internal balance of power. Marchenko very quickly retracted her statement, arguing that it had been misunderstood by a journalist.²⁰

16 Embassy of Ukraine in the Republic of Azerbaijan, "Comment of the Embassy on the situation around the program '15 republics' of the Ukrainian TV channel '1+1'" (translation from Ukrainian), November 27, 2014, available at: <https://azerbaijan.mfa.gov.ua/news/3239-komentar-posolystva-shhodo-situaciji-navkolo-programi-15-respublik-ukrajinsykogo-telekanalu-11> (accessed: December 23, 2020).

17 Espresso, "This authority does not apply to any deputy": Zelensky on the idea of 'servant' Marchenko to supply weapons to Azerbaijan (translation from Ukrainian), October 3, 2020, available at: https://espresso.tv/news/2020/10/02/quotce_povnovazhennya_ne_stosuyetsya_bud_yakogo_deputataquot_zelenskyy_pro_ideyu_quotslugyquot_marchenko_postachaty_zbroju_azerbaydzhan (accessed: January 13, 2020).

18 Kolomyjec, V., "The deputy of the 'servant' says that Ukraine will support Azerbaijan militarily if necessary. Avakov offers to look for medicine for her" (translation from Ukrainian), *Hromadske*, October 2, 2020, available at: <https://hromadske.ua/posts/deputatka-marchenko-zayavila-sho-ukrayina-za-potrebi-vijskovo-pidtrimaye-azerbajdzhan-avakov-zaperechuye> (accessed: January 13, 2020).

19 Ukrinform, *Kuleba urges deputies not to play with people's emotions with statements about military aid* (translation from Ukrainian), October 2, 2020, available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/3110723-kuleba-zaklikae-deputativ-ne-gratasa-z-emociami-ludej-zaavami-pro-vijskovu-dopomogu.html> (accessed: January 13, 2020).

20 Ludmyla Marchenko, Facebook, November 2, 2020, available at: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3395024333910644&id=100002093322118 (accessed: January 13, 2020).

Similarities and differences of the conflict's nature in the Ukrainian discourse

Ukrainian politicians and political commentators recognize the foremost similarities between the Ukrainian and Azerbaijani legal situations of their occupied territories. For Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelensky, the problem has another important dimension. In his opinion, the example of the "Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" shows that "*there are no frozen conflicts, [that] they can be frozen only for a certain time [and] each frozen conflict opens up the risk of both diversion and provocation*".²¹ Thus, Ukraine's Donbas region may become such an inflammatory focal point from the perspective of dozen or so years hence. The fights for this area have been going on for over six years, that is, longer than World War II in Europe. "Hot" Donbas is bleeding Ukraine slowly out, but frozen Donbas will become a time bomb that will block Ukraine's entry into the European Union, not to mention its accession to NATO. It is obvious that the possibility of expanding NATO to Ukraine is one of the reasons for the Russian aggression in Donbas. Moreover, it will always be a field of manipulation and a tool of pressure for the Russian Federation. This is why such situations "should be solved quickly", as the president said.²²

Ukrainian politicians and political commentators recognize the foremost similarities between the Ukrainian and Azerbaijani legal situations of their occupied territories.

However, this is where parallels between Ukraine's and Azerbaijan's attitudes toward their occupied territories end. Ukraine did not even manage to introduce restrictions on entry to the Crimea, unlike Azerbaijan, which urged foreigners against entering the occupied territories without prior authorization from Baku.²³ There are also clear voices in the Ukrainian media that believe that the two conflicts cannot be compared. In this context, Yuriy Panchenko and Serhiy Sydorenko, in their articles published in *Yevropeyska pravda*,²⁴ argued for two fundamental differences that make it impossible to establish a common denominator between the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict and the Russia-occupied territories in Ukraine. The first is the historical background; Panchenko

21 Office of the President of Ukraine, "The President of Ukraine communicates with the media of Bukovina" (translation from Ukrainian), Facebook, Facebook video, November 2, 2020, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/296958677115673/videos/329201118170684/> (accessed: December 25, 2020).

22 Ibid.

23 Azar, I., "Andrey Deshchitsa: Nashi voyska gotovy otrazhat voyennoye napadeniye", *Radio Ekho Moskvy*, April 7, 2014, available at: https://echo.msk.ru/blog/azar_i/1295112-echo/ (Accessed: December 24, 2020)

24 Panchenko, Yu., Sidorenko, S., "Karabakh, unlike Donbass: 8 answers to questions about a new war in the Caucasus" (translation from Ukrainian), *Yevropeyska pravda*, October 1, 2020, Available at: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2020/10/1/7114911/> (Accessed: December 26, 2020)

and Sydorenko define the conflict in Donbas and Crimea as “artificial”, in contrast to the Armenia–Azerbaijan clash, which, in their opinion, has been motivated by historical and ethnic reasons. It is hard to resist the impression that the authors overlook the consequences of Stalinist policies, in particular the Great Famine (1932–1933) and the deportation of the Crimean Tatars (1944), that changed the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic structure of the eastern and southern Ukrainian regions, thereby greatly facilitating Russia’s current hybrid attack. Second, and most significant for them, is their conviction that every change of power in the Nagorno-Karabakh region leads to ethnic tensions, which is impossible in Ukraine, even when it recovers its lost territories.²⁵

Clash of civilizations?

After the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict escalated, the first association that came to the analysts’ attention was Samuel P. Huntington’s theory of the “clash of civilizations”.²⁶ The commentators immediately split into two groups. The first defined the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict according to Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” paradigm; the second group believes that the cultural factor is not dominant and that political decisions are based solely on economic motives (so-called *realpolitik*). As Huntington himself admits, “religious beliefs shape identity. Still, they do not determine national interests, much less state behavior”.²⁷

Ukraine has chosen the path of realpolitik, at least in its official discourse, owing to its geopolitical conditions.

Ukraine has chosen the path of *realpolitik*, at least in its official discourse, owing to its geopolitical conditions. However, this does not mean that there are no dissenting opinions in the Ukrainian public sphere. In October 2020, the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Kyiv expressed outrage at Ukrainian MP Ilya Kyva’s statement calling for a support towards Armenia as a Christian country, seeing the “millennial standoff between the Christian and Muslim world” in the Azerbaijan–Armenia clash.²⁸ Kyva, in turn, commented on the Embassy’s protest, claiming that “Muslims are

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Rahimov, R, “Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict: Clash of Civilizations?”, *The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 17 Issue: 142, October 13, 2020, Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/armenian-azerbaijani-conflict-clash-of-civilizations/> (Accessed: December 27, 2020).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “Kiva causes outrage in Azerbaijan by calling for support for Armenia in ‘confrontation with the Muslim world’”, *Religious Information Service of Ukraine*, November 8, 2020, Available at: https://risu.ua/en/kiva-causes-outrage-in-azerbaijan-by-calling-for-support-for-armenia-in-confrontation-with-the-muslim-world_n112499, (Accessed: December 29, 2020)

against Christians calling to protect Christians!”.²⁹ Kyva’s statement impacted not so much on Ukraine–Azerbaijan diplomatic relations, but on internal affairs in Ukraine itself.

Kyva is a member of a pro-Russian party, “Opposition Platform – For Live”, that supports the so-called *Russkiy Mir* (Russian world), that is, Russian political doctrine being imposed on Ukraine by force, which has resulted in, among other events, a hybrid war against Ukraine. *Russkiy Mir*’s idea is to unite the East Slavic world under the aegis of the Kremlin and the Orthodox religious order, represented by Moscow as the “third Rome”. A public opinion polling centre in Ukraine, the Razumkov Center, has announced that there are more representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) in the “Opposition Platform – For Live” than in any other Ukrainian political party.³⁰ This is why we can hypothesize that Kyva’s “crusade” aims to unite the Orthodox world, rather than the general Christian one. Moreover, this process is taking place under the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchy, an ideological arm of the Kremlin and an executor of its political will.

The second issue that cannot be forgotten in Kyva’s anti-Muslim speech is the problem of the Crimean Tatars. After the annexation of Crimea, they are the biggest Ukrainian allies and the only chance for Ukraine to recover Crimea using political and diplomatic means. At the same time, they are the ethnic group most persecuted by the Russians because they refused to cooperate with the Russian authorities. Putin’s supporters began to actively use the “Islamic” issue against the Tatars, accusing them of being “extremists”, “separatists”, and “terrorists”.³¹ Under these circumstances, Kyva’s appeal for “Christian unity” and “the holy war against Islam” can also be interpreted in Ukraine as a blow against the Crimean Tatars and, through them, Ukraine itself.

The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict: Conclusions for Ukraine

Ukraine is very closely following the events of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict. The decisions that will be made in Kyiv may depend on the

29 5.ua, *Azerbaijani embassy reacts to Kyva’s scandalous statement about Nagorno Karabakh* (translation from Ukrainian), November 8, 2020. Available at: <https://www.5.ua/polityka/u-posolstvi-azerbaidzhanu-vidreahuvally-na-skandalnu-zaiavu-kivy-shchodo-nahirnogo-karabakhu-225990.html>, (Accessed: December 29, 2020)

30 Ukrainian religious life is characterized by great pluralism. About 35,000 religious organizations are registered in Ukraine (Institute for Religious Freedom 2020), of which the most numerous are: Orthodox Church of Ukraine (34.0%), Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) (13.8%), and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (8.2%) (Tsentr Razumkova 2020).

31 Werleman CJ, “How Russia is trying to erase Tatar Muslims,” *Middle East Eye*, September 2, 2018, available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/how-russia-trying-erase-tatar-muslims> (accessed: December 29, 2020).

solutions used in the Caucasus. The Ukrainian media primarily draws attention to the fact that the only effective action to recover occupied territories is the military variant. Azerbaijan has been preparing for that for a long time. This proves that diplomatic ways of resolving border conflicts have lost their *raison d'être* in the current geopolitical conditions.

Moreover, the events revealed the total powerlessness of the OSCE Minsk Group, which is also engaged in the mediation of the conflict in Ukraine. *“After decades of diplomatic deadlock, military force proved decisive in a matter of weeks”*, writes Taras Kuzio, a British expert in Ukrainian affairs.³² It is enough to recall that, according to the Minsk agreements, the eastern Ukrainian city of Debaltsevo should have been returned to Kyiv’s control in 2015, but remains occupied by so-called “pro-Russian separatists”.

the events revealed the total powerlessness of the OSCE Minsk Group, which is also engaged in the mediation of the conflict in Ukraine.

The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict has also shown that a country at war, in order to win, needs a credible ally. After the annexation of Crimea, Ukrainian public opinion strongly criticized the “Budapest Memorandum” of 5 December 1994. The security assurances provided by its signatories turned out to be worth less than the paper they were written on. Two parties to the Memorandum, the United States of America and the United Kingdom, were not interested in fulfilling their obligations. The third, Russia, has become the aggressor. In the case of the Armenia–Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) conflict, Azerbaijan has found an ally that is directly involved in the region’s geopolitical arrangements and has the ambition to become a significant

The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict has also shown that a country at war, in order to win, needs a credible ally.

player. In Taras Kuzio’s opinion, Azerbaijan’s victory was determined by Turkey, *“which was a major factor in deterring Russia from direct or indirect intervention in support of Armenia”*. This fact is more important than it seems. It turns out that Armenia, which is allied with Russia, cannot rely on Moscow. This is a terrible signal for the leaders of the self-proclaimed “republics” in eastern Ukraine, who can see that Russia does not have to be the guarantor of their position and that it can withdraw its support at any time. Especially since the Kremlin officially denies that its troops are participating in the conflict in Donbas region. This is why Kyiv should follow the example of Azerbaijan and look for a similar solution.

32 Kuzio, T., “Ukraine can learn from Azerbaijan’s recent victory,” *Atlantic Council*, November 17, 2020, available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraine-can-learn-from-azerbajjans-recent-victory/> (accessed: December 30, 2020).

Kuzio emphasizes that “*Ukraine and Turkey are in many ways natural allies. The two Black Sea neighbors have no significant geopolitical differences of opinion and share a common interest in reducing Russia’s regional influence*”.³³

Finally, a fundamental lesson that should be learned, and not by Ukraine alone, is that Russia will not miss any opportunity to deploy its troops into regions it considers to be in its sphere of influence. In the case of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, the Kremlin did so in the form of “peacekeeping missions”—which sounds like an oxymoron to Ukrainians. Ukrainian commentator Vitaly Portnikov writes that:

*Ukraine must look closely at what is happening in the Caucasus today, because the Kremlin will try to impose the same option on Ukraine, namely “direct negotiations” with Moscow’s puppets in the “DNR/LNR” [although Azerbaijan has never been involved in “direct negotiations” with the separatist regime in the Nagorno-Karabakh region—Author] and the deployment of Russian “peacekeepers” in the Donbas. Or—a new war and again, more Russian “peacekeepers”.*³⁴

In Portnikov’s opinion, Russia used this tactic in Georgia (with Abkhazia) and in Moldova (with Transnistria) and now it is the turn of Armenia and Azerbaijan, where the Russian authorities have once again shown that they are incomparable in managing the chaos that they themselves cause (Portnikov considers Russian politics to be the source of this conflict).³⁵

Conclusion

The perception of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict in Ukraine is influenced by Ukraine’s own experience, shaped by the Russian annexation of Crimea and the warfare in Donbas. This is the prism through which Ukrainian commentators and political analysts observe the recent developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Portnikov, V., “Putin as ‘peacemaker’ in Karabakh is a warning signal for Ukraine,” *Euromaidan Press*, November 10, 2020, available at: <http://euromaidanpress.com/2020/11/10/vitaly-portnikov-putin-as-peacemaker-in-karabakh-is-a-warning-signal-for-ukraine/> (accessed: December 30, 2020).

³⁵ “Vitaliy Portnikov o konflikte v Nagornom Karabakhe: ‘Turtsiya zdes’ ne igrok’”, *After Empire*, Youtube video, November 12, 2020, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaSIBsZwXAo&t=45s&> (accessed: December 30, 2020).

The escalation of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict acts like litmus paper in Ukraine, revealing not so much the divergence of opinions regarding Ukrainian foreign policy as the country’s internal political divisions, in which Ukrainian–Russian relations are always the “zero meridian”.

Ukraine, searching for a way to solve its own problems, is carefully observing the warfare in the South Caucasus. The conclusions drawn by the Ukrainian politicians and commentators come down to four issues: (1) Ukraine supports the international legal order and stands for Azerbaijan’s right to its territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. This position is the result of Ukraine’s own territorial losses. (2) Ukraine appreciates the efficacy of Azerbaijan’s military activities. This attitude was triggered by growing disillusionment with diplomatic methods of solving problems relating to the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine. (3) Ukraine is watching with concern the Russian peacekeeping mission in the Nagorno–Karabakh region, as there are opinions in Ukraine that the presence of the Russian army is aimed solely at strengthening Russian military power in the post-Soviet arena. (4) Ukrainian support for Azerbaijan does not go beyond the symbolic and diplomatic spheres owing to the internal and external political circumstances in which Ukraine is involved.

International Response to the Second Karabakh War

Nina Miholjic*

The dynamics of power in the South Caucasus has recently been changed. The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict has revealed a broader regional power struggle for influence in the South Caucasus. International responses to the Armenia–Azerbaijan war have varied from strong Turkish political support to the Azerbaijani side and gradually intensifying Russian intervention to a somewhat weak and neutral Western stance. While Turkey has gained a foothold in the region, Russia has also taken on a new, responsible role as a regional peacekeeper, which has reaffirmed Moscow’s presence in its sphere of influence. Western neutrality and disinterest in the South Caucasus’s affairs have opened a space for the prospects of future cooperation between Russia and Turkey and a better balancing of their possible disagreements. It is important to analyze the activities of foreign actors in local territorial disputes, because foreign actions can change or influence the course of conflicts and reveal a wider struggle for power. The Second Karabakh War has changed the balance of power in the South Caucasus. Turkey has become a more important foreign stakeholder in the region. Russian presence, although counterpoised by Turkey’s support to Azerbaijan, has remained strong in the South Caucasus, while the West has experienced a significant weakening of its influence in this region.

Keywords: International response, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan, dynamics of power, Turkey–Russia relations.



* **Nina Miholjic** is IR specialist with a strong focus on strategic analysis of the foreign policies of the South Caucasus, Russia, and Central Asia. Ms. Miholjic completed her undergraduate studies in Political Science at the University of Belgrade in Serbia, and holds a Master’s degree in Diplomacy and International Affairs from ADA University in Azerbaijan.

Introduction

The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict has taken a serious and violent turn recently. This was the first time in 26 years, except for several military skirmishes along the Line of Contact (LoC),¹ that the conflict had been unfrozen. The war between Armenia and Azerbaijan suddenly erupted on 27 September, proving once again that it cannot be defined as a “frozen conflict” but has remained in an active condition of hostility between two states, where Armenia sought recognition for the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan while Azerbaijan aimed to restore its territorial integrity from Armenian occupation. From an international politics perspective, the clash between Armenia and Azerbaijan is not simply a “territorial dispute” between the two ex-Soviet republics, but a conflict that reveals a broader regional power struggle for influence in the South Caucasus.² It is important to discuss the foreign policies of regional as well as global actors that can play an important role in the development of local disputes. Foreign diplomatic and military (non-)support may directly affect the involved sides, especially when international inertia has been adding to the already tense relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. More precisely, the reluctance of the leading members of the OSCE Minsk Group to be more proactive in resolving the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict had contributed to accumulated impatience among Azerbaijanis, who wanted to see their occupied territories liberated and celebrated within internationally recognized borders. The newly elected Armenian government became very nationalistic and populist oriented and made bold statements regarding the resolution of the conflict prior to the

International political inertia was just adding to already tense relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

war. Official Armenian hard-line political rhetoric that called for the “unification” of Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan as well as the plan to make Shusha a new “capital of Nagorno-Karabakh” and building a new road from Armenia to the occupied Jabrayil³ district of Azerbaijan were

1 In 2016, there was a short episode of military clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan along the line of contact (separating military forces of both countries in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone) that resulted in minor territorial restoration for the Azerbaijani side. This conflict is referred to as the “Four-Day War”. Again, in mid-July 2020 a short outbreak of hostilities occurred in northwest Azerbaijan, but such skirmishes did not catch international attention as has the current full range war that has already caused serious military and civilian casualties on both sides.

2 Nikolova, M., “Nagorno-Karabakh is a territorial, not sectarian, conflict,” *Emerging Europe*, October 9, 2020, available at: <https://emerging-europe.com/news/nagorno-karabakh-is-a-territorial-not-sectarian-conflict/> (accessed: November 7, 2020).

3 Babayev, A., “Nagorno-Karabakh: Why did the Second Armenia-Azerbaijan War Start?” *Leibniz Institute Hessian Foundation for Peace and Conflict Research*, November 5, 2020, available at: <https://blog.prif.org/2020/11/05/nagorno-karabakh-why-the-second-armenia-azerbaijan-war-started> (accessed: December 20, 2020).

perceived as serious provocations that caused tensions to flare up and led to the Second Karabakh War. International political inertia was just adding to already tense relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In every military conflict, alliances and foreign support can have a significant effect on opposing parties and the outcomes of military clashes. That is why analysis of international responses to local conflicts must be considered when discussing seemingly insignificant consequences of disputes between smaller states in the context of world politics and affairs. Back in 1994, a provisional ceasefire agreement that was signed in Bishkek by representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Russian Federation, which represented the OSCE Minsk Group, managed to maintain relative stability for more than two decades. This document aimed to prepare the ground for the withdrawal of troops from Azerbaijan's occupied territories and the return of refugees, but not to prolong the military status quo through unconstructive engagement. However, the Bishkek Protocol did not bring any permanent solution and it did not succeed in establishing a long-lasting, sustainable peace accord between the two South Caucasian neighboring states, but merely postponed another bloody conflict. Over the past two and a half decades, Azerbaijan's frustration increased to the point where it could no longer wait for international actors to finally break the status quo and allow Azerbaijan to fully enjoy its internationally recognized territorial integrity that includes the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

The Second Karabakh War ended with Azerbaijan's victory and the retrieval of many strategically important parts of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and all surrounding districts. The strong political support that Azerbaijan was receiving from Turkey throughout the recent conflict buttressed Azerbaijan's intentions and morale. On the other hand, Russia's initial weak reaction to conflict resolution showed that Azerbaijan's northern neighbor was more interested in preserving the status quo in the region. Some argue that the Kremlin, by not supporting the Armenian side during the recent war, wanted to punish the new Prime Minister of Armenia, who came to power through popular street protests but without open Russian support. Moreover, some analysts have interpreted Russian inertia as a sign of Russia's weakening influence in the South Caucasus. It should also be taken into account that the conflict was happening in the midst of a coronavirus pandemic and the U.S. elections, thus

Some argue that the Kremlin, by not supporting the Armenian side during the recent war, wanted to punish the new Prime Minister of Armenia, who came to power through popular street protests but without open Russian support.

global and regional powers were preoccupied with their own internal affairs. This conflict has also brought a new regional power (Turkey) to the region. Turkey has proved that it wants to actively participate in regional affairs, thus somehow questioning Russia's traditional role as the major power in the South Caucasus. Although a Russian-brokered deal has stopped the bloody clashes in the Nagorno-Karabakh war zone, there are still concerns that the region might slip into another conflict if all involved and engaged sides do not continue fostering peaceful negotiations in order to maintain the newly achieved arrangements.⁴ It is necessary that Azerbaijan and Armenia, together with interested foreign stakeholders, work to ensure that this newly brokered ceasefire leads to a clear and sustainable peace.

An analysis of the international response to the recent Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict has revealed a new dynamic of power in the South Caucasus. Turkey has increased its political visibility in the region and, together with Russia, will probably be more engaged with future regional affairs. On the other hand, the war saw a weak Western response and questioned the purpose and effectiveness of the OSCE Minsk Group's mediation activities.

The Role of the OSCE Minsk Group

The OSCE Minsk Group was officially established in 1994 at the OSCE Budapest Summit with the sole purpose of finding a viable political solution to the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict.⁵ The Group is co-chaired by France, the Russian Federation, and the United States but also includes Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, and Turkey, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan, as its permanent member states.⁶ Over the years, the Minsk Group has been trying to find the most appropriate agreement that would bring a permanent solution to the bloody hostilities and regional instability in the South Caucasus. For instance, the Joint Statement proposed by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries in 2009, was an updated version of the Basic Principles from the Madrid Document of November 2007 that aimed to bring a final resolution of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict.⁷

4 International Crisis Group, "Getting from Ceasefire to Peace in Nagorno-Karabakh," November 10, 2020, available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/nagorno-karabakh-conflict/getting-ceasefire-peace-nagorno-karabakh> (accessed: November 25, 2020).

5 OSCE, "Osce Minsk Group", available at: <https://www.osce.org/mg> (accessed: November 7, 2020).

6 OSCE, "Who we are," Available at: <https://www.osce.org/minsk-group/108306> (accessed: November 8, 2020).

7 According to the Joint Statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries from 2009, "the Basic Principles call for inter alia: return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control; an interim status

Even though the Basic Principles called for the return of the occupied districts surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh region to Azerbaijani control, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the deployment of peacekeeping forces, they still have not succeeded in realizing any of the suggested actions. The Minsk Group's activities have failed to bring to the table a comprehensive solution to the crisis and have constantly been encountering negotiation deadlocks. Some argue that the co-chairs of the Minsk Group are divided and biased, and thus unable to come to a final resolution. France has openly supported the Armenian side, Russia has been interested in securing the status quo, while the U.S.A. has not been showing particular interest in resolving the issue.⁸ Moreover, the OSCE might be limited in its activities as it is an intergovernmental organization with no supranational powers that requires absolute unanimity when deciding on important issues.⁹ Such ineffective diplomacy has brought more frustration to the Azerbaijani side and has been one of the culprits for the recurring fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan.¹⁰ The mediation process under Minsk Group might have arranged a partial ceasefire, but it has not ensured a long-lasting solution or prevented a resurrection of the conflict over the past three decades.

The role of the Minsk Group during the Second Karabakh War was once again negligible. Besides statements and calls for a ceasefire and peace, the Group did not bring any innovative approach or manage to bring a long-lasting solution to the conflict.

The Minsk Group's activities have failed to bring to the table a comprehensive solution to the crisis and have constantly been encountering negotiation deadlocks.

The role of the Minsk Group during the Second Karabakh War was once again negligible. Besides statements and calls for a ceasefire and peace, the Group did not bring any innovative approach or manage to bring a long-lasting solution to the conflict.

for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance; a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh; future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will; the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence; and international security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation." OSCE, "Statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries," July 10, 2009, available at: <https://www.osce.org/mg/51152> (accessed: November 8, 2020).

8 Sofuoglu, M., "Why the Minsk Group is unable to address the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict," *TRT World*, October 5, 2020, available at: <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/why-the-minsk-group-is-unable-to-address-the-azerbaijan-armenia-conflict-40306> (accessed: December 20, 2020).

9 Garibov, A., "Why the OSCE Keeps Failing to Make Peace in Nagorno-Karabakh," *The National Interest*, May 11, 2016, available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/why-the-osce-keeps-failing-make-peace-nagorno-karabakh-16161> (accessed: December 20, 2020).

10 Diab, A., "The Resumption of Conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh: Geopolitical Dimensions and Likely Scenarios," *The Emirates Policy Center* (EPC), October 4, 2020, available at: <https://epc.ae/whatif-details/34/the-resumption-of-conflict-between-azerbaijan-and-armenia-over-nagorno-karabakh-geopolitical-dimensions-and-likely-scenarios> (accessed: November 8, 2020).

The last statement leading to complete ceasefire that was signed by the presidents of Azerbaijan and Russia and Armenia's prime minister basically bypassed the Minsk Group from involvement in drafting or confirming the newly settled arrangements.

There were three failed attempts¹¹ to broker peace in the region but during that time the activity of the Group remained limited to issuing an official statement urging both sides to cease hostilities immediately and resume peaceful negotiations. Turkey also expressed strong criticism of the poor performance of the Minsk Group in the recent conflict. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that the co-chairs of the Minsk Group were stalling in dealing with the conflict.¹² The last statement leading to complete ceasefire that was signed by the presidents of Azerbaijan and Russia and Armenia's prime minister basically bypassed the Minsk Group from involvement in drafting or confirming the newly settled arrangements. However, Turkey has been publicly welcomed to participate in the peacekeeping process by Azerbaijan's president.¹³ Considering the current situation, the future of the Minsk Group is unpredictable, especially if the Group continues with a rather bland approach to solving the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Russia as a Peacekeeper

The deal arranged by Moscow has ended six weeks of intense fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, the region is still vulnerable and without a clear and stable peace.¹⁴ The signed trilateral statement excluded the Minsk Group and largely excluded the Western powers from future peace negotiations. A full ceasefire that came into effect as of midnight on November 10 includes important provisions that ensured the retrieval of several strategically significant territorial parts of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and all surrounding districts to Azerbaijan, a phased withdrawal of Armenian military forces from Azerbaijan's internationally recognized occupied territories, as well as the deployment of 1960 armed Russian peacekeepers in certain areas of the Nagorno-Karabakh region where ethnic Armenians were settled.¹⁵ The deal was

11 During the six-week long bloody conflict, France, the United States and Russia attempted to broker three separate ceasefires that failed as Armenia and Azerbaijan accused the other side of violations.

12 Butler, D., "Turkey's Erdogan says Minsk group stalling on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," *Reuters*, October 14, 2020, available at: <https://ca.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN26Z1P8> (accessed: November 24, 2020).

13 BBC, *Nagorno-Karabakh: Russia deploys peacekeeping troops to region*, November 10, 2020, available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/world-europe-54885906> (accessed: November 24, 2020).

14 "Getting from Ceasefire to Peace in Nagorno-Karabakh," op. cit.

15 "The agreement's other provisions, also now being implemented, include a phased withdrawal of the Armenian military from territory outside its internationally recognized borders. This territory includes Nagorno-Karabakh

signed almost immediately after Azerbaijan's forces had taken the key city of Shusha, which is the second-biggest city in the enclave.¹⁶ Indeed, Azerbaijan waited for almost three decades to retake what was within its internationally recognized borders. With strong support from Turkey, Azerbaijan was ready to continue all the way in reclaiming all of its occupied territories.

After facing inevitable defeat in the Second Karabakh War, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan called for help from Russia, the traditional Armenian ally, to intervene as a peacekeeper. The South Caucasus is still considered part of Russia's sphere of interest and Moscow has retained good relations with both southern neighbors, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russia has a military alliance with Armenia and a military base in the Armenian town of Gyumri, but it is also interested in maintaining close ties with Azerbaijan. One explanation for the initial weak Russian response to the recent military clashes in its sphere of interest is that Moscow did not want to take sides and disturb the status quo in a region that was bringing more leverage to this regional hegemon. During previous serious military hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russia continued to sell weapons to both countries.¹⁷ Even though this might define Russian foreign policy as unprincipled, the continuation of hostilities in the neighborhood can be turned into lucrative business.

Russia has been closely observing the dynamics of power in the South Caucasus. The Kremlin is well aware that Azerbaijan has become a strong, independent country with much more resources and power, especially military, compared with Armenia. Encouraged by a massive influx of energy revenues, Azerbaijan's defense budget has increased immensely and it is currently three times the size of Armenia's, which has undoubtedly shifted the balance of power in favor of Azerbaijan.¹⁸

One explanation for the initial weak Russian response to the recent military clashes in its sphere of interest is that Moscow did not want to take sides and disturb the status quo in a region that was bringing more leverage to this regional hegemon.

itself, but also Lachin, Kelbajar and Aghdam, the three adjacent areas where Armenians still held land. Some 2,000 Russian armed peacekeepers are deploying to Nagorno-Karabakh, excepting those areas of the enclave under Azerbaijani control. A corridor, patrolled by Russian peacekeepers, will connect Armenia to Stepanakert. Russian border police will also secure a new transit route between Azerbaijan and its exclave of Nakhichevan, through Armenian territory. The Russian mission is envisioned as a series of self-renewing five-year terms; renewal will not occur if any party so notifies six months prior to a scheduled extension," *ibid.*, op. cit.

16 AlJazeera, *Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia sign deal to end Nagorno-Karabakh war*, November 9, 2020, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/9/armenia-pm-says-signed-painful-deal-to-end-nagorno-karabakh-war> (accessed: November 25, 2020).

17 Mirovalev, M., "What role is Russia playing in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?," *Al Jazeera*, October 19, 2020, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/19/is-russia-reduced-to-a-secondary-role-in-nagorno-karabakh> (accessed: November 25, 2020).

18 Gabuev, A., "Viewpoint: Russia and Turkey - unlikely victors of Karabakh conflict," *BBC*, November 12, 2020, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54903869> (accessed: November 26, 2020).

Russia has been closely observing the dynamics of power in the South Caucasus. The Kremlin is well aware that Azerbaijan has become a strong, independent country with much more resources and power, especially military, compared with Armenia.

The newly elected Armenian government showed a high level of inflexibility and intransigence in the conflict negotiations.¹⁹ Since then, the Kremlin has been closely observing developments in Armenian domestic politics, which has become increasingly populist with a strong irredentist background. Russia's postponement of more intense diplomatic activity toward the recent clashes in the region might be a result of Moscow's distrust of and irritation towards the outsider Armenian prime minister, who has not been accepted as loyal and trustworthy in elite

Russian political circles.

Russian political inertia is also seen as a sign of Russia's weakening influence in the South Caucasus. Turkey entered the traditional Russian sphere of influence the moment it decided to give strong political support to the Azerbaijani side in the recent fighting. Such a bold move by Turkey has shown that Russia has lost a bit of its hegemonic power over the Caucasus. As Philip Remler points out, "Russian interests themselves are not yet seriously threatened, but expansion of those interests has been blunted."²⁰ Still, Russia has benefited from the peace deal since it was the only foreign signatory of the ceasefire that placed Russian troops as the only peacekeepers responsible for monitoring the implementation of the agreement.²¹ Even though Russian soldiers are accustomed to peacekeeping missions, especially in neighboring countries, their presence in eastern Ukraine, the Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria has been such that a newly assigned role as an unbiased peacekeeper is something that Russia might not be prepared for.²² However, Russia, through this new role, has to again win over both sides and work more on its regional diplomatic strategy in order to maintain stability, prevent future clashes, and, of course, boost its leverage in the region.

19 Popescu, N., "A captive ally: Why Russia isn't rushing to Armenia's aid," *European Council of Foreign Relations*, October 8, 2020, available at: https://ecfr.eu/article/a_captive_ally_why_russia_isnt_rushing_to_armenias_aid/ (accessed: December 21, 2020).

20 Remler, P., "Russia's Stony Path in the South Caucasus," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, October 20, 2020, available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/10/20/russia-s-stony-path-in-south-caucasus-pub-82993> (accessed: November 27, 2020).

21 Gabuev, op. cit.

22 Foy, H., "Russia faces peacekeeping challenge in Nagorno-Karabakh," *Financial Times*, November 18, 2020, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/ecb89877-6fd8-44b1-bfb1-2c3276967696> (accessed: November 27, 2020).

A New Player in the Region

The recently signed ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan has introduced a new balance of power in the Caucasus.²³ Moscow and Ankara shared interests and actively participated in the resolution of the recent clash between the two ex-Soviet republics. Azerbaijan came out as an unquestioned victor from the Second Karabakh War and restored its territorial integrity and earned geostrategic gains from the conflict. Apparently, Russia is no longer the major foreign actor in the region. With active Turkish political support, Azerbaijan has managed to successfully use its military endeavors in the occupied areas and reshape the regional balance of power. The Azerbaijani defense minister openly praised Azerbaijani–Turkish friendship during a meeting with his Turkish counterpart.²⁴ Such behavior from Azerbaijani officials has clearly shown that Baku has started exercising a new approach in regional relations, thereby leaving more space for other foreign powers, besides Russia, to participate in the realization of Azerbaijan’s geopolitical goals.

With active Turkish political support, Azerbaijan has managed to successfully use its military endeavors in the occupied areas and reshape the regional balance of power.

Undoubtedly, Turkish foreign policy has become very assertive and competitive. Turkey has been seeking ways to expand its regional role and influence. In order to ensure the security of its borders and close vicinity, the country is currently military present in Libya, Syria, and Iraq; this is the first time since the establishment of the modern republic in 1923 that Turkish forces have been engaged with so many regional conflicts.²⁵ Turkey has also been active in the eastern Mediterranean, a region where France wants to establish itself as a major actor, which has provoked strong tensions.²⁶ Turkey has been the most vocal critic of the Minsk Group because of its ineffective mediation of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. France, after Turkey’s active political support to Azerbaijan, at the expense of losing its impartiality as an OSCE Minsk Group co-chair, voiced a position favoring Armenia’s stance during the war. On the other hand, France has asked for international supervision of the conflict²⁷ in order to compensate for the damaged reputation of the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Turkey’s increasingly assertive foreign policy,” *Strategic Comments*, 26:6, iv-vi, September 30, 2020, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13567888.2020.1830557> (accessed: November 26, 2020).

²⁶ Zhigao, H., “France-Turkey disputes roiling European and Mediterranean affairs,” *Global Times*, October 28, 2020, available at: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1204992.shtml> (accessed: November 27, 2020).

²⁷ Aljazeera.com, *France calls for international supervision of Nagorno-Karabakh*, November 20, 2020, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/20/france-calls-for-international-supervision-of-nagorno-karabakh> (accessed: November 28, 2020).

Even though the deal has confirmed Russia's role as a regional arbiter only, Turkey has been recognized as a new, serious geopolitical player in the Caucasus.

OSCE Minsk Group after the vocal support of Turkey to Azerbaijan that rendered the public image of the OSCE Minsk Group less relevant.

The official stance of the U.S. government, particularly in the case of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, is that foreign powers should not get involved in the local conflict but should limit their role to diplomatic calls for a ceasefire.

Even though the deal has confirmed Russia's role as a regional arbiter only, Turkey has been recognized as a new, serious geopolitical player in the Caucasus. Turkey's popularity has grown immensely in Azerbaijan, especially after the latter's successful military operation in the occupied territories that was openly supported by the highest Turkish officials. The Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has openly expressed his full support to "friendly and brotherly Azerbaijan," stressing that Turkey would be open to helping through all of its means and its heart.²⁸ The outcomes of the Second Karabakh War have revealed more than one winner. Azerbaijan's victory after almost three decades of frustrating status quo has been a huge success in the contemporary politics of this country. However, Turkey and Russia have benefited greatly from the Karabakh war as well.²⁹ Turkey has managed to gain a foothold in the South Caucasus and entrenched its friendly and prosperous diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan.

Western responses to the Karabakh conflict

The Trump administration has been mostly absent from the conflict. The official stance of the U.S. government, particularly in the case of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, is that foreign powers should not get involved in the local conflict but should limit their role to diplomatic calls for a ceasefire. United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently explained the rationale behind the rather quiet response of the U.S. administration to the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict: "We're discouraging internationalization of this. We think outsiders ought to stay out. We're urging a ceasefire."³⁰ The U.S.A. proposed a peace agreement after the two previous deals

28 Aljazeera.com, *What's Turkey's role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?*, October 30, 2020, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/features/2020/10/30/whats-turkeys-role-in-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict>(accessed: November 28, 2020).

29 Gabuev, op. cit.

30 Safi, M. and Borger, J. "US silence on Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict reflects international disengagement," *The Guardian*, October 4, 2020, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/04/us-armenia-azerbaijan-nagorno-karabakh> (accessed: November 27, 2020).

brokered by Russia had failed. However, the U.S.-brokered ceasefire also failed to bring a truce to the conflicting sides. The weak involvement and lack of interest of U.S. representatives in this conflict might have reflected the specific circumstances existing in the U.S.A. in parallel with the Karabakh hostilities. Owing to the fact that the U.S.A. was preoccupied with its own presidential elections and with a serious health crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. administration decided not to take a strong stance in another foreign crisis but to focus on domestic politics.

EU states have remained reluctant or even uninterested in debating the recent developments in their neighborhood that have led to a change of the military map in the South Caucasus.

Although France has shown an interest in the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict, mainly because of Turkey’s involvement, other EU states have remained reluctant or even uninterested in debating the recent developments in their neighborhood that have led to a change of the military map in the South Caucasus. The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict and its geopolitical consequences have not been discussed seriously in political circles in Brussels.³¹ Failing to come forward with any viable proposition for resolving the Armenia–Azerbaijan hostilities, the EU missed out on an opportunity to become a relevant actor and a peace agent in its eastern neighborhood.³² European foreign policy answered this crisis with a few statements that called for peaceful negotiations and continuation of the peace process through the OSCE Minsk Group that has already shown its ineffective diplomatic role in the resolution of the almost three-decade-long conflict.³³ Once again, the EU has remained neutral and distant from the power dynamics in the South Caucasus, thus leaving Moscow and Ankara to share interests and power in the region.

Conclusion

The Second Karabakh War has ended with a clear victory for Azerbaijan. From a wider geopolitical perspective, Russia and Turkey have also benefited from interventionist foreign policies in the recent Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict. A recalibrated balance of power in the

31 Judah, B., “Europe stands by as borders are redrawn by Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire,” *Politico*, November 11, 2020, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/nagorno-karabakh-a-little-war-that-will-shake-europe/> (accessed: November 28, 2020).

32 Grgic, B., “The EU suffered a major loss in Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Al Jazeera*, November 23, 2020, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/11/23/the-biggest-loser-in-nagorno-karabkh-is-not-armenia/> (accessed: November 27, 2020).

33 *Ibid.*

South Caucasus has come about as a result of active Turkish support to the Azerbaijani side, while Russia's, although delayed, intensified diplomatic activities have managed to broker a ceasefire that has enabled Russia to act as a major peace guarantor in the region. So far, the agreed terms still stand, and Russia has deployed its peacekeeping forces to guard the "Lachin Corridor" that provides a link between Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. The peacekeeping clause of the latest agreement will last for the next five years, with a renewal option.

In the past three decades, the mediation process that was assigned to the OSCE Minsk Group had not shown any positive change or brought a sustainable peace to the region. The conflict remained open and a source of frustration for an Azerbaijani nation that wanted to fully restore its territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders that Armenian occupation had been preventing ever since 1994. The retrieval of several strategically important parts of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the surrounding districts can be an overture to future Azerbaijani diplomatic campaigns aiming at complete control of all parts of the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region.

The case of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict has revealed not only a wider regional power dynamic between Russia and Turkey, but also Western indifference toward the recent crisis in the Caucasus. Moscow and Ankara have taken opposite sides in different ongoing conflicts in Syria and Libya that actually make these two powerful countries competitors in their foreign-policy approaches. However, recent developments in the South Caucasus have made Russian–Turkish relations closer where the weak presence and lack of interest of the West in the region have brought to this newly established regional relationship a flavor of a partnership that will overcome any major disagreements.

Exculpation of Armenian terrorism under guise of the 'Armenian martyr'

Sama Baghirova*

Mexican social anthropologist and international relations analyst of Armenian descent, Carlos Antaramian Salas, has long focused on studying inter-ethnic issues, with an emphasis mostly on Armenian issues. This commentary explores the article by Carlos Antaramian Salas "The Armenian martyr: The political construction of an exemplary figure after the Genocide (1915-1918)" ("El mártir armenio: la construcción política de una figura ejemplar después del Genocidio (1915-1918)") and focuses on the notion of the "Armenian martyr" that the author connects to Armenian history and culture to justify the assassinations and attacks committed by Armenian terrorist groups from the 1970s to the 1990s. The analysis of the history of the Armenian nation and of the activity of the diaspora starting from the beginning of the 20th century presented by the author is at the foundation of this commentary. The commentary argues that the role of the nationalist narrative plays a key role in the activities of Armenian diaspora in order to keep its dispersed community united. This commentary, in turn, posits that the same activities of the diaspora have had a strong influence on the emergence of Armenian radicalized groups.

Keywords: Armenian diaspora, terrorism, martyr, nationalism, genocide, narrative



* **Sama Baghirova** is Advisor at the Baku-based Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center).

History of formation of the figure of the “Armenian martyr”

In order to understand the arguments introduced by Antaramian Salas, it is worth scrutinizing the background events to which he refers while posing his arguments. He starts to build his argument by stating that the figure of the “martyr” has always been present in Armenian culture, particularly since the time of the battle of Avarair (451 BC) against the Persian Empire, when they had to fight for Christianity. He argues that, in the Armenian case, the “martyr” is the one ready to sacrifice themselves for a duality: homeland and religion. Further developing this notion, Antaramian Salas continues by mentioning the 19th century process of the secularization of this figure, who gained a political–patriotic status with the guerrilla warriors called *fedayin*. In Persian, this means “the one who is committed” or “the one who is sacrificed.” The person he describes is an armed man fighting against the unjust Ottoman regime that keeps the Armenian people subjugated; according to the narrative, he dedicates his life to the people and wants to “wake them up” with his patriotic deeds and, above all, with his readiness to die for his nation’s cause.¹ The *fedayin* is a revolutionary figure mainly emanating from *Tashnaksutiun*, also known as Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutyun (ARFD), a leftist ultranationalist party that was one of several secret political parties founded in the period from 1885 to 1908.

First World War period

The event contributing most to the argument of Antaramian Salas is the so-called “Armenian genocide,” which has been a topic of debate between Armenia and Turkey for more than a century. Armenians claim that the events of 1915 were part of a “deliberate and inhumane extermination” plan of the Ottoman government during World War I on the basis of ethnic and religious identity, and that the deportations orchestrated by the Ottoman government in order to alienate Armenians from the enemy powers was just an instrument to accomplish that plan.² The Turkish side counter argues that Armenians were relocated to other parts of the Empire because of their political and military alliance with Russia, Turkey’s adversary in World War I, and assaults on Turkish villages in Eastern Anatolia, where Armenians were residing as a minority. The atrocities of this process are considered to be a result of the general lawlessness of a collapsing state apparatus unable to

¹ Ibid., p. 86

² Euronews.com, *Armenian massacres of 1915: The Armenian viewpoint*, April 24, 2016, available at: <https://www.euronews.com/2016/04/24/armenian-massacres-of-1915-the-armenian-viewpoint> (accessed: 23 August 2020)

properly control the relocation, together with the internal strife, banditry, famine, and epidemics that were present during the war.³ Hence, the figure of the “martyr” used in the article is the result of the construction of post-genocidal narratives, especially among the descendants of those who fled the Empire. These almost “1.5 million victims” (the unfounded number claimed by the Armenian side) that died during the period from 1915 to 1923 have come to be considered as “martyrs” by Armenians.⁴ A clear connection is seen to be made between ancient history and 20th century events through the notion of a “heroic Armenian nation,” constantly fighting against oppression throughout history.

A question arises here of whether the author is trying to justify those terrorist acts by analysing them through the prism of the figure of the “martyr”

Armenian diaspora and commemorations of ‘martyrs’

Carlos Antaramian Salas mentions in the abstract of the article the importance of the figure of the martyr in “the remembrance policy” structured by Armenian communities living abroad. He also underlines the transformations that figure has undergone since 1921 during the commemorations, every April 24, of the “genocide” by Armenian communities all around the world. The focus of his paper is thus to analyse the “remembrance policy” conducted by the Armenian diaspora in order to understand the use of the figure of the “martyr” as a strategy to qualify or distinguish not only “victims,” but also those young people that “sacrifice” themselves in terrorist practices.⁵ Thus, a question arises here of whether the author is trying to justify those terrorist acts by analysing them through the prism of the figure of the “martyr” that, he claims, has been part of Armenian culture for centuries and has been used for keeping this dispersed nation united—first by the church and then by the diaspora, especially after the 1915 event.

Antaramian Salas categorizes the critical stages in the development of the “genocide” commemorations: the silent commemorations (1921–1964), the demonstrations for the fiftieth anniversary and the struggle for recognition (1965–1975), and the “executions” conducted by the terrorist martyrs (1975–1988); he focuses particularly on the first and third periods as turning points in the commemorations. He also highlights “milestone events” in Armenian history. These are the “genocide” (1915), the creation of the first Armenian Republic (1921),

3 Bayraktar B., “Armenian massacres of 1915: the Turkish viewpoint”, *Euronews.com*, April 24, 2016, <https://www.euronews.com/2016/04/24/armenian-massacres-of-1915-the-turkish-viewpoint> (accessed: 23 August 2020)

4 Antaramián Salas, op. cit., p. 85

5 Ibid., p. 83

and the immediately subsequent period of Sovietization (1921–1991). According to the author, his main objective is to identify what role these commemoration periods and historical events have in the construction of the “martyr” figure that helps to depict a national identity under threat. The identified threats involve the fear of facing a situation of being an exile, assimilation as a result of displacement, loss of identity, and a sense of political impotency caused by the absence of a state that would protect and represent its people. Thus, Antaramian Salas, in constructing the figure of the “martyr,” emphasizes the connections among the critical moments in Armenian history, commemorations of the 1915 event, and these fears.⁶

One of the decisive events described as part of the period of silent commemorations is “Operation Nemesis,” which was directed clandestinely by *Tashnaksutiún*. The aim of the operation was “vengeance” for the 1915 event, and it resulted in killing those officials of Turkish origin whom *Tashnaksutiún* considered “responsible” for the

One of the decisive events described as part of the period of silent commemorations is “Operation Nemesis,” which was directed clandestinely by Tashnaksutiún.

“genocide.” Antaramian Salas highlights the purpose of the operation as not only revenge, but also the enacting of “strict justice.”⁷ It is reasonable to assume that the author, by categorizing the assassinations as part of the attempt to serve justice, seeks to justify the acts of terror.

The event of 1915, which today probably unites all political groups across the Armenian diaspora worldwide, was not such a unifying factor in the pre-World War II period. In 1933, the Armenian Archbishop of New York Levón Tourián was killed by members of *Tashnaksutiún* owing to his opposition to the politicization of the issue of 1915 by a particular political party. The ideological factor was one reason behind the divisions inside the diaspora, especially in the United States. One set of political parties was pro-Soviet, while the others were on the side of the *Tashnaksutiún*, and hence anti-Soviet. Another issue dividing these two camps was the flag; the tricolour used during the First Republic versus the flag of the Soviet Republic of Armenia. Archbishop Tourián was killed as a result of the series of events that followed his intention to separate the church’s activities on April 24 (a requiem mass) from those of the political parties, mainly led by the *Tashnaksutiún* party, as well as his refusal to make public appearance in front of the flag of the First Republic of Armenia.⁸ The archbishop was killed during the Christmas

6 Ibid., pp. 88-89

7 Ibid., p.90

8 Ibid., p.93

mass in New York and two *Tashnaksutiún* members, out of nine present during the ceremony, were accused of the murder. These two were praised and presented as heroes by the party, which the author highlights as the event that had an influential role in shaping the political culture in the diaspora on the basis of the patriotic ideals of “victims-heroes.”⁹ Moreover, an Armenian source also emphasizes “terrorism becoming an act of courage to clandestine organizations”—especially on the agenda of the *Tashnaksutiún* party.¹⁰ The party still has offices in all the countries where the Armenian diaspora resides and is known for radical views when it comes to their homeland and a political ideology that justifies killing and intimidating Armenians who have opposing political views. These cases were documented by Congressman Frank E. Hook in 1945, as has recently been revealed from the archives of the Congress of the United States. This fact is also mentioned by Antaramian Salas himself in reference to Armenian diaspora studies scholar Khachig Tölölyan and is further proved by the historical events described in his article.¹¹ The enumerated facts might serve as proof of the truth that the community itself, with its values deeply rooted in the church and in the notion of the motherland, can easily become fragmented and hostile towards one other because of political views.

Moreover, describing the diaspora activities in the second period, from 1965 until 1975, Antaramian Salas underlines the diaspora’s activity in achieving recognition of the “genocide” in host countries, which was finally accomplished through somehow overcoming these internal divisions.¹²

Finally, the author analyses the third-generation diaspora activities and the terrorist attacks mainly targeting Turkish officials and diplomats in Europe as well as in Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey that were committed by various Armenian terrorist groups. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, these organizations committed over 235 terror acts in over 22 countries, killing around 70 people. The terrorists were revered by the Armenian public.¹³ “Operation Nemesis,” with its message of martyrdom, served as an ideological trigger for the terrorist attacks of the 1970–80s.¹⁴ The assassination of Turkish officials who had no direct connection to the events of 1915, more than 50 years later, as well as the deaths of many innocent people killed in various terrorist attacks during these years,

9 Ibid., p.92

10 Atamian, S., “The Armenian Community: The Historical Development of a Social and Ideological Conflict,” *Social Forces*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1956, pp. 284-285, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2574056> (accessed: August 23, 2020)

11 Ibid., p.91

12 Ibid., p.95

13 Ibid., p.99

14 Ibid., p.91

cannot be justified in any way. However, Antaramian Salas attempts to prove the contrary. According to the author, the violent turn of events in the commemoration of the genocide had its origins in Beirut, where a vast Armenian population resides, and with the Lebanese war, during which similar attacks became a way to fight for people's rights. Combative ways of making declarations about the "genocide" to the international community started in 1973 with the murder of two Turkish embassy workers by Kurkén Yanikián in Santa Barbara, California. The author regards the Armenian terrorists as *fedayín* and links them to "Operation Nemesis" in the 1920s. The same is the case with many others, including the so-called "Lisbon Five" that blew up the Turkish embassy in Lisbon in 1983—they were glorified for "falling at the altar of liberty." The author also mentions that participants in both Operation Nemesis and the terrorist attacks of the 1970s and 1980s were *Tashnaksutiún* affiliates linked to the figure of the "martyr" who was revered for dying for the cause promoted by the party.¹⁵ This factor is not a coincidence, as even authors of Armenian descent such as Mikayel Varandian have described *Tashnaksutiún* as a unique revolutionary party in terms of having rich experience in terrorism with the most fanatical of terrorists.¹⁶

Conclusion: The true purpose of the figure and its consequences

Having analysed the developments in the activities of the Armenian diaspora, especially those directed to remembrance of the events of April 24th, and the transformations they have undergone through the influence of the mentioned milestone historical events in the history of the Armenian nation, the argument that Antaramian Salas repeatedly states throughout the article is this: This admiration towards the figure of the "martyr" is politically constructed to help in conserving the identity of the nation.¹⁷

According to the author, after 1988, the glorification of the terrorists stopped because of the loss of "sympathy" owing to the numerous terrorist attacks committed all over Europe, including the bloodiest one at Orly airport in France in 1983. The period of the first Karabakh War with Azerbaijan from 1988 to 1994 is also covered and mentioned as a reason for the cessation of terrorist activities. Antaramian Salas states that, after the war, terrorists were not labelled as heroes anymore. Contradicting himself one more time, he concludes, by the end of the same paragraph, that some of those who died during the first Karabakh War (self-proclaimed *fedayíns*) are considered as "martyrs" for dying for their religion, as they were

¹⁵ Ibid., pp.97-98

¹⁶ K. Papazian, *Patriotism Perverted*, (Boston: Baikar Press, 1934) , pp. 1-79

¹⁷ Antaramián Salas, op.cit., p. 100

fighting against a Muslim state and for their nation as well.¹⁸ What he omits is that, this time, the atrocities committed were the result of military aggression led by the state of Armenia that resulted in the occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan, which was condemned by the UN Security Council resolutions (822, 853, 874, 884) issued in 1993. The occupation objective of the state of Armenia had no connection to the religious cause, nor to the “genocide.”

After 1988, the glorification of the terrorists stopped because of the loss of “sympathy” owing to the numerous terrorist attacks committed all over Europe, including the bloodiest one at Orly airport in France in 1983.

However, after the first Karabakh war ended, there were some other terrorist acts committed against Azerbaijan and Turkey. After the ceasefire agreement was signed in May 1994 in Bishkek between Armenia and Azerbaijan, there was an explosion on a Baku subway train in July 1994. The responsibility for the act was taken by armed separatist group the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh defense army.”¹⁹ The group was first assembled in 1988–1990 as part of a special regiment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Armenian S.S.R. Volunteer militants from illegal militarized cells comprising it were active participants during the active phase of the First Karabakh War (1988–1994).²⁰ Moreover, four days later, on July 7, Haluk Sipahioglu, Counsellor of the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey to Greece in Athens, was assassinated by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), which was one of the most extreme of the extremist terrorist groups formed in the 1970s.

After the ceasefire agreement was signed in May 1994 in Bishkek between Armenia and Azerbaijan, there was an explosion on a Baku subway train in July 1994.

Armenia itself suffered from domestic terrorism as well. In 1999, a terror act in the National Assembly (NA) of the Republic of Armenia in Yerevan resulted in the assassination of the NA Speaker, Karen Demirchian, the Prime Minister of Armenia, Vazgen Sargsyan, and other officials. This fact contradicts the notion, frequently presented by Antaramian and many other Armenian experts, that the “Armenian cause” is a unifying factor for all Armenians around the world. It might be a unifying one, but it is also a divisive one, and the community, by its nature, is quick to radicalize and become aggressive - even against its own members.²¹

18 Ibid., p. 101

19 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, “Armenian Terrorism”, Available at: <https://mfa.gov.az/files/shares/Armenian%20terrorism.pdf> (Accessed: August 23, 2020)

20 O. Kuznetsov, *The History of Transnational Armenian Terrorism in the Twentieth Century* (Berlin: Verlag Dr. Koster, 2016), p. 209.

21 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, op. cit., p. 7.

Radical sentiments have always been present in the Armenian diaspora and continue to feature in its activities, even in the open and democratic environments of Western countries. For example, in July 2020, after the military clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan, organized gangs from the Armenian diaspora attacked the peaceful demonstrations of Azerbaijanis in many European countries and in the United States. In Los Angeles, some of a group of 3,000 Armenian protesters attacked a group of some two dozen Azerbaijanis, causing injuries that required urgent medical care. A Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) officer was hurt as well. The LAPD has since launched a hate-crime investigation.²² A similar scene was witnessed when an Azerbaijani journalist was stoned in the head in Brussels.²³

In July 2020, after the military clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan, organized gangs from the Armenian diaspora attacked the peaceful demonstrations of Azerbaijanis in many European countries and in the United States.

In the conclusion of the article, Antaramian Salas posits his idea that the concept of the “martyr” is used to make a connection between “old heroes” and “new stories.”²⁴ This means that, despite acknowledging the radically oriented actions that such “martyrs” have carried out during the past centuries, they are still, on the whole, praised by the Armenian communities.²⁵ The argument that, despite having a common motivation of fighting and defending the “Armenian cause,” each community will “present” its commemoration of the “genocide” according to the “tendencies” present in the host community is also a debatable one,²⁶ as most

of the democratic societies where the July silent demonstrations turned violent, for example, Los Angeles and Brussels, reject the justification of terrorism and aggression on any grounds. The consequences of this glorification are seen nowadays, too. This kind of nationalistic and radicalized mindset, promoted by the diaspora for decades for the sake of keeping its dispersed members “united,” is spreading more hatred to future generations, thereby impeding the resolution of the conflict, and should not be encouraged.

22 Nurullayeva, K, “Azerbaijani MP condemns violent attacks on diplomatic missions and embassies in the US and Belgium by members of Armenian Diaspora,” *The Parliament Magazine*, August 4, 2020, available at: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/news/article/azerbaijan-mp-condemns-violent-attacks-by-members-of-armenian-diaspora>.

23 The Embassy of Azerbaijan in the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, “Statement of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Mission to the European Union dated 23.07.2020,” July 23, 2020, available at: <https://brussels.mfa.gov.az/news/28/3430> (accessed: August 23, 2020).

24 Antaramián Salas, op. cit., p. 101.

25 Ibid., p. 102.

26 Ibid., p. 102.

Dispatch from the Conflict Zone during Azerbaijan's Patriotic War

Elmira Musazadeh*

Journalistic Dispatch titled "Dispatch from the Conflict Zone during Azerbaijan's Patriotic War" prepared by Azerbaijani war correspondent Elmira Musazadeh covered the war zone with compilation of photo shots from her field trip. Her emotional story narrates that from the very first day of the Second Karabakh War the Armenian armed forces deliberately and overtly resorted to targeting with constant artillery shelling the peaceful citizens, villages and cities in the front-line districts.



* **Elmira Musazadeh** is war correspondent, anchor and editor at Caspian International Broadcasting Company, Baku, Azerbaijan.

When going to a war zone, all journalists are typically advised to wear a vest with a bright “PRESS” logo to make it obvious that they are a correspondent and not a participant in the hostilities. Male or female, they, too, are civilians. As envisioned, this measure was taken in the recent war to ensure the safety and protect the lives of media representatives. After all, peaceful and unarmed people should, under no circumstances, become targets or come under fire.

In the Nagorno-Karabakh war zone, the situation was exactly the opposite. The Armenian armed forces deliberately and overtly resorted to targeting peaceful citizens as a military provocation. From the very first day of the Second Karabakh War, September 27, villages and cities in the front-line districts (Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Goranboy, and Aghdam), were under constant artillery shelling from the Armenian forces. Hundreds of shells were hitting these areas every day.

When the war began in the Terter district of Azerbaijan, the first reports of the artillery shelling of residential buildings in Gapanli village of Terter district began to air between 6 and 7 a.m. After a couple of hours, when our film crew was deployed to the area to document the devastating effects of the Armenian forces’ military provocations, the sounds of artillery shots were clearly audible on the approach to this district. Armenian troops fired large-caliber weapons and heavy artillery, such as BM-21 “Grad” multiple rocket launch systems and D-20 and D-30 howitzers, at civilian residential settlements.

Despite the heavy shelling, not one of the local residents was willing to leave their homes. Fortunately, every personal house in the front-line area has a special bunker dug into the ground and roofed with metal plates to shelter civilians during such massive artillery-rocket bombardment and protect them from shrapnel.

A resident of Gapanli village, Kamran Gurbanov, showed us one of these temporary shelters. He said that sometimes they had to wait within the shelter for several hours. Then he started to collect the fragments from the Grad, D-20 and D-30 shelling that had hit his property. After several days of the war plenty of these had already accumulated in the surrounding area. Despite the constant danger, he was resolute about not leaving the village: *“I am not afraid of anything,”* he said, setting the table right there in the yard close to the shelter, and added, *“how can I leave when our soldiers are at the forefront to protect us? We*



Kamran Gurbanov shows one of the temporary shelters

need to be their support and help.” The drill of running into the shelter together with his family members at the first sound of shooting had already become a routine.

Such preparations, including the moral aspect, originate from the fact that the residents of the front-line regions have been facing regular Armenian provocations for almost 30 years. The sound of shots from machine guns and artillery never stopped here throughout the entire period of the conflict. During both the fighting of April 2016 and the current war, the Terter district, including its villages, emerged as the main target of the Armenian armed forces. Billboards announcing “Caution! War zone!” hang at the entrance to the settlement and informative posters, with photographs, notify local residents and visitors about the barbaric acts perpetrated by the enemy and the destruction caused during the early years of First Karabakh



Shelling of school building in Eskipara village of Terter district, Azerbaijan

War (1992–1994) and the fighting four years ago, in April 2016. One of these posters was mounted in the secondary school in the village of Eskipara; the photographs showed the severely damaged school building, with broken glass and demolished walls, caused by artillery shells falling onto the schoolyard in 2016. Four years later, during the Second Karabakh War, shells hit the building itself, leaving just fragments of desks and chalkboards from some of the classrooms. It is likely that no one would have survived if anyone had been inside the school during the shelling. One can barely find an intact building in the entire village. Yet some areas were even less fortunate; in these, the residential buildings caught fire from the rocket explosions, leaving

The houses will be rebuilt and the economy restored. But, unfortunately, there is something that cannot be restored: that is, human life. In the entire course of the hostilities, 110 civilians were killed as a result of missile and artillery attacks by Armenian forces.

only ashes afterwards. When incessant shelling began in the front-line districts, most of the men decided to send their women, children, and the elderly to safer neighboring areas. However, they themselves did not leave their homes.

Despite all the destruction caused by the Armenian units, the resilience of the local residents was striking. Inspecting the destruction, or even the literal ruins, of former residential buildings, the residents of Terter, Aghdam, and Goranboy districts (the territories that suffered more than others) waved their hands and said that “*the most important thing for everyone is to be safe and sound.*” The houses will be rebuilt and the economy restored. But, unfortunately, there is something that cannot be restored: that is, human life. In the entire course of the hostilities, 110 civilians were killed as a result of missile and artillery attacks by Armenian forces. The worst thing is that small children were among them. Behind each of these numbers lies a human story, a terrible tragedy, which cannot be forgotten.

Our film crew headed from the neighboring village of Guzanly, Aghdam district, to the village of Garayusifli in Barda district, when we were informed about the shelling of residential buildings there. Arriving at the scene, we were horrified not by the sight of a destroyed house, but by a father bending over his dead daughter, Aysu Iskandarova, a seven-year-old little girl. A missile fragment hit her near her own house. The injury was serious, and her vital organs were affected. No matter how hard her father tried to stop the bleeding by bandaging her numerous wounds, the child died before the ambulance arrived. A little later, the

grief-stricken father remembers each second of the tragedy, saying that he will never forget the fear in the eyes of his dying daughter. With tears in his eyes, an adult man asks everyone around him “*where does such cruelty come from? Why do Armenian units shoot innocent children?*” Unfortunately, no one can answer his questions.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs), who had to leave their native lands at the end of the last century following the Armenian occupation, live tight together in the settlement of Shikharkh in Terter district. Their geographical origins are diverse. There are natives of the (previously occupied) Zangilan, Gubadli, and Kalbajar districts and the city of Shusha. But the main portion of the population is still in the nearby (previously partially occupied) Aghdam and Terter districts.

“*We have already had to leave our homes once, leave shelter and lands and retreat.*” Gurban, a resident of Shikharkh settlement and an IDP from the now-liberated Suqovushan settlement, shares his revelation while we are hiding from another bout of shelling in the basement of a residential building. “*We will not retreat even a step back any more,*” he says. Gurban’s grief is understandable. Over many years, an entire infrastructure had been built up in the village, including a school, a hospital, a small number of shops, and even a music academy. Now, all that remains of the academy is the frame; the glass walls have been turned into fragments, and the only music playing there during the war was formed by the incessant explosions of shells. Other buildings suffered, too. Here, a shell hit the roof; elsewhere one flew into a second-floor balcony, almost completely destroying all the apartments inside. However, those living in Shikharkh settlement are not the only refugees in these territories.



Shikharkh settlement, Terter district, Azerbaijan

Even though the Armenian community were not the indigenous inhabitants of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, all their fundamental rights were respected in Azerbaijan. They were often represented on local authorities and the two peoples lived here quite amicably until the territorial claims of Armenian nationalists emerged.

During filming in the very center of Shikharkh village, we come across a monument called *Maragha-150*, which was erected in 1978 at the request of the Armenian community of the Terter and Aghdam districts on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the resettlement of Armenians there from the Iranian village of Maragha. The dates 1828–1978 and the number 150 were engraved on the monument. In 1991, however, this monument was destroyed by the local Armenians themselves to hide the fact of their resettlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Just a couple of years ago, the Azerbaijani authorities managed to open the archives and restore the historical statue, once again revealing the attempts of Armenians to falsify history. Even though the Armenian community were not the indigenous

inhabitants of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, all their fundamental rights were respected in Azerbaijan. They were often represented on local authorities and the two peoples lived here quite amicably until the territorial claims of Armenian nationalists emerged.



A woman living in Horadiz settlement, Azerbaijan. She is showing a shell fragment.

This was not the case only in Terter. A resident of Horadiz settlement of Fuzuli district says that three of her neighbors were of Armenian ethnicity. As if it took place just yesterday, she starts to remember the Karabakh war of the early 1990s, when the peaceful Azerbaijani population suffered atrocities at the hands of the Armenian armed forces. The First Karabakh war took away the life of her brother, who sacrificed himself for the sake of the territorial integrity of the country. This time Armenian forces completely destroyed her home when an artillery shell hit the residential building, causing a massive fire. By the time

rescuers arrived, there was practically nothing left of the house.

A similar situation was faced by locals in Khindiristan village of Aghdam district. This is one of ten villages in Aghdam district that were liberated from an occupation that went back to the 1990s. Arriving at the site of shelling, our film crew found only ashes. A representative of the local fire department, who was extinguishing the remnants of the fire and coughing heavily from the terrible smoke, said that *“as soon as they noticed the smoke that had risen as a result of a rocket shelling, the Armenian troops were deliberately shooting at the same place, realizing that firefighters would be working there, and that ambulances and the victims could be there, and were thus trying to increase the number of wounded [persons].”* The cars of the Ministry of Emergency Situations came under massive fire several times. While examining the shrapnel holes from the missile fragments over their car, we understood that the firemen survived only because they were moving at high speed. A little later, another artillery shell fired by Armenian troops hit a cotton processing plant. Having left for the scene with the fire department, we were asked to leave the location of the incident in a rush, as enemy shots were arriving only a few seconds apart.



A house in Aghdam district (Azerbaijan) completely destroyed by fire.

Later on, we had an encounter with another example of the violence of the Armenian forces, perpetrated with the use of Smerch cluster munitions against civilians in Goranboy district. These are weapons prohibited by international conventions, as well as by the rulings of the UN, ICRC, and others. This is not unintentional. According to

the employees of the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA), cluster munitions consist of several containers that unfold in the air and distribute their payload over a vast territory, causing tremendous damage to all objects in the vicinity. Such artillery ordnance, containing up to several hundreds of sub-munitions, can be dangerous even a long time after the attack, since the explosives in the missile core can be toxic. Thus, ANAMA employees have to manually

inspect the entire nearby area and artificially detonate all the bomblets found.



“Smerch” missile in Goranboy district, Azerbaijan

While we were watching this process, ANAMA sappers were continuously informed by radio about another series of incidents involving the shelling of civilians. The news of the Elbrus tactical ballistic missile attack on Ganja, the second largest city in Azerbaijan, 60 km away from the front line, shocked everyone. In fact, Ganja city came under missile shelling several times (on October 4, 11, and 17). Most of the missiles fired were immediately intercepted by Azerbaijani air defense

systems. Over recent years, Azerbaijan has developed one of the most echeloned (structured) air-defense systems in the world. That is to say, the skies of Azerbaijan are covered not only by a modern umbrella of anti-aircraft missile systems purchased from the world’s leading weapons manufacturers, but also by an advanced electronic warfare (EW) system. Therefore, most of the air assaults by the Armenian armed forces on peaceful residential areas were prevented.

However, in early October, a missile fired by Armenian troops hit a local market building in Ganja—fortunately with no human casualties. A couple of days later, the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia sat down at the negotiating table in Moscow, Russia, and spent about 11 hours in discussions. As a result, at the time when they agreed on a

humanitarian truce, our film crew was in Aghdam district. Despite the announced truce, we noticed that the local residents were still anxious about a possible violation of the ceasefire. One of the locals, Mammad Mammadov, recounted how he had experienced something like this back in the 1990s. As a serviceman then, he experienced how Armenian units, under the cover of “the ceasefire regime,” returned their forces to the front line and attacked Azerbaijani civilians and soldiers many times. Therefore, he could not trust the Armenian side even today, continuing to expect the next provocation, which was about to come. The ceasefire came into force at 12 noon on October 10. Half an hour later, three shells were fired at the village of Sahlabad of Terter district. The shelling did not stop that day, and in the evening, they fired at Aghdam.

Late in the night of the same day, the horrible news came about a missile hitting a large residential building in the city of Ganja. When we managed to get there in the evening, fragments and debris from the buildings were scattered everywhere up to a few kilometers from the site of this horrific incident. The closer we got, the more terrible the scene appeared: the neighboring buildings were heavily damaged, and almost all the shopping facilities were ruined. As a result of the Elbrus/Scud tactical ballistic missile attack, the apartment building was completely destroyed and a huge crater appeared in its place. Not a single intact building remained in the surroundings, and rescuers were still sorting through the rubble, trying to save anyone who had managed stay alive under the building’s wreckage. Trained dogs, special equipment, ambulances, law enforcement agencies—it seemed that all of Ganja had rallied to help the victims.

During the search and rescue works, an ethnic Russian woman was standing next to me with a scarf tied on her head and different shoes on her feet. She had obviously run out of her house in an extreme hurry. *“I live in the next block,”* she said. *“we heard a loud noise at 2 a.m. At first, we did not understand what was happening. Then the building shook so much that we thought it was an earthquake. Then there was a terrible crash, the windows were shattered. We realized that there was an attack and ran out immediately to find out how we could help the victims.”*

A retired doctor, standing a little further away, also came to help. *“We heard about shelling in front-line areas, but we could not even think that the [Armenian] occupying troops would shell Ganja. Even during the war of the 90s, such atrocities were not committed,”* he said. *“Look,*

there are no military installations here! I have lived in a neighboring house all my life and I know every corner of this area. Here is a peaceful unarmed settlement. What do the Armenian troops want to achieve in this way?" His rhetorical question is immediately answered in the crowd: *"They are trying to retaliate for their weakness at the front at the expense of civilians!"* Others agreed with this opinion.



Results of ballistic missile attack on Ganja city

While emergency employees were sorting through the rubble, a child's toy appeared from within the wreckage of a former residential building. *"They say a child has suffered,"* someone sighs nearby, *"a little girl. If only she stayed alive."* Everyone was waiting in suspense for the end of the rescue work. Fortunately, the child did survive, but many others were badly injured. In total, 11 people lost their lives as a result of the missile attack and 34 were injured. A couple of days later, preliminary

This attack was launched not from the territory of the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region, but from the Berd region of Armenia across the nearby Armenia–Azerbaijan state border. Obviously, Armenia was trying to expand the geographical extent of the hostilities.

investigation results revealed that Armenian forces were firing from an Elbrus/SCUD operational-tactical missile system. According to Gazanfar Ahmadov, ANAMA director, this weapon can even carry a nuclear warhead, which directly proves that Armenia neglects all the values of humanity. Moreover, this attack was launched not from the territory of the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region, but from the Berd region of Armenia across the nearby Armenia–Azerbaijan state border. Obviously, Armenia was trying to expand the geographical extent of the hostilities.



Results of the ballistic missile attack on Ganja city

Soon after, the residents of another large city, Barda, had to experience the next incident of Armenian aggression. At 2 p.m., right in the middle of the day, missiles with cluster munitions were fired into the center of this densely populated city. Having scattered across several kilometers, this ammunition, with its large radius of destruction, caused colossal damage to a vast civilian area. The explosions of the bomblets followed one by one, hitting about 30 shops and shopping facilities, and completely burning out more than 20 cars in the street; as a result, more than 20 people died and about 80 were injured. ANAMA employees and ambulances were operating non-stop trying to save as many people as possible. Together with our crew, the journalists from leading international media recorded all these terrible events. The military-political leadership of Armenia, by targeting civilians, once again tried to cause panic among the population.

International non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch also recorded the war crimes committed by the Armenian forces. A statement from Human Rights Watch reads thus: *“A cluster munition missile Smerch and a high-explosive fragmentation missile with a parachute deceleration were identified. As far as we [Human Rights Watch] know, the Armenian armed forces have Smerch rocket launchers.”*¹

By deliberate attacks towards civilians, Armenia violated the Geneva

¹ Human Rights Watch, “Armenia: Unlawful Rocket, Missile Strikes on Azerbaijan”, December 11, 2020, Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/11/armenia-unlawful-rocket-missile-strikes-azerbaijan> (Accessed: 7 January 2021).



Missile attack on civilian car in Barda district, Azerbaijan

Conventions for the “Protection of Civilians in Time of War” several times, and the weapons used by Armenian armed forces throughout the entire course of hostilities are strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law. Notably, the use of phosphorus munitions by the enemy was recorded on the territory of Terter district. It is impossible to get protection from phosphorus penetration, since its munitions completely burn out the air, as a result of which humans die due to lack of oxygen, and it causes severe burns when in contact with skin. Although the Armenian side denies the use of prohibited weapons, solid evidence and audio-visual facts prove their illegal conduct.

After the signing of a Declaration on the observance of the ceasefire by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia on November 10, 2020, which testified to the effective capitulation of Yerevan, our crew managed to visit the liberated lands in Fuzuli district. While entering the former military posts of Armenian forces, we discovered large quantities of munitions abandoned by the enemy units, as well as a homemade rocket launcher. Using 240-mm missiles, they fired this launcher at a range of 18 km towards densely populated Azerbaijani civilian settlements. “*These hand-crafted systems are often used in Syria. Armenians attracted mercenaries from the Middle East,*” confirmed Hikmat Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan.

International non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch also recorded the war crimes committed by the Armenian forces.

Not only weapons, but also explosives and mines were used in an improvised way. In the liberated territories, it is necessary to pay attention to every single step,

since an explosive device can be located in any place; particularly in large quantities within the houses of Azerbaijanis destroyed during the war of the 1990s, in cemeteries, and at historical monuments. Our film crew personally saw anti-personnel mines in the liberated Gubadli and Jabrayil districts of Azerbaijan. However, the worst situation is being experienced in Aghdam district, where anti-personnel and anti-tank mines were installed almost every couple of meters, according to sappers' reports. The city of Aghdam, which was once one of the most densely populated in Azerbaijan, now resembles Hiroshima, with not a single building left intact. All houses were destroyed, mosques desecrated, and cultural and historical monuments can only be recognized by miraculously surviving fragments of their ornamentation. They cannot be restored or reestablished in the near future, as it is dangerous not only to come close, but even just to stray off the road.



Self-made rocket launcher of Armenian forces.



Results of the ballistic missile attack on Ganja city

In the liberated territories, it is necessary to pay attention to every single step, since an explosive device can be located in any place; particularly in large quantities within the houses of Azerbaijanis destroyed during the war of the 1990s, in cemeteries, and at historical monuments.

Moreover, during the 44 days of the war alone, employees of the National Agency for Mine Clearance of the Territories of Azerbaijan conducted over a thousand of missions just to the settlements, cities and villages where civilians live. About 400 pieces of unexploded ordnance; more than 800 pieces of exploded ammunition; almost 2,000 anti-personnel mines; and more than 200 anti-tank mines were found and neutralized. However, it will take many years to completely clear these areas. According to preliminary estimates, this process may take up to some 10 to 15 years. Despite the end of hostilities, the civilian population and the military personnel of the national army remain the victims of mines and booby traps set by Armenian units.

BOOK REVIEW:

“The Light that Failed: why the West is Losing the Fight for Democracy”, authored by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes

REVIEWED BY **MURAD MURADOV**

“The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World”, authored by Anu Bradford

REVIEWED BY **MAHAMMAD MAMMADOV**



“The Light that Failed: why the West is Losing the Fight for Democracy”, Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes (Pegasus Books, 1st edition, January 2019).

This book by I. Krastev and S. Holmes is an attempt to explain the challenges faced by the ideology of global liberalism has been facing in the recent years. The authors try to explain why liberalism, that was proclaimed the ultimate winner in the race of ideologies after its victory in the Cold War, is now under attack from various directions in many parts of the world. They refer to the question reportedly asked by President Obama to himself on the day he was leaving the White House: “What if we were wrong?”. Indeed, the character of the crisis of liberal politics seems to be existential and puts the need to question its validity and efficiency to the very basics, as “public faith in democracy is plummeting and long-established political parties are disintegrating or being crowded out by amorphous political movements and populist strongmen” [Introduction].

The book is divided into three chapters. The first one, “the Copycat Mind”, tells the story of the disillusionment of Poland and Hungary, taken as the representatives of the post-socialist Central European countries, with liberalism and free market and the rise of populist illiberal political forces. The second chapter, “Imitation as Retaliation”, deals with Russia’s failure (and the apparent lack of willingness) to comply with the imagined ideal of Westernisation and its ingenious attempts to simulate being a working democracy in order to be better able to challenge and undermine the dominance of liberal principles. The third and final chapter, “Imitation as Dispossession”, touches upon maybe the most challenging problem of the book- explaining the U.S. revolt against its own status as a leader of the globalized world, embodied in the enigmatic figure of Donald Trump. The authors stitch these three seemingly dissimilar stories into one overarching narrative, not by simply repeating platitudes about populism or political correctness, but by arguing that they all stem from the politics of imitation- which, as they claim, has been at the heart of the post-Cold War liberal order (which they even call “the Age of Imitation”) and which is now coming to an end. Then Krastev and Holmes proceed to analyse the three cases separately.

The first chapter of the book explains the rise of illiberal regimes in Poland and Hungary (however, the authors imply that similar trends have been observed throughout the whole Central Europe). The major

challenge is to understand why, as they put it, “there rose conspiracy-minded majoritarian regimes where the political opposition was demonized, non-government media, civil society and independent courts were denuded of their influence, and sovereignty was defined as the leadership’s determination to resist any and all pressure to conform to Western ideals of political pluralism, government transparency and tolerance for strangers, dissidents and minorities”. They start their story from the fact that at the end of the Cold War, these countries have been the most passionate disciples of the liberal West and mention the unique features of the revolutions that swept aside the crumbling communist regimes there. These revolutions were largely nonviolent; they were led by intellectuals rather than charismatic heroes; and the general mood of the people was rather a desire to return to “normality” (understood as the Western way of living) rather than to achieve something completely new. German philosopher even named them “rectifying revolutions”. Unlike Russia or China, leaders of Central European democratic movements wanted their countries to undergo genuine “conversion” into exemplary members of the liberal world. What went wrong then that some societies of the region came to openly denounce the principle once so dear to them?

First of all, Krastev and Holmes argue that the process of wholesale imitation itself has a heavy downside and may invoke feelings of inferiority in the imitator. Being an imitator is a psychological drama. Discontent with the ‘transition to democracy’ was also “inflamed by visiting foreign ‘evaluators’ with an anemic grasp of local realities” [Chapter 1]. However, this is only a part of the story. The burden of the need to imitate and copy has been much exacerbated by the fact that the ideal of Western Europe cherished by the Central European elite was itself fastly changing and ceased to be accepted as an ideal as such. Conservative Poles in the days of the Cold War viewed Western societies as normal because, unlike communist systems, they cherished tradition and faith. Today most Poles- as well as people in other Central European countries- come to associate the West with secularism, multiculturalism and gay marriage, which causes severe frustration. In response, modern-day Western Europeans view the conservative attitudes as an assault on moral progress and anti-Western. This problem of value decoupling has been exacerbated by the refugee crisis that erupted in 2015: while the EU, represented by liberal Brussels bureaucrats, insisted that all EU members had to open their borders, many Central European member states expressed their fears that the arrival of millions of non-Europeans

would dilute and destroy the European identity and threaten their way of life. In 2018, Polish President Andrzej Duda even compared membership in the European Union to the country's previous periods of foreign occupation. Hungary's Prime Minister Orbán and Polish Law and Justice Party government seized an opportunity to pose as the last defenders of Old Europe from the "hordes" of refugees, also hinting at the Brussels conspiracy to punish them for their independence and refusal to accept all the EU commands. To prove their worth, they simply put the much-hated imitation story on its head and instead claim that it is Western European countries which should learn genuine "Europeanness" from their Eastern fellows.

The authors indicate to an underlying factor that made Central European societies so much receptive to the anti-immigration statements: the demographic crisis and its psychological consequences. This fear of nation-killing depopulation was caused by dropping birth rates and also the constant emigration of the most talented youth to the EU. Unexpressed dread of demographic collapse is exacerbated by an automation revolution that is gradually making obsolete the jobs for which the current generation of workers was trained. It is found the areas that have suffered the greatest shrinking of population in the last decades are the ones most inclined to vote for far-right anti-liberal parties. The unspoken but nevertheless pervasive thought of those failing to emigrate to the West as "losers" boosted their illiberal revanchist inclinations. This also brings us to the economic element of this story. East-to-West migration has done nothing to stimulate serious efforts at political and economic reform in Central Europe. On the contrary, the aspiration, after 1989, to have 'a normal political life' led only to a brain drain and the expatriation of the healthy, the skilled, the educated and the young. The general refusal of the West to invest heavily in the political stability of the new entrant states by supporting the economic importance of labour unions deviated radically from the Allies' basically pro-labour union policy in West Germany after the Second World War which created a developed and egalitarian welfare state. At the same time, in most of these countries new elite was primarily formed out of the various swaths of the communist one, as they simply switched sides and used their connections and know-how to become beneficiaries of the new order. Economic hardships and growing polarisation between the newly rich elites and the wider people sow the first seeds of disenchantment and resentment against the West. The lack of trust towards the allegedly new liberal elite entrenched them further and helped the populists easily

blame liberals in their inability to protect the simple people and the country from indebtedness and economic dependence.

Finally, Holmes and Krastev argue that the West also failed by trying to use, no matter deliberately or not, the German example as a blueprint for post-communist development of Central Europe. Postwar Germany is a unique case in a way that it happily abandoned nationalism, which helped her to regain prestige and influence in Europe and focus on socioeconomic development. The same trick could have never worked in Poland, Hungary or any other regional state since, first, their very existence as independent republics was inevitably linked to their nationhood and, moreover, nationalism had been a key element of anti-communist resistance throughout Central Europe. Hence, their societies and elites were not ready to trade nationalism for developed democracy, instead viewing them tightly interdependent.

In the **second chapter** the authors purport to explain the politics of post-Soviet Russia, particularly during Putin's presidency, as a series of simulations and anti-Western copying of some Western practices. They compare it to Germany after WWI, claiming that both countries viewed themselves as angry outsiders determined to undermine the European order based on their own defeat. In their view, the major mistake of Western liberals was to assume that Russians would be as happy with the collapse of the USSR as the Central Europeans were. In reality, most Russians cheered the end of communism and wanted liberties but not at the cost of the Soviet Union as a country; its dissolution was the first big blow to the hopes of Westernisation. In contrast to Central Europe, communism was not seen as rule from abroad. So, "conversion (understood as borrowing the values and goals) with the West was not an option for Russia" [Chapter 2]. The relatively peaceful collapse of the USSR without external blows actually made it psychologically even harder for Russians to digest as it engendered ubiquitous suspicions of treason and conspiracy that could have explained the otherwise inexplicable process.

In the 1990's, Russia acquired all the major features of a liberal democratic state: free (at least theoretically) elections, free market, independent media etc. However, as Holmes and Krastev argue, they were hollow and artificial, compared to their Western counterparts. What emerged out of this institutional mishmash, was an "imitation democracy" where politics is a constant struggle between democratic forms and non-democratic substance. Russian "imitation democracy" was embod-

ied in the distinctly Russian figure of a “political technologist”- an expert in manipulating politically dependent media. At the height of their influence, political technologists were tasked with maintaining the illusion of competitiveness in Russian politics. Democracy in post-communist Russia was primarily a technology for loosely governing a basically ungovernable society without resorting to excessive physical violence. Political technologists themselves viewed this structure as the only possible way of emulating the West for Russia. This system capitalized heavily on the Russian fear of separatism, exceedingly strong after the Chechen wars: the elections came to signify the unity of this exceptionally diverse political space. The capacity able to achieve high turnouts in very different and distant regions provided psychological reassurance that the country retained its territorial integrity.

That’s why the book doesn’t argue that President Putin brought Russia off the democratic path. What he really did was simply allowing Russians to stop pretending that ‘the transition’ was taking them to a better place. In his worldview, the post-Cold War’s Age of Imitation was actually an Age of Western Hypocrisy. The so-called ‘liberal international order’, Putin implied, was nothing nobler than a projection of America’s will to dominate the world, and universalism- just the particularism of the West.

It is important that under Putin, Russia never stopped imitating the West: but this imitation was not deferential at all. On the contrary, his imitative politics is essentially competitive and conflictual. The defeated may borrow the strategies, procedures, institutions and norms of the enemy, not to mention stealing their breakthroughs in nuclear weapons technology, with the long-term aim of acquiring the arts of victory and turning the tables. So, Russia shifted from simulating the West’s domestic order to parodying America’s international adventurism. Holmes and Krastev compare Moscow’s international behaviour to “holding up a mirror in which the enemy can observe the immorality and hypocrisy of its own behaviour” with the aim to rip off the West’s liberal mask and help undermine the Western-dominated global order. They argue that the primary motivation behind President Putin’s controversial foreign policy decision- Georgia in 2008, Ukraine in 2014, Syria in 2015 etc., was not pursuing rationally calculated Russian national interests but showing the world the hypocrisy and inefficiency of the liberal order. The Crimean annexation was thus simultaneously a bid to boost the legitimacy of the domestic system and undermine the credibility of the global one. Moscow did this by demonstrating

that she could defy the West with impunity. By insisting on Russia's cultural and political exceptionalism, this new approach also provided a moral basis for rejecting out of hand all the condescending lectures that the West had been giving Russians; it is subversion by emulation. For the West, by contrast, Russia has become the double the West fears it might become. The principal purpose of the Kremlin's meddling in American elections is "to reveal that competitive elections in the West resemble Kremlin-engineered elections more than Westerners would like to think" [Chapter 2]. This is how Putin is trying to kill the West's victory narrative.

Finally, the **third chapter** takes on the task of explaining the phenomenon of Donald Trump and Trumpism within the framework of "counter-imitation". The authors view Trumpism as part of the anti-liberal pattern, previously described in the examples of Russia and Central Europe. But it is indeed hard to understand why so many citizens of the most powerful country in the world view themselves as global losers, and why "they come to distrust countries that have traditionally seen America as an exemplar nation and long viewed liberal democracy as the political model most worth imitating" [Chapter 3]. The contrast between Trump's iconic "America first" slogan and his de-facto rejection of American exceptionalism is particularly puzzling.

In fact, as the book goes, "America first" and American exceptionalism represent totally different views as to America's role in the world. What Trump meant is rejecting what constituted the basis of the post-Cold war world- the perception of Washington as the "shining city on the hill" worth imitating and copying. "America First" means caring nothing for the welfare of other countries while angling to best them in international trade negotiations. "Winning" is the opposite of "leading by example". The latter, for Trump, is worse than a waste of time: It means training others to overtake you. That's why one of Trump's harshest critics remarked shortly after his election that "America may once again start behaving like a normal nation" [Chapter 3]. In this framework, traditional American willingness to serve as an example was a liability rather than an asset for Americans themselves: it diverted a lot of resources and served to raise and nurture global rivals for U.S. (primarily economically). It is very symptomatic that Trump-like ideas, though always lurking in the American society, gained ground exactly as de-industrialization of inner states and progress in automation took heavy jobs on working-class America. These problems came to be strongly associated with the liberals' economic policies: Trump openly

castigated previous American administrations for their role in the rise of Germany and Japan and, later, China. The examples of self-defeating American generosity are not limited by assisting the economic development of foreign countries: U.S., in Trump's view, is the architect of global security and dispute resolution mechanisms which now often work to constrain American foreign policy; it also shared American-invented internet and got nothing in response. As a businessman determined not to be outplayed, he instinctively hates being imitated, and this is the core reason his ideology reverberated with the millions of people distressed by America's global rivals successfully competing with it in the global market. Trump wanted U.S. to embrace its lack of innocence and reject moralistic illusions exactly in order to be able to compete as fiercely as other powers do.

The most striking thing about this kind of populism is that it derives a lot of its theses exactly from the playbook of radical liberalism which considerably gained in popularity with American failures in Afghanistan and Iraq and the 2008 economic crisis. One of them is that globalization favours business over labour and that regime change and nation-building are beyond America's capacities and not in America's interest. That "the system" is not fair, is a liberal platitude. The same can be said of his claim that democratic politicians are in the pocket of lobbyists and donors. So, Trump is cynically parroting liberal talking points with the key difference that while liberals meant them to rectify the American politics from corruption and bring it to the imagined ideal, populists use them as a proof that such ideal is a myth and doesn't exist in reality.

So, the authors conclude, America's version of illiberal populism has something in common with both Russian and Hungarian/Polish ones. Like their Russian counterparts, American populist voters believe that liberal global order is hostile to their national interests and undermines their country's place in the world- while it also emphasizes socioeconomic and cultural threats to the "true" national identity stemming from globalization and immigration. Trump never hesitated to make openly divisive statements and portray his political rivals in evil expressions. The key to understanding Trumpism is the way his frequent resort to half-truths and full-fledged lies did not affect his popularity despite the liberals' disgust with these excesses. In fact, his supporters draw a clear line between "accuracy" and "sincerity" and it is enough for statements to be "sincere" to be classified as truth. In this logic, "every statement of fact dissolves into a declaration of membership or allegiance" [Chapter

3], and believing them wholeheartedly served Trump's supporters to feel moral superiority over liberals who value accuracy over sincerity, and deliberately distance from them. The feeling of being, on one hand, outsiders, and on the other, bearers of a genuine identity unites Trump supporters with the Polish and Hungarian anti-liberals and creates strong resentment against entitled cosmopolitan elites.

In conclusion, Krastev and Holmes also quickly upon the case of China and the development path its leadership chose back in 1989. They describe it as deliberate technical imitation of the Western institutions and mechanisms that were deemed to be capable of helping China develop and get more competitive without any degree of attachment to the norms and values that stood behind them; instead, the Chinese Communist Party elite was determined to keep its firm grip over the Chinese society and put goals and targets exclusively based on China's needs and interests as they understood it. The book ends with the verdict that globalisation, while bringing all the world together, also undermined the Enlightenment's faith into the humankind's gradual progress towards a future where all nations will be bound by common interests and values. This faith inspired ubiquitous imitation and borrowing of institutes, norms and practices in very different spheres of human live aimed at arriving at this shining future- but the seemingly ultimate triumph of liberalism in 1989 spelled the delayed end of this process and re-introduced disagreements and conflicts over basic normative issues and destroyed the belief in common aims.

To sum up, this book is a very bold and inspiring attempt to establish a common pattern under the complex mishmash of various strains of illiberal and revisionist reaction to the alleged triumph of global liberalism. The authors have managed to dig deeper than commonplace explanations more or less limited to the talks of the desperate uprising of the older generation, economic grievances or temporary deviation out of sheer weariness with political correctness and mainstream truths. They go into the depth of political psychology and show that the success of illiberal forces in very different places of the world has been a thing to expect and will hardly vanish in the near future; moreover, they make one of the most ingenuous attempts to investigate the concept of imitation in politics not in its technical aspects but down to the effects it leaves on political discourse and thinking. The finding that the lack of the "genuine" has been the Achilles' heel of global liberalism and the analysis of illiberal revolt must necessarily take into account the concept of the genuine in earnest, is simply brilliant.

Krastev and Holmes, in quite a Hegelian fashion, reveal the complex dialectics of the historical ascent and current crisis of global liberalism, which encouraged imitation as the best way towards triumph only to be undermined from inside by imitators and their interplay with the imitated, which actually hollowed out the essence of liberal ideology on the both sides. Their guess that the rise of Trumpism has not been due to idiosyncratic internal problems of U.S. but primarily to her precarious position of the hegemon outplayed by the very rules she introduced and moreover, being expected to accept this state of affairs as natural.

The book has a few downsides of course. The biggest one is the continuation of its advantage: handling an incredibly complex and wide-ranging process in a relatively short book, the authors had to squeeze too many thoughts and paradigms into its pages each of which is potentially worth a monograph of its own. The authors sometimes introduced totally distinct topics, such as China's role in the crisis of liberalism, only passingly, which makes it impossible to develop an argument in a sufficiently detailed manner and leaves more questions than answers. And while making myriads of brilliant observations, and establishing unexpected common patterns in the series of anti-liberal revolts of 2010's, the authors stops short of making the single major conclusion out of the plot; the ultimate verdict remains somehow diluted it and leaves a sense of the theme not revealed to its fullest and some detachment remaining between the three big stories of the book. However, the book is a definite must-read for anyone who wants to understand where the world is heading and be able to see into the near future as well.

reviewed by Murad Muradov

“The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World”,
Anu Bradford (Oxford University Press, March 2020)

The systemic position within which the European Union finds itself today and its implications for future geopolitical developments in world politics has been the subject of intense debate among students of international relations and expert community in recent years. The narrative is mainly built on depicting the EU as a diminishing force in the so-called shared neighbourhood where Russia militarily outmanoeuvres the Western countries in general and the EU in particular. Economically, the EU has been losing global market share to rising powers in Asia, China and India as the main challengers. Strategically, the American unilateralism especially under the recalcitrant presidency of Donald Trump pushed the EU to seek strategic autonomy in international affairs. In this context, Anu Bradford’s recent book, *The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World* offers an alternative perspective that puts special emphasis on how the regulatory dominance affords the EU the ability to shape global politics in its own image. Despite formidable challenges it faces in the domestic and external arena, the author believes that the EU successfully retains its status as the “global regulatory power” through unilateral actions, facilitated by markets and private businesses. What makes Bradford’s argument more interesting is the observation that the regulatory power will be one of the few areas where the EU can go it alone in the newly-emerging multipolar world order.

Bradford structures her arguments in three main sections: theory (Chapter 1-3), case studies (Chapter 4-7), and assessment (Chapter 8-9). The theoretical part of the book describes in detail the evolution of a European regulatory state and puts forward scope conditions under which the Brussels Effect occurs on a global level. Accordingly, ensuring the functioning of a single market has historically been the primary driver behind the EU regulations. Minimum harmonization of member-state standards has not only led to unprecedented growth in cross-border trade but also advanced consumer and environmental protection across the EU. Bradford goes on to explain how the EU achieved to harmonize the most burdensome regulatory standards while it would prove costly for poorer member states, individual consumers and multinational companies. According to the author, the qualified majority voting system in the Council as opposed to unanimity and strong backing from member states who have more stringent regulatory systems made it easier to pressure regulatory laggards to opt for the

highest standards. At the same time, the Commission frequently agreed to provide compensation in the form of structural funds and package deals where low-regulation member states would support the adoption of EU-wide regulations in return for more favorable treatment in other policy areas.

Bradford identifies two main ways in which the Brussels Effect unfolds. *De facto* Brussels Effect happens when multinational corporations adjust their worldwide operations to conform to the EU standards and advocate further externalization of the single market to the third country jurisdictions. Harmonized standards make them competitive in those markets and help them to expand their economies of scale as the same technologies can be used to produce certain goods sold in different countries. *De jure* Brussels Effect takes it a lit bit further and leads to the adoption of EU regulations by foreign governments. As in the case of the internal regulatory expansion, here too, the main question is why multinational corporations and even economically advanced countries choose to emulate the costlier EU standards. Bradford suggests five mechanisms through which the EU emerged as the global regulatory agenda-setter: market size, regulatory capacity, stringent standards, inelastic targets, and non-divisibility.

The *market size* has always been one of the main instruments great powers leveraged externally to maximize relative gains vis-à-vis peer competitors. Bradford's hypothesis rests on the argument that the greater the ratio of exports to the EU relative to sales in the third-country markets, the more likely that the EU regulations will have a spill-over effect globally. For example, Facebook has more customers in the EU than in the United States or Google's share of the search market in the EU (90%) is bigger than in the United States (67-75%) which makes them more amenable to EU standards. Secondly, Bradford provides a detailed account of the EU's *regulatory capacity* and shows how the EU institutions evolved to promulgate and enforce the European norms in a wider geography. In this regard, sanctioning companies that fail to meet regulatory standards to offer their services on the EU soil and imposing significant fines for not obeying the regulations proved to be the defining features of the EU regulatory capacity. Google faced a \$9 billion fine in total in the last 3 years for failing to meet the EU regulations on market competition and data protection.

According to Bradford, market size and regulatory capacity should be supplemented with a political will to accept *stringent standards* for the

domestic market. Europeans' historical distrust of markets and pro-government ideological preferences opened up certain avenues for the EU to come up with regulatory mechanisms to facilitate single market and protect the customer interests at the same time. Moreover, stringent regulations could be successfully externalized mostly when they covered *inelastic targets* – products that are tied to a certain regulatory standard. Consumer markets are inelastic targets as one cannot move, for example, the European population to a different jurisdiction. What matters most is the location of consumers and their purchasing power capabilities rather than the places where companies produce goods and services. Therefore, as long as a company wants to sell its products to the EU, it has to comply with its regulatory requirements. Finally, Brussels Effect occurs when multinational corporations apply the EU regulations in the home or third-country markets due to the non-divisibility of global operations. Tailoring its production to meet divergent regulatory systems is most of the time a costly business. Not surprisingly, these companies obey the EU standards to benefit from economies of scale emanating from the single global production process.

Brussels Effect is not, however, the only manifestation of the EU's normative power projection outside its borders. The author compares market-driven harmonization (Brussels Effect) to treaty-driven harmonization where the EU unilaterally expands its regulatory jurisdiction to other markets through various legislative techniques such as international treaties and institutions. Drawing on Ian Manner's "normative power Europe" concept, Bradford reveals how the EU's normative attractiveness contributes to its persuasion capacity and "ability to shape what is normal in international relations" (p.81). The author is not, however, optimistic about the unilateral effectiveness of the treaty-driven harmonization as it is getting harder to conclude and enforce international treaties in the newly-emerging world order.

Bradford goes on to empirically support the Brussels Effect's theoretical underpinnings through 4 case studies: market competition, digital economy, consumer health and safety, and environment. Each case study discusses in detail the major legislation in the field and further elaborates on political economy implications of the EU regulations. Referring to the five scope conditions mentioned above, the author presents comprehensive empirical findings on how multinational companies' global operations have been shaped by the EU regulations and hence, led to the realization of de facto and de jure Brussels Effect in these 4 economic sectors. In this context, it is especially to be

noted that Bradford keeps providing an insightful self-critique of her arguments throughout the chapters. For instance, in all case studies, the author repeatedly emphasizes how difficult it is “to link the various domestic reforms to the de facto Brussels Effect given the various additional channels, such as consumer and NGO activism, which also drive domestic reforms in this area”. (p.231)

In the assessment part of the book, Bradford is on shakier ground when she offers mostly subjective and value-driven assessments to engage broad strands of criticism leveled against the Brussels Effect. The discussion revolves mainly around two questions: whether the Brussels Effect is beneficial and to whom and whether it will retain its transformative influence in the rapidly-changing international relations system. Firstly, even if the author admits the Brussels Effect’s normative deficiencies in the case of multinational companies (costly and hinders innovation), nation-states (protectionism), and third-country citizens (regulatory imperialism), she still believes that it is a force for good that generates net benefits for many if not all. Bradford at some point concedes that the EU’s unilateral regulatory dominance can be characterized as “soft coercion” as it (indirectly) uses different economic and bureaucratic tools to build asymmetric relations with the countries that are dependent on access to its vast consumer market. Yet she insists that the EU can hardly be accused of imperialism when it simply asks other countries to play by its rules, even if it proves costly for the non-EU citizens who do not have a say in the adoption of EU rules and standards. Of course, one may not agree with Bradford’s pro-EU bias about the costs and benefits of the EU regulations worldwide, but it does not change the fact that Brussels Effect exists and matters in the contemporary global political economy.

Finally, the author examines potential external and internal challenges to the EU’s regulatory dominance in the future. China appears to be the main challenger in different categories of the Brussels Effect. Its expanding market size has come at the detriment of the EU’s global market share that would provide multinational companies with an option to shift more of their exports away from the EU. At the same time, Chinese leadership embarked on various programs to increase the state’s regulatory capacity in areas such as consumer law, environmental protection, food safety, etc. Nevertheless, Bradford believes that with excessive debt accumulation, unsustainably high investment rate, aging population, and increasingly autocratic political system, China may not realize the “Beijing Effect” in the foreseeable future. Moreover, new

developments in the technology world such as additive manufacturing (e.g. 3D printing), geo-blocking, or cultivation of GMOs may usher a new era in industrial processes that would render non-divisibility meaningless as multinational companies would easily choose to exploit lower standards in various markets while meeting the European regulatory requirements. Lastly, the EU will have to deal with a host of internal challenges from Brexit – which will diminish its market size by 15% - to migration, terrorism, and burgeoning anti-EU sentiments. Despite these risks, the author claims that the EU will emerge largely unscathed from the crises surrounding it and the Brussels Effect will continue to extend the EU's regulatory hegemony in the near future.

In sum, Bradford's analysis provides alternative and stimulating views on less-explored dimensions of the EU's global influence. There is no doubt that this book will be of interest to scholars of European Studies, international relations, postcolonial studies, as well as policymakers and practitioners of foreign policy.

reviewed by Mahammad Mammadov

Call for Submissions

Issue Title: *"Pax Caucasia: Prospects of Peace and Cooperation in South Caucasus"*

Deadline: 15 April 2021

Subtopics:

- Perspective of new connectivity projects and economic cooperation in South Caucasus
- Bilateral partnership with Azerbaijan on reconstruction and restoration of the liberated territories
- Obstacles and challenges to establishing and maintaining multidimensional regional cooperation
- Views of neighbouring countries (Georgia, Iran, Turkey, Russia) and outside actors (EU, USA, China) on sustaining the security and stability in the South Caucasus
- Overcoming the post-war emotional crisis between Armenians and Azerbaijanis through confidence-building measures and peace-building initiatives
- Performance of Russian peacekeeping forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan

Prospective authors should submit 3.000-5.000 word articles and 2.500-3.000 words commentaries (in both formats including footnotes, abstract, title and sub-titles) for consideration in Microsoft Word-compatible format. For full details please see the "Guidelines for Authors" section of the journal's website. Submissions should be sent in electronic format to: **editor.submissions@cspjournal.az**. Manuscripts submitted to CSP journal should be original and challenging, and should not be under consideration by another publication at the time of submission.

Please note that the journal's scope is not necessarily limited to the topics listed above; off-topic papers that are relevant to the Caucasus region and its neighbourhood are also welcome and will be taken into consideration.

CSP journal's key goal is to foster stimulating dialogue and exchange of ideas on the Caucasus region and beyond, among practitioners, researchers and scholars from around the world. The Publishers and Editors are responsible only for providing authors with the opportunity to express their personal views as a mean of stimulating intellectual debate. For permission to reprint or translate articles, please contact: **executive.editor@cspjournal.az**. For the further information about the journal please visit the CSP's website at **www.cspjournal.az**

