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***ARTSAKH WAR AND THE GEOPOLITICAL  
FUTURE OF EURASIA: PEACE AND  
COOPERATION VS WAR PARADIGM***

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*“Nowadays, the Artsakh war determines the geopolitical future of Eurasia, battling to defeat the scenario of chaos and destabilization, and develop the paradigm of peace, stability, and development.”*

### ***Nagorno–Karabakh conflict: Roots and Consequences***

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has a history of more than one hundred years, when after the disintegration of the Russian Empire in 1917, Artsakh (the Armenian name of Nagorno Karabakh) received independence.

However, during the bolshevization of the South Caucasus, the Bolsheviks in face of Stalin decided to grant this piece of land (with approximately 95 percent of Armenian population) to a newly formed state – Azerbaijan, expecting in return Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk to join the “*global communist revolution.*” Kemal Ataturk cheated very soon, but this “*gift*” triggered an approximately 70 years of latent conflict, when the Armenians of Artsakh were permanently (but without any success) appealing to the Moscow officials to include then-Nagorno Karabakh autonomous region (the name of the Republic of Artsakh during the Soviet rule) into the Soviet Armenia.

Situation has changed in the late 80<sup>th</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with weakening of the central power in Moscow and disintegration of the Soviet Union. Armenians of Artsakh again raised their voice to join Armenia. Azerbaijan reacted with Armenian pogroms in Sumgait, Baku, etc., which triggered a full-scale war between Azerbaijan and Artsakh Armenians. Armenia supported Artsakh’s fight for freedom and security.

The war stopped in 1994 with the “*Three-part Ceasefire Agreement*” signed by Azerbaijan, Artsakh, and Armenia<sup>1</sup>, which de facto recognized Artsakh as an independent part of the conflict. Since then it has been functioning as a de facto independent state. However, it is recorded a stalemate in that process, provided the maximalist position of official Baku, which demands Artsakh to be under its jurisdiction, using force, provocations, and involving Turkey to reach its goals.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://vn.kazimirov.ru/doc10.htm>

### **The third Artsakh war: Fighting for the right to exist**

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Azerbaijan violated the “*Three-part Ceasefire Agreement*” of 1994 and waged a new war against Artsakh. In opposite to the provocations and escalations of the previous years after the ceasefire of 1994, Azerbaijan is engaging all its military capabilities, including air force and ballistic missile systems. Additionally, it is targeting not only military, but also massively shelling civil objects – churches, hospitals, schools, and so on. At the same time, Azerbaijan fires not only towards Artsakh, but also Republic of Armenia which makes situation even more complicated.

Current escalation has several reasons. First of all, it is about the COVID-19 pandemic. It triggered rather tough economic and political crisis in Azerbaijan. In other words, being authoritarian in nature and lacking popular support, Aliyev used the “*old, but gold*” trick to redirect the social attention from domestic problems to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as they usually do.

Secondly, for about thirty years the Aliyevs (Heydar Aliyev and then his son Ilham) have been feeding its population that they are going to conquer Artsakh. And now, given the situation with COVID-19, when the whole world, including Armenia, is busy fighting with the pandemic Ilham Aliyev and his advisers thought, that it is a good time to wage a war.

Additionally, Azerbaijan initiated a military attack against Armenia’s Tavush region this July but failed to succeed. Aliyev might wish to use this chance to take revenge, especially, provided that the July’s lose was fostering political crisis in Azerbaijan weakening his positions at home.

Finally, the role of Turkey is essential in this conflict. Most probably Erdogan encouraged Aliyev to start this war seeking to trap the latter increasing the Turkish influence over Azerbaijan and, as a consequence, over the whole South Caucasus. At the same time, Turkey redirects attention of Russia and international community in general from Eastern Mediterranean, Libya, etc.

Situation is getting worse with the direct involvement of Turkey and its attraction of international terrorist groups from, particularly, Syria and Lybia; a fact that has fully

confirmed.

This made Artsakh and Armenia to apply the Article 51 of the UN Charter and use their right for self-defense. However, support from Turkey (Aliyev recognized the presence of Turkish F16 fighter jets in Azerbaijan) and massive involvement of terrorists fighting on Azerbaijani side, makes this war existential for all Armenians.

### **Artsakh war through the Prism of global and regional powers**

Since 1994 the Artsakh conflict has been negotiated by the Minsk Group co-Chairs (Russia, United States, and France). However, nowadays it is noted a gradual transformation in how global and regional powers are getting engaged in the current war.

From the first day Erdogan declared a full support to its political and military ally – Azerbaijan. The launch of military operation by Azerbaijan followed a wargame by Turkey and Azerbaijan. Turkish military instructors and advisors are directing the Azerbaijani Army in the current war. The international community accused Turkey of sending a couple of hundreds of Syrian jihadists to Azerbaijan to fight against Artsakh. According to the Armenian sources, Syrian terrorists are more than four thousand. Additionally, Turkish F16 fighter jets are covering the Azerbaijani air force in the aggression against the Armenian sides.

Not less important is the Pakistani support to Azerbaijan, which is possible only due to Turkish interference, as Pakistan does not have much direct interests with Azerbaijan, but strong ties with Turkey.

A clear evidence of the above fact is that in a recent interview to the Russian news outlet RBK, the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Moscow Polad Bulbuloglu stated that in case Russia or Russia-led military alliance Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) interferes into the conflict, Turkey will also have a direct interference<sup>2</sup>.

On the other hand, Russia is considered to be the Armenia's closest political-military ally. However, in contrast to Turkey, Russia is different case. It tries to balance between Armenia and Azerbaijan, having strong interests in both countries. For instance, it

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/30/09/2020/5f7449ea9a79475d079eb4fe>

is a major arms provider to both Armenia and Azerbaijan. As a result, there is not unanimous support from Russia to Armenia during the war. However, given that Armenia is a full CSTO member, Russia has its only military base in the region in Armenia, and Russia considers the South Caucasus as a region of its major interests, the growing Turkish influence in this region might lead to another proxy between Russia and Turkey.

On October 10<sup>th</sup> Moscow brokered a temporary truce between the sides. However, having Turkish support and due to Erdogan's ambitions, Azerbaijan has started violating the agreement since it went into force while it was claiming more Turkish involvement in the negotiation process.

At the same time, the other two OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs (United States and France) demonstrate gradual but only verbal support to peace process, pointing at Aliyev as an aggressor and talking about Erdogan's involvement<sup>3</sup>.

However, provided Erdogan's ambitions and its behavior as an "*international hooligan*," announcements and rhetoric will hardly stop Turkey from assisting Azerbaijan. On the contrary, it will push Aliyev for further escalation, delivering more ammunition and terrorists to the region.

### **UN resolutions, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno Karabakh conflict: myths and reality**

Nowadays, Azerbaijan very often refers to the international recognition of its borders, as well as the four UN Security Council Resolutions of 1993, claiming that Armenia is violating them. However, the truth with regard to the issue is that it is not the UN or UN resolutions, which claim anything like that, but Azerbaijani propaganda, which manipulates public opinion and presents the reality as they wish it to be.

First of all, in difference to the League of Nations, the UN does not raise the issue of borders, when it accepts new members. As a consequence, Azerbaijan was accepted to the UN without any clarification of its international borders. Additionally, the Nagorno Karabakh Republic left Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic earlier (September 1991) than Azerbaijan became a UN member (March 1992).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-with-erick-erickson-of-the-erick-erickson-show-on-wsb-atlanta/>

However, what is more important is the fact that the right of peoples for self-determination is a dynamic right and can be applied before, during or after a metropole joins the UN, as happened for instance with Kosovo or South Sudan.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that not the UN, but the OSCE Minsk group, co-Chaired by three UN Security Council permanent members – US, Russia, and France, has received the mandate to facilitate the negotiations and provide peace in the region. In this regard, the OSCE Minsk group does not recognize Artsakh as part of Azerbaijan, as currently the issue of the status of Artsakh is under negotiations.

When it comes to the so called “*occupation*” and the UN resolutions of 1993, in reality, when you read these resolutions, you see that they ask Armenia to apply all its influence to provide peace and security in the region<sup>4</sup>. And this is basically what Armenia is doing for the last 25-30 years by protecting Artsakh and its Armenian population from the Azerbaijani aggression and atrocities of civilian population, which they did, for instance, during the April war of 2016 and continue these days by shelling civilian targets not only in Artsakh, but also in Armenia.

In fact, it is the Azerbaijani side, which violates those resolutions. Resolutions demand immediate stop of fire and exclusion the use or threat of use of force by all sides<sup>5</sup>. In violation of these resolutions, Azerbaijani leadership permanently states that they are going to occupy Artsakh by the use of force. And during the April war of 2016 they clearly demonstrated that approach on the ground. They are doing the same at the moment.

### **Artsakh war: The way forward**

On his Twitter account, Aliyev declared that this war will change not only the region, but the whole world. “*Everyone saw our force. We must create a new strategic panorama, strategic vision in this region. After the war, a new era will begin for Azerbaijan, region,*” Aliyev wrote.

Given the enormous rise of Turkish engagement in the South Caucasus, its attraction of terrorists into the region, stress on use of force by Azerbaijani authorities,

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<sup>4</sup> S/RES/884, 12 November 1993, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/884>, paragraph 2, p. 2

<sup>5</sup> S/RES/822, 30 April 1993, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/822> paragraph 1, p. 1

their atrocities in the conflict zone and international shelling of religious, historical-cultural heritage, civilians, and civilian infrastructure, the “*new panorama*” will hardly develop peace paradigm.

On the contrary, the above demonstrates that Aliyev and Erdogan are determined to provide further regional destabilization if they succeed with Artsakh and Armenia, which will fire the whole Eurasia from Europe to China.

This means that today Artsakh and Armenia are fighting a new Battle of Vienna (1583), which will either stop Erdogan’s adventurism and expansion, or foster a new “*Turkish khalifate.*”

From this perspective, the current visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Nikos Dendias, to Armenia is very symbolic and set a ground for joint efforts to win this “*Battle of Vienna,*” developing the paradigm of peace, stability, and security. At the same time, much more active, strong, and feasible international support is necessary to stop Erdogan and his terrorists.



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He has approximately ten years experience in academic research and lecturing, starting from 2010, when he began his PhD studies. From September 2018 to August 2019 he undertook a Visiting Fulbright Scholar position at Princeton University, working on a project entitled, “Eastern Partnership Countries on the Cross-roads of the Eurasian Geopolitics: USA, EU, Russia, and China.” His research and teaching cover international relations, geopolitics, as well international and cyber security, with focus on the South Caucasus, Eastern Europe, Russia, and Eurasia.