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**THE CONFLICT IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH:  
IS IT A “CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS”?  
How Samuel Huntington’s Theory Explains  
Its Culturological Dimension**

**A b s t r a c t**

**T**he author discusses various ideological and ethnopyschological aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the light of Huntington’s clash of civilizations theory. He

offers his own culturological approach to the causes, motives, and driving forces behind the Armenian-Azeri confrontation and the ways they affect the prospects for peaceful settlement.

**KEYWORDS:** *Nagorno-Karabakh, Samuel Huntington, the clash of civilizations theory, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Artsakh, diaspora, peaceful settlement.*

**I n t r o d u c t i o n**

Samuel Phillips Huntington (1927-2008) is one the outstanding political and social thinkers of recent times, whose theoretical contribution to our understanding of geopolitical processes is beyond

comparison. His theory of the clash of civilizations presented to the public in the form of an article “The Clash of Civilizations?”, which appeared in 1993 in *Foreign Affairs*, an American journal of political science,<sup>1</sup> and later extended to a historical-philosophical monograph *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* published in 1996,<sup>2</sup> was an ideal model and real pattern of comprehensive and unbiased understanding of the sources, the driving forces behind and development prospects for the absolute majority of regional (local) wars and conflicts of the last quarter of the 20th century, including the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Strange as it may seem, during the twenty-five years of open confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas, the political scientists in both countries have made no attempt to analyze the sources, nature, and possible repercussions of the conflict from the point of view of a civilizational-culturological approach within the framework of Huntington’s theory. They have had every opportunity to do this, but in the last two decades there have been no political scientific works (to say nothing of Ph.D. and doctoral theses) in Russian carrying an analysis of the Armenian and Azeri positions in the Karabakh war of 1991-1994 and its follow-up in the region in the context of the clash of civilizations theory. I can offer two explanations: either no one in Armenia and Azerbaijan was able to undertake this analysis, or the conclusions of such efforts proved to be too “unpalatable” for either side to be published.

It is my turn to fill in the gap.

## Nagorno-Karabakh: A Fault Line War

It is commonly believed that the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is a conflict between two antagonistic civilizations—Armenian and Azeri—even though the nationalist-minded Armenian intelligentsia refuses to accept this. They consistently deny that the Azeri ethnicity has the right to national self-identity as a very specific social organism and dismiss its members as “Caucasian Turks.” There is nothing new in this; it is an echo of the official position of the Russian Empire which, at the turn of the 20th century (that is, a century ago) refused to treat the Azeris as an ethnicity in their own right and insisted on the term Transcaucasian Tatars. The fact that some Armenians deny the right of the Azeris to ethnicity is the best proof that the confrontation between these two nations is civilizational (cultural-ideological) rather than socioeconomic and political.

Samuel Huntington used the term “fault line war” to describe conflicts similar to that around Nagorno-Karabakh and discussed them in Chapters 10 and 11 of his book. It should be said that the variety of causes and multitude of reasons behind this conflict are much greater than behind any other local conflict or sluggish regional war of our time (this is true of the confrontation between the Christians of the south and the Muslims of the north of Sudan, which has been going on for a long time; the same applies to the Israeli-Arab confrontation in the Middle East). The fault line between the sides in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is much deeper than in any typical conflict between states or peoples represented by the Afghan war the Soviet Union waged in 1979-1989, the Falkland War between the U.K. and Argentina in 1982, or even the 1991 Storm in the Desert operation of the multinational coalition in the Gulf against Iraq. The gap is much deeper than it looks to a superficial observer, the fire being maintained by a much larger number of factors, more on which will be discussed below.

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<sup>1</sup> See: S.P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49.

<sup>2</sup> See: S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996.

Huntington proceeded from the thesis that in the near future religion will become the main driving force behind civilizational clashes. This is true—to a certain extent. He compared the present “clashes of religions” with the previous epochs of “clashes of ideologies” of the second-fourth quarters of the 20th century and did not go further. In the past, religious wars occurred on the fault line between Christianity and Islam (the Crusades of the 11th-15th centuries, the Reconquista in Spain in the 8th-15th centuries; and the wars the Ottoman Turks waged in Southern and Eastern Europe in the 14th-17th centuries). This does not mean, however, that the wars inside the Christian or Muslim worlds were free from religious overtones: in the 13th century the Baltic peoples were baptized in the course of what looked very much like another crusade; the military inroads of Swedish and Teutonic knights into northwestern Russia in 1240-1242 were, in part, confrontations between Orthodox Christians and Catholics over domination in the eastern Baltic lands. The Reformation wars in Europe between the Catholics and Protestants went on and on for over a century with short respites, while the Persians and Ottoman Turks fought for several decades over the rights of the Caliphate. Religious hues were added to play down the economic reasons invariably present in all wars; this means that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, likewise, cannot be reduced to a religious war of Armenian Christians against their eternal foe, the Muslim Turks. This is how ideologists from among the activists of ARF Dashnaktsutun (who speak of all Azeris as Muslim Turks) describe the conflict.

For two reasons, however, this conflict defies this description. Correctly grasped and correctly interpreted they point to the deepest sources of this civilizational confrontation.

- First, from the very first days of its independence proclaimed in 1918, the Azerbaijan Republic has been a secular state; it outstripped in this respect not only the Turkish Republic, but also all countries of the Islamic ecumene. Throughout the 20th century the Muslim factor was present in the life of the country and the nation as a culturological rather than political factor and could not, therefore, affect state life. The contemporary Azeri variant of secular (non-political) Islam demonstrates loyalty, tolerance, and non-conflict relations with other religions and cultures. In this respect it differs greatly from the Arab-Maghreb variant of political Islam (in the last few decades it ignited wars and fed violence and hatred in the Middle East and North Africa; recently it moved to Western Europe).
- Second, over the last century, the Armenians have been building their country as we see it now without relying on Monophysite Christianity, the official religion, but by delving deeper into the past, to the pagan roots of their national mentality. In the mid-19th century, the cults of pagan deities Vahagn, Mihr, Anahid, and Hayk, the legendary forefather of the Armenians who entered a contract with supreme deity Ara (from whom he received the staff of power and strength), coexisted in the nation’s spiritual and public life with Christian Gregorian religious rites, the attributes of which were very close to pagan. In their time, Russian historians of the Caucasus and ethnographers pointed to this similarity.<sup>3</sup> This is explained by the fact that throughout the entire period when Armenians were scattered across the Muslim ecumene, the Armenian Apostolic Church was an administrative instrument on which the Armenians relied in their dealings with the powers of the corresponding titular nations. The Church was part of the unshakeable world order and de facto part of the system in which the Armenians depended on the Muslim peoples. This explains why it was not and could not be either a revolutionary, or even an evolutionary force behind the Armenians’ national-self-identification process. For obvious reasons this identity should be placed on a cornerstone very different from the religious ideology of the Armenian Gregorian Church.

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example: N.F. Dubrovin, *Istoria voinny i vladychestva russkikh na Kavkaze*, in 8 volumes, Vol. 2, St. Petersburg, 1871, pp. 409-410.

Late in the 19th and throughout the 20th centuries, political self-identification of the Armenians proceeded from paganism or neo-paganism rather than from Christian morals and ethics. This process gained momentum under Soviet power. It was instigated by the leaders of the Armenian S.S.R., who used legends about Greater Armenia, the Old Armenian Kingdom, the Armenian State of Urartu, and other myths as trump cards in the ideological struggle against the ideologues of the Armenian diaspora in the bourgeois and Third World countries. They looked at Soviet Armenia as a reincarnation of Greater Armenia and the center of attraction for all Armenians. In view of the anticlerical nature of Soviet ideology and, therefore, of the ideology of the Armenian S.S.R., the Armenian Gregorian Church could not serve as an ideological center for the Armenian ethnicity. This explains why pagan legends and myths of the Armenian forefathers (proto-Armenians) and the points of view of social evolution that corresponded to the archetypes of the ideology of the clan and tribal period were permitted (and used) as an archetypical foundation of the ideology "Armenians of all countries, unite!" under the red banner of the U.S.S.R.<sup>4</sup> This explains why the religious fault line between the Armenians and Azeris in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is much deeper and much harder to negotiate than it might seem because it divides not a religious or confessional but a mental-ideological space.

This means that the intellectual foundations of the ideological component of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict do not belong to the level of contradictions between Islam and Christianity, but go much deeper, to the level of comprehension of the world beyond the canonical traditions of the world religions. The political identity of the contemporary Armenian ethnicity extends beyond the moral laws and canons of the Armenian Gregorian confession; it is rooted in the legends and myths of pre-Christian times, which is amply confirmed by the materials and designs of the Internet resources of the Armenian International or Hay Dat; they operate under the ideological impact of extremist slogans of the Armenian Revolutionary Faction Dashnaktsutiun. The site [www.k4500.com](http://www.k4500.com) in the Russian sector of the Internet is a typical example of these resources. It functions under the slogan "Know! Know How! Dare!" that Dashnaktsutiun brought into political practice. Nothing is said about Christ and His death on the cross to redeem mankind; there is not a word about the Gospels or Christianity in general, while the main accent in visualization is on Ara, the world creator, Vahagn, the Armenian deity of fire and war, Hayk, the forefather of Armenians who received the staff of power from Ara, and the battle between Hayk and Bel, king of Babylon, which took place on 11 August, 2492 B.C. on the eastern shore of Lake Van (Hayots Dzor). This removes all doubts: political self-awareness of the contemporary Armenian ethnicity is far removed from the publicly declared common Christian or Armenian Gregorian religious self-awareness.

This means that either the Armenians were never Christians throughout their history in the canonical sense of this definition and the Armenian Apostolic Church served as a screen behind which Armenian paganism was concealed from the Muslims and the Orthodox Christians (since the 19th century), or that the politically active and extremist minded part of the Armenians, disappointed with the ability of their Church to fully express their spiritual needs and hopes, turned to neo-paganism. These people were appealing to pagan archetypes of national self-awareness to build their political ideology. The truth of this is not guaranteed since both theses rely on argumentation of their own. If the second argument is true, the fact that the nation turned to the ideology of neo-paganism shows

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<sup>4</sup> In view of a possible negative response from the Armenian academic community, let me explain. The world of antiquity of Southeastern Europe and Hither Asia as well as the Hellenic world of the Mediterranean were pagan and yet the first empires (from the Macedonian Kingdom of Alexander the Great to the Roman Empire of Caesar Augustus and Octavianus Augustus) were built on the social foundations of paganism. At the early stages of human civilization, paganism was a state-forming ideology, the role which later belonged to Christianity and Islam. Before he baptized Rus in 988, Grand Prince St. Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles (Grand Prince of Kiev Vladimir Svyatoslavovich), tried to build a united Old Russian state on the pagan ideas and even created, in 980, a pantheon of pagan deities common to all the Eastern Slavs, starting with Perun and ending with Simargl.

that the political establishment of the Armenian ethnicity is highly aggressive. The degree of its psychological aggressiveness can be compared with the degree exhibited by the leaders of the Third Reich in the 1930s, with the only difference that the Nazis geared their aggression against the Jews, while the Armenians geared theirs against the Turks (the ideologists of contemporary Armenian nationalism call Azeris "Caucasian Turks"). This means that the exaltation with which the Armenians do this and which has already manifested itself in recent history (the Khojaly massacre) and may cause new geopolitical upheavals is much more lamentable than the fact that the Armenians are sliding back toward paganism (a trend typical of many nations today).

Vahagn, the Armenian god of fire and war, who is actively cultivated by the ideologists of ARF Dashnaktsutiu and Hay Dat, the worldwide Armenian International, is identical in written form and pronunciation to the name of Baal, the god of all Semites, who in the Christian tradition is Satan's brother and broke away with him from God the Father. Placed in this context, Armenian neo-paganism makes the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (from the culturological viewpoint) eschatologically tinged, or a precursor of Doomsday. In this conflict, the Azeri side (both in the light of Christian and Islamic metaphysics) represents Light, while the Armenians represent Evil. An opposite interpretation of the metaphysical roots of the Armenian-Azeri confrontation is also possible from the position of Armenian paganism, in the context of which the Muslims are associated with Babylon tyrant Bel killed by Hayk, the forefather of Armenians (on the whole, this story is very close to the Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel). This brings us to the limits of metaphysics where it borders on eschatology with opposite signs: the Armenians represent Light, while the Turks and Azeris represent Darkness.

Irrespective of the eschatological signs, this aspect moves the civilizational conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh far beyond the framework of Huntington's "fault line war" between two world religions and adds the pathos of the universal struggle between Good and Evil. Each of the sides involved sees itself as an instrument of Good; in this case the Armenians' archetypical mentality plays a much more important role than the religious mentality of the Azeris. Traditionally secular, they tend to look at the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a conflict between states or nations, but not eschatological as it appears to or, at least, is publicly declared to be by the radical Armenian political neo-pagans.

In the context of our discussion of deeply-rooted archetypical stereotypes of national self-awareness of ethnicities, we should pay attention to a fundamentally important circumstance, i.e. the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict bears imprints of the millennia-old confrontation between the Semites and Aryans. It appeared in the Old Testament times when the Babylonians and then the Romans conquered the Middle East and North Africa and has been present in world history ever since. As distinct from the events that took place four thousand years ago, today it is the descendants of the Semites, not of the Aryans, who are the aggressors. Seen from this position, contemporary geopolitics shows that at the turn of the 21st century the Semitic peoples exhibited much more passion and aggression, amply confirmed by the never-ending troubles people from Arab countries stir up in Europe and the never-ending wars in the Middle East. The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is an inalienable part of these geopolitical processes and is, in fact, a "war of retribution" of the Armenian Semites against the Azeri Aryans. The interest of the Armenians in this war is encouraged (deliberately or not) by the radically minded national intelligentsia; it relies on the religious-eschatological ideas of neo-paganism cultivated among co-tribesmen scattered all over the world. This is how it looks to an Orthodox Christian. The above can be summed up by saying that the smoldering Armenian-Azeri confrontation around Nagorno-Karabakh is a vivid and classical example of a clash of civilizations. The fault line is much deeper and, therefore, much harder to negotiate than a religious fault line. It runs across five spheres: state, national, religious, cultural, and racial; this makes the Karabakh conflict very different from any other war known to mankind.

## The Dominants of the Conflict

The active phase of the Karabakh war (1991-1994) and its “smoldering” continuation was not a war between states since in Nagorno-Karabakh the army and the police of Azerbaijan fought not the army of the Republic of Armenia but organized forces of local separatists and international terrorists, among whom were Armenian servicemen from the regular forces of the United Armed Forces of the CIS and mercenaries from the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. This was an intervention of the coalition forces of the Armenian International, or Hay Dat, organized by ARF Dashnaksutiun, which assumed all sorts of hypostases and reincarnations, the most prominent among them being the notorious ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) which moved to the fore in the last quarter of the 20th century.

Aggression of the international Armenian forces against the Azeris of Nagorno-Karabakh was not a colonial war either in its classical or contemporary interpretation, that is, a war for natural resources or living space. After winning, the Armenians acquired neither new sources of raw materials nor new consumer markets; this victory did not change the vector or balance of trade and economic relations. This is especially true of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, which still exhibit many features of a feudal natural economy. In the last two decades, occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and its military, administrative, and economic infrastructure has cost the Armenians dearly; the investors gained nothing—neither money nor even minimal dividends.

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is not a civil war, nor is it a traditional war for self-identification (an anti-colonial war). The Armenian separatists of Artsakh show no desire to isolate the territory (liberated or conquered) they control. They are actively invading the political and economic space of Armenia and the neighboring countries with deeply rooted Armenian diasporas (Russia, Ukraine, and Abkhazia in particular). For this reason the Armenian side treats the conflict as part of military and economic expansion, a colonial cold war of sorts, to spread its geopolitical domination and economic dominance across the Transcaucasus, the Caucasus, and even Hither Asia as a whole.

Neither Armenia nor Artsakh profited from the victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict either in the foreign policy and military-strategic or economic spheres. The international community, as represented by U.N. institutions, looks at the Armenians as aggressors, occupants, and interventionists; this hypothetically may produce sanctions against Artsakh, non-existent twenty years ago when the war was still going on (no-flight zone over Armenia and Artsakh or arms and dual technologies embargo). In any case, any rational-minded observer can say that the war cost Armenia and the Armenians dearly, while the gains were minimal; and it will cost even more in future. This means that as seen from Erevan the conflict is of political and ideological, rather than of military and economic importance. This also means that the term “identity war” (Huntington) is fully applicable. In plain words, the Armenians started the war to preserve their national identity.

## Armenian Identity

The Armenians are one of the few peoples, the majority of whom live beyond the borders of their state (that is, beyond the borders of the Republic of Armenia). In other words, the numerical strength of the Armenian diaspora, the members of which have no citizenship in what is called “the historical homeland,” is much larger than the population of this state. Some ethnographers think that it is impossible to arrive at an exact number of Armenians because they are scattered all over the world, however approximate assessments (up to a hundred of thousands) are possible. I think that a

figure of about 11.5 million is more or less correct; today, the population of Armenia is under three million, a quarter of the total number of Armenians in the world.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was a unifying factor indispensable for consolidating the ethnicity scattered all over the world. We should bear in mind the historical conditions in which it was started: in the Soviet Union the citizens of Soviet Armenia and Armenians from other countries were divided by an iron curtain that created an ideological abyss between two communities of the same ethnicity. For a long time, the Armenians in the Soviet Union were guided by moral values and social landmarks very different from those that guided the Armenians in Lebanon, Syria, the U.S., and France. Disintegration of the Soviet Union and the national statehood of the former Soviet Armenians made their prompt integration into the worldwide Armenian community a priority, since the numerical strength of the diaspora has exceeded and exceeds the size of the Armenian population living in the Republic of Armenia. Armenia and the diaspora had to unite. The war over Artsakh (called the Karabakh war of 1991-1994 in recent history) was the main driving force. Indeed, post-Soviet Armenia with its weak economic and social infrastructure (in many places there is no running water) stood little chance without Artsakh of attracting money from the Armenian diaspora in the volumes that arrive today. In fact, the Karabakh war became the ticket for the former Soviet Armenians (in Armenia and Karabakh) to the world Armenian community. Today, Artsakh is Armenia's main instrument for extracting investments or subventions from the diaspora in order to maintain relative financial stability and wellbeing. This means that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will be preserved, in its present smoldering state, for as long as possible.

Armenia is a recipient country that lives on financial aid from abroad. The main source of its financial wellbeing, besides its own GDP, is regular donations from international Armenian NGOs which, in turn, collect donations from the Armenian diaspora to keep their "historical homeland" afloat. This brings Armenia up to \$10 billion every year. In other words, Armenia is not self-sufficient and, therefore, not a completely sovereign state; to go on living it needs outside help from the Armenian lobbies in other countries, the members of which are citizens of these countries. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia around Nagorno-Karabakh would have been settled long ago in full conformity with international law if the Armenian diaspora or its financial elite needed this. A settlement could have been achieved by suspending financial aid for several months. Nothing of the sort was done and nothing is being done; this means that there are extra-economic reasons behind the seemingly unjustified spending.

An answer to the question of why the sluggish Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is vitally important for the top crust of the Armenian diaspora would have explained why this seat of international tension in the Caucasus is seemingly irrationally preserved in its present state. It seems that these people regard Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) as an Ark of sorts, which in the near future will serve as a heaven amid the upcoming global geopolitical transformations and metamorphoses. Active Islamization of Europe and radicalization of political Islam in Hither Asia and the Balkans, which we have been watching for two decades now, are narrowing down the range of political impacts and related financial possibilities of the Armenian diaspora in the traditional countries—Syria, Lebanon, France, and the Balkan states. The dwindling numerical strength of the titular population groups in the main European countries and the growing share of Muslim immigrants from Africa and Asia (mainly from the Maghreb), together with the aggressive promotion of so-called liberal values there (unconditionally rejected by the Christian traditionalists and Islamic fundamentalists), will very soon exacerbate all social contradictions and add vigor to the social and political activity of the followers of fundamentalist religions, Christian Orthodoxy, and Islam in particular.

In twenty years' time, that is, one generation later, Western Europe will become completely Islamized. If events unfold according to the Bosnian, radical, scenario, the decline of the West (which Spengler predicted in 1918 in his book of the same title) will cause irreversible and relatively prompt removal of two ethnic and religious minorities (Armenians and Jews) traditionally hostile toward

Muslims from the continent. This may happen to the European Christians too; they, however, will have Russia as a safe place (probably if and when they publicly declare their devotion to the traditional Christian values). The Jews can count on Israel and the United States; while the European Armenians will be sheltered in the United States, Russia, and Ukraine with their strong Armenian diasporas, or in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) as the second Ark. This explains the lavish, and strategically important, funding by the Armenian diaspora of the continued Armenian presence in Karabakh via the Republic of Armenia, the building of an international airport in Khankendi that will receive large airliners, the unyielding position of Erevan at the talks on the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement at all levels, and the provocations of all sorts connected in one way or another with Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian presence there. Resettlement of Armenians from Syria has already begun to test the exodus mechanism.

## Armenians and Artsakh

Huntington wrote that “fault line wars go through processes of intensification, expansion, containment, interruption, and, rarely, resolution. These processes usually begin sequentially, but they also often overlap and may be repeated. Once started, fault line wars, like other communal conflicts, tend to take on a life of their own and to develop in an action-reaction pattern. Identities which had previously been multiple and casual become focused and hardened; communal conflicts are appropriately termed ‘identity wars’.”<sup>5</sup> He hinted that fault line wars (the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict belongs to this category) never reach resolution all by themselves since each of the sides (or one of them) interprets continued awareness of a war (even if not the war itself) as an expression of its national identity. In Armenians, the demonstration of national identity in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is most open and most impulsive: no Armenian is recognized as such by other Armenians if he admits that Nagorno-Karabakh (the second Ark of the Armenians) is legally Azeri, not Armenian, territory. This is easily explained by geopolitical reality: in the mid-term perspective the Armenians have no choice but to regard Artsakh as the Promised Land.

This calls for a profound psychological analysis of the Armenians’ attitude toward the conflict; in other words, we must turn to ethnopsychology.

Many Russian ethnographers and memoir writers pointed to the practically pathological greediness of the Transcaucasian Armenians as one of their most prominent immanent features; their striving for material wealth, however, never conflicted with religious ethics. They are not merely close-fisted—they are misers; for the smallest profit they are ready to go far, to what borders on, but does not violate, ethnic and religious prohibitions.<sup>6</sup> Translated into academic parlance this means that Armenians at all times and in all circumstances have been guided and are guided by their private or selfish interests both in their relations with individuals and with society; they, however, keep within their traditional norms of religious ethics.

I have already written that throughout the centuries the Armenians have been inspired and kept together by the eschatological dream of national statehood (either in the form of a revived theocratic Old Armenian Kingdom or a bourgeois Greater Armenia republic). Disintegration of the Soviet Union, which gave the Armenians a chance to set up the Republic of Armenia, deprived them, by the same token, of the irrational meaning of their collective national-religious existence. In the late 1980s, amid the turmoil of perestroika, Armenian fighters from the Middle East, Europe, and the United States

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<sup>5</sup> S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, p. 432.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example: N.F. Dubrovin, *op. cit.*, pp. 405-406.



moved to Armenia in great numbers to fight for the national idea against the Soviet troops. Later, when there were no longer Soviet troops in the Transcaucasus, they became the main striking force of the Armenian separatists of Nagorno-Karabakh. I do not mean to say that the armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was an accidental war. The Karabakh war of 1991-1994 was the logical outcome of the natural death of the ethnoreligious eschatological ideological dominant of Greater Armenia reincarnated. It died as the result of its practical implementation. If you like, this war was a product of the Armenians' collective idea of reinstating Greater Armenia.

Strange as it may seem, the newly acquired national statehood deprived the Armenians and the thinkers among them—the nationalist-minded intelligentsia—of the meaning of social existence. The dream disappeared together with the meaning of life. The fate of Paruyr Hayrikyan, dissident No. 1 in Soviet Armenia in the 1970s, may serve as a good example. He fought energetically and sincerely against the Soviet Union, then in post-Soviet times became a political outcast (in fact, he was an outcast in Soviet times) for most of his compatriots. This was the tragedy of a man who, inspired by an idea, proved in real life not to be the man he imagined himself to be, and found this hard to accept. The Republic of Armenia, which in the twinkling of an eye stopped being a dream and became harsh reality, left an intellectual and emotional vacuum in the minds of those who for many years had been inspired by it. The loss, to use a psychological term, of a dominant constellation or motivation for action caused frustration which, to be cured, required a fundamentally new eschatological idea. The war over Nagorno-Karabakh, which the Armenians anticipated as a triumph after the triumph, became this idea.

Despite the obvious military-technical success in the war, the Armenians suffered a crushing psychological defeat, which was very obvious to the nation's more rationally minded members. The creative and therefore fundamentally collectivist idea of Greater Armenia was replaced with a negative and therefore hopeless idea of a defensive war on the Karabakh front. In fact, this is an even gloomier and even more hopeless idea of survival in extreme conditions that people created for themselves; this is a situation in which man is left alone to come to grips with no matter what might happen. So far, the idea has meant something to its creators—the middle and older generations of Armenians; it says nothing to their children and grandchildren; this much is amply shown by the contacts of young Armenians in the social networking services.

Very much like their fathers and grandfathers, young Armenians are enthusiastic nationalists; they are more determined than their ancestors to divide the world into "us" and "them." They are intoxicated by the fact that Armenians live not only in Hither Asia, Europe, and North America, but have reached Australia, Oceania, Central Africa, and even Japan and China with their alien mentalities. This means that the younger generation of Armenians is no longer interested in its "historical homeland": today, the diaspora has become a center of attraction for the subjective interests of the younger generation and a dream reincarnated. They no longer associate their personal future with Armenia, its ideal has lost its former luster; young minds are concerned about the alternatives and possibilities of joining the diaspora; young souls have been conquered by the Wandering Jew. The pendulum of history has started moving in the opposite direction—Armenians have begun scattering all over the world, away from the ideal of Greater Armenia; they have started moving; this means that fairly soon the Republic of Armenia will weaken. I am not talking about next year or in two years' time; this will happen in the mid-term perspective, in the next decade. Armenia's economy and politics will slide down into stagflation—permanent stagnation, plummeting standards of living, and a gradual loss of all former values.

Armenia and Karabakh, to an even greater degree, will remain a distant moral ideal for the younger generation, which they are light-heartedly and remorselessly prepared to exchange for material wellbeing in the Armenian quarters of Glendale and Hollywood, Montebello or Burbank in the United States, Toronto or Montreal in Canada, to say nothing about Russia's South, Moscow, or St. Petersburg. The Armenian diaspora will collect money to help the Armenians in Armenia and

Nagorno-Karabakh, using, on numerous occasions, the state or local budgets of the countries and regions where they live (for example, since 2008, the Haut-de-Seine department, the General Council of which is headed by ethnic Armenian Patrick Devedjian, has been sponsoring the development of the communal infrastructure in agricultural areas of Armenia at the expense of French taxpayers). This money will be a compensation of sorts; it will buy the right to call oneself an Armenian and enjoy the related benefits without being a citizen of the Republic of Armenia and not living in it or Nagorno-Karabakh.

Current globalization has deprived the religious mystical idea of Greater Armenia of its ideological consequence of the continued existence of the Armenian ethnicity as a whole; it has become the ideology of a closed elite club of those who have power and money and who are ready to earn more doing business with their ilk, holding forth on the subjects commonly discussed in these circles and paying membership dues. Similar structures of social and business communication organized by the ethnoreligious principle need the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. We all know that people are brought closer together by their awareness of social belonging and collective responsibility. Among the Armenians this awareness was cultivated for centuries through the payment of the poll tax (*jizyah*). There are no longer Islamic, Russian imperial, or Soviet rulers in Armenia and Karabakh, but the practice of money gathering and money distribution for national needs has survived. Over the centuries this practice has become a rational and viable tradition which will not and cannot be abandoned. Allocations for common national needs are like ballast that adds very much needed stability to the Armenian ship in a sea of troubles, calamities, and wars. It remains to be seen how this money will be spent.

Donations of the Armenian diaspora cannot be used to feed the Armenians in Armenia lest they become its spongers. The diaspora cannot afford this because of their members' inborn stinginess and selfishness. Giving money to those who suffer because of a war is a horse of another color: for Armenians the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is a sort of psychological compromise between private and public interests; they need it to keep the centuries-old rules and forms of public relations alive in their ethnoreligious environment. This conflict allows the Armenians scattered across the world to retain their feeling of belonging while changing nothing in their habitual life style and habitual way of thinking. The Middle Eastern conflict plays a similar role for the world Jewry. Both conflicts allow the predominantly scattered peoples—Armenians and Jews—to preserve their national and religious unity and feeling of belonging, without which their ethnoreligious awareness would have collapsed.

When talking about the future of the Karabakh Armenians, who comprise a meager 2 percent of the total number of Armenians, we should bear in mind that we are talking about the mode of existence of the Armenian nation in its present form. We also need to keep in mind that the Republic of Armenia today is not the center, not even a tiny point of attraction for the Armenians of the diaspora. Armenia is ballast that makes the diaspora's ship more stable; Karabakh (Artsakh) is a Kingston valve that connects the ship to the sea. In other words, a man or an organization, who/which means Artsakh when talking about Karabakh, is a "friend of the Armenians" and can count on their support. If the man or organization publicly expresses a different opinion, he/it becomes subject to obstruction and is persecuted in the same way as the Armenians were persecuted in the Islamic world.

## Azeri Identity

I have written a lot about the Armenians' position on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, discussed the sources and motives of their actions, and tried to forecast the future. To complete the picture I will turn to the Azeri side and its position.

The Karabakh war of 1991-1994 greatly affected the self-identification or forming of identity (Huntington) of the contemporary Azeri ethnicity, which transformed the Azeris into a state-forming nation in the true sense of the word. It should be said that in Azerbaijan the process followed a vector very different from that of the ideology of the Armenians and most other peoples who acquired national and state independence in the 1990s (I have in mind the peoples of former Yugoslavia, Slovakia, Eritrea, the Central Asian countries, and partly Sudan). In most of these countries (former Yugoslavia, Eritrea, and Sudan) and on the Armenian side of the Karabakh conflict, fault line wars were the consequence and frequently the main result of national and religious polarization of the ethnicities involved. In Azerbaijan, on the other hand, the war produced a different effect: the country and the people acquired their national and state identity; they started looking at themselves not as Transcaucasian Muslims (something which the Armenians would like very much) but as a nation deliberately and consistently building its united polyethnic state.

It stands to reason that choice of the Azeris, as an ethnicity, of this vector of identification was not caused by external factors (the war). The choice was predetermined by the content and the course of ethnogenesis of the Azeri nation within the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union as a secular nation. Secularism strongly affected the historical destinies of the Azeri nation during the (civilizationally) short life of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic of 1918-1920, the first ever secular state in the Islamic ecumene. Islam was a factor of political identity in the relations between the Azeri ethnicity (in its contemporary state and political interpretation localized in the triangle formed by the Caspian, the Arax, and the Great Caucasian Range) and its northern and eastern neighbors. In the country itself Islam served as a background rather than an ideological (system-forming) factor; this explains why the process of self-identification among the Azeris was of a secular (national-state) rather than ethno-religious nature.

Samuel Huntington never grasped the secular specifics of the Azeri ethnic identity of recent times or, probably preferred to ignore it because it did not fit his clash of civilizations concept in the form of "fault line wars" caused among other things by the religious factor. It should be said, however, that he correctly pointed to this factor as the driving force behind Armenian separatism in Nagorno-Karabakh when he said that the "local groups" of Armenians there were "at best, embryonic states."<sup>7</sup> This, deliberately or not, answers the question of why neo-paganism serves as the cornerstone of national and religious identity for the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh: any society at the stage of clan-tribal relations cannot objectively appreciate the moral values of any of the world monotheist religions, be it Christianity, Islam, or Judaism.

No matter what Baku thinks about the Karabakh war, it was this war that transformed the Azeri ethnicity into a nation. In the early 1990s, Armenian separatism in Nagorno-Karabakh stirred up centrifugal trends in other regions of Azerbaijan. This revived separatist sentiments in the compact settlements of Lezghians and Avars. In the south, a self-proclaimed Talysh-Mugan autonomy appeared; local separatism was partly fed by the contradictions between the Shi'a and Sunnis, very typical of Islam. At that time, in the specific historical conditions, no single national-religious identity could have appeared in polyethnic Azerbaijan. Guided by its collective instinct of national and state self-preservation, society opted for civil-political identify and unity: the local people demonstrated that they were first adherents of statism, and only then secular nationalists, and, finally, Muslims. This explains why the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict does not completely fit the Huntington concept of the clash of civilizations as a confrontation between communities and religions. In this conflict, the fault line ran between the desire of the citizens of Azerbaijan to preserve their sovereign statehood and the Armenian desire to destroy it. The fault line divided ideas of statehood and ideas of anarchy, ideas of civilization and ideas of barbarity. Barbarity wins tactically, while civilization carries the

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<sup>7</sup> S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, p. 272.

final victory; this means that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an exception that proves the rule (Huntington's theory).

It was the Armenian International (Hay Dat) that drew Azerbaijan into the conflict. From the very beginning it was "catching up with the developments" or defending itself against Armenian attacks. Azerbaijan never held the strategic initiative either during the war or after its active phase ended. It seems that this happened because Baku demonstrated a very rational approach to the forms and methods of settlement based on the principles and norms of international law and diplomatic practice. Its traditional instruments and its legal demands to observe Azerbaijan's territorial integrity were not sufficiently supported by the instruments of force and coercion: the international community did not dare to use them against the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

Statism and secularism as two dominants of the Azeri national identity suggest that once returned to Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh would not be impulsively rejected by the country's social organism after decades of occupation. The nation, which managed to overcome an internal social and political split in wartime, is able to cope with the repercussions of a territorial split imposed from the outside. As distinct from those who rule Artsakh and Armenia and the establishment of the Armenian diaspora, official Baku has clear-cut plans for the reinstated territories of Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent, so far occupied, territories. This is confirmed by the clear and fully substantiated reintegration plans. They are absolutely realistic provided there is political will and enough material resources.<sup>8</sup> It seems that there is enough of both.

An analysis of these plans shows that reintegration of the conflict zone into the country's state and public life will be based not on the political principles Baku declares from time to time to create a liberal, that is, positive image outside the national borders. The economic, social, administrative, and humanitarian re-adjustment of the returned region will proceed according to the principles of statism and secularism, which will exclude any possibility of any type of autonomy (even national-cultural autonomy) for the Armenian minority in the future. This is not an anti-Armenian model; it fully corresponds to the present nature of the political regime of Azerbaijan that took shape in the conditions of and under the impact of the Karabakh war of 1991-1994 today tolerantly called the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

## Prospects for Settlement

Samuel Huntington wrote in his time that "as violence increases, the initial issues at stake tend to get redefined more exclusively as 'us' against 'them' and group cohesion and commitment are enhanced. Political leaders expand and deepen their appeals to ethnic and religious loyalties, and civilization consciousness strengthens in relation to other identities. A 'hate dynamic' emerges, comparable to the 'security dilemma' in international relations, in which mutual fears, distrust, and hatred feed on each other. Each side dramatizes and magnifies the distinction between the forces of virtue and the forces of evil and eventually attempts to transform this distinction into the ultimate distinction between the quick and the dead."<sup>9</sup> I can add that in the final analysis the frontline of any protracted war becomes a border which later appears on the political map of the world (the Korean Peninsula divided along the 38th parallel into the South and the North is one of the examples. The process began back in 1895).

By way of conclusion, I can say that Armenia alone needs the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. As distinct from the Azeris, the Armenians do not need Karabakh as a living space (they do not live

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<sup>8</sup> See: N. Muzaffar, E. Ismailov, *Basic Principles for the Rehabilitation of Azerbaijan Post-Conflict Territories*, CA&CC Press, Stockholm, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, p. 266.

there) or as a source of material boons (the money poured into the region will be never returned). For the Armenians, Karabakh or, to be more exact, Artsakh is another reincarnation of the metaphysical myth of Greater Armenia, a copy of the original that never existed; it is a simulacrum, a new semiotic sign that divides the world into allies and enemies of Artsakh, not Armenia. If there is no Artsakh, there will be no Armenia; if there is no Armenia, there will be no Armenian diaspora as we know it. We should register the fact and derive the only possible conclusion: no matter how hard Azerbaijan tries, no matter what new steps the international intermediaries of the Minsk Group of OSCE suggest, it is impossible in principle to return the region to *status ante bellum*. In both capitals, the solution to this territorial and military-political problem is seen as “all or nothing”; the Romans would have said *tertium non datur*. As the Armenian occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh goes on, Baku’s chances of reinstating its jurisdiction (actual and formal) by peaceful means are gradually disappearing. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh the “relatively soft” methods of settlement of similar geopolitical problems (such as mandates of the League of Nations or Anschluss) will be neither efficient nor legal.

I have written above that the fault line between the sides in this local conflict on a contemporary planetary scale is the deepest and has the sharpest edges. This may be precisely where humanitarian development is pushing mankind.

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## REVIVAL OF THE NORTH CAUCASIAN UMMA IN THE LIGHT OF RUSSIA’S FOREIGN POLICY FLAWS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

### A b s t r a c t

**T**he author looks at the extremely complicated, numerous, and contradictory aspects of the upsurge in Islamic awakening, the so-called Islamic renaiss-

ance, in the Northern Caucasus and offers his opinion of how the North Caucasian Muslims perceive the factor of Islamic globalism.

**KEYWORDS:** *Islamic renaissance, Islamic globalism, Islam in the Northern Caucasus, Islamic community of Russia.*