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**THE KARABAKH PROBLEM AS A GAP  
IN THE IDEOLOGICAL DOCTRINES  
OF THE RF AND THE USA/WEST <sup>2</sup>**

*The Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, a part of the historical region of Artsakh, became one of the first locations on the map of the former Soviet Union that believed in the process of “perestroika” and “glasnost” proclaimed by M. Gorbachev, in the ability to restore historical justice within the framework of Soviet legislation. After the bitter lessons of Chardakhlu and Sumgait, the Armenians realized the falsity of the postulates of Moscow's national policy and were among the first to oppose the chimera of the Soviets. Years passed, the USSR fell for the whole world, but did not leave Karabakh: here, like thirty years ago, there is still a blockade, food stamps, everlasting shooting and killings of civilians by Azerbaijani formations against the background of unaddressed statements by the international community. Nagorno-Karabakh, and with it Armenia also, once again became a point of application for both “high truths” and “low interests” of the powers of the world.*

**Roots of the modern ideological doctrines**

It is generally accepted that any country's policy is guided by its own interests, which are, in theory, limited by its own international obligations, principles and traditions of international law.

Despite the existence of the codified normative framework for international relations and universally recognized principles and traditions of their implementation, the concept of “national interests” still lies in the sphere of subjective interpretations of what exactly proceeds from the interests of a particular state. The understanding of these national interests by the society and the authorities depends on many factors – history, ethnic composition of the state, geographical location, economy, availability/lack of resources, etc., up to the personal ambitions and whims of the ruler or leaders. Theoretically, the promotion of national interests involves the implementation of constant activities for the benefit of the country both within its and abroad, and the methods of promotion can vary from trade and allied relations, dynastic marriages up to the forcible restoration of trampled honor, to which, once, one of the most famous works of the Ancient World under the authorship of Homer was dedicated.

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A slightly different logic operates in the case of empires, which, by virtue of their formation philosophy, differed from ordinary states. If ordinary countries did not shy away from imposing force on others by the "right of the strong" in the process of advancing their interests (mainly the preservation or acquisition of territories and resources), empires, doing the same, tried to fix their steps with ideological assumptions according to which conquest was no longer aggression, but benevolence.

While the tactics of the conventional state traditionally implied a short-term solution of problems by force, empires tried to ensure a long-term presence of their power in a new territory without provoking resistance of local elites and population. And therefore, they provided two fundamental parameters the presence of which allowed the old and the new subjects to live and work – *legality* and *security*. It was the ability to enforce the law, the justice of which has always been weighed against the current system of sacral values, and the security, that was so understandable to people in the era of “the law of power”, that underlay the empires known from the history of mankind. And that is why the empires ruthlessly dealt with various kinds of robbers, pirates and uprisings violating the “idyll”. Similar principles underlay the Pax Romana, and their implementation was claimed by Qing Shi Huang, the Sasanian Empire, Byzantium, Charlemagne, the Pope and even the Ottoman sultans.

The establishment of law and ensuring security required empires to renounce trivial imposition of their will for further enrichment. Henceforth they were to become bearers and defenders of values. The development of political thought, coupled with the search for an ideal society, led to an evolutionary change in the ideological component of the policy of world powers, as they are commonly called today. The management of many nations that differ in terms of culture, religion, the level of development of science, education and public institutions, requires the development of a universal value systems, understandable and acceptable, if not for all subjects, then for their maximum number. The case of spreading and establishing such values became the basis of the “American Messianism”, when the state, in fact conquering other countries, is no longer an aggressor, but a “bulwark of freedom” delivering this freedom and democratic values to the locals. “Freedom to German peasantry” was delivered by Napoleon. Later, the Bolsheviks came up with a similar concept, claiming to introduce not only the rule of law and security, but also another fundamental element – the social justice in a classless society. Subsequently, the presence of a unified, universalist understanding of value systems based on the primacy of basic rights and freedoms, and, of course, material interests (it is always a must) on which the same EU, *inter alia*, is constructed, made possible the “voluntary reunification” of countries in new style empires with the common understanding of foreign and security policy, cooperation in the field of justice and internal affairs.

## **The Karabakh problem and the ideological doctrines of the “Bipolar World”**

Contrary to the popular opinion, introduced into the Karabakh discourse by mainly Western experts, the Karabakh problem in chronological terms originates not from the proclamation of the NKR on September 2, 1991, but much earlier. Being the only Christian autonomy within a Muslim Soviet Republic and, again, the only one in terms of absence of the name of the titular people (Armenians) in the title of the ethno-territorial formation, the NKAO’s very existence was a challenge to the dominant ideology based on the postulate of a “united Soviet nation”. The Artsakhi people did not give in to assimilation in the surrounding Caucasian-Tatar substrate – the carrier of a different culture and values, into one-unified “Azerbaijani people”. At the same time, against the background of the creeping “Azerbaijanization” of Armenian settlements in the NKAO and beyond, carried out under Bolshevik slogans, excesses constantly arose, which were subject to resolution within the framework of strict Soviet jurisdiction. Which, in practice, was opposed by the Soviet ideology, according to which “in the socialist family of peoples” there could be no violations of rights on national basis, and therefore any mention of such violations was a “slander” against Marxism-Leninism, and therefore – a manifestation of nationalism “alien to Soviet people”.

The unwillingness of the Soviet system to resolve a real-life problem gave blank check to the “defenders” of the Leninist National policy and, as a result, made possible the egregious pogroms of Armenians in Sumgait, Kirovabad, Baku and other cities of the AzSSR, which showed the failure of the Soviet state to protect its own citizens. The January massacre of Armenians in Baku in 1990 and the Kremlin’s readiness to make a deal with the murderers from the Azerbaijan People’s Front and the Azerbaijani Communist Party in exchange for silence of “Azerbaijani victims of January” showed the level of moral and political degradation of the state, totally unable to provide legality, security or even justice. Despite the fact that the “January of 1990” was declared in Azerbaijan the page of the struggle of the Azerbaijani people for independence and against Communist arbitrariness<sup>3</sup>, it did not prevent the Azerbaijanis themselves from actively voting (75.1% participation) in the All-Union referendum on March 17, 1991 for the preservation of the USSR, providing more than 93% of “Yeah” votes<sup>4</sup>. Apparently, this fact does not particularly bother the official delegations of Baku guests visiting the relevant memorial, which,

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example: Baku residents remember the "Black January" 1990: "I still don't know what freedom is", Maharram Zeynalov (in Rus), BBC, Baku, January 20, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-51151021> (download date: 26.06.2023).

<sup>4</sup> The information of the USSR Referendum Central Commission of the On the results of the USSR Referendum held on 17 March 1991 (in Rus.), [https://www.gorby.ru/userfiles/file/referendum\\_rezultat.pdf](https://www.gorby.ru/userfiles/file/referendum_rezultat.pdf) (download date: 24.06.23).

incidentally, was erected on the graves of Armenian victims of Baku pogroms of 1905-06.

The apotheosis of bankruptcy of “Lenin’s National policy” by Gorbachev and his team became a large-scale so-called “*Operacia Koltso*” (“Operation Ring”), during which by the joint efforts of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the KGB of the USSR, as well as the Azerbaijani OMON (Special Police Force), involving dozens of Soviet Army tanks and helicopters, the population of 19 Armenian villages in and around the NKAO was deported. The expulsion was accompanied by looting, murders and kidnappings of people of Armenian nationality. And here, it seems, it was no longer possible to refer to the discourse involved in relation to the Sumgait and Baku massacres: “we had no time”, “we were late just for several hours”, “some hooligan elements”, etc. Translated into Moscow’s popular paradigm of “struggle against fascism”, this means that the Kremlin has used tanks and troops against the Artsakhi people, whose participation in the Great Patriotic War was 1 out of every 3, while the Azerbaijani “lions” took part in it in proportion 1 out of 19. The forcible deportation of residents of Armenian settlements inside and outside Nagorno-Karabakh took place against the backdrop of a total blockade by Azerbaijani militants of the Lachin Road, the only land route connecting the NKAO with the ArmSSR. Even then, the largest nuclear power in the world demonstrated its inability to ensure the unhindered movement of people and humanitarian cargo even within its own – then Soviet territory.

Taken together, the Kremlin’s remarkable softness and spinelessness towards the terror and arbitrariness of Baku against the Armenian population of the former AzSSR ruined not only the myth of the “socialist brotherhood of peoples”, but also dispelled the image of the formidable power that occupied 1/6 of the land. Small Karabakh became a litmus test that clearly demonstrated the bankruptcy of the Soviet ideology, as well as its actual inability to ensure the basic requirements of legality and security. And even the decision of the Constitutional Court of the USSR on the “lawfulness” of the NKAO’s withdrawal from the AzSSR, adopted at the very end of the Soviet Empire, could not change anything: the Gorbachev team was too late to realize that its “Byzantine games” with the Baku elites bypassed the legality and morality leading the state to collapse. Its disintegration has become irreversible.

Somewhat different, for objective reasons, was the strategy of the United States and countries, which are commonly referred to as the “Collective West”. First, they were not burdened by the legal formalities resulting from the treaty basis for the creation of the Soviet Union, nor by the requirements of its Constitution, much less by the theoretical considerations of Marxism-Leninism. Considering the ideological defeat of the “Soviet idea” as a necessary element of the final defeat of Moscow in the global “Cold War”, the Western actors did not miss an opportunity to oppose the arbitrariness of Moscow and Baku by their own positive discourse, refined under “human rights”. Appropriate information support of political processes related to

NK by different, as it was common to say then, [radio]“voices”, as well as on the pages of leading Western and world media, the adoption of declarations by individual countries and European structures, as well as some demarches – up to the relevant normative acts (for example, the 907 Amendment to the “Freedom Support Act” in the USA<sup>5</sup>) created a sharp dissonance between the words and deeds of the Kremlin partocrats and the Western social and political circles. The general political and informational background around the Karabakh issue was supplemented by the similar perception of the Karabakh agenda on the part of the Russian human rights activists, the socio-political circles of the former Soviet Baltic States, as well as the public, human rights structures and individual figures from the Western countries. Thus, on 18 January 1990, the European Parliament adopted a resolution “On the situation in Armenia”, calling on the European Council of Foreign Ministers and the Council of Europe to intervene with the Soviet government to provide immediate assistance to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. On the same day, a group of American senators sent a letter to Mikhail Gorbachev expressing concern about the pogroms of Armenians in Baku and calling for the reunification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia<sup>6</sup>.

The situation changed quite dramatically after the formally fixed dissolution of the USSR and the declaration of independence by the former Soviet republics, including Azerbaijan. In the context of the Karabakh problem this led to a certain shift of emphasis in the Western countries: the sympathetic circles gradually changed their positions from “anti-Soviet” to “anti-Russian” with the simultaneous disappearance of “pro-Karabakhi”. As a symptomatic example, we can mention the metamorphoses that took place with the same Baltic “democrats”, who, having become anti-Russian, began to unanimously vote for various pro-Azerbaijani formulations on the European platforms<sup>7</sup>.

The hated Stalinist heritage has ceased to cause negative sentiments regarding the NK problem, and problems of “human rights” have lost their vital relevance. And even the corruption case initiated in the Federal Court of New York, involving Heydar and Ilham Aliyev, suspected of receiving a bribe of at least \$150 million<sup>8</sup> in one episode, has not become a point of crucial efforts by the US to eradicate this phenomenon, but rather, as a backup lever of influence on the ruling family of

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<sup>5</sup> See the Azerbaijani position on topic: The notorious 907th amendment and the problem of the Karabakh settlement (in Rus.), Teymurkhanly F., Mirror. –2009. –22 July. –C.1, [http://www.anl.az/download/megale/zerkalo/zerkalo\\_iyul2009/87292.htm](http://www.anl.az/download/megale/zerkalo/zerkalo_iyul2009/87292.htm) (download date: 26.06.23).

<sup>6</sup> A mourning procession in memory of the victims of the pogroms of the Armenian population in Baku was held in Yerevan (in Rus.), January 19, 2009, 20:00, – IA Regnum, <https://regnum.ru/news/1112440> (download date: 26.06.23).

<sup>7</sup> For US policy in the region, see: US Policy in the South Caucasus: Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan (in Rus.). Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky, Paul Stronski February 13, 2018, Brochure, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/13/ru-pub-75514> (download date: 25.06.23).

<sup>8</sup> EurasiaNet, US indictment implicates top Azerbaijani officials in corruption case, 11 September 2003, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/46f258b18.html> (download date: 26.06.2023).

Azerbaijan. As a result, American and European media and NGOs, known for their ties with the authorities of their countries, began to simultaneously reiterate the need to fight against the “KGB Colonel” Putin, while persistently ignoring the KGB General Heydar Aliyev, write about “dictator Putin” avoiding such epithets against Ilham Aliyev. The “fig leaf” of Western propaganda became a number of such narratives about Azerbaijan: “a newly emerging market”, “a road bypassing Russia”, “an alternative source of energy resources”, “an important component of the European energy security”, etc. The lobbyists who voiced these kinds of political *mantras* were political scientists and researchers hired by few institutes, who appeared out of nowhere and disappeared. Although maybe someone else remembers the fiery speeches of the same Brenda Schaffer.

### **“This is different” in the Karabakh problem**

The completion of the military phase of the Karabakh conflict and the subsequent years “of relative peace before the 44-Day War marked not only the active establishment of ties with Baku, but also the emergence of a number of identical cases, which found their solution outside the formula of the Karabakh problem. For example, Bosnia and Herzegovina was removed from Serbia, followed by Kosovo and Metohija. At the time, when asked about the existence of parallels between the Balkan scenarios and the Karabakh problem, the former US OSCE MG Co-Chair M. Braiza tried to explain that “Kosovo is different”, and failed to clearly explain what, in fact, this “different” really was<sup>9</sup>. However, such a formulation in the context of the Karabakh problem did not become an exclusive “skate” of the State Department and was adopted into the political and diplomatic treasury of the masters of diplomacy of the Denezhnaya Lane.

Despite numerous analyses of the essence and dynamics of the negotiation process, the basic issue on its agenda is unfairly ignored, namely, the issue of recognition by Azerbaijan of the right of the people of NK to self-determination. The right enshrined in the UN Charter and wherever possible, was subject, according to the world powers, to mandatory coordination with Baku. A similar right was not envisaged for the same Serbia or Georgia. And the Russian-American tango on Nagorno-Karabakh, which took place against the backdrop of “partial” recognition, in defiance of each other, of the independence of Bosnia and Kosovo, Ossetia and Abkhazia, turns into passionate lambada, as soon as it comes to the sacramental “And what about Karabakh?”. And this despite the fact that in the above-mentioned cases the partial recognition was preceded by an armed conflict, as a result of which a region declared “separation in salvation”. In case of NK, everything is exactly the opposite – as a result of the conflict, it is being aggressively driven into a genocidal

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew Bryza: Decision on Kosovo cannot predetermine issue of priority of territorial integrity (in Rus.), July 30, 2007, 18:32, – IA Regnum, <https://regnum.ru/news/863552> (download date: 26.06.2023).

state, which carried out this aggression against it. This is probably what Mr. Bolton insisted on speaking about the need for Armenians to abandon their “historical stereotypes”. Today the ideologically inconvenient Karabakh conflict interferes with ideologically verified speeches from high stands, and therefore over the past years the term “Nagorno-Karabakh” has been purposefully excluded from the list of “self-proclaimed”, “unrecognized” or “partially recognized” entities. Because *this is different*. The formula “This is different”, ironically voiced by the speaker of the RF Foreign Ministry to point the “double standards” of the West on a variety of issues of the global Russian-American confrontation is not something new to M. Zakharova<sup>10</sup> herself, who demonstrates the mastery of verbal equilibrium, as soon as it comes to analogies on the Karabakh issue. Thus, the media-face of the Russian diplomacy, which would denounce the demolition of Soviet soldiers’ memorials in Eastern Europe and the Baltics, could not clearly explain the tolerance of her ministry about the destruction of similar monuments in the deported Armenian villages of the “friendly” Azerbaijan, primarily in Chardakhlu. She could not say anything, but her body language was clear – “this is different”. Just as the case of the barbaric destruction of a Christian, and in fact – the Russian *Montinsky Cemetery* in friendly Baku. The destruction of another cemetery, a historical monument of medieval Armenian Christian culture at Nor Jugha of Nakhijevan, also did not lead to the righteous anger of international non-governmental and governmental structures and even the UN itself: after all this is not the Buddha statue in Bamiyan, *this is different*.

The variability of Russian approaches to the issue of self-determination has clearly been demonstrated in the context of the processes related to the referendum in Crimea, the fate of the LPR and the DPR. Minister Lavrov’s earnest expression about the absence of alternatives to the independence of these territories, which were culturally, ethnically and spiritually connected with “mainland” Russia, against the background of the Karabakh problem was no longer the face of the power, but the interface of the ordinary country, selectively invoking principles of international law acceptable to it. As a whole, the RF diplomacy of “S. Lavrov Era” marked the beginning of a withdrawal from the centuries-old intellectual and ideological foundations of the Russian presence in the South Caucasus. Once a young power, positioning itself as a stronghold of Eastern Christianity and pretending to become the “Third Rome”, gives up its historical responsibility for the region and steadily slides to the “Second” Byzantium, known for its palace intrigues, coups, corruption, treachery, and short-sightedness of the political elites.

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<sup>10</sup> For comparison see, for example, the situation in Kosovo according to Zakharova: Briefing by MFA Spokesperson Maria Zakharova (in Rus.), Moscow, June 21, 2023 года /On the degradation of the situation in Kosovo/, [https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/news/1890329/#5](https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1890329/#5) (download date: 26.06.2023).

## The 44-Day War and peace

The September 2020 war helped to crystallize several important realities. First of all, the war showed the ability of the international terrorist to conduct active combat operations against the interests of the “strategic ally” of the RF, especially in the “zone of historical responsibility of Russia”. Moscow, which claims to be a stronghold in the struggle against international Islamic fundamentalism in Syria, has largely ignored the fact that Azerbaijan has attracted various kinds of radicals of Syrian origin. Even the words of the head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence, who mentioned this fact, remained simply words with “no action”<sup>11</sup>. And Moscow – as the “Third Rome”, did not bother itself by getting into the fight, even though it was a part of a strategic alliance treaty.

As a result, the political short-sightedness of Moscow’s decision-makers put it, as a player, in front of the prospect of a final squeezing out of the region in accordance with the main thesis of the Western narrative that “Russia’s presence in the region is based on conflicts”, which are needed for her to stay here. And therefore: “No Russia, no conflicts”. Incidentally, this approach implied that the peoples involved in the conflict are very similar and close, equally peaceful and guilty, and in the absence of an external negative (Russian) impact, could immediately find a common language and live in peace. Today, the main promoters of this idea, and above all, the “black gardener” Tom de Vaal, who advocated the direct dialogue of societies and the “second track diplomacy”, in the light of the events of recent years, is no longer relevant even to his granters. Another important milestone of the “Lavrov era” was the triumphal return to the region of Turkey<sup>12</sup>, the opposition of which for centuries was the main goal of the regional policy of the Russian emperors and empresses. Meanwhile, Turkey, which is legally established in Azerbaijan, has even received from Moscow a legitimate right to monitor the mission of the Russian Peacekeeping Forces stationed in Nagorno Karabakh. It is about the Joint Russian-Turkish monitoring center in Aghdam, which has never disproved the numerous stuffing of the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry about the alleged “provocations by the Karabakh forces”.

Attempts to explain this absurdity as a “forced measure” are hardly appropriate, as Russia, which is waging a tough proxy war with the world’s leading powers in Ukraine does not allow there any similar “deflections”.

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<sup>11</sup> See "The Real Beasts": Who Came to Fight in Karabakh and Why Urgently Wanted to Go Home, 21:54 19.10.2020 (refreshed: 22:02 19.10.2020), <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20201019/Nastoyaschie-zveri-kto-tayno-priekhal-voevat-v-Karabakh-i-pochemu-srochno-zakhotelos-domoy-24983339.html> (download date: 25.06.23).

<sup>12</sup> See: Russia's influence in the South Caucasus is not a matter of prestige, but of security, 21:10 27.05.2023 (refreshed: 23:24, 27.05.2023), <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20230527/vliyanie-rossii-na-yuzhnom-kavkaze--eto-vopros-ne-prestizha-a-bezopasnosti-60254816.html> (download date: 25.06.23).



Meanwhile, ranting about the struggle against the collective West and the “NATO aggressive bloc” Russia with its own hands allowed a NATO member to approach to its “soft underbelly” – the Main Caucasian Range, coming close to the inevitable “spinelessness” due to its political “flexibility”. After all, we are talking about Turkey, which “allowed” the murder of the Russian ambassador, shot down a Russian military plane and granted amnesty to the murderer of her pilot. About the state whose head was saved from a military coup due to timely information from the Russian side.

Further processes in the zone of responsibility of the Russian Peacekeeping Force in the NK – the seizure of territories by Azerbaijani forces, killing of civilians in front of peacekeepers, the closure of transport communications by Azerbaijan, deprivation of the electricity and gas supply to NK, the establishment of a checkpoints and the seizure of territories already within the RA itself have shown the complete failure “on the ground” of the political and diplomatic tools of the main non-regional player. Fans of the “diplomatic talks” with Azerbaijan on opening of Lachin Corridor for Armenians today found themselves in a situation when they were forced to beg for the possibility of cargo passage for the Russian peacekeepers.

The above-mentioned algorithms of Russian policy call into question the whole pathos of narratives such as “Where we are – there is peace”, “We do not abandon our friends” etc. Today the Karabakh problem becomes “a suitcase without a handle” of Russian political and ideological thought, including promoted figures *a la* Dugin: recognizably a Russian with his gracious appearance, but to put it mildly, frankly “alien” in the content of their speeches. The ideological helplessness of the Russian side is underlined by the activation of a number of biased figures, positioned as experts close to the Kremlin. Inflamed by a sudden “love” for Heydar Aliyev and R. Erdogan the “talking heads” broadcast Azeri-Turkish narratives to the Russian society, trying to convince the audience that “*Russia has no reason to fight for Armenians*”, which only aggravates the situation. Such sharp and categorical Lobanov-Rostovsky style productions (“*Do we really need the second Bulgaria?*”) do not reflect the true expectations from Russia, but also are a direct call to abandon its “historical mission”. And also, if you like, an acknowledgment that from now on, in a geopolitical confrontation for any strategically important region, Moscow can be “outdone” by any conditional person from streets. And this is definitely a failure, even with the special piety of the Russian establishment towards the “revolutionaries” with incomplete university education.

The situation is no better on the “Western (ideological) front”. And here we are talking about several levels of impact. First of all, as the Russian Federation itself, through the high representatives of the Western powers repeatedly declared “*impossibility of solving the Karabakh problem by armed means*” and called for preparing the peoples of the region for peace and compromise. As history has shown, among trained there were mainly Armenians. And later, the powers calmly

accepted the aggressive war initiated by Azerbaijan. Actually, this step by Baku, taken under the conditions of the *de jure* ongoing negotiation process under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group, including Russia, the USA and France, was a blow to the reputation of all three, but with one significant difference. If for certain circles in Moscow Armenia at that moment was perceived as a “country with the winning orange (“velvet”) revolution”, then for the collective West, in theory, it should have been about a “country with winning democracy”. Armenia’s attempt “to get into the Western club of civilized countries” – the eternal formula of “democratic changes” all over the world, not only did not open “embraces” of the West to Armenia, but did not stop the autumn aggression of 2020, which did not even deserve a UN Security Council resolution. And then the events of May 2021, September 2022 and etc. took place.

Strengthening of the Russian-American confrontation after the start of the Russian Special Military Operation in Ukraine has added spice to the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh. The countries of the collective West waging an all-out “sanctions war” against Russia and personally V. Putin and his entourage due to the “aggression against Ukraine” demonstrate the wonders of tolerance in the case of I. Aliyev, to whom aggression, in fact is not forbidden. Despite several large-scale aggressive attacks on the territory of the Republic of Armenia; constant shelling of its civilians and settlements; the total blockade of Artsakh leading to humanitarian catastrophe (including the explosion of gas and electric communications); refusal to allow international fact-finding missions to visit Nagorno-Karabakh; destroying and destruction of historical, cultural and religious heritage of Artsakh, and, in addition, the verdict of the International Court of Justice, representatives of the world and the European democracy are limited to the expressing “deep” and other kinds of concern, relentlessly sending “clear messages” regarding “impermissibility” of similar steps from Baku. However, against the background of Ursula Von der Leyen’s statements about the importance of Azerbaijan as a reliable partner in ensuring Europe’s energy security<sup>13</sup>, the rest of the “critical” rhetoric evokes thoughts about the caravan, which continues its way regardless of anyone and anything.

Leaving aside diplomatic language, the collective West at least sees no obstacles to the forcible incorporation of Nagorno Karabakh into a genocidal state led by dictator Aliyev. Moreover, he almost insists on it in plain text. The situation is painfully reminiscent of the beginning of World War II, when the West and Soviet Russia, in their perennial confrontation, tried to negotiate separately with Hitler at the expense of the opponent. Chamberlain’s “fig leaf” designed to bring “peace for a whole generation” and the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact clearly demonstrated the

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<sup>13</sup> Naira Badalyan, Ursula von der Leyen called Azerbaijan a reliable country of Europe (in Rus.), ArmInfo, Saturday, December 17 2022 15:06, [https://arminfo.info/full\\_news.php?id=73506](https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=73506) (download date: 25.06.23).

readiness and ability of the world powers to deal with the devil himself in the name of their own interests. The willingness to turn a blind eye to crime and lawlessness has led, as a result, to their multiple increase, to deaths and destructions. Today, in their desire to lure Azerbaijan to their side, the powers are ready to sacrifice a lot, but the Armenians and Armenia will have to pay for it. And all these happens in a situation when Armenia is least of all ready to confront these challenges, both in terms of the quality of its power and the amount of its resources. The Karabakh problem will have consequences for all the parties involved. Born and survived in the USSR, it remains an indicator of the modern system of international relations, a measure of the voiced and real values of the powers. It will affect both Russia and the West.

Thus, a country that voluntarily renounces its historical mission as a defender of the rights and freedoms of Greeks, Serbs, Armenians, Georgians and others, by which it than had actually legitimized its involvement into global upheavals, is threatened by the prospect of a geopolitical rollback to the Grand Knyaz era with a huge queue of those who will appear for “their land” in Russia itself. Whether Moscow wants it or not, but after the Balkans Stepanakert remains the point of no return – Manazkert of Russian statehood, a retreat from which will deprive Russia of its ideological and historical significance. At the same time, unlike all other actors, she will have to answer the question of the history: “How it turned out that those who once called you to help (Armenians of Karabakh) were persecuted even in your time and now, before your very eyes, are on the verge of annihilation?”.

And the things are not much better in the West. The US is on the verge of an identity crisis: the advanced country of the democratic world, as it turned out, was ruled by “racists” for centuries and cost its power on the oppression of various segments of its population, and therefore – initially could not bring the light of civilization and freedom to others. Having become the global platform of radical liberal movements, the country faces a prospect of a bubbling civil confrontation between those who are ready to start questioning everything that used to be values and those who do not want to give them up. The transition from “democratic power of the majority” towards the “tyranny of minority” is tangible in Europe. The rejection of the basic values, common to all “Abrahamic religions”, has led to a point when the countries who had been spreading the “European civilization” for centuries, can no longer overcome the internal segregation and integrate millions of immigrants from the Middle East, accepted by them with open arms. The removal of Gaddafi and the “Arab spring” did not bring peace to the East, but destroyed the barrier that shielded the Old World from radical Islamic movements. And if one can openly and with impunity destroy traditional Christian civilization in places like Nagorno Karabakh, what can prevent “jihad” against European “infidels” who do not defend their brothers-in-faith and do not respect their own laws?

Historically Armenia and Armenians, including Artsakh, over the last century and a bit more, being at the very junction of tectonic plates of the global policy, used to be the stumbling block for many and the first to find themselves at the epicenter of the instability waves, that soon would covered the others as well. And today, by all indications, the world is again on the verge of global upheavals, which is signaled by the situation happening with a handful of surrounded and blockaded people who wish to live freely on their land remaining faithful to their values and traditions, as it has been for millennia<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> For the position of Artsakh, see: Karabakh Courier, *Information and Analytical Bulletin of the Representation of the Republic of Artsakh (NKR) in the Russian Federation* (in Rus.), 3 (74) October 2021, [http://russia-artsakh.ru/sites/default/files/2021-10/kk\\_3\\_74\\_2021.pdf](http://russia-artsakh.ru/sites/default/files/2021-10/kk_3_74_2021.pdf) (download date: 26.06.23).

