

ARMENIAN ISSUE IN PRESENT-DAY WORLD POLITICS



The Armenian issue has been on the agenda of various international conferences and forums for many decades and plenty of literary works have been published in this regard. Initially a local and regional issue, the Armenian problem has essentially assumed a global scale, but the actual causes of its emergence are not being explicitly referenced. This is often explained by a double standard policy, however, this explanation could barely be deemed profound and comprehensive enough. The issue evidently entails a host of ethnic, religious and psychological reasons, which are manifested both in the Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations.

The West backs Armenia as it is guided by **Christian solidarity and relapses of "cross"-based thinking, which urges it to free "the tomb of the Lord" from infidels.** In particular, this is stressed by Turkish author Metin Aydogan, who researches the 1,600-year-long history of the Western-Turkish relationship. Aydogan concluded that over 1,300 years – from the Fall of the Western Roman Empire to the Treaty of Karlowitz of 1699, the Turks enjoyed undisputed dominance as they had essentially crushed the troops of European kings in all the eight crusades (1, p. 181-182). Azerbaijani author Arastu Habibbayli also **termed the crusade wars as Western stand-off not just with the East, but with the Turks in**

“Gudok” newspaper with a story about clashes on interethnic grounds in Baku. 1907. National Museum of History of Azerbaijan

particular, as it was not the Arabs or Persians but the Turks who fought the crusaders (5, p. 125-126).

Samuel Huntington, a well-known US political and social scientist, indicated that the Turks, having accessed the European and Mediterranean stage soon after the crusades, first undermined the Byzantium’s power and then seized vast territories in the Balkans and northern Africa. The Ottomans stormed and seized Constantinople in 1453 and besieged Vienna in 1599 (6, p. 308-309). From then onward, the Turks began to be perceived in European conscience not so much as ordinary people, but rather as “the scourge of God”, as merciless persons who carry death and destruction (7, p. 103-104). A couple of centuries thereafter, in the late 19th century, when public awareness was at a high level, British Prime Minister Gladstone claimed, “*Turks are the only human beings devoid of anything human...*” (1, p. 185). In 1919, his successor, Lloyd George, alleged, “*A nation of barbarians and pillagers, the Turks are a cancerous tumor on the body of mankind. They are an ulcer in the tissue of the land that they rule...*” (1, p. 185). Such mythical perceptions, rooted in the European conscience, along with purely political factors, contributed to turning the “Armenian issue” into one of the pivotal issues on the agenda of Western powers.

Another driving force that facilitated the emergence and dissemination of this issue was **the guilt complex toward the Jewish people that has taken hold in the Western conscience, which stems from the centuries-long tradition of anti-Semitism in Europe, the incidents, pogroms and deportation of Jews as well as their segregation that it has caused in different periods of history.** The pogroms and genocide of Jews, the Holocaust, committed during World War II in Nazi Germany and a number of other European countries (4, p. 105-106), were a clear contemporary manifestation of this trend, which stemmed from the biblical legend about the killing of Jesus by the Jews (2, p. 381). **The myth on so-called genocide of Armenians allegedly committed by Muslim Turks long before the Holocaust emerged under the influence of the mentioned “guilt complex” and the consequential psychological tension.**

An argument is also being circulated that the notorious gas chambers where hundreds of thousands of Jews were executed by the Nazis had been initially



invented by the Turks and Hitler further borrowed the idea from them (11). Thus, a report of the “scientific research service” under the German Bundestag, released on April 3, 2000, claimed, “*The methods of mass extermination, employed by the German National Socialists, were actually used back in 1915 by the Turks against Armenians. The Armenians were being exterminated and forced to toil; people were stuffed into railway carriages slated for cattle and used to conduct barbaric medical experiments. Armenian servicemen and civilians were being infected with various viruses. In Trabzon, Armenian children were taken to special rooms under the pretext of giving them a bath where they were asphyxiated by poisonous gas. We hereby conclude that Adolf Hitler had comprehensive information about the genocide committed by the Turks and deemed it as a guide to action.*” (1, p. 185).

However, Dagobert Raney, a US historian of Jewish descent, whose parents were killed by the Nazis during World War II, noted that “*Hitler was learning all this from the church. Whereas in the past, the Church burned Jewish women and children alive, Hitler inflicted a quicker death upon them by first killing them in gas chambers and then burning them.*” (4, p. 109).



Map of the Caucasus region. 1917. The map clearly shows that most of the geographical locations in present-day Armenia have Azerbaijani names.



Map drawn up by modern Armenian ideologists showing Armenia's territorial claims

Evidently, the US historian essentially **lays the blame for the Nazis' crimes on the Christian Church, without saying a single word to accuse the Turks**, not to mention a so-called genocide of Armenians.

In accordance with the Treaty of Sevres of August 10, 1920, which concluded World War I, an Armenian state was to be established in the eastern parts of Asia Minor and a Kurdish one in the north of the present-day Iraq and Syria (8, p. 109). As the victor, Britain presented itself as the sole benefactor and defender of the Armenian and Kurdish population in the east of Asia Minor. According to the British foreign policy concept, in the past, Kurdish tribes were vested the task to keep Armenians in fear, although in turn, they faced pressure from the Ottoman authorities. In keeping with this concept, **the British side had made a significant effort to set up an Armenian-Kurdish anti-Turkish alliance in the region**, even during the conclusion of the Treaty of Sevres (10, p. 209-210). In fact, this agreement was aimed at splitting up not only the Ottoman Empire but also Turkey in Asia Minor. It is not a mere coincidence that the Grand National Assembly, the parliament of the Republic of Turkey, which was established soon thereafter, declared a nationwide call to active duty against the Treaty of Sevres (9, p. 86).

German priest Johannes Lepsius, who was the author of the books "Armenia and Europe: a challenge to Christian states" (1897), "Report on the state of the Armenian people in Turkey" (1916) and "Germany and Armenia, 1914-1918" (1919), wrote that the Turkish state

should be subdued in the interests of not only Christians but also Muslim Kurds. He opined that Turkey should be partially overseen by Europe, in which case the nations residing in this country would "enjoy comprehensive European support" (11). Certainly, it is hard to believe that all these large-scale geo-political plans stemmed from compassion for the Armenian and Kurdish people or an aspiration to extricate them from "the Turkish slavery". To the contrary, there is a strong impression that **the Armenian and Kurdish issues are just a pretext for realizing the long-standing aspirations of European powers with regard to the Ottoman Porte, which stem from the same outdated complexes, namely, the crusade mindset and revenge for the past failures. It is this very crusade mindset, paired with the above-mentioned subconscious guilt complex of the European Christian nations before the Jews, that stipulates regular revisiting of the notorious topic of the "genocide" of Armenians** at different levels – from the parliaments of certain countries to influential international organizations.

Following World War II, the West was swept away by the atmosphere of repentance and guilt. According to Turkish author Erol Gok, in a broad sense, such a psychological environment was created in line with the interests of the leading Western powers, which are responsible for the deaths of millions of people in the two world wars and are now hiding behind the "curtain of guilt" to justify themselves (3, p. 133). On the other hand, those who ignited discord among nations

The city of Shusha in Karabakh after the pogroms organized by Armenian nationalists. 1905



during World War I became judgmental afterwards and began accusing the Turks of wrongdoing. As a result, no one is asking inconvenient questions any longer regarding the true causes and culprits of the two world wars. All this has an in-depth connotation that they are trying to convey implicitly to the public: **purportedly, Christians themselves could not have committed such atrocities as the genocide of Jews and it could not have occurred without the aid of Muslim Turks, therefore, they needed a theory that would conclude that the first-ever genocide in the history of mankind was committed not by Christians, but by Muslims against Armenians.** In order to further reinforce this theory, an extra propagandist “canard” was circulated, aimed at promoting sympathy for Armenians in the Western world by asserting that the Armenians were the first nation in history to formally adopt Christianity.

The mentioned factors were **a significant cause of striking double standards in the policies of Western powers regarding the Armenian-Azerbaijani military conflict.** Certainly, the West’s historical hostility is aimed mainly at Turkey, not Azerbaijan, however, when it comes to the Armenian issue, the pro-Armenian sympathy of the West comes into play. Essentially, Azerbaijan had to become involved in a conflict facing the West, which gives preference to Armenia one way or the other. This allows us to make a conclusion that the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict has turned into a significant link in the Western-Turkish stand-off, which emerged centuries ago. Thus, a destructive point, not a constructive one, lies at the core of the so-called Arme-

nian issue, i.e. anti-Turkish sentiments in the West, which have psychological, ethnic and religious roots and date back to the period of the crusades. ✪

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