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GEO-POLITICAL RIVALRY IN SOUTH CAUCASUS AMID EMERGENCE OF NEW WORLD ORDER



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World order is determined by a correlation of power capacities of major geo-political players, not international law and institutions. Challenges facing the South Caucasus region, in particular, the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, should be considered in the same context. The conflict is one of the most significant obstacles to security and stability in this region.

An uncertain situation emerged with the fate of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which had been unresolved for about 30 years. The ongoing occupation of 20 percent

of Azerbaijani territory by Armenia continued to increase the possibility of war. Armenia's new subversive activities sparked hostilities in an instant. This article provides an analytical review of the geo-political rivalry in the South Caucasus and the stance of countries on the Armenian-Azerbaijani war in the context of the formation of a new world order.

Introduction. The "New World Order", its essence, behind-the-scenes features, promises made to mankind, as well as issues relating to the role of world powers in this new order, have recently been high on the agen-

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the Munich Security Conference. 15 February 2020



da among scholars worldwide. The fact that officials of numerous countries, political analysts, pundits and the scientific community at large have expressed their views in this regard definitely indicates the utmost gravity of the matter. Overall, anyone commenting on the “New World Order” would have a distinct opinion to that end, regardless of their position or specialty. However, most of the commentators point out the significance of this order for the sake of the world’s future, consider it a stride toward ironing out differences between civilizations and deem it pivotal for uprooting international terrorism, racism and religious extremism and preventing chaos internationally. Others believe that the new world order is merely a new division of power among the world’s powerhouses. The U.S., Russia, China and major European powers, which follow their own paths aimed at realizing this order, are crafting new geo-strategic projects.

At the same time, some analysts claim that the new world order is a plan outlined by behind-the-scenes forces, which have a significant economic potential and political leverage on the world stage. In fact, proponents of this idea believe that a system called the “New World Order” is an attempt to assert dominance of transnational companies undertaken by the executives of corporations who are seeking to establish a

single prevailing state by taking control over all energy sources in the world (for more detailed information, see 5, p. 131-147; 7, p. 32; 19, p. 60-77).

Undoubtedly, there is some truth to any of the viewpoints or claims expressed in this respect. If the current developments in the world are taken into consideration, those interested in this issue may arrive at their own conclusions, having studied the matter to determine which of these opinions has more merit.

A new world order or the lack of order?

Historically, “battles for influence” and rivalry have been underway among major forces to gain control over the world’s energy-rich regions representing strategic importance. However, the interests of the contested regions are not taken into account in the process. Therefore, the power and sovereignty of national states is diminishing and their role in the system of international relations is increasingly waning. Simultaneously, developments weakening the central government consistently occur in the targeted countries and the latter plunge into chaos.

Although the New World Order concept emerged as early as in the 1990s, it started to be manifested within different systems in certain periods of history. In fact, its existence remains questionable to date. According to Henry Kissinger, a well-known American politician,



world may currently establish bilateral relations with another one. This necessitates the emergence of a new order for the globalizing world. However, no universally accepted rules are in existence. Chinese, Islamic and Western views, as well as the Russian approach, to a certain extent, have been in place, and these views are often divergent (see 17, p. 16-20).

When a world order controlled by superpowers is considered, it is worth mentioning that the struggle among states for supreme dominance is not a new concept. Geo-political interests have always been at the core of major policies pursued by superpowers in certain periods of history; there has been attempted division of territory among global powerhouses and new borders have been drawn up. This triggered new conflicts of interest due to the lack of a substantial system regulating international relations and each of the countries involved sought to demonstrate its supremacy. To this day, the situation has not changed for the better. To the contrary, it has become more dangerous and tensions have risen. Thus, at a time history

is repeating itself and amid ongoing new clashes of geo-political interests, it would be useless to express optimistic views regarding a new world order.

diplomat and geopolitical consultant whose expertise on foreign policy and security issues is still followed in the US president's administration, a world order has never existed whatsoever (17, p. 13).

There is a real notion of "a powerful state" and the "big policy" it pursues in political history. Taking this factor as a basis, a conclusion may be made that world orders based on peacemaking among countries have succumbed to geo-politics throughout history. US strategist Paraq Hannah notes that though the World Order has been hidden behind such agendas as globalization, democracy and human rights, it has always clashed with geo-politics (15, p. 15).

Certainly, international systems of relations have been established and world countries have sought to reach agreement under the same umbrella, but these attempts never came to fruition. There is no state in the world that has a final say and no country has wielded enough power to date to shape up a world order single-handedly. There are numerous actors with geo-political influence and power in the international arena and each of them is seeking to assert its own interests.

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Statesman, diplomat and international law expert Henry Kissinger

setting the tone internationally by “creating and running law and order” within the New World Order system. It is noteworthy that some analysts in the U.S. deem countries present on the world’s political stage (*such powers as China and Russia as well as other geo-strategic actors – E.S.*) as major hurdles standing in the way of this new order. US analyst Robert Kagan, who is one of the main ideologists of a liberal world order, sees China and Russia as two major obstacles for a US-controlled world order. Kagan believes the dominance of these two countries, which are unwilling to cede their leading positions in the world, in their spheres of influence, poses a threat to a liberal world order (26).

For the first time in the history of international relations, an organization like the United Nations was established based on such principles as equality of nations, non-interference with the internal affairs of states, ensuring peaceful solution of disputed issues and security, as well as international cooperation in the solution of economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems in the world in compliance with human rights and regardless of race, gender, language and religion. Nevertheless, permanent members of the UN Security Council, themselves, evidently manage to send a military contingent of any size and launch a war in any country without prior UN approval. Certainly, such actions of superpowers run counter to liberal values, imply interference with the internal affairs of states and blatantly violate human rights and the territorial integrity of countries.

Propaganda, games, unrest and wars show no signs of abating in a number of world countries. A similar situation is seen in the South Caucasus region. It is no coincidence that Georgia’s territorial integrity was violated and the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict escalated. Until recently, Armenia occupied 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan, a much more powerful state, with significant support and involvement of major powers that call themselves liberal and democratic states. It is common knowledge that Russia played a major role in this occupation. Russia’s geo-political interest in the violation of Georgia and Ukraine’s territorial integrity should be highlighted as well.

Overall, the following point may be made when studying the real situation in world politics: if a certain measure is in favor or harms superpowers, the issue of its compliance with international law is placed on the back burner and those powers proceed as they deem necessary. In other words, superpowers consider themselves “exceptional”.

Noam Chomsky, a well-known American political activist and philosopher, described international relations as a system run on the basis of mafia authority. “The conduct of international affairs resembles the Mafia. The Godfather does not tolerate defiance, even from some small storekeeper,” Chomsky said (23).

Certainly, a liberal world order appears to be an unfeasible goal if this approach persists. In reality, a world order is defined not by international law and institutions, but a ratio of the power capabilities of major geo-political



players. As a result of scenarios drawn up in line with geo-political interests and double standards, the UN Security Council has been sidelined from the settlement of conflicts. The lack of UN mechanisms on enforcing its resolutions prevents the organization from playing a leading role in the solution of disputed issues. Moreover, the process is impeded by major powers that play a crucial role in the organization itself. This raises doubts about the UN mission, prompting substantial conclusions regarding the UN's inefficiency. Meanwhile, permanent UNSC members have been focussing their attention on their intransigent struggle for global dominance. In many cases, this rivalry completely tramples on the rules of international law and amounts to real battles. The U.S., Russia, Britain, France and China violate international law instead of serving as an example of compliance with it for other countries to follow. Evidently, there is no international organization in the world that could influence superpowers when it comes to the norms of international law. Therefore, a valid question arises regarding the activity and overall existence of international organizations spearheaded by the UN. More precisely, are these organizations necessary for major powers to cover up their own interests and committed crimes and, if possible, make their actions look legitimate? If these organizations are involved in "covering up" ongoing developments and crimes in numerous troubled and conflict-ravaged regions of the

world, in particular, areas with conflicting geo-political interests, any legitimacy is out of the question.

There is an important point that is definitely worth mentioning. Overall, if the developments currently happening in the world are profoundly studied, it turns out that these events are being closely followed and controlled by global powers. There is apparently a significant correlation between propaganda, riots, wars and crises ongoing in many world countries and armament and arms trade.

A double standard policy is observed with regard to numerous hotspots worldwide, including the South Caucasus region, the ongoing events and some conflicts between states. It is noteworthy that although there are different causes of these disputes, the interests of superpowers are involved and these differences even play into their hands. First of all, there is a substantial connection between economic crises and wars and armament. A tested armament method has already been employed in international practice. Countries experiencing the mentioned challenges are major markets for weaponry makers. It is worth mentioning that companies operating in the arms industry and weaponry exporting firms are based in major countries. Remarkably, weaponry suppliers advocate for "peace" internationally. Increased defense spending and the need for armament stems from geo-political ambitions and the presence of hotspots and frozen conflicts in the world.



These factors are stipulated by the environment of an arms race and the threat of war. Certainly, a high risk of armed conflicts is in favor of the world's major arms exporters (13, p. 345).

Historical developments indicate that economic crises of a global scale have always given an impetus to increased military expenditure. Superpowers have substantially used and will continue to employ their weaponry arsenals in armed conflicts throughout the world, which means new orders will be placed with weaponry makers. In addition, countries where a change of power occurs represent major markets for these companies. Frozen conflicts among countries also turn the latter into attractive long-term markets and sources of revenue for arms exporters. Thus, lingering conflicts certainly meet the interests of companies manufacturing weapons.

As for the South Caucasus region, global players are not interested in the solution of disputed issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the conflicts in Georgia, just like the disputes in many other regions of the world.

An interesting picture emerges regarding the ability of weaponry exporters to influence the foreign policy of their countries. Since these companies represent superpowers, their sphere of influence has an international scale. In other words, major world countries are capable of exercising their leverage of influence with regard to

all developments ongoing in the world. Likewise, they have a say in any conflict worldwide in one way or another. Therefore, these companies manage to ensure their interests in hotspots around the world.

The established facts and an analysis of global developments lead to a conclusion that unresolved conflicts and interference with them, as well as efforts to succeed in geo-political rivalry, are not in line with anyone's serving as a mouthpiece for "peace". On the basis of these factors, an overall conclusion may be made that the present-day world order is experiencing comprehensive chaos and uncertainty. As a result, a real transformation into a new order is currently a daunting task facing the world. Undoubtedly, certain goals are pursued behind those high-toned slogans that are currently being declared, including "democracy", "ensuring peace and well-being in the world" and "facilitating stability in regions". Interestingly, these principles are voiced in the slogans promoted by all world superpowers. Certainly, the slogans being announced have hidden agendas. The main goal is division of the world among the powerhouses. However, no common ground is in sight in this division, which is considered the reality of the current geo-politics, and there is no room for shifting toward a balanced policy meeting mutual interests.

The reality of Russia's "big policy" and the double standard policy of Western states: evaluating the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict



in this context. Given the impact of the above-mentioned global issues, an analysis of the developments that have occurred in the South Caucasus, in particular, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, has a great scientific and political relevance. Overall, tremendously important points may be made when studying the developments that have happened in most of the former Soviet states, including the countries of the South Caucasus region, since the 1990s, as well as Russia's geo-political priorities. Russia, which is one of the five permanent UNSC members, has violated or threatened the territorial integrity of the countries countering or defying it.

Prof. Alexander Dugin, a well-known Russian strategist known for his pan-Eurasian views, has commented on prospects for Russia's relations with other post-Soviet states, as well as the future and fate of the countries countering Moscow.

“Ensuring any former Soviet country’s territorial integrity dwells upon its ties with Russia. If any of the post-Soviet states maintains good relations with Russia, it has secured its territorial integrity. But if these relations are poor, those countries’ integrity is violated... The hegemony of such countries as Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, which have bad relations with Russia, has already been disrupted,” Dugin said (27).

The current situation once again reflects the reality of “powerful states” and the “big policies” they are pursuing. It is not a mere coincidence that Russia’s “big politics” was observed not only in other former Soviet states, but also in the South Caucasus region and with regard to the

Armenia-Azerbaijan relations and the Karabakh war in particular. This reality, which remains relevant to this day, is that just like in most of the former Soviet states, complete resolution of conflicts and disputed issues in the South Caucasus and establishment of peace in the region does not comply with long-term interests of Russia's regional security policy in any way. If the root cause of the Karabakh problem is taken into consideration, it is clear that the Armenians represent one of the primary tools for meeting and securing Russia's geo-political interests. The separatist movement aimed at realizing the idea of “a great Armenia” and “ancient historical territories” serves this purpose. Restoring stability in the South Caucasus and a real solution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan problem is undesirable from Russia's point of view. Moscow's policy is underpinned by its future objectives, namely, **keeping the parties dependent on itself and securing its leverage of influence in the region.**

It is worth mentioning that this course of Moscow that has been pursued for many years and its double-faceted games are not in line with its mission as a mediating state. On one hand, Russia had assumed the task of mediation between the conflict parties. On the other hand, it provided a significant amount of weaponry to Armenia and did not refrain from declaring that this bilateral collaboration continued. Overall, it would be more appropriate to regard the presence of the Armenian state and separatist forces in Karabakh as a guarantee of Russia's presence in the South Caucasus.

The purpose of this article is not to go back to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as related issues were covered in detail in our previous research. However, we



recall that the negotiated settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had been mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs Russia, the U.S. and France. Each of these countries had its own stance on the issue, which was impeding progress in peace talks. It is clear that all the three countries are global powerhouses. It is also an accepted reality that these powers had geo-political clout to put pressure on the invading state. The point is that the main problem with regard to the settlement of any conflict is not the capabilities of superpowers, but the political will required to solve it. It was the lack of a keen interest in the Karabakh conflict settlement that was preventing the Minsk Group from fulfilling its duties. Representatives of the co-chairing countries have paid numerous visits to the region merely to defuse tension. Thus, they were mostly engaged in "exercising control over the conflict", not execution of the "conflict resolution mechanisms". Therefore, the public in Azerbaijan rightfully regarded the co-chairs' visits as **"tours"**.

In the wake of the double standard policy of international organizations, the Minsk Group member states and other countries, the Armenian side failed to pursue a real solution of the problem and repeatedly violated the ceasefire instead. As a result, a war occurred on April 2-5, 2016, which indicated that the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, in fact, was not a frozen conflict, although the

course of developments was eventually diverted to its previous state for some reason with the aid of certain facilitators, namely, Russia's interference. Furthermore, Armenia believed that state of affairs would be maintained forever and continued to stage provocations. Encouraged by its patrons, Armenia resorted to another provocation in July 2020. Certainly, there were certain reasons for its actions. Firstly, the main goal of the provocation on the border in the vicinity of Tovuz was to divert Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's attention from the Line of Contact. Secondly, those territories are crossed by the routes of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway and Great Silk Road, which are Azerbaijan's projects of an international scale. Armenia sought to take over relevant heights to accomplish its goal. Thirdly, Armenia was trying to skew the attention of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) members in a completely different direction. However, none of these objectives was achieved.

Some claim that the mentioned attacks had been incited by Russia and France (21; 28). It should also be taken into account that the Pashinyan administration, which relied on unyielding support from superpowers, embarked on its attack with the slogan of "a new war and new land". Armenia, which bound hopes with everlasting support of major world powers, continued

to violate the Line of Contact, attempting to deal a psychological blow to Azerbaijan and resorting to provocative methods. Defiant and strongly worded statements from Pashinyan, such as **“Karabakh is Armenia. Period”**, which countered international law, as well as erroneously adventurous steps, served as a precursor of a new war. Prior to Pashinyan’s governance, Armenian leaders and officials sought to convey to the world community that Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh were the main parties to the conflict, saying that the warring sides were Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh accordingly. They alleged that Armenia was seeking to put forward a constructive stance in peace talks and tried to convince the international community that Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians were merely pursuing ethnic self-determination and that no territorial claims were on the agenda. However, Pashinyan’s saying **“Karabakh is Armenia. Period”** essentially amounted to admitting to the policy of an invading state in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and showed Armenia’s true essence as a state to the rest of the world.

On September 27, 2020, Armenia violated the ceasefire, launching an attack on Azerbaijani territory, which sparked an “instantaneous war”. It is noteworthy that the firm resolve of both the government and people in Azerbaijan to regain their land was also a precursor of these developments. The Azerbaijani side launched a counter-offensive, regaining significant areas, historical land, strategic territories and heights that had been under occupation.

Azerbaijan, which attained a confident victory in the Patriotic War waged against the invading Armenia, had the upper hand over the Armenian armed forces, using the unmanned aerial vehicles and armed drones purchased from Turkey.

Despite calls from Russia and Western countries, as well as international organizations, to halt warfare immediately and resume peace talks, Turkey, Pakistan, Northern Cyprus, Ukraine, Israel and other countries expressed everlasting support for Azerbaijan.

Nikol Pashinyan, who claimed that “Karabakh is part of Armenia”, attended events and danced yalli, an Azerbaijani folk dance, in Shusha, arranged settlements and stationed terror groups in the occupied territories, faced a deplorable situation. Furthermore, the whole world community witnessed that Pashinyan had to ask world leaders for assistance. It is worthy of note that Armenia, which faced a predicament, followed its usual pattern of behavior, releasing false reports regarding

an alleged presence of Syrian mercenaries and Jihadist groups in Azerbaijan. The main goal of these fake news was to draw the attention of the world’s Christian nations, in particular, superpowers, to this matter, prompting these countries to launch “crusades” against Azerbaijan. It is not a coincidence that French President Emmanuel Macron expressed his usual pro-Armenian stance, claiming that the issue of “Syrian jihadists fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh” was a serious “game-changing reality”. This blackmail-oriented issue was related to the attempts to start pertinent discussions in the Council of Europe (11). On the contrary, there are plenty of reports saying that PKK fighters and other terrorists had been brought to Armenia from Iraq, Syria and Lebanon and further sent by the Armenian side to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Information is also available regarding the activity of mercenaries in the region (10, 12). However, France and like-minded countries and officials are turning a blind eye to Armenia’s close ties to terror groups. France, which is one of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, should put forward a neutral stance on the issue, to say the least.

There is a significant point that should be made in this regard. A threat is posed by the fact that the killings and beheading, committing Jihadist acts while exclaiming “Allahu Akbar” (“Allah [God] is the greatest”) is the primary aspiration of terrorists, who act under the pretext of religion. Nevertheless, there is absolutely no premise of unfair and groundless killing in Islam. These deliberate actions merely facilitate the campaign aimed at sullyng Islam in the world. Therefore, “Jihadist groups” was a dangerous term used as part of an anti-Azerbaijan campaign. Thus, spreading rumors that *“beheading terrorists are fighting Christian Armenians on the frontline”* on the Azerbaijani side may be regarded as another attempt at re-launching medieval crusades.

At the same time, Armenia sought to exaggerate the involvement of Turkish armed forces in the war, releasing false reports through media outlets around the world. However, a substantial response was delivered to the allegations with due arguments by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. The President exposed all of Armenia’s lies on the state-run TV channels of numerous countries with regard to both the “Jihadist” issue and the contribution of Turkish armed forces to warfare, as well as strongly criticized those making such claims. ❀

to be continued

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