



TOPICAL  
DIALOGUES

# TOPICAL DIALOGUES

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## One topic covered by two authors

In this issue of the bulletin we bring to you an Armenian and Azerbaijani authors' views of the origin and functions of the image of the enemy in their respective societies.

And in the “Comments to the Articles” section , the Armenian and Azerbaijani authors commented on each other’s articles. Judging by the content of these comments, the discussion at distance could still be continued by a whole series of new comments. But both the articles and these first comments reflect both the attitude to the opposite side in each country, and the perception of this attitude at the moment.

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## **The perceptions of the “enemy’s image” in Armenia**

The use of the enemy’s image as soft power is a political practice, established ever since the ancient times, the significance of which is especially heightened in various crises, domestic, interstate and interethnic conflicts, and is based on stereotypes in mass ethnic consciousness, as a mechanism of identifying “the others” and defending oneself from the latter.

Currently, the motives, mechanisms and methods for the formation of the “enemy’s image” in individual and collective consciousness are quite diverse. By the way, this image can be both invented and real. On the one hand, it is possible to artificially design and disseminate the “image of the enemy” as a tool of war propaganda: “First we create the enemy. The image precedes the arms. We kill the others in our minds, and then we procure clubs or ballistic missiles in order to physically annihilate them. Propoganda precedes technology” (1). On the other hand, the presence of an “enemy’s image” is of fundamental importance to the society, which is impossible to eliminate due to humanistic considerations. “The image of the enemy is an objective ideological product, a kind of a propaganda GDP of a concrete country and era” (2).

In fact, “the image of the enemy” is a universal political tool which allows to both create (strengthen patriotism, mobilize the public, shape and reinforce identity and so on) and destroy (bring about social and ethnic conflicts, dehumanize social groups, nations, ideas, values and so on).

In a factual state of war to which it is a party, within a hostile environment and bearing hostile imagination of historical memory, with security problems and a priority of identity preservation, Armenia has its own peculiarities in the perception of the enemy.

## **The Hostile Neighbors of Armenia and Prospects of Reconciliation**

Today in the Armenian society’s perceptions of enemies *Azerbaijan is considered to be the most hostile country*, hence, the structuring of the enemy’s image takes place mainly around that country and its people. According to public opinion in Armenia, the majority of the population believes that Azerbaijan is the most hostile country to Armenia (about 75%

of respondents) (3): Turkey is considered the most hostile country by one fifth of all respondents. In fact, these two countries are major enemies (the other countries instigate innoticable levels of hostility). It is noteworthy that identifying Azerbaijan with Turkey has changed in the course of years: over time, Turkey is more often seen as separate from Azerbaijan, parallel to the decreasing perception of the former's hostility, whereas the perception of Azerbaijan's hostility is increasing. However, unlike Armenia, the perception of hostility is much more acute in Artsakh, also there is almost no difference between perceptions of Azerbaijan and Turkey: about 90% of the respondents consider both countries equally hostile (4).

The perception of hostility is manifest at personal level, too. According to the data of research conducted by CRRC-Armenia (5), the vast majority of Armenians does not approve of the marriage of Armenian women with an Azerbaijani or a Turk. There is some tolerance in the case of economic relations. Thus, 15 and 25% of respondents approve of business conducted by compatriots with the Azerbaijani and Turks, respectively.

The historical memory of the Armenian Genocide, the blockade of borders by Turkey, on the one hand, and the war with Azerbaijan and the unresolved Karabakh conflict, on the other, make the prospects of the reconciliation of these countries unrealistic. The Armenian public does not think the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is likely in the near future, even though the majority of the people are for the resolution of the conflict through peaceful negotiations (6). As compared to the impossibility of reconciliation with Azerbaijan, it is obvious that there is a need for greater "tolerance" on the part of Armenians for reconciliation with Turkey. The population of Armenia realizes the cost of economic development wins and losses as a result of unblocked border, as well as its impact on security. However, the majority approves of the normalization of relations without any preconditions, yet prioritizing the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and the issues of the Karabakh conflict regulation (which Turkey is using as a precondition) (7).

The way of thinking, rooted in public consciousness that Azerbaijan and Turkey are pursuing a hostile policy against Armenia and Artsakh (frequently this is perceived as cooperation between the former two countries), bring about a universal hostile perception of those countries mainly not differentiating between official policies and people's standpoints.

## **The Image of the Enemy: Stereotypes and Perceptions**

"The image of the enemy", i.e. the evaluative description of the enemy in public consciousness, the perception and understanding of it may often be significantly different from the "enemy", since the image reflects not only the objective reality, but also the evaluative and emotive components. Besides, stereotypes and attitudes, myths and prejudices typical of mass consciousness greatly influence the shaping of the enemy's image.

The image of Azerbaijan and Turkey as the enemy is less invented or mythological and is rather relevant to Armenia, the real threat posed to the Armenian people and the memory thereof. The deadly threat that comes from the enemy and is established as a given in the daily routine becomes the most important indicator of the semantic and rhetorical structure. Consequently, both the instrumental aggression – attack, and the hostile intent – destruction are included in the circulated image of the enemy.

As a counteraction to such a perception of hostility, the image of the enemy is dehumanized through various means, namely by ascribing various negative qualities, associating with death, hatred, conspiracy, aggression, violence and other hostile actions. An Azerbaijani or a Turk (often the same ethnonym – Turk – is used) we deprive them of human qualities, and through the generic image they are turned into an *absolute evil*. Thus, the country, the leader, the people, the ideas, the political system, the culture and the civilization, the history, the religion and so on are considered to be hostile. The personal stories of the opponents, human empathy towards them are depleted in this general dehumanization: “The value of every individual life is lost, since people’s attention is focused on the generic topic of victory or defeat in the conflict.” (8)

On public and state levels the image of the enemy becomes even stronger due to the consciousness that there is a deep and comprehensive Armenophobic propaganda in Turkey and especially in Azerbaijan, from school textbooks and historiographic literature to mass media and official propaganda. Besides the perception of the current image of the enemy, Armenians also bear the historical memory thereof. Having been subject to the most extreme manifestation of hostility, a genocide, the Armenian people bear this memory, consequently, they try to keep the realization of the deadly threat coming from the enemy fresh in their minds due to self-defense considerations.

The Genocide and the Karabakh conflict have become part of the Armenian identity. People aspire for feeling they matter and constitute a part of an important resource. “The conflict was mythologized too, in such a manner that it is considered to be extremely important and even valuable. This may have to do with the emotional burden of actualizing the price paid for the conflict and still being paid to this day. This includes the official rhetoric, which depicts the conflict as practically unresolvable”. (9)

However, regardless of the identification of Azerbaijan and Turkey as enemy, the Armenian people perceive them differently on psychological level. If our perception of Turkey is from the standpoint of the victim, Azerbaijan is seen from the position of the winner. If in case of Azerbaijan we believe that we have restored justice (according to extreme nationalistic circles – not fully), in case of Turkey demanding claims and the restoration of justice are still topical. This difference in perceptions, however, does not stop from maintaining “a Turk remains a Turk” stereotype (ascribing it to the ordinary population, too), thus establishing deep mistrust and anticipation that they will commit a genocide upon the next appropriate occasion. The society finds it hard to overcome the stereotype of Turks that presents them as butchers.

The Armenian specificity of shaping the image of the enemy has not only strengthened the negative aspects of the enemy's image, but has created a contrast with the image of the hero, using the positive image of the hero. Presenting the image of the enemy with that of the hero within the same mythologeme, the strength of the hero is stressed over the contrasting qualities of the enemy. For example, a person who is publicly ascribed inhuman or cruel deeds is not glorified as a hero in Armenia (the hero may have committed such an act, but this is not discussed in public and is not encouraged with a state award). The violence committed by an Armenian is presented as just revenge. Barbarity is not justified on the level of perception. The image of the Armenian hero reflects philanthropy (for example – care for the peaceful population), restoration of justice, courage, and devotion to the motherland.

### **The Importance of the “Enemy’s Image” in the Context of War**

The propaganda led by any country preparing for war creates an “image of the enemy” which has an undeniable impact on people's hostile imagination. It is necessary to destroy the living force of the opponent in order to be resilient and win in the war. That is why it becomes necessary to ascribe them inhuman qualities which will abolish the psychological hindrances and will justify their deeds. Besides, the definitions of an enemy's image indicate who/what becomes a threat to the people and the state, what are the parameters of that threat and what is necessary to undertake for protection from the enemy.

The images of the enemy created on the basis of some historical events are transferred from generation to generation, change with time, disappear or neutralize. However, the image latent in situations of no tension reappears and is activated in public consciousness. Thus, the image of the Turk as the enemy that was passive in Soviet Armenia, was activated in the Karabakh movement and in the following years of war. The memory of the Genocide became the locomotive of the Karabakh movement (10). On February 27 – 29, 1988, people perceived and evaluated the massacre in Sumgait as a manifestation of the Genocide, and thus, it moved the memory of the Armenian Genocide in 1915 – 1923 to the forefront (11). Thus, the hard memories of the Genocide and the image of the enemy played a positive role in the mobilization of the Karabakh movement and the victory in the war.

It is not accidental that in the future Azerbaijan started to make use of the Karabakh conflict as a tool for national unification and shaping the Azerbaijani national identity, as well as the “liberation” of Karabakh as a “sacred” goal which should ensure such unification. Based on these ideas, the Azerbaijani elite is trying to recreate the Armenian model of historical memory by various means (Karabakh as a “sacred place”, “a lost land” just what Western Armenia is to Armenians, the myth of the “Genocide of the Azerbaijanis” by Armenians, Armenians/Karabakh people as mythological enemies for the unification of the nation) (12).



In the course of the Karabakh war the enrooted stereotypes against Turks were used to understand the enemy (Azerbaijan) and describe it. Later, the experience of the war and the following years of the war situation created the image of a new enemy – the Azerbaijani – and made it more topical.

## **The Enemy as an Important Element of Propaganda**

The concept of the “enemy’s image” is directly linked with propaganda. However, different political forces make use of this link differently: “The phenomenon of the “enemy’s image” is most prominently expressed and manages the consciousness of the society in states with authoritarian and totalitarian political regimes” (13). We see clear differences between Armenia and Azerbaijan/Turkey, along with a number of changes after 2018 Velvet Revolution in Armenia.

The mechanism of the negative mobilization of the society, i.e. the use of the external enemy’s image to overcome domestic problems has been constantly used in the domestic political life of Armenia. Taking advantage of the war situation, the authorities strengthened the contrast between security interests and fundamental principles of democracy in the political discourse. These discourses have established some narratives which aimed at the justification of authoritarian governance or the regression of democracy (authoritarian approaches are presented as a guarantee for power and security), socio-economic hardships (at the expense of the everlasting peril of the war and defense costs), the role of the guarantor of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict resolution (the settlement in favor of Armenians was directly linked with some individuals in power).

The taboo of not making “Turks happy” with domestic weaknesses, omissions and problems was definitely broken after the Revolution in April 2018. The massive participation in the revolution broke the long-standing myth that the Armenian society will not go for domestic shocks due to its historical memory, conservatism and common sense/wisdom, realizing the advantages it will give to the enemy against the peril of hostile environment and threat of war. Even though this thesis was voiced throughout actions of civil disobedience, and information was being shared on the movements, shifts and threats along the border, not only did it fail to restrain the participants, but generated counterarguments that civic engagement, spirit and moods and people’s power, on the contrary, could in the same manner serve the cause of defending the motherland.

We can state that regardless of the existence of a nationalistic discourse in Armenia, there is no hate speech or extreme aggression against the enemy. The various sources of information that precondition the perception of the enemy and shape the image thereof are incomparable with the propaganda in Turkey and especially in Azerbaijan, where children’s literature, school textbooks, media, political rhetoric and other means of communication are filled with hostile discourse or hate speech and propaganda. Unlike the Azerbaijani propaganda that proposes itself as homogeneous, the pluralism in Armenia, as well as the variety of opinion-making sources and their content differences are obvious. In

the societies of Armenia and Azerbaijan the asymmetry in the presentation of the enemy's image and the propaganda is expressed in the political rhetoric, in the media, in social media, academic programs, art and everywhere else. For example, in Armenian children's literature and textbooks there is no xenophobic propaganda, there are no epithets labelling Azerbaijanis or Turks (14). In the media outlets, too, despite the existence of nationalistic discourse, systematic use of extreme manifestations and vocabulary is not the case. For example, it can be noted that the word *opponent* is used more often than the word *enemy*. As for the political discourse, all political leaders and forces' rhetoric of war has not been extreme.

Moreover, in post-revolutionary Armenia there were new emphases in the peace discourse: the new government has spoken more about the readiness to and significance of peace (certainly, emphasizing that such discourse should not be interpreted as a sign of weakness or unpreparedness for war). The leader of the country, the Prime Minister spoke about the peaceful population among the Azerbaijani people and cooperation with this population.

## **The Specificities of Armenian Mechanisms for Shaping the Enemy's Image**

Thus, to sum up, we can group the following grounds for structuring the "image of the enemy":

### **Traditional grounds**

The primary one among the Armenian specificities of building the image of an enemy is not viewing the external enemy as a means for the shaping its own national identity, since the Armenian people have not historically had the need for shaping an identity, and besides Armenia is almost a monoethnic state (15) (in Azerbaijan, for example, we see the opposite situation: the image of the enemy is prioritized rather for the establishment of the identity and the unification of ethnic minorities in the country). The external enemy rather contributes to the reinforcement of domestic relations to fight against mobilization and threats from the enemy. The following factors stand out within the traditional grounds, shaping the image of the enemy:

- *Historical*  
The historical memory and the past losses of Armenians are among the major factors of conflict continuity. That memory is kept awake even beyond Armenia, in the Diaspora. However, as a party that has won the war and has established historical justice (from the viewpoint of Armenians), the Armenian society does not bear the same level of extreme aggression as the losing party.
- *Stereotypical*  
The Armenian and Azerbaijani war has left "unexploded bombs" in the form of stereotypes in the public consciousness that impede the peaceful settlement

/resolution of the conflict and discussions on cooperation prospects. The historical memory of the Genocide has also shaped hostile imagination stereotypes which greatly impede the normalization of Armenian – Turkish relations. Our perception of the enemy's image is based on various archetypes: "Aggressor," "barbarian," "criminal", "abuser", "torturer," "butcher," and so on.

- *Psychosocial*

In ethnic autostereotypes Armenians describe themselves as kind, non-aggressive, not cruel, creative, sedentary nation, and on the contrary, in the heterostereotypes of Turks/Azerbaijanis, qualities of cruelty, aggressiveness, destructiveness and invasiveness are ascribed. This contrast enables the use of social tension at the times of crises, as the simplest and most effective means of releasing the aggressive energy and channeling it towards the enemy.

### **Targeted-rational and value-based rational grounds**

Besides the above-mentioned traditional grounds, the reason for our hostile attitude towards and the conflict with Azerbaijan and Turkey are the interests of the two countries. The ambitions for territory in case of Azerbaijan, the recognition of and compensation for the Genocide in case of Turkey and the unwillingness to agree for compromises are the targeted-rational bases for the image of the enemy. The hostility formed on this bases is further strengthened due to value-based rational grounds. The definition of the enemy is further reinforced through the contrast of ideological, ethnocultural, religious and other values. For example, we contrast our ideological and political system differences, our cultural, religious and civilization belonging, the difference in our historical background and its duration within the image of the enemy.

### **Manipulative grounds**

The "image of the enemy" is manipulated for the sake of both external and domestic processes. Stakeholder states that act as third parties also make use of the tool for manipulating with the enemy. The concept of the enemy by itself also brings forth a negative perception, which fails to lead to positive evaluations, moreover to create unbiased attitudes. Armenians ascribe a *lower status* to the enemy – low intellect, a low level of self-organization, low culture, viewing it as an entity that has a history without a history and without a shaped national identity. Often, the enemy becomes the scapegoat for one's own faults and mistakes.

The use of the enemy's image in domestic processes is part of the Armenian domestic reality, too. The former power made use of the enemy's image in order to legitimize the political regime, overemphasize security issues, justify military costs at the expense of social expenditure, and so on. However, the revolution introduced some changes in this mechanism of manipulation, indicating to the mythological nature of incompatibility

between the threat from the enemy, i.e. security and war and democracy. The popularity of using the method of constructing an “image of the enemy” to manipulate public consciousness in countries with an authoritarian/totalitarian regime is also characterized by the presence of propaganda in these states as the main political tool of ideological influence.

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14. Children’s liaterature and textbooks in Azerbaijan directly preach anti-Armenian sentiments. The content of textbooks and other educational materials can be found at <http://azerichild.info/books-education-azerbaijan-hatred-from-childhood.html>. In Turkish textbooks we can notice some appeasement in the recent 10 years. If previously, for example, they used “the so-called Armenian Genocide”, in the new textbooks we can come across expressions such as “the events of 1915”, “just memory”, “normalization”, “sending condolences,” “memorial rituals”. (<http://hayernaysor.am/archives/170500>):
15. Over 95 percent of the population are Armenian.



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## **Stereotypes and the “image of the enemy” in Azerbaijan**

One of the factors hindering the settlement of the Karabakh conflict is the numerous stereotypes and myths in the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. On the one hand, their occurrence and wide distribution is essentially objective, because they are a natural result of all modern conflicts, especially for the ones on ethnic or religious grounds. At the same time, the emergence of certain myths and stereotypes is often based on subjective factors associated with the history of the construction of the national state.

Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani society are a characteristic example of such a process. On the one hand, Azerbaijan is a classic example of a bordering country and a kind of crossroads between the East and the West, Islam and Christianity. At the same time, Azerbaijanis are a divided people and not only territorially do they divide into southerners (Iranian) and northerners (after the Russian-Iranian wars at the beginning of the 19th century), but also on Shiites and Sunnis. But most importantly, in the 20th century Azerbaijan had two starts for building a nation state: in 1918-1920 and after 1991. In both cases, the process of building a national state was carried out not after a long struggle for independence, but as a result of the circumstances: in the first case after the fall of the Russian Empire, and in the second – after the collapse of the USSR. And each time during the construction of the national state, Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani society went through severe trials – a war over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh (the term "Nagorno-Karabakh" itself was born in 1919, as a result of this confrontation) with neighboring Armenia, which also created its own nation state at this time. And each time the country and society incurred human and territorial losses.

Meanwhile, both times the divided people faced the issue of unity. And nothing unites people more than war and loss. War takes sacrifice, that is, heroes and martyrs. But these tragedies and losses make it possible to unite the nation and declare as strangers those who remain outside its borders. As Ernest Renan remarked at the end of the 19th century, “common suffering unites more than common joys. For collective national memory, mourning is more important than triumph: mourning imposes obligations, mourning brings about common efforts.” (1) All this is especially characteristic of the 20th century – the time of widespread creation of nation-states and the struggle for the territory considered to be one’s own, the time of mass ethnic cleansings and genocides on the planet. All these tragedies and losses in the struggle for the creation of a national state brought about

“vicious circle of defining enemies and making victims,” as stated by Omer Bartov, that is – the desire to define your nation as a victim, which is not only a sign of sorrow and shame, but also an appropriate status and honor (2). At the same time, the logic of the struggle for the construction of a nation state and development against the background of a struggle with neighbors and rivalry for international community’s sympathy required to flaunt national victims and the grief caused by the tragedy.

With regard to Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani society, it should be noted that a few years before the collapse of the Russian Empire, there appeared the first national political parties (Musavat, Gummat), there appeared a layer of intelligentsia that raised the question of ethnic identity. However, a significant part of the population was far from these processes, their thinking remained at the level of the usual Muslim “ummah” (community of believers), with its low level of national identity perception.

In such a situation, after the collapse of the Russian Empire and during the process of creating a nation state in March 1918, bloody events took place in Baku when the Bolsheviks, along with the Dashnaks (from the point of view of Azerbaijanis - Russians and Armenians) organized massacres in the city and killed at least 12 thousand Azerbaijanis. If “judged by the number of victims, the March events were one of the most terrible episodes in the course of the Russian revolution.” (3)

Entering Baku in September 1918, the Turkish and Azerbaijani forces launched a massacre, killing at least 9,000 Armenians. Then the mutual pogroms of the parties followed in the city of Shusha in Karabakh, and it was during this period that the first myths and images of enemies arose. At the same time, each side focused on its own victims and losses, while at the same time whitewashing its own bloody actions.

On the year of the first anniversary of the March events (March 31, 1919), the leaders of the first sovereign Republic of Azerbaijan decided to combine religious feelings with ethnic ones and as a result, for many Shiite Azerbaijanis, the March events became the “new *Ashura*” (4) and a kind of “civil *Maharram*” (5). By the way, not so much was this a day of religious mourning, as that of national unity, when the victims (*Shahids* (martyrs))(6) fell for the people. That is when the victims of the March events were reburied in a cemetery, opened for this special purpose in the Nagorny Park in Baku.

In the Soviet period, the Communists tried to get rid of all this and delete all this from the memory of Azerbaijanis. March events began to be interpreted as the “counter-revolutionary revolt of the Musavatists,” the cemetery in the Nagorny Park was destroyed, and a new park and the restaurant “Friendship of Peoples” were erected in its place. And now the pantheon to the heroes and victims hosted the 26 Baku commissars, and a monument to them was erected in the center of Baku, as evidence to the internationalism of the new government. That is, the new authorities hastened to create their own “place of sorrow” and worship new heroes and victims of the struggle, where schoolchildren were regularly taken to and flowers were laid.

It is true that Communists did not achieve their goals completely. Azerbaijanis kept the memory of those March events. As a result, the park, let alone the Friendship of Peoples restaurant, was not a favorite place for Azerbaijanis to visit and stroll. Many, especially among the young, did not even know the reason for the ban, but they knew from their parents that this place was *haram*. (7)

However, the Soviet period succeeded in something the leaders of the first Azerbaijani Republic failed in. Moscow retained the territory of the republic and even some national symbols. But most importantly, the policy of “indigenization” was carried out in the USSR, which in fact meant attention to local human resources in the state and party apparatus. In addition, attention was paid to the development of science and culture. As a result, in Azerbaijan, on the eve of the collapse of the USSR, there was a significantly large scientific and creative intelligentsia. But most importantly, after 70 years of the Soviet policy of atheism and the fight against religion, the main factor for the Azerbaijani society now was not the Islamic factor, but the national one.

In such circumstances, the situation of 70 years ago was getting repeated: again, against the backdrop of the rapid collapse of the USSR, there was an urgent need to think about creating an independent republic. And again, the war with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, again bloody and violent interethnic clashes and cleansings, and again the emergence of a vicious circle of identifying enemies and creating victims.

For many objective and subjective reasons, at that time, Armenian nationalism was much more active than its Azerbaijani counterpart. In addition to the conflict with the Azerbaijanis and the losses suffered in 1918-1920, Armenians in 1915 experienced much more terrible losses in the Ottoman Empire, and this became a real national disaster for them. Besides, in the Soviet times, starting from 1965, Armenians were allowed to hold mass demonstrations and hold a Commemoration Day of the victims of 1915 on every April 24. Since 1967, Armenia has had a monument for this occasion, that is, its own place of sorrow and worship for universal unity. There was also an image of an external enemy in the person of Turks. And all this was replicated in textbooks, books on history, and films. That is, the propaganda component played its very significant role in clearly defining the image of the enemy and uniting the nation around its victims. Finally, Armenians were also allowed communication with the Diaspora, albeit with some restrictions. All this contributed to the organization and solidarity of Armenians at the initial stage of the Karabakh conflict. Indeed, for Armenians, Azerbaijanis were the same Turks, and therefore, the Karabakh conflict was for Armenians a kind of continuation of what happened to them in the Ottoman Empire seven decades ago.

Azerbaijanis did not have all of this, and therefore, at the initial stage of the Karabakh conflict, they were not united, their actions were often spontaneous and were a response to the actions of the Armenians. Although the memory of the March events of 1918 was preserved among a certain part of the population and these events were even openly spoken and written about in the late 1980s, still in the Azerbaijani society there was not yet a symbol of sorrow and a clearly defined image of the enemy. The society remembered

that in the 1970s conflicts with Armenians periodically arose in Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region, which, however, were quickly resolved by the authorities. And therefore there was a strong belief that these were just accidental and occasional misunderstandings, which would be resolved if not by the republican, then the central Soviet power in Moscow. Even the first refugees from Armenia that appeared and the Sumgayit pogroms did not change the views of Azerbaijanis – the events that took place were viewed through the prism of “perestroika” declared by Gorbachev and the struggle for democracy in the USSR, and not as the beginning of an ethnic conflict with the Armenians.

It seems paradoxical, but the Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan (PFP), created in 1988, initially also declared the idea of the struggle for democracy and did not advocate independence and the creation of a nation state.

Back then many in Azerbaijan did not understand why, in connection with Karabakh, Armenians and many in the USSR and in the West raised the topic of the genocide and the role of Turkey. Even more annoying was the fact that the Karabakh problem was considered through a religious prism outside Azerbaijan, as the supposedly historical struggle of “Christian Armenia” with “Muslim Azerbaijan”. A survey conducted in 1990 in Azerbaijan showed that only about 3% of the population believed that the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Karabakh had religious grounds. (8)

But very soon the situation changed. The influx of Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia, and then from Karabakh, were like an avalanche, which sharply radicalized public views. The theme of democratization and “perestroika” was swept aside, the Karabakh conflict with Armenians came to the fore, which sharply strengthened the factor of ethnicity. A multitude of publications on the history of Karabakh and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations began to appear. The propaganda and ideology of the struggle against Armenian ethnic separatism quickly established themselves within the context of the conflict.

Soon, the Popular Front was also forced to take a different position, a more nationalistic one. And against the backdrop of the rapid collapse of the USSR, it had to start to think about the need to create an independent state.

The turning point came after January 20, 1990, which was marked in the history of Azerbaijan under the name of “Black January” (Azerb. *Gara Yanvar*). The funeral of citizens killed during the entry of Soviet troops into Baku seemed to have returned the Azerbaijani society to the distant March of 1919, when there was the first action of the civilian Maharram of Azerbaijanis. Again, the society gave victims who were buried in the same place as the victims of the 1919 March events. Of course, the restaurant opened in Soviet times was closed down, and the park was turned not just into a cemetery, but into the Alley of Martyrs (Azeri. *Shehidler Khyabani*).

At the same time, the society has not particularly voiced and still does not voice any questions about the victims of the pogroms against Armenians in Baku, which took place literally a week before January 20. In accordance with the laws of ethnic conflict, it is important to commemorate their victims.



Thus, Azerbaijanis created their “place of sorrow” and worship of new heroes and victims of the struggle, which is annually visited by hundreds of thousands of Baku residents and residents of other regions in the republic on January 20. At first it was a place of sorrow and worship for the victims of the struggle against the Soviet regime for the creation of a nation state. The monument to the 26 Baku commissars, as the last symbol of Soviet power, was destroyed, too. When in 1992-1994 large-scale military operations were underway in Karabakh, those who fell in the battles with the Armenians also began to be buried on Shehidler Khiyabani. At this moment in time, this place became not only a symbol of the struggle for the independence of Azerbaijan, but also a place of worship for the dead martyrs in the struggle for the territorial integrity of the country.

It is noteworthy that those who died in the Second World War, including the famous Heroes of the Soviet Union, were not perceived as martyrs and were buried in the Alley of Honorable Burial created in the Soviet times (azerb. *Fahri Hiyaban*) along with famous figures of science and culture, as well as politicians and statesmen of Azerbaijan.

But the tragic events in Khojaly in February 1992, when 613 people were brutally killed, including 63 children, 106 women and 70 old people, played a major role in the problem of the Karabakh conflict and the creation of numerous stereotypes and the “enemy image”. After all, Black January was a symbol of the struggle against the Soviet power. And although those who died in the Karabakh war were also buried in Shehidler Khiyabani, in the public mind this place was still associated more with the struggle against the Soviet government for the creation of an independent nation state than with the war against Armenians. The Khojaly tragedy occurred already in the post-Soviet period, and although parts of the former Soviet and now Russian army participated in the massacre of the peaceful Azerbaijani population, only Armenians were seen as the culprits as perceived by the collective consciousness of the Azerbaijani society.

At the same time, although the Karabakh war was in full swing, and Armenians had already clearly taken the place of the main enemy for Azerbaijanis, too little time had still passed from the beginning of the conflict, and the propaganda machine was not fully developed. Therefore, for some time, even after the Khojaly tragedy, the more liberal views and attitudes towards the “image of the enemy” prevailed in the society. A typical example for that time: in the fall of 1992, a meeting of experts was held in the President’s Office to determine how to describe the bloody events that occurred in Khojaly in the media and official propaganda outlets? Different terms were proposed: “carnage”, “pogrom”, “massacre”, “tragedy”. Suddenly, someone suggested qualifying the events in Khojaly as genocide. This proposal was harshly rejected, because then in the public consciousness and understanding of Azerbaijanis this word bore a humiliating connotation – “you are being killed, but you are not resisting”. Therefore, we stopped at the term “tragedy” (*fajja* in Azerbaijani).

Moreover, in public opinion, as well as during the investigation process in that period, the main emphasis was laid on the search for those, responsible for the tragedy from the Azerbaijani side. That is, there was no doubt in the society that it was the Armenians who

carried out the massacre in Khojaly. But it was also necessary to find those from the Azerbaijani side, for whose, albeit indirect, fault, the Armenians staged this massacre. It was then about the fault of President Ayaz Mutallibov and a number of field commanders who did not fulfill their duties and did not come to the aid of the Khojaly residents.

With the advent of Heydar Aliyev to power in 1993, a new stage began in the history of the creation of stereotypes and images of the enemy in Azerbaijan. The war was lost, a large part of the territory was occupied, hundreds of thousands of refugees, not only from Armenia, but from their own territories, became refugees within the country. The society was overwhelmed by frustration, depression, and doom. The former identity and attitude towards oneself and the world around was destroyed.

The ruling elite set itself the task of justifying its presence in power and the choice of foreign policy allies, as well as enemies. It was necessary to provide all this with an appropriate ideology, culture and educational discourse. The new national ideology being constructed was set up to represent the Azerbaijani people as a victim of constant attacks by insidious neighbors, primarily Armenians. The defeats were explained not only by the multiplicity of enemies, but also by the lack of unity. But it was pointed out that the Azerbaijani people never gave up and courageously fought against changing the geopolitical map in favor of the Christian world. In this picture of the world, it was the past that gave an answer for the present: "we have always been oppressed, but we have never stopped fighting." (9) And therefore, the difficult period of defeat and loss of Karabakh would necessarily be replaced by a triumphal victory.

In the framework of the new national ideology, first of all, a new policy for creating and managing historical memory was needed to explain the reasons for the defeat in the Karabakh conflict and the unification of the people around the authorities and personally H. Aliyev, who alone could save the nation and save the state, as well as return Karabakh. Accordingly, speaking out against the policy of the authorities was regarded as a desire to defeat one's own people or a call to humble themselves and abandon their former greatness. It is no coincidence that the most popular motto that was repeated everywhere and at all festive events in Azerbaijan was: "Homeland is indivisible, martyrs are immortal!" (*Vatan bolyunmyaz, martyr olmyaz!* in Azerbaijani). In fact, it was about reformatting the nation.

As a result, according to Heydar Aliyev's instructions, from the second half of the 1990s, Azerbaijan began to carry out relevant programs on "patriotic education of citizens in the spirit of love for the homeland and the need to fight against enemies", as the programs read. And first of all, they began to rewrite history books, as well as publish new school history textbooks, which were designed to "educate patriots who could separate" themselves "from" the others "and were ready, if necessary, to take part in another conflict." (10)

The policy of creating the "image of the enemy" in the person of Armenians took on a purposeful and large-scale character. This image of the "historical enemy" of the

Azerbaijani people has become the main symbol in school history textbooks, starting from the 5th grade! (11) That is, the younger generation should know clearly, ever since childhood, who is the main enemy of the people! Moreover, all possible negative epithets (“bandits”, “aggressors”, “killers”, “insidious”, “hypocritical”, etc.) are used in school textbooks regarding Armenians. And if we add hundreds of publications in the press and television programs about the role of Armenians in the history of Azerbaijan to these school textbooks and history books, it becomes clear that brainwashing is comprehensive.

Paradoxically, the new authorities in Azerbaijan have largely borrowed the example of ... the Armenian propaganda! More precisely, anti-Turkish propaganda and the numerous myths, fears and stereotypes among Armenians about Turks. As a result of this long-term propaganda, the Armenian population, reading books on the history of the Armenian people or publications about the Turks and Turkey, often sincerely believe that for centuries the Turks did nothing but kill Armenians or dream about killing them.

In fact, Heydar Aliyev began the process of “Armenization” of the Azerbaijani society and soon the Azerbaijani started “crying for their lost lands”, the words “genocide”, “long-suffering Azerbaijani people”, etc. became fashionable.

Previous disagreements about how to name the Khojaly tragedy in the media belonged to the past. At the initiative of Heydar Aliyev, in February 1994, a special meeting with the participation of the public was held in the parliament, dedicated to the discussion of the Khojaly tragedy. At the end, on March 1, 1994, Heydar Aliyev issued a decree declaring February 26 as “the Day of the Khojaly genocide and national mourning”. Three years later, on February 25, 1997, Heydar Aliyev signed a decree announcing the "minute of silence in memory of the victims of the Khojaly genocide" throughout Azerbaijan at 5 pm on every February 26.

Thus, along with the Black January 20th, another nationwide day of mourning and sorrow for victims was established. But the laws of ethnic conflict and propaganda fight demanded to bridge the present also with the past, to show that Armenians were centuries-old enemies who only cared for killing Azerbaijanis in the name of creating their own “Great Armenia”. And the March 1918 events were best suited for this. As a result, on March 26, 1998, a Decree was issued by Heydar Aliyev, according to which from then on they began to celebrate March 31 as "The Day of the Genocide of Azerbaijanis" (*Azarbadzhanlylaryn soigyrymy gunu* in Azerbaijani) in Azerbaijan and in the Azerbaijani Diaspora.

So the program to create national days of mourning and sorrow was completed, meant to unite the nation against the historical enemy in the person of Armenians. At the same time, a very effective succession of dates to commemorate the tragic events in the history of the Azerbaijani people was designed: January 20 - “Day of National Mourning” for the victims of the Soviet power (“Black January”), a month later February 26 - “Day of Khojaly genocide and national mourning”, a month later March 31 - the "Day of the genocide of Azerbaijanis." That is, for three consecutive months, Azerbaijanis should have their sorrowful days of mourning. And all this is widely publicized and promoted, including

abroad. And only then, in April, the turn of Armenians begins to have their own day of sorrow and mourning for the victims of 1915.

Under Ilham Aliyev, this policy continued. The memorial complex in memory of the victims of Black January, nevertheless, did not play a big role in the propaganda about the struggle against Armenians – the historical enemy. A separate monument was needed for the victims of Armenian atrocities, which was to play a special role for the Azerbaijani society. And on February 26, 2008, the official opening of the monument to the victims of Khojaly called “The Cry of the Mother” (*Ana Harayi* in Azerbaijani) took place, and the President, the representatives of the diplomatic corps and hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis make a solemn procession to that monument annually.

Now, Azerbaijan had it all – their commemorations and mourning and sorrow dates and the monuments to the victims, hundreds of thousands of people solemnly marched to. Thus, the policy of forming the image of the “historical enemy of the nation” in the person of Armenians was fully completed.

The process of the “Armenization” of Azerbaijanis began to bear fruit very quickly. In the propaganda campaign, Armenians and Azerbaijanis began to behave like Siamese twins – each of the two justified their actions in every possible way and focused on their own victims, and saw only evil in the actions of the opposite side. Armenians focused on the pogroms in Sumgait and Baku and completely denied the pogroms of Azerbaijanis in Armenia and their guilt in Khojaly, and considered this to be the work of Azerbaijanis. In turn, Azerbaijanis focused all attention on Khojaly and denied their guilt in the above pogroms, putting the blame for these pogroms on Armenians only. Moreover, a propaganda competition started very soon – each side regularly and joyfully reported as a major “historical” victory that the parliament of a country or a state in a country adopted an appropriate resolution on “its” genocide. If at the beginning of the Karabakh conflict the Azerbaijani society did not understand why the events of 1915 were associated with them, now Azerbaijanis began to react to the actions of Armenians or anyone else towards Turks and Turkey in 1915 more painfully than Turks themselves.

To raise patriotism, and in fact militaristic feelings, both sides began to actively use new technologies and develop computer war games for young people. Azerbaijani programmers created a series of games for young people called “Under Occupation.” In response, their Armenian counterparts created “Hi Zinvor” – the first online game for a mobile phone. As a result, every day thousands of young Azerbaijanis and Armenians are already virtually fighting each other with the help of these and other software games.(12)

Moreover, each party does not see itself from aside and denies the presence of phobias, assures that it is more tolerant than the other. Meanwhile, the only difference is that Azerbaijanis are the losing side, they are not satisfied with the outcome of the war and the current status quo, and therefore they have more phobias and militarism.

Under Ilham Aliyev, Armenophobia was raised to even greater heights and in many ways has become an ordinary thing. Sometimes it looks like a racist theater of the absurd. On

the one hand, the authorities, and many ordinary people following them would talk about 30 thousand Armenians, supposedly quietly living in Baku (13), who, they say, are fine and have no problems. This does not stop even the pro-government media from simultaneously recognizing that many Armenians are trying to hide their nationality in Azerbaijan, are forced to change their names and surnames, and introduce themselves as Russian or Jewish (14). At the same time, journalists from pro-government media do not think about a logical question: why are Armenians who have no problems while living in Azerbaijan forced to change their names and surnames and why do they have to introduce themselves as Russian or Jewish?

Many years of Armenophobia has led to the fact that in Azerbaijan the nationality term "Armenian" has almost become synonymous with "enemy" and causes only negative emotions among respectable Azerbaijanis. In the recent years, government media outlets have launched a real "witch hunt" campaign, using the ethnonym "Armenian" as an indictment. Political opponents or anyone in or out of the country who disagree with the policy of the Azerbaijani authorities are labeled Armenian. Even a slight and cautious criticism of the policy led by the ruling regime in the field of human rights causes official Baku's hysteria. The critics are immediately labeled "Armenian" or "sold to the Armenian lobby."

But if outside the republic such an inadequate reaction of the authorities is perceived with irony and as evidence of paranoia, the attitude is different in the republic. To have Armenian origin or even family ties with Armenians is becoming increasingly dangerous in Azerbaijan year by year. This can lead to dismissal from work or harassment. Azerbaijani pro-government media have long been full of calls to dismiss not only Armenians, but also those who are related to Armenians (have an Armenian mother, grandmother or spouse), because "Armenians are worse than animals." (15) A statement about someone's Armenian origin in general can be perceived as an insult and lead to a trial (16).

People simply do not see themselves from outside and sincerely do not understand that their words would be perceived as racism in any other civilized country, and they themselves would face trial and respective punishment. Frankly, racist discourse regularly appears in the press, inciting ethnic and religious discord. So, in March 2017, Nizameddin Shamsizade, professor at a leading state university in the country made a public statement in an interview without a shade of doubt: "People born from mixed marriages always think wrongly. But a man with pure genes and blood is always pure for the nation." (17) It would never occur to him and those who believe him that this rhetoric about pure blood and genes as an indispensable condition for making right decisions and moral and ethical purity exactly repeats the rhetoric of German and Italian fascists in the 30-40s of the last century.

To understand the current situation in Azerbaijan, it would be useful to quote the characteristic and notorious "case of Ramil Safarov", who killed an Armenian officer, his peer Gurgen Margaryan at a NATO training event in Budapest (Hungary) in 2004. Initially, both President Ilham Aliyev and the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry were cautious in

assessing the incident and even expressed condolences to the family of the murdered Armenian officer. But then, as the power of Ilham Aliyev and the anti-Armenian rhetoric of the authorities strengthened, their attitude towards this fact and Ramil Safarov's character began to change, as the latter was already becoming an element of the anti-Armenian propagandistic struggle. As a result, very soon, he began to turn from a murderer, first, into a victim, whose relatives died as a result of the Karabakh conflict, and then into a hero of the war against the worst enemy of the nation! After that, the authorities began to make all possible efforts to release and return R. Safarov to his homeland and achieved their goal: in August 2012, Hungary extradited R. Safarov to Azerbaijan. Immediately upon his return to Baku, R. Safarov, instead of serving his sentence, according to the assurances of the Azerbaijani authorities, was pardoned and released by a presidential decree! Moreover, he was promoted: from senior lieutenant immediately to lieutenant colonel (currently colonel), he was presented with an apartment and paid an officer's salary for all 8 years in prison. Following this, the authorities launched a nationwide campaign to glorify R. Safarov's image.

Certainly, the growing dissatisfaction with the outcome of the war and the futility of many years of negotiations could not but strengthen radicalization in the Azerbaijani society. And numerous opinion polls constantly showed a tendency for the growth of radicalism in the Azerbaijani society in the recent years. Opinion polls conducted in 2001-2012 showed that in Azerbaijan the number of supporters of a military solution to the conflict was growing steadily. Over this period, this number grew from about 35-40 percent to 60-65 percent (18). The number of those who believe in the victory of the Azerbaijani army in the event of the resumption of hostilities is growing steadily. These sentiments increased even more after the April battles in 2016, which, thanks to propaganda, were perceived in Azerbaijan as a major victory.

Surveys also show that the vast majority of Azerbaijanis and Armenians - up to 90 percent - consider the other party an enemy of their country. Moreover, while Armenians within the range of 50-60 percent feel "hatred", "rage" and "contempt" towards Azerbaijanis, the same figures for Azerbaijanis range from 70 to 80 percent, that is, the negative feelings are stronger.

The picture is fairly clear with regard to other friends and foes, too. As was to be expected, Turkey (approximately 70-80 percent of the respondents) is number one among the countries perceived to be friendly to Azerbaijan, followed by others by a large margin in all polls. The USA and Georgia constantly occupy the following positions. These three countries take the lion's share of the respondents' votes, clearly showing to whom the sympathies of the population of Azerbaijan belong.

As expected, Armenia was called the most hostile state to Azerbaijan. It is followed by Russia and Iran (19).

Thus, a quarter century after the ceasefire and the achievement of truce in the Karabakh conflict, the positions of the parties not only have failed to come closer and get softer, but

on the contrary, have led to a situation that is even more radical and harsher. During this time, both sides have completed the formation of the "vicious circle for defining the enemy." Each side has a clear memory of its victims, forgetting or avoiding the thought that they themselves committed violence. Both sides are at an impasse in the conflict. And so far there is no hint that the parties intend to change the situation and begin to try to understand the pain and suffering of the other side.

In this regard, it is appropriate to recall the famous Armenian writer Hrant Matevosyan, who in one of his interviews sadly remarked: "So far, my word is only the word of an Armenian, and it does not equally include the words and thoughts of Azerbaijanis and Turks. So far, the merger is not working. Maybe it is yet to come?" (20) And indeed, realizing the pain and suffering of each side, their thoughts and psychology, you can try to stop this "vicious circle of defining the enemy" and find a compromise.

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1. Эрнест Ренан. Что такое нация? - Собрание сочинений в 12-ти томах. Пер. с франц. под редакцией В.Н. Михайловского. - Киев, 1902, Том 6, с. 102.
  2. Omer Bartov. *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide and Modern Identity*. - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 91.
  3. Майкл Смит. Память об утратах и азербайджанское общество. Пер. с англ. О. Фидиной. – Сборник «Азербайджан и Россия: общества и государства». Под ред. Д.Е.Фурман. – Москва, 2001, с.95.
  4. *Ashura* – a mourning religious ritual among Shiites during the commemoration service for Shiite martyrs.
  5. *Makharrah* (variants – *Mukharrah*, *Magharrah*,) – a sacred month for Muslims, especially for the Shiites, who in this period mourning for Imam Hussein, martyred in 680
  6. *Shahids* – Martyrs in Islam who die for faith.
  7. *Haram* – actions and deed that are most sinful and prohibited in Islam.
  8. More details in: Ариф Юнусов. Ислам в Азербайджане. – Баку, 2004, с. 196.
  9. Сабир Ахундов. Наш геноцид. Историческая политика и школьное образование в Азербайджане. - <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ru/nash-genocid/>
  10. Ильхам Аббасов, Сергей Румянцев. Способы увековечить прошлое: анализ образов других в учебниках истории Азербайджана. – Сборник «Современные учебники истории на Южном Кавказе». Под ред. Любоша Веселего. – Прага: «Ассоциация международных вопросов», 2009, с.34.
  11. More details in: Ариф Юнусов. Мифы и образы «врага» в исторической науке и учебниках по истории независимого Азербайджана. - [http://amudarya.gei.de/fileadmin/\\_amudarya/bs/ay.pdf](http://amudarya.gei.de/fileadmin/_amudarya/bs/ay.pdf)
  12. Лилит Аракелян, Ника Мусави, Седа Мурадян. Как в Армении и в Азербайджане играют в войну. - <https://jam-news.net/как-в-армении-и-в-азербайджане-играют-в/?lang=ru>
  13. In fact, according to 2009 census in Azerbaijan, except Nagorno Karabakh, there were 183 registered Armenians, of which 104 were in the capital. In the vast majority of cases, these were elderly people, members of mixed families.
  14. How many Armenians live in Azerbaijan? <http://www.1news.az/society/20151030025627115.html>
  15. In: Шок: армяне создали в Азербайджане сеть. - <http://www.dia.az/print:page,1,9448-eok-azzhrbaycanda-ermzhndlzhr-ezhbzhkzh-yaradb.html> (in Azerbaijani); Егяна Рзаханова. Азербайджанская певица: «Угнавший мою машину преступник имеет армянские корни». - <http://vesti.az/news/87629/>; «Мать Ильгара Рагимова была армянкой». -

- <http://haqqin.az/news/3983>; Бабушка Гюляр Ахмедовой армянка... - <http://olaylar.az/news/ru/15133> и др.
16. В Баку сотрудник дорожной полиции обратился в суд из-за слова «армянин». - [http://ru.oxu.az/society/54016?fb\\_comment\\_id=803907369648241\\_804302356275409#f219d1ed8a802b](http://ru.oxu.az/society/54016?fb_comment_id=803907369648241_804302356275409#f219d1ed8a802b)
17. Низамаддин Шамсизаде. В жилах шаха Исмаила текла христианская кровь. - <http://publika.az/news/maraqlitarix/189900.html> (in Azerbaijani).
18. In: Ариф Юнусов. Азербайджан в начале XXI века: конфликты и потенциальные угрозы. – Баку, 2007, с. 26-30. The results of other opinion polls can be found here: Возможности урегулирования Карабахского конфликта. Результаты социологических исследований и мониторинга средств массовой информации (2001-2003). – Баку, 2004; Армения и Азербайджан на перепутье «ни мира, ни войны». – Ереван, 2005 г.; Арда Инал-Ипа. Обзор результатов качественного социологического исследования по проблеме конфликта вокруг Карабаха. - [https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Ardalnal-Ipa\\_ThePriceOfPeace.pdf](https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Ardalnal-Ipa_ThePriceOfPeace.pdf); Глоссарий языка вражды в СМИ Азербайджана и Армении. - [https://ypc.am/upload/GLOSSARY\\_rus.pdf](https://ypc.am/upload/GLOSSARY_rus.pdf) и др.
19. In: Ариф Юнусов. Азербайджан в начале XXI века, с. 207. Интервью с Грантом Матевосяном. - Газ. «Литературная газета» (Москва) от 8 июля 1992



## COMMENTS TO THE ARTICLES

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### Arif Yunusov's comment on Susanna Barseghyan's article "the perceptions of the "enemy's image" in Armenia"



The article under review is devoted to a very important and relevant topic - the perception of the "image of the enemy" in Armenia. The author rightly points out that the "image of the enemy" has always emerged and has been exploited in conflicts and crises since ancient times. This is a universal political tool that allows unifying people/the nation in such conditions, which at the same time has negative consequences. However, the author somewhat confuses the cause and the effect, since it is not "enemy images" or negative national stereotypes that give rise to conflicts, but rather conflicts and crises give rise to the emergence, formation and development of the "enemy image".

Further, the author rather interestingly depicted how and why the main "enemy images" appeared in modern Armenia in the person of Turkey and Azerbaijan and what are the differences in the Armenians' perceptions of these two major enemies. If Turkey is perceived by the Armenians from the viewpoint of a victim, Azerbaijan is seen from the viewpoint of a winner. The main evil from such an "image of the enemy" is indicated very accurately when the enemies lose their "human attributes" and turn "into absolute evil." And "the country, the leader, the people, the ideas, the political system, the culture and the civilization, the history, the religion and so on are considered to be hostile."

At the same time, the author of *The Perceptions of the "Enemy's Image" in Armenia* failed to notice that she herself began to write as a victim of this "image of the enemy". Indeed, propaganda of the "image of the enemy" implies the inevitable birth of the antithesis of "we-they", "friends-strangers", "executioners-victims", etc. And the author herself, without knowing it, began to write precisely from the standpoint of this antithesis. For her, as a representative of the Armenian people, it is absolutely natural that compatriots perceive the victory over Azerbaijan as restoration of justice: "we (that is, Armenians and the author - A.Yu.) believe that we have established justice", but "our perception of Turkey is from the standpoint of the victim" and here the author already, just like the whole Armenian society, "demands restoration of justice". Without even trying to separate herself from her people and understand the other side of the conflict.

The further she writes, the more evident it gets. The author writes that "The image of Azerbaijan and Turkey as the enemy is less invented or mythological," because it is

associated with a “real threat” to Armenia and the Armenian people. A legitimate question immediately arises for the author: aren't Armenians the same threat to the Azerbaijani people? Didn't the Armenians conduct ethnic cleansing of the Azerbaijanis and deport them from Armenia in 1988-1990? Didn't Armenians kill peaceful Azerbaijanis in the Karabakh conflict? And finally, didn't Khojaly happen? But obviously, the author does not think about this, because in accordance with the laws of conflict and the creation of the “image of the enemy”, “your pain” and “your fears” are important. But the fact that the same fears and concerns may be on the other side of the conflict, too, is not being investigated. And therefore, it is quite natural for the author and there is no doubt that it is extremely difficult for the Armenian "society to overcome the stereotype of Turks as butchers." Indeed, as the author herself correctly noted above, the "image of the enemy" requires turning it into an "absolute evil." And one's own people should only be in the position of the victim of these butchers.

And again, in strict accordance with the behavioral pattern of a victim to an “enemy image” created by a conflict, the author tries to pass off wishful thinking: "regardless of the existence of a nationalistic discourse in Armenia, there is no hate speech or extreme aggression against the enemy." And she further asserts that “In Armenian children’s literature and textbooks there is no xenophobic propaganda, there are no epithets labelling Azerbaijanis or Turks. In the media outlets, too, despite the existence of nationalistic discourse, systematic use of extreme manifestations and vocabulary is not the case.” But there are already many publications by Armenian authors on this subject, which give specific examples that contradict what the author is trying to assure us of (1). As the Armenian students themselves say, “if I were to form an opinion about Turks only on the basis of school information, I would think that they were barbarians, animals, monsters.” There are equally negative epithets about Azerbaijan, which “is described in textbooks as a new country, formed on the basis of nomadic tribes.” (2) Even social experiments were carried out in the streets of Baku and Yerevan to determine the intensity of the “image of the enemy.” And within the framework of these experiments, in exact accordance with the laws of conflict, the reaction of Armenians is the same as that of Azerbaijanis (3).

And it becomes absolutely embarrassing for the author when she naively tries to convince that "As for the political discourse, all (!!! - A.Yu.) political leaders and forces" rhetoric of war has not been extreme." It will suffice to bring only one example: making a speech at a meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2003, then-President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan publicly declared: “Azerbaijanis and Armenians are genetically incompatible peoples.” This statement was regarded not just as extremist, but racist and provoked a harsh response from many Europeans, including the Minsk Group Co-Chairs. And how many similar statements have been made by other Armenian ministers, politicians and leaders of various parties and organizations! It is unlikely that the author is unaware of such statements. The psychology of a person who has become a victim of the “image of the enemy” and who therefore does not see anything reprehensible in the statements of “one’s own” lot, but she can easily pick a needle in the haystack of “enemies”. Now, if it weren't for Robert Kocharyan to make this notorious statement, but

Ilham Aliyev or one of the Azerbaijani politicians, the author would have no problems. Then she would have noticed extremism. And how can she notice "her own ones" extremism?

And the assurances that in "in post-revolutionary Armenia there were new emphases in the peace discourse: the new government has spoken more about the readiness to and significance of peace" are absolutely naive and amusing! As if there were no aggressive statements by the Minister of Defense and the Prime Minister of Armenia about the seizure of new territories from Azerbaijan. And as if during a recent visit to Karabakh, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan did not say that this is the territory of Armenia, which was regarded as an aggressive statement that only incites militarism on the other side (4).

Thus, the peer-reviewed article demonstrates how difficult it is even for experts to avoid the influence of propaganda and stereotypes.

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1. See: Глоссарий языка вражды в СМИ Азербайджана и Армении. - [https://ypc.am/upload/GLOSSARY\\_rus.pdf](https://ypc.am/upload/GLOSSARY_rus.pdf); Армяно-азербайджанские взаимоотношения в медиа Армении и Азербайджана. - [https://ypc.am/upload/ArmAzMonit0809\\_rus.pdf](https://ypc.am/upload/ArmAzMonit0809_rus.pdf); Филип Гамагелян и Сергей Румянцев. Армения и Азербайджан: конфликт в Нагорном Карабахе и новая интерпретация нарративов в учебниках истории. – Сборник «*Мифы и конфликты на Южном Кавказе*». Том 1. Под ред. О.Карпенко и Дж. Джавахишвили. - International Alert, 2013, с. 177-183 и др.
  2. Кристина Солоян. Линия фронта начинается в учебниках. - <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ru/linia-fronta-nachinaetsya-uchebnikach-karabakh/>
  3. An Armenian in Baku vs. an Azerbaijani in Yerevan: a Social Experiment – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkA6twUVu48>; Armenian about Azerbaijanis and Azerbaijanis about Armenians - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAt9HPzSKBA>
  4. See См Громкие «военные» заявления от армянского премьера и министра обороны. - <https://jam-news.net/громкие-военные-заявления-от-армян/?lang=ru>; Пашинян поддерживает тезис «новая война – новые территории». - <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2603820.html>; Пашинян: Арцах — это Армения, и все! Заявление премьера республики ставит под сомнение надежды на урегулирование и внутривнутриполитический консенсус по Карабаху. Чем ответит Баку? - <http://www.rosbalt.ru/world/2019/08/08/1796164.html>



## Suzanna Barseghyan's Comment on Arif Yunusov's Article “Stereotypes and the “image of the enemy” in Azerbaijan”



In his article, A. Yunusov carefully analyzed the history and factors of the formation of the “image of the enemy” in Azerbaijan. The author of the article quite objectively and thoroughly presents the history of Azerbaijan, reconstructing the process, referring to important historical events and, in this context, the essence of propaganda of the “image of the enemy” in his country. He rightly indicates to the mythological character of the image of the enemy in the representations of both societies. However, A. Yunusov speaks about the polarity of these images, rather than mentioning the main features that are specific to the process of forming the “image of the enemy” in Azerbaijan.

Anti-Armenian propaganda and Armenophobia are presented as the most important factor of national unification and unity, imitating the “Armenian prototype”. At the same time, the Armenian example is presented as based solely on grief, mourning, and a sense of sacrifice. However, the expert does not consider other essential factors, such as history, culture, values, ethno-cultural identity, the features of nation state, etc. For example, the article does not discuss the features of the political regime and the formation of public opinion in Azerbaijan. After all, it is known that the phenomenon of the “image of the enemy” is most clearly manifested and controls the consciousness of the society in states with an authoritarian and totalitarian political regime and propaganda and acts as the main instrument of ideological influence.

In this regard, we see a clear difference between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Unlike the seemingly homogeneous Azerbaijani propaganda, there is a pluralism of opinions in Armenia. In the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies, the asymmetry of the representation and propaganda of the image of the enemy is manifested in political rhetoric, in the media, social networks, educational programs, science, art, etc. Ramil Safarov’s example cited in the article by A. Yunusov contradicts his opinion that both countries conduct a similar propaganda of the “image of the enemy”. In Armenia, a person who is credited with inhuman or cruel acts is not heroized at public or state level. Another distinctive feature is the public opinion about the ways to resolve the Karabakh conflict: if in Azerbaijan the number of supporters of a military solution to the conflict is steadily growing (as the author indicates), in Armenia the society sees a solution to the conflict through peaceful negotiations (even after the April war of 2016) (1).

A. Yunusov also draws parallels between anti-Turkish Armenian propaganda and anti-Armenian propaganda in Azerbaijan. As the author rightly analyzes, the Azerbaijani elite uses the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a tool for the purpose of national unity and the

formation of the Azerbaijani national identity in a variety of ways and tries to recreate the Armenian model of historical memory. But we see this as an incongruence of facts for the correlation of these processes. The article also contains, to put it mildly, ambiguous interpretations of genocide (the term “genocide” has a clear legal definition). The memory of the Armenian Genocide and the image of the Turkish enemy are not formed specifically for the image of the victim and national unity. This is not the result of propaganda, but an oral history, the social memory of the people that is passed down from generation to generation, it is part of ethnic identity.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that in the future the societies of Armenia and Azerbaijan will be so democratic and open that we can speak frankly about the real processes and discourses in our countries.

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1 Caucasus Barometer, Public Perceptions on Political, Social, and Economic Issues in the South Caucasus Countries, CRRCArmenia, 2017 ([https://www.crrc.am/wp-content/themes/crrc/barometer\\_files/presentations-2017.pdf](https://www.crrc.am/wp-content/themes/crrc/barometer_files/presentations-2017.pdf))