TROJAN HORSE AT THE GATES OF ARTSAKH

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Category: Opinions

By Prof. Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, Los Angeles, 12 April 2021

In chess, sometimes a player sacrifices an unimportant piece as a lure in anticipation of capturing a more valuable piece. Such tactic is called "deception". Deception is a trick or scheme used to get what you want. That is one way to describe how Azerbaijan and Turkey bamboozled Artsakh Defense Forces into a devastating defeat.

Military deception is an attempt by a military unit to gain an advantage during warfare by misleading the enemy decision makers into taking actions that are detrimental to their own soldiers and positions. Deception is usually achieved by creating an artificial situation of war via psychological operations, information warfare, and visual deception such as using decoys, dummies of weapons, or other methods of entrapment. Military deception also involves psychological warfare closely connected to operations in which attempts are made to conceal from the adversary critical information about one's capabilities, activities, losses, while deception reveals false information in an effort to mislead the adversary. For example, unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan refused to disclose its casualties during the war in an attempt to hide its losses. Moreover, Azerbaijan engaged in war propaganda by issuing graphic videos showing Armenian positions, weapons, infrastructure, civilian quarters, and the like being pulverized in a blaze of fire by their suicide drones, remote piloted by the Turkish and Israeli experts.

The defeat has caused widespread disillusion with the Armenian military experts. What had happened to the overly confident generals, commanders, and the like, who assured people of a smashing victory should Azerbaijan were to attack?

What went wrong? In analyzing the reasons for our loss we discover very disturbing, even mindboggling facts.

According to military analysts Nicole Thomas, Lieutenant Colonel Matt Jamison, Capt. Kendall Gamber, and Derek Walton: "The resounding success of UAS in the Nagorno-Karabakh War marks what many consider to be a turning point in modern warfare. For the first time in recorded history, nearly all battle damage was inflicted by unmanned platforms."

Artsakh's defeat has been attributed also to grave blunders such as sending green troops to the front; using outdated, outmoded Soviet weapons; the debilitating grip of COVID-19 disease on the troops; the grind of 44 days of fighting with no fresh replacements; low morale; lack of ammunition; misfiring or “disoperation” of the S-300 anti-missile Soviet weapon; failure to use Iskander missiles, being outnumbered and outgunned by the coalition of Azerbaijani, Turkish, Syrian 4,000 mercenaries, ISIS jihadists, Israeli experts, Pakistani volunteers, and so on.

Azerbaijan also engaged in heinous psychological warfare tactics of Genghis Khan by instilling fear in the Armenian soldiers by decapitating captives.

Despite the long list of shortcomings, so far nothing has been mentioned of Artsakh's military being

outsmarted and outmaneuvered by the war strategists of Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Israel. The Armenian military force strategists were deceived and destroyed in plain daylight. As a result, the tide turned against the Armenians. Thomas and her colleagues also said: "These improvised UAS were repurposed as decoys and flown to the front lines to force air defenses to give away their location and enable targeting by TB2s. When the Armenian air defenses targeted, engaged, and destroyed the perceived threats, they inadvertently broadcasted their positions to Azeri unmanned aerial attack platforms that flew at higher altitudes—enabling the Bayraktar TB2 and kamikaze drones to destroy higher-payoff targets like the Armenian air defense systems".
Six days into the war, Armenia had already lost its important positions high in the mountains. Artsakh has a natural defense against the enemy in the form of high terrain (mountainous rugged land) and thick forests. This enviable, confidence building position was neutralized by the Azerbaijani war strategists.

Within six days, Azerbaijan claimed to have wiped out 250 armored vehicles, 250 artillery pieces, and 39 air-defense systems, including a Russian S-300 surface-to-air missile system, etc. The weapon that enabled Azerbaijan win the war was the UAVs, which badgered the Armenian forces constantly no matter how high and hidden their positions were in the mountains of Artsakh.

Unknown to Armenians, the "Trojan Horse" tactic was used by Azerbaijan to mislead the Artsakh Defense Forces. One of the deadly Azerbaijani deception tactics consisted of employing decoys by sending low flying drones--which in fact were meant to lure the Artsakh Defense Forces to shoot them down and in so doing disclose their positions. As a result, the Artsakh forces became targets for Azerbaijani drones.

If the Armenians had known about the Azeri military deception, they would not have come out to shoot the low-flying decoy drones, and in the process, they would not have betrayed their camouflaged positions to become the identified targets for the killer drones later to strike. Or better yet, they should have moved to a new location right after bringing down the enemy drone and finding out that it was a decoy.

The Azerbaijani Trojan Horse deceived Artsakh's military decision makers. As a result, we lost the war. Unequivocally, the naivety of the commanders of the Artsakh Defense Forces is inexcusable, if not downright guilty of gross negligence.

Most war analysts have already come to the conclusion that Artsakh lost the war mainly because Azerbaijan had the Turkish and Israeli drones deployed on suicide missions. Based on military experience, the following common sense steps are presented to deal with misleading military activities such as the deployment of decoy drones:

1. Conduct a quick analysis of the contents of the "Trojan Horse" or decoy drone your troops had shot down to determine its possible mission.
2. If it is a decoy drone, move the troops along with their weapons as quickly as possible to a

nearby location hidden from the adversary.

III. Try to watch for another attempt by a high-flying drone to establish a connection with the first low flying drone--for they are out there to get you.

1. Alert all military position commanders of the military deception Azerbaijan/Turkey/Israel is carrying on misleading the Artsakh Defense Forces.
2. Send the greenhorn, inexperienced military decision-makers back to school to stop them from jeopardizing the lives of their own troops because of their negligence or incompetence.
3. Replace the deadwood military decision makers with military personnel of great knowledge and experience of warfare in the cadre of the late commander (aka Komandos) Arkadi Ter-Tadevosyan to ensure the same blunders would not occur in future wars.

A military commander is supposed to be a commissioned professional solider who has gone through formal education and extensive training in the area of old and modern warfare. For example, cadets at West Point study the war strategies, tactics, and schemes of Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Charlemagne, and Napoleon. How is it that the Armenian commanders had missed Azerbaijan's costly deceptive tactics?

The best recommendation one would make under these circumstances is to demand Prime Minister Pashinyan to replace those deadwood army personnel with conscientious and patriotic individuals after having court marshaled them.

The ship of Artsakh struck ground in the 2020 war. To pull itself out of the quagmire requires serious preparation. What is in store for Artsakh? Without groping for an answer, readiness in two critical areas: one is in acquiring latest unmanned aerial weapons for existential battles against the combo of two genocidal adversaries, the league of Azerbaijan and Turkey sworn to be "one nation, two states"; the other one is to enlist Armenian commanders who would serve for love of country rather than for power, prestige, and personal gain.

The dawn of post-modern warfare has begun with the Artsakh War in 2020. For the first time in the history of high-tech warfare, UAVs caused a decisive victory over the adversary. It has shown that as a model war lessons can be learned from it. Taiwan, India, the United States, and others have extensively written on lessons to learn from the war.

The improved capability and versatility of UAVs to be used for decoys, reconnaissance, and destruction has been well established in the latest war between Artsakh and Azerbaijan. Given UAVs relatively low cost and high capability, Artsakh can include "killer" drones in its arsenal of weapons either by purchasing them from China or by producing them.

The decreased human risk and stand-off capability have changed the equation in armed conflicts. Now, small countries like Armenia and Artsakh can face Azerbaijan and Turkey with the new air technology since victory does not depend on the size of the army rather on the capability and

maneuverability of the UAVs against the adversary. Armenian military top brass should be indicted for letting the Armenian nation down. They should be court marshaled for the highest felony. As for the Artsakh military decision makers, we have to depend on local professional officers with a strong passion for patriotism to lead the army into victory. In addition to acquiring modern weapons, we need to enlist active or retired military personal from the Armenian Diaspora to serve as honorary military advisors for the Artsakh Defense Forces.

We need dedicated military leaders to boost our confidence and foster long-term resilience and self-reliance. Then, and only then we would have confidence to regain our ancestral province of Artsakh.

Illustration: Detail from *The Procession of the Trojan Horse in Troy* by Domenico Tiepolo (1773), inspired by Virgil's *Aeneid*. Metaphorically, a "Trojan horse" has come to mean any trick, deception, or stratagem that causes a target to inadvertently invite a foe into a securely protected bastion or place.

Comments



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One big deception was the July 2020 battle in which an azeri general was killed and we won the battle. It reminds the 1939 Soviet - Finland war that lasted for 9 months. Tiny Finland. That gave Hitler the confidence that he would finish the soviet Union in 3 months. (No need for winter preparations!)