A PERSPECTIVE ON THE AMERICAN HEGEMON'S WARS

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Category: Opinions

By Varouj Pogharian, Bogota, Colombia, 10 March 2026

For those of us who have lived through the second half of the 20th century and into the 21st, the title of this essay—'A Perspective on the American Hegemon's Wars'—is not a provocation, but an invitation for historical inquiry. On several occasions, we have observed the American superpower's capacity for overwhelming violence and asked ourselves whether its military might is ever used in the service of good, or, as the evidence suggests, in the service of power and profit.

For Armenians, this question is not an abstract, academic exercise. As the drums of war beat once more against the Islamic Republic of Iran, we are duty-bound to watch closely as citizens of the world, and as a nation with deep, ancient ties to the Persian world.

Demonstrated Lies

To understand our stake in this conflict, we must first recognize the pattern of the American hammer always in search of a nail.

In my lifetime, the justification for American war-making has consistently been built on a foundation of sand. The pattern is so well-worn it has become a tragic cliché: "intelligence" is manufactured, a threat is exaggerated, and the machinery of war is set in motion, leaving devastation in its wake.

To name a few examples, let us consider the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964—when I was twelve—which became the pretext for the catastrophic Vietnam War. We now know, from declassified National Security Agency documents, that the second attack, which President Johnson cited to launch retaliatory strikes and secure a blank check for war, never happened. Key information was withheld from the President by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who pushed for escalation despite direct reports from naval commanders on the scene expressing doubt.

Fast forward to 1983 and the invasion of Grenada. The Reagan administration justified the invasion of this tiny Caribbean island by claiming it was a threat to US national security. The real target was a socialist government that dared to build a new airport with Cuban assistance. The claim that the airport was a military threat was dismissed by international scholars and critics who saw it for what it was: a pretext to crush an independent movement that refused to fall in line.

Then came the masterclass in manufactured consent: the Iraq War in 2003. The world was told with absolute certainty that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD). We heard tales of aluminum tubes meant for uranium centrifuges and mobile biological weapons labs. Colin Powell presented "evidence" to the UN Security Council that was later proven to be based on the dubious testimony of a defector codenamed "Curveball," whose stories were doubted by German intelligence. The UN weapons inspectors and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), who were on the ground in Iraq, were saying that there was no active nuclear program. Their on-site analysis was ignored in favor of politically convenient narratives from Washington. The invasion,

which destabilized an entire region and cost hundreds of thousands of lives, was based on a lie.

Today, we are witnessing a similar chorus from Washington and Tel Aviv rising against Iran. The accusation is that Iran is building a nuclear weapon. Yet, even now, the head of the IAEA, Rafael Mariano Grossi, has stated clearly that there is "no evidence that Iran is building a nuclear bomb." While concerns exist about uranium stockpiles and access for inspectors, the core allegation of a weaponization program remains unproven. The pattern is unmistakable: assert a demonstrable lie, beat the drums of war, and deal with the consequences later.

Can humanity afford to ignore the lessons of the past and accept the word of those who have misled us before?

Saint Gregory the Illuminator

Before Armenians accept the simplistic binary that casts Iran as the eternal demon and the West as our saviors, we must look inward at our history. Our national identity is built upon a foundation of complex choices, accommodations, battles, and massacres that defy easy categorization. Nowhere is this complexity more evident than in the story of our conversion to Christianity—the very event that defines us as a people.

We revere Saint Gregory the Illuminator as the founder of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the divine figure who pulled us from the darkness of paganism into the light of Christ. But if we scratch the surface of his hagiography, a more uncomfortable, and far more interesting, historical picture emerges. Gregory was not an Armenian. He was a Parthian—a Persian nobleman. His father, Anak the Parthian, was a member of the powerful Suren clan who, bribed by the Sassanid King of Persia, assassinated the Armenian King Khosrov II. Gregory himself was saved from the bloody purge that followed and was raised in Caesarea, a region steeped in Greek culture. When he returned to Armenia, he entered the service of King Tiridates III, the son of the very man his father had murdered.

The story we tell is one of miraculous survival, holy suffering in the pit of Khor Virap, and divine healing. But the historical reality is that Gregory's mission was a political and cultural conquest. He did not simply preach to willing ears. According to historical accounts, he and King Tiridates traveled throughout Armenia, and where persuasion failed, force was applied. The armed resistance of pagan priests was crushed by force. Schools were established not just to educate, but to take the children of the pagan priestly class and re-forge them into Christian clergy. Pagan temples were systematically destroyed, and their wealth was confiscated to build the new churches. Tens of thousands of pagan Armenians, our ancestors, were killed or forcibly converted to the new faith by a Persian-born aristocrat. This was not a gentle enlightenment; it was a violent reorientation of our national soul away from its Persian roots and toward the Greco-Roman world.

And yet, history is never a straight line. If the story of Saint Gregory reveals the Persian architect of Armenian Christianity, the story of Vartan Mamigonian—barely a century later—reveals Armenians

spilling their blood in resistance to the Persian empire's attempt to take Christianity away.

In 451 CE, the Sassanid Emperor Yazdegerd II issued an edict. Armenians, he declared, must abandon the faith Gregory had given them and convert to Zoroastrianism. This was not a request; it was an imperial command backed by the full weight of Persian military power. The Armenian nobility was summoned to Persia, pressured, and coerced into appearing to apostatize. But upon returning to their homeland, the fire of resistance ignited.

Led by Vartan Mamigonian, the Armenian forces gathered at Avarayr. They were outmatched, outnumbered, and facing the professional might of the Sassanid war machine. The battle was a slaughter. Vartan fell, along with most of his men. By any military measure, it was a catastrophic defeat. However, the Persian emperor, shaken by the ferocity of Armenian resistance and the impossibility of pacifying a nation willing to die for its faith, relented. The Edict of 484 (the Treaty of Nvarsak) guaranteed religious freedom to Armenian Christians. Avarayr became the eternal symbol of Armenian identity: a military defeat that was a spiritual and political victory. Vartan Mamigonian became a saint of the nation, and proof that Armenians would rather die than be forcibly assimilated into the Persian religious orbit.

Why Armenians Must Pay Attention

For most Americans, Iran is a distant and abstract concept. For Armenians, it is a neighbor and a historical constant. Our interest in preventing another disastrous war is not theoretical; it is existential.

There is the simple geography of survival. The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of only two states (along with Georgia) that offers Armenia access to the outside world. Our borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan are closed. Iran is a conduit for energy and trade. Any military conflict on that border would be catastrophic for Armenia's economy and security. It would turn a peaceful frontier into a war zone and sever our last connections to global markets.

Today, a powerful propaganda machine is working to cast Iran as the perennial demon. The calls for war against Iran are coming from the same architects of violence who brought us the lies of Iraq. They are based on the same pattern of ignoring on-the-ground facts in favor of ideological ambition. An attack on Iran would not just be another Middle Eastern war. It would be a direct assault on the security and sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia. Armenians must not buy into this narrative.

As Armenians, we know what it is like to be the victim of great power games. We have the historical memory and the strategic interest to see through the fog of propaganda. Let us not be complicit in our own strategic strangulation. Let us remember the lessons of the Gulf of Tonkin, of Grenada, and of Iraq, and raise our voices to say, with the clarity of history on our side, that another war built on a lie is not the answer.

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Comments



Nurnisa Erismis – 2026-03-20 02:55:57
Dear Varouj, I read your response to Antoine very carefully, and I have to admit—it did not feel foreign to me. In different contexts, I have found myself thinking along similar lines, especially when reflecting on how belief systems can shape not only identities, but also expectations, alliances, and even vulnerabilities. So I understand that your "wish" comes from a deeply historical and strategic place, rather than from a simple rejection. What stayed with me most is the clarity with which you separate admiration for the Church from a more critical reflection on what it may have meant, politically and historically, for a people trying to survive within larger power structures. At the same time, I find myself returning to a slightly different question. Perhaps what history asks of us is not to abandon belief, but to rethink the expectations we attach to it. In that sense, what may have failed us was not faith itself, but the political meanings and hopes we built around it over time. Your reflection opens a space that is not easy to sit with, but perhaps that is precisely why it is necessary. I read it less as a conclusion, and more as a thought that invites us to keep thinking. Warmly, Nur



Nurnisa Erismis – 2026-03-19 14:24:11
Dear Varouj, I read your article slowly, almost as if I needed to pause between its layers. What stayed with me most was not only the geopolitical question you raise, but the way you gently turn the reader back toward their own historical memory. There is something quite striking in how you bring the past into the present—not as a fixed narrative, but as something still open, still unsettled. Your references to St. Gregory and to the deeper, more entangled nature of Armenian–Persian relations quietly move the discussion beyond familiar lines. It made me think about how easily we inherit certain binaries, and how rarely we question them. I found myself lingering on your reading of Vartan Mamigonyan as well. That moment in history—the way defeat transforms into meaning—has always carried a particular weight. In your text, it feels less like a distant memory and more like a question that continues to echo. As I was reading, I also felt that your piece leaves certain spaces deliberately open. Perhaps that is what gives it its strength. It does not try to resolve everything; instead, it allows the reader to sit with the complexity, to think through it in their own way. I kept thinking about your article even after I finished it. And I think that says something. Thank you for sharing it. Warmly, Nur



hrayr berberoglu – 2026-03-18 09:51:27
It is clear who agitated and convinced an American in power to start this senseless attack.



Hrayr Agnerian – 2026-03-17 15:34:09
Thank you, Varouj, for a very interesting article and an illumination about Saint Gregory the Illuminator. Your approach and explanation about the Avarayr battle is unusual, to say the least. It is interesting that some of the Iranians that I have spoken to and asked about their ancient history, haven't heard about the battle of Avarayr. Certainly not our version of it. Your version of the method of Armenians becoming Christians may be seen as a heresy, but honest introspection is helpful and necessary. As I see it, the current path of politics in Armenia will result, eventually, in our Hayrenik becoming a vassal state (say, semiautonomous republic) within a new and enlarged Turkey or Azerbaijan, depending on how the latter countries decode to divide Armenia. No wonder that Aliyev refers to Armenia as "Western Azerbaijan".



Varouj Pogharian – 2026-03-16 19:49:33

Sireli Antoine: You are right to point out the complexity of Avarayr. The historical record shows that our ancestors were not of one mind—many indeed chose the Persian Shah over the Armenian general . This is a necessary correction to the simplistic telling of our national story, much like the legend-making that surrounds Gregory the Illuminator . Your question compels me to a personal confession, one that has been forming in me for years: I WISH OUR ANCESTORS HAD REMAINED FIRE-WORSHIPING PAGANS. This is not because I am blind to the beauty or the historical importance of our National Church. It is a strategic wish, born of the long tragedy of our near-extermination. I believe a pagan Armenia would have approached the millennium-long pressure from the Turkic tribes of Central Asia with a different spirit. Not necessarily with more physical courage—our Christian kingdoms did fight, sometimes valiantly—but with a hardened, pragmatic paganism that viewed survival as a strictly temporal affair, not one entangled with the promise of a non-existent "eternal life in God's kingdom," be it Apostolic, Catholic, or Protestant. This leads to my second, and more painful, reason. We would not have fallen for the lies of the Christian powers of Europe and Russia, which deluded us time and time again into believing they shared a spiritual kinship with us. Let us remember that our genocide was not just committed by the Young Turks; it was enabled by the broken promises of France, Britain, and Russia. A pagan people would have trusted only their own arms and their own gods, and harbored no illusion of outside rescue. Perhaps that clarity would have served us better than the hope we misplaced in our co-religionists, who never really gave a damn about us—all the way to the recent mass exodus of Armenians from Artsakh in September 2023, following Azerbaijan's military offensive.



H – 2026-03-16 13:29:36

Mr Pogharian, Through your thought provoking and priceless article, you have provided new perspective on the ultimate result of the Vartanant's War. Defining clearly as to why Armenians need to celebrate the loss on the battlefield, as victory. As for the past centuries and proven to date, Armenia's peaceful neighbors, Iran and Georgia, have provided vital lifeline, without which there will be total devastation for Armenia and the Caucuses. Thank you also for your interesting synopsis covering the past several decades of geographical and psychological unprovoked aggressive changes on the different continents of the globe.



Harry Pogharian – 2026-03-16 12:20:15

Selective outrage toward the United States while remaining silent about authoritarian powers like Russia and China reveals more about the author's bias than about global reality



Keith Garebian – 2026-03-16 09:12:27

A succinct but accurate analysis, with sad consequences for Armenia. American foreign policy has always been demonically false, misleading, and one structured around that country's damnable imperialistic ambitions, and now that the country has a criminal lunatic at the helm, aided and abetted by goofs, goons, and grifters at the Supreme Court, in the House and Senate, and by an always-warlike Pentagon, the world is in worse shape than ever. If there is to be regime change, it should begin in the U.S. and Israel..



Antoine S. Terjanian – 2026-03-16 08:00:38

Thank you again Mr. Pogharian for a very informative historical perspective. Yes we have been lied to again and again, yet some of us will risk their lives for these lies. I was hoping you would tell us the truth about the battle of Avarayr. According to some historians, there were almost as many ethnic Armenians fighting on Shah Yazdegerd II's side as on Mamigonian's. And, even today, our National Church repeats that Zoroastrians were pagans and 'fire worshipers'...