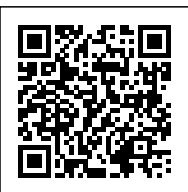


KARABAKH DIARY: EPILOGUE

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By Alan Whitehorn

War Clouds in the South Caucasus

Very sad news today in the South Caucasus.
Continuing deterioration in Karabakh,
an exceptionally unstable and precarious military situation.
A Baku dictator emboldened by recent past successes
and encouraged by another expansionist autocrat in Ankara,
taps an opportunity created by a Moscow despot
who is distracted by the catastrophic war in Ukraine.
In the meantime,
Yerevan vacillates in foreign policy
and is inadequately prepared militarily for another war.
The South Caucasus is a 21st century Balkan powder keg,
as the world aligns into two hostile global military alliance systems
which are rapidly arming for war.
Time for a reset somehow....

Warring Words

She claimed the rights of freedom of religion and language.
He demanded loyalty and obedience to the central state.
She called for the collective democratic rights of an ethnic people under oppressive alien rule.
He denied such rebellious dissent and discontent in his historic lands.
She voiced peaceful protest.
He fired shots upon the assembled crowd.
She proclaimed national independence.
He responded with draconian decrees to disband the regional government.
She proclaimed a nation's right of self-determination.
He asserted the state's claim to territorial integrity.
She took up arms as a freedom fighter.
He deployed troops to crush the rebellion.
She won the first Karabakh war.
He won the second and third Karabakh wars.

Mother Armenia now mourns the long-suffering civilians and its heroic freedom fighters.
The Aliyev dictatorship calls for the arrest and punishment of ethnic separatists and terrorists.

All the while,

the world is focused elsewhere.

Who after all knows where Karabakh is?

Who are the Armenians of the South Caucasus?

We thought they lived in Turkey.

The Road to Exile

In the 1990s, it was a Karabakh war of independence.

In subsequent decades,

it was an unrecognized autonomous state
with surrounding buffer lands meant to protect the Armenian population.

Instead,

the occupied lands fueled Azerbaijani emigres' resentment
and generated widespread international criticism.

Meanwhile,

Baku's oil and gas riches financed a military expansion.

The one-sided 2020 drone war swiftly stripped away Karabakh's buffer lands,
and destroyed most of Armenia's military manpower and weapons capacity.
Only a narrow-winding Lachin corridor connected land-locked Stepanakert.
Humanitarian supplies needed a critical thin protective line of Russian peacekeepers.

But they proved largely ineffective for ten months
and largely disappeared in the 2023 one-day Azerbaijani blitzkrieg assault.

The small, ill-equipped and isolated Artsakh forces were no match.

The defeated Armenians of Karabakh were now terrified and desperate.

They were acutely aware of the Aliyev's dictatorship's past,
which was filled with pogroms and genocidal deeds against Armenians.

With a long-overdue sudden opening of the Lachin corridor,
the entire Karabakh Armenian population rapidly departed en masse.
A nation was once more fleeing genocide across an international border.

They sought sanctuary in tiny land-locked Armenia.

But how safe?

The Armenian nation is still in grave peril.

Genocide has not stopped,
only temporarily paused.

The tragic history is still unfolding.

Reintegration?

I can conceive of reintegration of an ethnic minority within a larger community.

It is often difficult, but not impossible.

To do so, there is need for understanding and tolerance on all sides.

Even then, patience and difficult compromises are essential.

In the South Caucasus ethnic cauldron,

historic hatreds and conflicts have largely prevailed.

I can analytically conceptualize efforts to integrate a minority
of one hundred thousand with ten million others.

It is a large differential, but it is conceivably workable.

However, I cannot comprehend so-called reintegrating zero number of Armenians
with millions of Azerbaijanis.

Analytically it is nonsensical.

Zero does not add or multiply well.

Reintegration is meaningless amidst minority population expulsion or annihilation.

Genocide is a more apt and honest word.

We should never describe genocide as reintegration.

To do so is the language of genocide perpetrators and denialists.

Karabakh Memories

While winning the 1990s Karabakh war,

Armenians gained only an unstable and insecure ceasefire,
and no long-term peace.

Armenia and Artsakh lost the 2020 war,

and endured subsequent Azerbaijani territorial encroachments.

The months-long food, fuel and medicines blockade of the Lachin corridor
caused the Armenian civilian population to suffer greatly.

The 2023 final blitzkrieg attack upon Karabakh by the Aliyev dictatorship's troops
caused a mass forced exodus of desperate Armenians from the tiny land-locked region.

After the last starved and terrified Armenian refugees depart,
the abandoned monasteries, churches and gravesites will inevitably be destroyed,
as was the case decades ago in nearby Nakhchivan.

Soon Karabakh will only be a mournful Armenian memory.

The world should have done more.

The world should have done more.

South Caucasus Scenarios

South Caucasus scenarios for Armenia seem to range
between bad, worse and catastrophic.

Sadly, over the past decades,

the Aliyev dictatorship's policies and negotiations
seem to be an unreliable and unstable basis for long term peace and security.

As a political scientist,
I wish I could be more optimistic.
As a Diaspora Armenian,
I live with hope in a world too filled with war and genocide.
And so,
we hug our beloved children once more
and prepare as best we can.
Tomorrow is another day.

Tears

The tears of sorrow;
yesterday, today and even tomorrow.
But love inspires us
to try to do what we can,
while it is still possible.

*Alan Whitehorn is a professor emeritus of political science at the Royal Military College of Canada and the author of several books on the Armenian Genocide. In 2022, he authored the poetry book **Karabakh Diary: Poems From the Diaspora** on the 2020 Karabakh War.*

Biography & Books

<https://www.writersunion.ca/member/alan-whitehorn>

Comments



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Karabakh Armenians' Exodus The mass exodus of the Karabakh Armenians is a profoundly tragic historic event. Whole families were targetted, besieged, starved, tormented, assaulted, and abruptly expelled from their ancestral homeland. It is impossible to fully comprehend the magnitude of the civilian trauma and suffering. Its impact will last for generations to come. Sometimes when the political scientist closes the computer, the poet's pen comes out.