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Understanding the outcome of the war for Nagorno-Karabakh

The Saker

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[*this analysis was written [for the Unz Review](#)*]

A lot has happened very rapidly in the past two days and I will begin this analysis by a few bullet points summarizing what just happened (not in any particular order, including chronological):

- The war which has just ended was a real bloodbath and it has seen more casualties (counting both sides) than what the Soviet Union lost in 10 years of warfare in Afghanistan
- This war is now over, Russian peacekeepers have already been deployed along the line of contact. So far, neither side has dared to resume hostilities (more about that below).
- There have been two days of celebrations in Baku where President Aliyev has declared that the war was a triumph for Azeri forces and that Pashinian got nothing. He is right.
- The Azeris are now declaring that they want compensation from Armenia.
- There are now Turkish forces in Azerbaijan and Russian and Turkish forces have created a joint committee to coordinate

actions.

- Erdogan has insisted that he wanted Turkey to send in peacekeepers, but Putin has categorically rejected this demand: like any other state, Azerbaijan has the undisputed right to invite foreign forces on its territory, but these forces will not have the status and rights of a peacekeeping force.
- Violent riots have broken out in Erevan where violent mobs have stormed government buildings, beaten officials and sacked the Parliament.
- Seventeen Armenian opposition parties have declared that they want a committee of national salvation and the resignation of Pashinian.
- Nobody knows where Pashinian is hiding, but he seems to still be somewhere in Armenia.
- These mobs also destroyed the Soros offices in Erevan and they are now looking for Pashinian “the traitor” to lynch him.
- Pashinian has complained on Twitter that his offices were sacked, that a computer, his driver license and, I kid you not, a bottle of perfume (poor perfumed baby!) were stolen.
- The Russian peacekeeping force will be constituted of subunits of the 15th Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade which itself is part of the 2nd Guards Combined Arms Army of the Central Military District. It will include about 2000 armed soldiers, APCs and IFVs, specialized vehicles (EW, C3I, etc.), drones and air defense systems.
- Russians peacekeepers will stay deployed in this area for no less than 5 years.

- Russia will now control both the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) corridor and the Nakhichevan corridor.

Now let's look at the position of the parties at the end of this war and compare them.

Armenia: there is no doubt that Armenia is the biggest loser in this war. Pashinian and his gang of russophobic Sorosites has brought a real calamity upon his people. Since he came to power his anti-Russian actions included almost totally eliminating any Armenian participation on the CSTO, he completely ceased any collaboration with Russia (including in the intelligence and security domains), he purged the Armenian military and security forces from all the supposed "pro-Russian" elements, he banned Russian language schools. In contrast, Armenia has an absolutely huge US embassy with about 2000 personnel (as much as the entire Russian peacekeeping force!) and when the Azeris attacked, Pashinin refused to ask Russia for help for a full month. He did ask Trump, Merkel and Macron for help instead. Needless to say, they did exactly nothing once the crisis erupted.

Truth be told, the Armenians had absolutely no other option but to accept the Azeri terms. The Armenians have suffered huge losses while the Azeris have taken Shushi, the key strategic city which controls both the capital of NK Stepanakert and the corridor between NK and Armenia. Had Pashinian not signed, the surrounded Armenians would have been slaughtered by the Azeris (in this war, both sides reported having almost no prisoners. Why? Because almost all were all executed, often after gruesome tortures by both sides). Russian analysts also say that Armenia was simply running out of supplies very fast (a fact also mentioned by Pashinian).

Simply put: Aliev's plan worked, the blind arrogance of the Armenian leaders, along with their suicidal policies have almost cost Armenia the complete loss of NK and, possibly, even the existence of their own country. With all the best Armenian officers removed (including heroes from the first Karabakh war, which Armenia won), what was left were delusional clowns who promised that Armenia, without any help including without Russian help, could win the war and drive its forces to Baku (yes, they did sound just as delusional as some Ukie leaders).

Turkey: the next big loser in this war is Turkey whose objectives of bringing all Turkic nations under one neo-Ottoman empire have, predictably, crashed. Again. Erdogan is a world class megalomaniac and trouble maker, and he has involved Turkey in wars (or quasi wars) with Syria, Israel, Iraq, Greece, Libya, Iran, Russia and even (to some degree) NATO. And let's not forget the bloody operations against the Kurds everywhere. He is a bona fide megalomaniac and that makes him very, very dangerous. Russia has intervened militarily in Syria, Libya and now Azerbaijan to deny Turkey its wannabe empire status and each time we saw that Turkey, as a country, simply does not have the resources to try to build an empire, especially since Erdogan simply does not understand that simultaneously opening conflicts on several fronts is a recipe for disaster.

There is also pretty strong likelihood that it was the Turks who shot down the Russian Mi-24 right inside the Armenian air space: their goal was to force Russia to stop seeking a negotiated solution and to impose a continuation of hostilities. Thank God for Aliev's superb strategic skills which made it possible for him to do something very smart: he took the blame for what he called a

tragic mistake and offered all sorts of compensations and excuses. Aliev's decision to take the blame probably came after he and Putin (who are close friends) had what diplomats call a "frank exchange of views".

The Turks are making a big deal out of the fact that the Azeris have invited Turkish forces into Azerbaijan. But let's be honest here: the Azeris and Turks were always close and there was no outcome which could have prevented the Azeris from legally inviting Turkish forces into Azerbaijan. The real issue is what these forces can do. I submit that while we should never discard the toxic potential of any Turkish force anyway, there is little this force will be able to do than to a) monitor the situation and 2) coordinate with the Russians to stay out of each other's way. But what these forces won't be able to do is to attack, or even threaten to attack, Armenian and/or Russian forces (see below why).

Russia: Russia is the only true winner of this war. I know, there is a powerful Armenian lobby in the USA, in Europe and in Russia, and they are trying to present their defeat as a defeat for Russia. Frankly, I understand their bitterness and I feel sorry for them, but they are absolutely wrong. Here is why:

First, Russia has now established herself as the sole power in the Caucasus which can bring about peace. 2000 US personnel in Erevan did absolutely nothing for years to really help Armenia, all they did is force suicidal russophobic policies on Armenia, that's about it. The same amount of Russian soldiers literally brought peace overnight. Here I have to explain a little something about the units which was sent Azerbaijan: 15th Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade (15IMRB).

The 15IMRB is not a peacekeeping force in the western meaning of the world. This is an elite combat force which specializes in peacekeeping and peacemaking (“coercion to peace” in Russian terminology) missions. It’s personnel is 100% composed of professionals, most of whom have extensive combat experience: they participated in the coercion to peace operation against Georgia in 08.08.08 and in Syria. These are top of the line, well trained, superbly equipped forces who, on top of their own capabilities, can fully count on the support of the Russian forces in Armenia and from the full support of the entire Russian military. Those who say that this force is a lightly armed token force simply do not understand these issues.

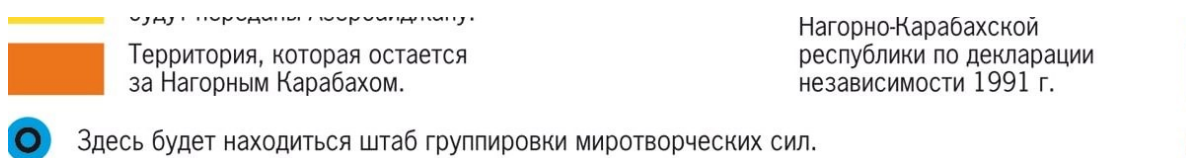
The entire theatre of operations of this war is very much inside the (conceptual) under 1000 kilometers from the Russian border which the Russian military wants to be capable of domination escalation should a war break out. To repeat, the Russian military is not organized the way the US military is: the Russian military doctrine is purely defensive, this is not propaganda, and it relies for this defense on its ability to very rapidly deploy high readiness mechanized forces anywhere inside Russia and within about 1000km from the Russian border and the ability to destroy any force entering this zone. Russia also relies on advanced weapons systems capable of unleashing a lot of firepower in defense of its deployed task forces forces. In other words, while the 15IMRB is only a brigade sized expeditionary force, it is trained to hunker down and hold a position until the reinforcements (personnel and/or firepower) are deployed from Russia. You can think of this as something similar to the Russian task force in Syria, only much closer to Russia and, therefore, much easier to support if needed.

Coming back to the shooting down of a Russian Mi-24, this action will not go unnoticed or forgotten, of that you can be sure. The fact that Putin (and the Russian military) don't act like the US would and immediately initiate reprisals does not mean that the Russians don't care, have forgotten or are afraid. There is a Jewish proverb which says *"a good life is the best revenge"*. I would paraphrase this by saying that Putin's motto could be *"an advantageous outcome is the best retaliation"*: this is what we saw in Syria and this is what will happen in Azerbaijan.

Another sweet spot for Russia is that she can now (truthfully) declare that color revolutions inevitably result in territorial losses (the Ukraine, Georgia and now Armenia) and political chaos (everywhere).

Next, please look at the following map (in Russian, but that is no problem):





Please look at the two thick blue lines: they are showing corridors between Azerbaijan and the Azeri province of Nakhichevan and the corridor between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. These two corridors are absolutely vital for both of these countries and they will now be under the control of FSB Border Guards (Russian border guards are light, mobile and elite units comparable in terms of training and capabilities to their colleagues from the Airborne Forces. Again, don't assume that they are anything like the US or EU border or customs officials). They are very tough elite units which are trained to fight a much superior force until reinforcements come in.

What that means in strategic terms is that Russia now has an iron grip on what is a vital strategic artery for both Azerbaijan and Armenia. None of the parties are willing to comment very much on this, no need to humiliate anybody, but those in the know realize what a fantastic pressure capability Putin has just added to Russia in the Caucasus. You can think of these two corridors as a lifeline for both states as long as you also realize that these corridors are also strategic daggers in Russian hands pointed at the vital organs of both states.

The usual Putin-hating choir which has been singing the "Putin lost control of the near abroad" mantra should now be both ashamed of their lack of understanding, and livid at what "Putin" did to their hopes, but that kind of magical thinking won't change reality on the ground: far from losing anything, Putin secured an immense strategic Russia victory at the cost of 2 killer soldiers, one

wounded and one helicopter.

From now on, Russia will have permanent military forces in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Georgia has been effectively neutered. The Russian Caucasus is mostly peaceful and prosperous, both the Black Sea and the Caspian are de facto “Russian lakes” and the Russian “underbelly” is now much stronger than it ever was before.

Let’s see when any western power achieves a similar result :-)

Conclusion:

This war is now only frozen and, like in Syria, there will be provocations, false flags, setbacks and murdered innocents. But, like in Syria, Putin will always prefer a quiet strategy with minimal losses over one with a lot of threats, grandstanding and instant retaliations. There is also what I call the “Putin use of force rules”: never use force where expected, always use force when least expected and always use force in a way your enemies do not plan for. Still, let’s not see all this in rosy colors, there will be setbacks for sure, Erdogan is angry and he still wants to play a role. Putin, in a typical Russian manner will give him exactly that “a role”, but that role will be minimal and mostly for internal Turkish PR consumption. Erdogan, far from being a new Mehmed The Conqueror and “The Great Eagle”, will go down in history as Erdogan The Loser and the “Defeated Chicken”. Megalomania might be a prerequisite for an empire builder, but that alone is clearly not enough.

What comes next?

Pashinian will be overthrown, that is pretty sure. What matters most for Armenia is who will replace him. Alas, there are anti-

Pashinian nationalists out there who are just as russophobic as the Pashinian gang. Furthermore, considering the hysterics taking place in Armenia, there is a real possibility that a new government might annul the ceasefire and demand a “fight to the end”. This could be a major problem, including for the Russian forces in Armenia and the peacekeepers, but it is also likely that by the time the Armenian people really understand that 1) they have been lied to and 2) they have suffered a crushing defeat these calls will eventually be drowned out by more sane voices (including those of the currently jailed pre-2018 leaders).

There is also a huge Armenian immigration in Russia which will hear all the reporting and analyses produced in Russia and will be fully aware of the reality out there. These immigrants represent a huge resource for Armenia as they are going to be the one who will push for a strong collaboration with Russia which, frankly, Armenia now needs more than anything else. Right now, judging by what pro-Armenian Russian analysts are saying, the Armenians and their supporters are absolutely horrified by this outcome and they are promising that the Turks have now penetrated deeply inside the Russian sphere of influence. To them sane voices reply that this so-called “move” into the Russia sphere of influence will be mostly PR and that it is far better for some Turkish forces to move inside the Russian sphere of influence than for some Russian force to be deployed inside the Turkish sphere of influence. In other words, when these Armenia supporters say that Erdogan has moved deeply inside the Russian sphere of influence, they are also thereby admitting that this is a Russian, not Turkish, sphere of influence. They just don't realize what they are saying, that's all.

Frankly, the Armenian diasporas in Russia, the EU and the USA are superbly organized, they have a lot of money, and they currently control the narrative in the EU and the USA (in Russia they tried and miserably failed). Add to this the fact the Aliiev was the one who started that war and that he is deeply enmeshed with Erdogan's Turkey and you will see why the magnitude of the Armenian defeat is systematically underplayed in the western media. That's fine, let a few months go by and the reality of the situation will eventually convince those currently in denial.

Right now, this is exactly the process which is (violently) taking place in Erevan. But sooner or later, looting mobs will be replaced by some kind of government of national unity and if that government wants to put an end to the horrendous losses and wants to rebuild what is left standing, they will have to call the Kremlin and offer Russia some kind of deal. Needless to say, the immense US embassy, and the hundred of Soros-sponsored "NGOs" will oppose that with all their might. But with the USA itself fighting for survival, the EU in total disarray and the Turks failing at everything they try, that is simply not a viable option.

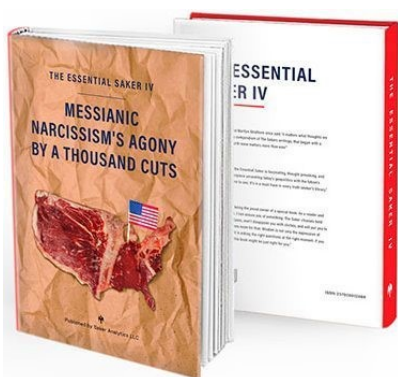
Russians used to joke that it takes 2 Jews to cheat 1 Armenian, meaning that Armenians are possibly even smarter than Jews (who, in all fairness, are not that smart at all, that is mostly self-serving and self-worshiping propaganda). I tend to share this admiration of the Armenian people: Armenians are an ancient, truly noble and beautiful nation and culture, who deserve to live in peace and security and who have suffered many horrors in their history. They deserve so much more than this CIA/MI6 stooge Pashinian! Right now, the Armenian nation is definitely at a low moment in its history, comparable to the "democratic" 90s in

Russia or the current “liberal” horror taking place in the USA. But, as Dostoevsky liked to say, *“one should never judge a nation by how low it can sink, but by how high it can soar”*.

The best thing for Armenia, objectively, would be to become part of Russia (which Armenia was in its recent past). But that is not going to happen: first, Armenian nationalism is as blind and as obtuse as ever and, furthermore, Russia would never accept Armenia into the Russian Federation, and why would she? Armenia has exactly nothing to offer Russia, except a difficult to protect territory with potentially dangerous neighbors. No, Russia never lost Armenia – it was Armenia which lost Russia. Now the most the Kremlin will offer to Armenia is 1) protection against all neighbors and 2) economic help.

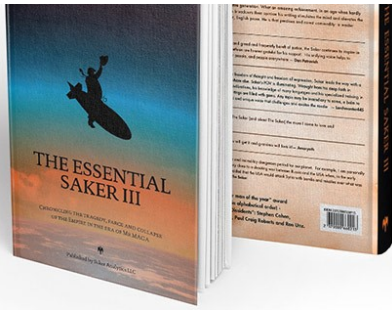
As for the rest, let’s see if the next Armenian government re-joins the CSTO not only in words (as was the case for the past couple of years), but in actions (like resume intel exchanges, military collaboration, joint security operations, etc.). That would be a great first step for Armenia.

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