

THE ETHNO-RELIGIOUS ORIGINS OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM PERPETRATED BY ARMENIAN NATIONALISTS (HISTORICAL-CULTURAL ANALYSIS)

(ERMENİ MİLLİYETÇİLER TARAFINDAN GERÇEKLEŞTİRİLEN
ULUSLARARASI TERÖRİZMİN ETNO-DİNSEL KÖKENLERİ
(TARİHİ-KÜLTÜREL ANALİZ))

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Abstract: *This article seeks to understand the theoretical and cognitive aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. For this endeavor, it examines the identity-based and motivational factors that induced the involved Armenian groups or organizations to carry out aggression against Azerbaijan in the events that constitute the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This article highlights that subconscious factors that stretch back to the days of pagan beliefs still have a noticeable effect in the actions of today's people. This article also argues that Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was not truly about a yearning for autonomy, independence, or a desire for resources, but rather an attempt to enable the Armenian diaspora, taken as a whole, to expand itself both politically and militarily in other countries, as well as in the Republic of Armenia itself.*

Keywords: *Nagorno-Karabakh, terrorism, identity, religion, Armenians*

Öz: *Bu makale, Dağlık Karabağ çatışmasının kuramsal ve kavramsal yönlerini anlamaya amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç için makale Dağlık Karabağ sorunu ortaya çıkaran olaylarda, olaylara karışan Ermeni grupların veya örgütlerin Azerbaycan'a saldırmalarına sebep olan kimlik esaslı ve teşvik edici etkenleri incelemektedir. Bu makale, kökleri putperest inançların hüküm sürdüğü günlere kadar uzanan bilinçaltı etkenlerin, günümüzdeki insanların üzerinde hâlâ fark edilebilir etkiler yarattığına dikkat çekmektedir. Bu makale ayrıca Dağlık Karabağ*

çatışmasının gerçek anlamda sadece özerklik, bağımsızlık veya doğal kaynak elde etme arzusundan değil, onun yerine Ermeni diasporasının, bir bütün olarak, kendisini başka ülkelerde ve Ermenistan Cumhuriyeti'nde siyasi ve askeri bakımdan genişletmesi çabasıyla kaynaklandığını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Dağlık Karabağ, terörizm, kimlik, din, Ermeniler*

During the last quarter of the century, the concrete existence of Armenian-Azerbaijani armed conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region (which currently Armenia occupies with military forces) and the Azerbaijan's territories that are adjacent to it, is not solely within the domain of historical events, but is also a main factor for the lack of stability and security in the South Caucasus. This situation brings the necessity for a neutral analysis of the inciting motivations and driving forces of the aggression of the involved Armenian groups. In this paper, we will not attempt a victim analysis study involving the collective behavior and actions of the Azerbaijani people who were the main victims of the 1988-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh war, nor will we study the events surrounding the background and the aftermath of the conflict. We will instead examine the relevant Armenian groups' worldview (in the possibility of which, the common reflexes embedded in the subconscious of Armenians) and the ideological (or intellectual) paradigms of their identity that led the Armenian people to commit armed violence. To create settlement mechanisms that are neutral, independent, unaffiliated with the ideologies arising from the 20-year war, and compliant with international law, and to ensure their application, we need to understand the theoretical and even cognitive aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict more than ever.

The mentality of the Armenian people (and not the political will of the Armenian government), which provokes the fixed ideologies within the national consciousness and which currently prevents peaceful solutions to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with international law, is the main obstacle for resolving this issue.

Today, the international community supports the Republic of Azerbaijan's right of sovereignty by expressing Armenia's need and obligation to let go of the occupation regime in Azerbaijani territory, to withdraw all its military forces and the militias integrated to the illegal armed groups in Nagorno-Karabakh from the area belonging to Azerbaijan. However, the mentality of the Armenian people (and not the political will of the Armenian government), which provokes the fixed ideologies within the national consciousness and which currently prevents peaceful solutions to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with international law, is the main obstacle for resolving this issue. The main purpose of this article is not to provide misleading propositions and giving hope to the parties of the conflict and the international society about the resolution of the conflict, but to systematically and comprehensively illustrate our perspective to interested readers.

As we have expressed many times in various monographies and scientific articles, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh does not solely consist of a

temporary political and military situation, but has a deep and even national character¹ and we retain this point of view in this article. As we have expressed before, within the deep layers of the consciousness of the majority of the ethnic Armenian society, there are pushing forces and stimulating causes that forms the basis of Armenian identity and national-religious existence (this applies to other groups of people as well). The irrationality as well as the logical foundations of the ideological components of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict have been studied by us in the article titled “The Clash Of Civilizations - How Does Samuel Huntington’s Theory Explain The Cultural Basis Of The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict?” (Stockholm 2013), presented as a separate section in the monograph called “The Realities Surrounding The Myths Of The Karabakh Conflict” (Moscow 2013). Consequently, this paper will not study in detail the subject discussed in the mentioned article, but will only examine the elements that constitute the key views and findings of the work.

Between 1988 and 1994, the Nagorno-Karabakh war was not an interstate war, because the forces that were mobilizing against the official state police and army of Azerbaijan were not the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia, but were international terrorists and separatist groups comprising soldiers from the United Armed Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States, mercenaries from the Middle East, Europe, and the United States of America, and Armenian nationalists who previously lived in Transcaucasia and who were formerly Soviet citizens. In fact, in its most intense phase, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was a military intervention by the Armenian international coalition (or Hay Dat) against the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani people.

The attack of the international Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh against the Azerbaijani people was not a colonial war in today’s terms, which means

1 О.Ю. Кузнецов, *Правда о «мифах» карабахского конфликта* (М.: Минувшее, 2013): 181-202; О.Ю. Кузнецов, *История транснационального армянского терроризма в XX столетии: Историко-криминологическое исследование* (Баку: Шарг-Гарб, 2015): 195-222; О.Ю. Кузнецов, “Нагорно-карабахский конфликт: «столкновение цивилизаций»? Как теория Самюэля Хантингтона объясняет культурологическую суть конфликта вокруг Нагорного Карабаха”, *Кавказ & Глобализация: Журнал социально-экономических и политических исследований*, Вып. 1-2 (2013, Т. 7), 93-108; О.Ю. Кузнецов, “Национально-религиозный экстремизм и политический терроризм националистов как движущая сила этногенеза армянского этноса (очерк социально-политической истории)”, *Кавказ & Глобализация: Журнал социально-экономических и политических исследований*, Вып. 3-4 (2014, Т. 8), 175-200; O.Yu. Kuznetsov, *History Of Transnational Armenian Terrorism In The Twentieth Century: Historical And Criminological Study* (Berlin: Verlag Dr. Köster, 2016): 154-174; O.Yu. Kuznetsov, “The Conflict In Nagorno-Karabakh: It Is A ‘Clash Of Civilization’? How Samuel Huntington’s Theory Explains Its Culturological Dimension”, *The Caucasus & Globalization: Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Issue 1-2 (2013, Vol. 7), 82-94; O.Yu. Kuznetsov, “National-religious extremism and political terror of nationalists as a driving force behind ethnogenesis of the Armenian ethnicity (essay of social-political history)”, *The Caucasus & Globalization: Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Issue 3-4 (2013, Vol. 8), 163-182.

one aiming to obtain control of natural resources or the settlement in the area. The military victory in this war did not bring Armenians any new raw materials, a new product market, nor did it constitute a change in the vector or the balance of economic-commercial relations (especially considering the fact that feudal attitudes prevail in the economy of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh). The expenses of the Armenian side for invading and, for the last quarter of the century, supporting the administrative-political branch of the occupying regime (without mentioning that there was no prospect of obtaining any future profits or returns), have not been paid for by the Armenian aggressors.

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh was not one carried out for the usual causes of autonomy, decolonization, or national independence. At that time, the separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh were not merely attempting to separate their region, but they aimed to explicitly support the political and military expansion of the Armenian diaspora in other countries and the Armenian Republic itself. The takeover of the country by the military structure of the Armenian separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh and the integration of this structure called “The Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army” into the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia have been among the most interesting manifestations of this process. For this reason, for the Armenian side, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was not merely for the control of Transcaucasia and the Caucasus, but it constituted the basis for a colonial war aiming to create a dominion over the whole of Southwest Asia and even Central Asia by the Armenian people. However, between 1988 and 1994, the victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh war did not bring any geopolitical, military-strategic, or economic gain either to the Republic of Armenia or the separatist regime in Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, the international community, foremost being the United Nations, and other international organizations (most prominently the OECD and the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe), view Armenians as interventionist and as aggressors, which means that sanctions that did not exist in the practice of international relations until the last 25 years could be put to use against the state occupying Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijani territories. We are talking about the possibility of an internationally enforced no-fly zone over Armenia and the territories it occupied or the ban heavy weapon sales to Armenia.

As seen, when the 1988-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh war is analyzed in a rational and empathetic way, it brought more damage to Armenia and Armenians than it brought benefits. It is causing such damage now, and it will cause economic, material, and human loss in the future. Consequently, from the ongoing nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, one can deduce that political-ideological considerations outweigh military or economic interests. Therefore, this

conflict could be defined within the framework of Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" theory. In other words, when analyzed with hindsight, this war was in truth started by Armenians to protect the Armenian identity for the benefit of Armenians.²

Today, Armenians are among the few peoples that mostly live outside of their natural geographic boundaries. In other words, the individuals who live abroad and who do not have any citizenship link with the "historical motherland" are more numerous than the population of the "motherland" country. Mostly, when these separations increase, to increase the sense of ethnic identity, there is a need for an irrational-ideological unifying factor like the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, not only for a rational-commercial one. In this context, there is a need to articulate the concrete circumstances at the start of the conflict: in Soviet times, there was an "iron curtain" enforced and strengthened by the initiative of the state that constituted an ideological barrier between the citizens of the Armenian Socialist Soviet Republic and the diaspora Armenians that were more numerous than them. At the end of the 1980's, a process that consisted in the active and internationally supported forceful integration of Soviet Armenians into other Armenian societies around the world took place, because the ratio of the Armenian diaspora exceeded the population of Armenia, and this trend is continuing today. Armenia and its diaspora had to inevitably unite under political and ideological conditions and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been a supporting element and stimulating motivation for such a unification. This war has been an "entry opportunity" for Soviet Armenians to integrate to the global Armenian community (one must add that without the help of the global Armenian community, it was impossible for the Republic of Armenia to become an independent state according to the necessities underlined by international law; especially within the first 10 years where the industrialization and the constitution of the political structure takes place).

The 1988-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh war that we examined multiple times has been, for the Armenian side, the "First Terrorist War" in the history of humanity.³ This is not surprising. This is so because, as we have stated before,⁴

2 Кузнецов, "Нагорно-карабахский конфликт: «столкновение цивилизаций»? ...," 98-100; Kuznetsov, "The Conflict In Nagorno-Karabakh: It Is A 'Clash Of Civilization'? ...," p. 86-88.

3 For more details, please see; О.Ю. Кузнецов, *История транснационального армянского терроризма...*, 178-194; Kuznetsov, *History of transnational Armenian terrorism...*, 142-154; О.Ю. Кузнецов, "First Terrorist War: A Look from Russia (Transnational Armenian Terrorism and Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict of 1988-1994)", *IRS-Heritage: International Azerbaijan magazine*, 2015, № 2 (21), 54-60; № 3 (22), 46-51; № 4 (23), 58-63.

4 Кузнецов, *История транснационального армянского терроризма...*, 195-222; Кузнецов, "Национально-религиозный экстремизм и политический терроризм националистов...", 175-200; Kuznetsov, *History of transnational Armenian terrorism...*, 154-174; Kuznetsov, "National-Religious Extremism And Political Terror Of Nationalists...", 163-182.

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beginning from the last quarter of the 19th century, terrorism and political extremism were perhaps the only instruments and basic driving forces of Armenian ethnogeny during their modern transformation process from being subjects or a church congregation, which they had been even one and a half centuries ago not only in the Muslim world, but also in the Russian Empire according to its internal legislation, into a nation as a political structure. We will not repeat this thesis that has been previously stated and submitted to the science world in this study. Thus, we will limit ourselves by showing certain arguments of ours.

During their existence in the Muslim world, Armenians were an aggregate of followers or supporters of the Armenian Apostolic Church dogma and the religious rituals of some early Christian churches, and belonged to different ethnic and language groups (both Semitic and Turkic). Armenians never existed as an ethnic majority in their places of residence to separate and establish themselves as a national and religious state. They therefore lacked the possibility to establish long-term independent control with considerable territory and to have an opportunity to use resources of this area (material, human, natural) inside any Muslim state. The Armenians, deprived of the possibility of using resources in their national struggles, were forced to use the means of collective insurrection and terrorism, the least costly form of resistance, or the tools that would not add an extra burden to the existing economy. Unlike other groups of people who constituted a majority in the regions they lived, to the dismay of Armenian nationalists, Armenians as a people never had sufficient resources to pursue a guerrilla or civil war that would enable them to obtain their national and political independence.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Armenians living in the Ottoman and Russian territories with a wide variety of ethnic origins introduced themselves as a community of the Armenian Apostolic Church. If we start our argument from the typological resemblance of the most important ethnographic elements of the various peoples of the Southwest Asia region, the ethnographic characteristics of the Armenians include elements of Kurdish, Assyrian, Persian, and Turkish origin. This presents evidence for the thesis of the multi-ethnic nature of the Armenians as one of the religious communities living in the periphery of Islam (a foreign religion to them) that is attached to the teachings of one of the early Christian churches. In order to integrate the diverse people of this mosaic community and representatives of tradition into a unified social structure, it is necessary for this social community to have some material basis for public resources and self-collective social cohesion as well as for the basis of the general world view. The integration of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which constituted its own legal entity by virtue of the material donation of each member, constituted the

basis of the material source of a single root of a multi-ethnic society. The Armenian Apostolic Church did not only fulfil its duties as the spiritual center of the Armenian ethnic community, but at the same time fulfilled its social function as the guardian of the well-being of the people, as Church's disciples proved themselves not only in the religious sense but also in terms of social material solidarity.

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only the protection of the region they lived in, but that the attack of any foreign state against the Church, such as by the Ottoman or Russian state, began to be perceived as an attack against all the members of the people and necessitating the protection of the property of the common church. As mentioned above, Armenians did not have the means of military action to defend themselves because of their inadequate resources, as many other people did, and so they were forced to use terrorism due to it being the least-costly tool, a tool that uses sacrifices from their own community members or co-religionists.

Because of this, apart from the perception of religion and the world, two separate moral and psychological dominant powers emerged, not theologically, but as a social

religion, by the Armenian Apostolic Church. The first one is the glorification of terrorism as a means of war in the formation of national and religious identity. The second one is the culture of sacrificing oneself for the realization of social or organizational interests in a simpler form. This tendency was the main character of the Armenian people throughout the two centuries in all their national and religious rituals in the cultural orbit of the Russian nation. Therefore, these can be considered as the identity consciousness of the Armenians who represent the ethnic church and the subjects.

The “Russian Federation official, religious, national and traditional festivals calendar”, which was published for the year 2016 with the support of the Russian Federation Public Chamber and with the financing of the Russian Assistance Fund, has an extremely up-to-date and guiding content to fully

understand and describe the present situation of the ethnic and religious identity consciousness of the Armenian people.⁵ The project has been conducted by the Russian Academy of Sciences Ethnology and Anthropology Institute (RAD EAI), Federal Jewish National and Cultural Autonomy (FJNCA) and Moscow Regional Jewish National and Cultural Autonomy (MRJNCA). The result of these institutions' intellectual and published work became a source of information for the daily activities of the Armenians, spreading between the state and municipal institutions of Moscow and its region. In fact, the content of this calendar reflects official views on the festivals and commemoration days of different communities of Russia, so that Russia does not in any way allow xenophobia or extremism to appear in the interpretation of their semantic content. This is extremely important in terms of understanding that the content of the calendar is a result of introducing itself to the religious and national social fabric, which inevitably negates possible negative comments from the outside. The materials required to compile the schedule for the traditional religious and national festivals and holidays of the Armenians were provided by the Soviet Armenians, which removes the possibility of deliberate distortion of the information supplied during the reprinting and editing of the calendar.

The Armenian national and religious festivals, which were reported to the compilers of the calendar, who are the Armenian diaspora representatives in Russia and which was added without any change and uncensored by the persons mentioned. In the context of the subject we are examining, Saint Sarkis' Day (23 January), Vardanank (4 February), Terendez (13 February), Zatik or Armenian Easter (27 March), Vichak (5 May), Vardavar (3 July), are particularly interesting. In addition to the national and religious festivals mentioned above, two additional important dates have been added: These are the day of remembrance of the victims of the military and police raids conducted towards the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire on April 24th, and the December 7, 1988, the memorial to the victims of the Spitak earthquake. But we take no account of these because they have emerged in the late 20th century and are derived separately from the pre-existing ethnic and cultural traditions, and thus do not reflect the modern Armenian mentality under analysis here. In the light of the concrete examples reflecting the national and religious intellectual views of the Armenian people, we will explain below the explanation of the most important ethnic-religious festivals that will provide a clear view of the dominant collective worldviews. The comparison and analysis of the examples will enable us to determine and show the

⁵ *Календарь государственных, религиозных, национальных и традиционных праздников Российской Федерации на 2016 год* (М.: ОО «РЕНКАМО», 2016).

archetypal features of these festivals that reflect and settle in the religious tradition of the Armenian people.

“24 January, Saint Sarkis’ Day

This holiday is celebrated 64 days before the Holy Easter (Holy Zatik (easter)). St. Sarkis (320-350) is one of the most sacred saints of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Born in the state of Gemerek, lived in the time of Emperor Constantine the Great in 363, during the time of the Emperor Julian, suffered for his faith in God. Saint Sarkis became the guardian of travellers, soldiers, pregnant women, and especially young lovers. One night before the festival, young people eat the salty lavash and wait the arrival of the bride or groom destined for them in their dreams. The church invites people to pray St. Sarkis in these days. This holiday is preceded by the five-day “khashil” fast.”

“4 February, Vardanank, Day of Compassion and National Respect for Heroes

It is celebrated for the Battle of Avarayra in honor of the defeat of the Armenian troops led by Vardan Mamikonyan in 451. The Persians, who suffered great losses and faced fierce resistance by the Armenians, had to give up their opposition to the national identity of the Armenian people and the Christian religion. According to the chronicles, ‘everyone is both a church and a priest.’ Vardan Mamikonyan, who died as a hero in order to protect his motherland, the Armenian church and Christian religion, and his 1036 friends-in-arms are the great saints of the Armenian Apostolic Church.”

“13 February, Terendez

At the beginning, Terendez was a ritual pagan feast of the Zarathustrans and was called Drndez, which meant a desire for the abundant harvest, and when translated from Armenian, it meant ‘a bunch of hay in front of your house’. After the Armenians accepted Christianity, the festival changed both in name and essence. The main participants of Terendez are the newly married or young boys and girls who have gathered for marriage. The most important characteristic of the festival is that young people who have fallen in love are holding hands and jumping over the open fire. It is believed that if they can jump over the fire without

leaving each other's hands, both the families will be strong and their love will be infinite. Women without children jump over the fire after the loving couples, hoping that the fire will help them get pregnant. In the end, everyone joins their hands and moves in a circular fashion around the fire. According to ancient Armenian beliefs, whoever touches his tongue at the feast of fire that day will enjoy abundance. When the fire goes out, the remaining ashes are collected and the fields are scattered so that the next autumn will bring a good harvest."

"27 March, Zatik or Armenian Easter

The Armenian word 'Zatik' probably comes from the words 'azatutun, azatel' (freedom, freeing) and means getting rid of suffering, evil, and death. The Armenian Christians say to one another, 'The Messiah is resurrected from the dead!' And 'Jesus is the Messiah!' The idea of a resurrection is the foundation of Christianity, meaning a new life from death, the transition from earth to heaven. One day before, on Saturday, the women painted a large number of eggs, the youngsters prepared small bags for the eggs, and the men engaged in the joint sacrificial organization. In the night bridging Saturday to Sunday, around the fire where the slaughtered sacrifices would be cooked in large copper cups, after everyone's festival service, the akhar time of games and dancing joined by everybody started."

"5 May, Vichak, Day of the Ascension of God

Armenians call the Day of Ascension Vichak ("fate") or Katnapuri Ton (the festival of milk porridge). In Armenia, these festivals are associated with the growth of flowers. Especially, livestock capable of giving milk were decorated with flowers, and on the eve of the feast, the festivities of young girls and women started on the mountains and the fields where they gathered flowers and water on Wednesday."

"3 July, Vardavar/Rose Festival, Celebrated in Honor of the Transfiguration of Jesus

Vardavar (Ar. 'Blossoming roses'), according to another adaptation, is made up of the words of 'vard' (water) and 'var' (flowing) and means 'sprinkling the water'. The roots of this festival go to the beginning of

Christianity and the god of maternity and fertility Anahit absorbed most of the features of this feast. The relationship with the water cult is not a coincidence: the feast celebrated 98 days after the Zatik/Armenian Easter occurs during the arid time of Armenia. According to the customs of this feast, everyone is watered and washed away. Among the traditional Armenian holidays, Vardavar/Rose Festival is the most important summer festival of the Armenian church and one of the most popular holidays of the Armenian people. Vardavar festivals were accompanied by games, sports, and horse riding competitions. The festival took place in honor of the Messiah's transfiguration on Mount Tabor. According to the Bible, the three apostles of Jesus (Peter, Jacob, and John) climbed up Mount Tabor, where they saw the Prophets Moses and Elijah, and there Jesus transfigured, his clothes were whiter even than snow."

After completing the quoted explanations of the major national and religious festivals of the Armenians from the "Official, Religious, National and Traditional Holiday Schedule of the Russian Federation" in 2016, it is worthwhile to continue to give our attention to the most important typological features in the contents of the festivals.

First, the main Armenian festivals "being associated" with the Zatik festival in temporal or chronological order is attention grabbing; the St. Sarkis' Day is celebrated 64 days before the Zatik day and 98 days after the Vardavar (this is especially obvious because of the incongruence between the celebration date in 4 February 2016 and the actual date for 26 May for the Battle of Aravayr). This means that traditional Armenian festivals do not have an exact date in the calendar, but they are movable, meaning that their date changes every year depending on positional relationship of heavenly bodies. This shows the cosmogonical, but not the Christian essence of Armenian religious festivals, which contain Christian rituals, and but also contain qualities left over from paganism. Supporting this thesis, there is a fact that all the Armenian autochthonous festival celebrations are accompanied with traditional rituals more inherent to Hellenistic Saturnalia (Saturn festivals)⁶ or Bacchanalia (Bacchus/ancient vine harvesting festivals⁷ than to the religious ceremonies of Christian churches. Rituals such as jumping over the bonfire, pouring water, collective preparing and eating of common sacrificial

6 Saturnalia: the festival held on 17-23 December dedicated to the goddess of agriculture Saturn. During this festival, all class differentials are lifted and everybody is free to do what they want.

7 Bacchanalia: Bacchus/Dionysus is the ancient Greek god of wine. Bacchanalia festivals are held during grape harvesting times. In this festival, the tearing apart of wild animals and eating raw meat takes place. This is a reference to the tearing apart of Bacchus by tyrants when he was small.

food etc., demonstrate that they emanate from people's tribal roots. This circumstance is an indirect evidence of the idea that the level of social-cultural view of the world of the majority of people representing Armenian ethnos still corresponds to patrimonial type of social relations organization which was characteristic during the "kingdom period" in the ancient age and Hellenistic period or basic modern theocracies.

In this context, we should mention another main feature of the aforementioned Armenian groups' world view; this world view remains constant in the framework of the changing world order. The content of the social and religious rituals of the Armenians in the beginning of the 21st century is not principally different from the rituals conducted 150 years ago. In the book written by Lieutenant General H. F. Dubrovin (Member of the Military Research Commission during the period of the General Staff of the Russian Empire Army, permanent secretary of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Russian historian and ethnographer) which is titled "History of Wars and Russian Domination in the Caucasus", which was published in St. Petersburg in 1871, also contained in the religious, national, and traditional festivals of the year calendar of the Russian Federation printed in 2016, when the contents of the text of the Caucasian Armenian religious rituals and the specific ethnographic description of the culture are compared, this situation is very evident. Considering all the elegance of the formal and bureaucratic political correctness towards Armenians, the academician N.F. Dubrovin writes:

"Although the Armenians have long embraced Christianity, they still maintain paganism rituals in some religious ceremonies. They sacrifice to Migr, protector of war heroes who brings victory to courageous and brave people... Today's Armenians are conducting a festival in honor of Migr or the Savior of the Lord or on his eve. This ceremony takes place inside or outside the church or takes place outdoors..."

Among many Armenians, sun worship, called 'arev', is quite common. There are still people who call themselves arevardi today, meaning the child of the sun. They turn the face of the dying person to the east, and when they put the dead into the coffin, they always turn the face to the east. The funeral ceremony almost always takes place before the sun goes down. According to many Armenians, they regard the Anagida, who protects the Armenian kingdom, as the god of wisdom and grandeur. Every year in the summer, when the roses bloom, Armenians celebrate the day of these gods and call this ceremony "vartavar". On this day, they decorate sculptures, public spaces, and even themselves, in honor of the temples of the gods. Armenians, honoring the same

goddess, adorn the altars with their flowers, and while the liturgy is performed, they sprinkle people with rose water.”⁸

Note that these words were written at the beginning of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, when the Armenian Apostolic Church was officially recognized as a Christian faith, according to the laws of the Russian Empire.

The quotation from the basic work of N.F. Dubrovin above shows that the mentioning of the existence of the pagan god Migr, the guardian of the 19th century warriors of the Armenian cult, which is similar to the Hellenistic god Ares or the Roman god Mars, including the human sacrifice which is incompatible with the religious tradition of Christianity. The special form of worship offered by the victims is of special interest. In connection with this, we should pay attention to the expression “Armenians are conducting a festival in honor of Migr or the Savior of the Lord or on his eve” mentioned by Dubrovin. In all the Christian churches, this feast was celebrated 40 days after the birth of Christ. It is done 32 days after festival of the circumcision of Jesus. This festival takes place on 2 or 15 February in accordance with the church calendar, which is accepted in this or other religious doctrine.

In the present Armenian tradition, the pagan festival in honor of the god of war Migr coincides with Vardanank, the day of compassion and national reverence for traditional heroes. As a reminder, the content of “calendar of state, religious, national and traditional holidays in the Russian Federation”, this day was established by the Armenian Apostolic church “to commemorate the defeat of Armenian army lead by Vardan Mamikonyan in the Battle of Avarayr in 451”, although even one and a half centuries ago, this day was the festival for offering sacrifice in to the pagan god Migr. While talking about this coincidence, it should be kept in mind that the true history of the Battle of Avarayr, which is present in all the encyclopedic dictionaries of the world, is 26 May. On this day, which is a living example of offering human blood as sacrifice for the honor of God Migr in the religious or cultural tradition, the Armenians honor the memory of “the great saints of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Vardan Mamikonyan and his 1036 brothers-in-arms,” although the actual date of this battle is at least three months apart. In this context, even though it takes place in a somewhat more modern form, in the contemporary religious tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the cult of mass human sacrifice offered in honor of the pagan god Migr is still considered to be holy. This does not reflect in any way to the religious ritual and practices which

8 Н.Ф. Дубровин, *Истории войн и владычества русских на Кавказе: В 5-ти тт., 8-ми кн. Т. I, кн. II. СПб.: Тип. Н.И. (Скорородова, 1871): 409-410.*

remain paganist in their subconscious, and which externally appear as being intrinsic and unique to the Armenians.

For this reason, it is not surprising that although the actual date of the Battle of Avarayr is three months after the Vardanank celebrations, the pagan festivals for the Armenian God Migr, the Christian festival of the Presentation of Jesus to God in Temple, and the day of compassion and national respect for heroes Vardanank coincide on the same day. “Sretenie” means “meeting” when Slavic church language is translated into modern Russian. The festival was established to commemorate “the meeting” as described in the Gospel of Luke, which happened on the 40 days after birth of Jesus. That day, Virgin Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus to the Temple of Jerusalem to offer thanksgiving to God for the firstborn child according to the determined law. According to the Old Testament law, a woman who gives birth to a boy is banned from entering the temple for 40 days (for 80 days, if it is a girl). She was also required to offer a one-year-old lamb and a pigeon as sacrifice for purification and the “forgiving of sins”, but if the family was poor, they could sacrifice a pigeon or a pair of doves or two young pigeons instead of a lamb. In addition, if the first child in the family was a boy, on the 40th day of him being born, his parents would come to the temple for the completion of his circumcision. As you can see, here is a bloody sacrifice ritual not only of birds or animals, but also a body part (the prepuce of the penis) of a human baby. At the end of the ritual, a blood stream is required which completely overlaps with the sacrifice of the bloody sacrifice to the God Migr of the Armenian pagan tradition. For this reason, the mention of Vardan Mamikonyan and his 1036 brothers in arms is nothing but a camouflage and or decoration designed to hide the festival’s the blood shedding ritual associated with human sacrifice rituals from the non-Armenian foreign eyes.

If we use a terminology that belongs to clinical psychiatry on the basis of this, it is obvious that this mechanism is “substitution”, the highest form of defense mechanism in psychology. In such a mechanism, an individual or a society perceives the consequences of psychological trauma, shock, stress, or other negative effects, and is compelled to transfer responsibility for past events from themselves to other people or unfavorable of external circumstances, meaning is a kind of psychological countermeasure to alleviate one’s own sufferings.

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perceives the consequences of psychological trauma, shock, stress, or other negative effects, and is compelled to transfer responsibility for past events from themselves to other people or unfavorable of external circumstances, meaning is a kind of psychological countermeasure to alleviate one's own sufferings. Being pagan in their mentality but forced to adopt to Christian cultural traditions, Armenians had to use the memory of the Battle of Avarayr, which did not coincide with the traditional festival in honor of Migr in terms of date but did coincide the content (because Armenian blood was shed in this battle). For this act of slight balancing and addition, Armenians combined the blood sacrificing ritual in honor of the god Migr with the Christian festival of the Circumcision of Jesus (or the Presentation of Jesus in the temple). In fact, what we are witnessing here is the adaptation of the archetypal pagan culture to the changing objective reality and the bidirectional initiative of the peculiar modernization of the sacrament during the preservation of the mental and divine essence of God Migr.

The keeping of the Armenian "Holy Spear of Longinus the Centurion", one of the sacred relics of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Echmiadzin Monastery clearly reveals the Christian imagery and the synthesis of pagan traditions in the world view of the Armenians. In Christian theology, the "Spear of Longinus" (sometimes called the "Spear of the Fate") in the body of Jesus Christ (one of Jesus' Sufferings), was used -according to St. John- by the Roman warrior Longinus (in Orthodox tradition, Longinus was commander of the execution of Jesus and leader of the two bandits) to pierce Jesus (who had been put up for crucifixion) in his hypochondrium to make sure that he was dead. Several modern Christian churches in the world store several similar replicas supposed to be spear or parts of the spear of Longinus. One of these is the Armenian spear mentioned above, the second is the Vatican spear kept in the basilica of San Pietro in Rome, and the third is the Vienna spear in the Hofburg Palace in Vienna, kept in the imperial treasury. According to Armenian sources, the Echmiadzin version of "The Spear of Longinus" was placed in its present place of storage only in the 13th century. Before this date, it was in Gerardavank, which means "Monastery of the Spear" when translated from Armenian. The spear itself is interpreted as the means of the sacrifice of Jesus. Thus, as accepted in all the traditional Christian churches, Armenians perceive Jesus Christ, who sacrifices himself for the forgiveness of mankind's sins, not as a body of God, but as a direct sacrifice, as in the Old Testament and Talmudic traditions. This explains why the Armenians identified themselves as monophysites or miaphysites, and why they did not recognize the Holy Trinity as a sign of God. According to Armenians, Jesus is not one of the hypostases of God, the Father-Son or the Holy Spirit, but the sacrifice offered only to the supreme being through special rituals, so there is

nothing to do with God's own being, God's creation, or laws, or commandments of the rules of morality. We can conclude that the unlike other Christian churches and their populations (where the praying of gratitude to God is accepted as being the most important ritual), the ritual of blood sacrifice is the most important ritual in the religious tradition of the Armenians.

The first person to draw attention to this discrepancy between the Apostolic Armenian Church and the Orthodox Christian Churches was Zephaniah, the Archbishop of Turkestan and Tashkent (Bulanov at birth, Stefan Vasilyevich Sokolsky in his life outside religion), the theologian who was an outstanding author of many studies on Christian history and also a preacher. Among these works, the book "The Dispute Between Armenian and Universal Orthodox Churches" was compiled and published by an Orthodox Christian with footnotes and attachments. It was translated from Greek by the episcopate of Novomirgorod (Odessa, 1867). The second work is, "Non-Orthodox Christian Liturgy and Modern Life" (St. Petersburg, 1987), which was formed by adding brief summary of the hierarchical formations of the Iakovites and the Nestorians to the church services (especially liturgies), their churches and religious ceremonies, and the translation notes of the "Dispute between Armenian and Universal Orthodox Churches" that was translated from Greek. As viewed by Orthodoxy and the generally by Christianity, the Apostolic Armenian clergy's unique interpretation of Christ was explained by Zephaniah as the general backwardness of cultural development and particularly the inadequate development of language and (tied to that) world view through the preserving of the influence of the pagan mentality or Armenian traditional ceremonialism. Fanatically preserving their pre-Christian world view, Armenians refused to affirm the deficiencies of the Armenian language as a means of social communication, and argued that this was an outcome of the problems regarding civic development, rather than affirming that problems of civic development were caused by this deficiency.

Archbishop Zephaniah wrote the following while talking about the problems related to the socio-cultural development of Armenians as a result of the current conflict between the laws of the Christianity as a whole and the Armenian Apostolic Church:

"However, regarding the Armenians, I find it necessary to add the inadequacy of the Armenian language. It does not have the productivity of the Greek language in the expression of the theological terms and it is not possible to understand the difference between the concepts of *hypostasis* and *nature* in the Armenian language. When our people (the

Greeks) said that there were “two natures” in our God, Jesus Christ, the Armenians took it for “two faces” [author’s note: two hypostases] and, wishing to express that there are not two but “one face” in Christ, they said “one nature”, in reference to the allure of our argument.”

After this explanation, Archbishop Zephaniah, who supported his viewpoint with various examples of the ritual and service content of the church, makes the conclusion that Armenians completely ruled out the “Holy Trinity” and respected the “only the veneration of Jesus Christ”.

The main difference in the religious tradition or liturgy between Orthodoxy and Apostolic Armenian doctrine is that, according to Zephaniahis, the “Bless Three Times Chant” is read as “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!” in Orthodoxy, while Armenian Apostolic doctrine it is read it as “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, crucified for us, have mercy on us!”. To the extent that we clearly see, the Armenians address not God, but one of his hypostasis - Jesus Christ, the God-Son or the Holy Spirit, the sacrifice for the sins of man.

Archbishop Zephaniahis directly states this in his theological review as: “Not only at that time, but nowadays [author’s note: in the 1870’s] the Armenians talk about the Third Nature of God as belonging to the Second Nature [author’s note: the hypostasis of God], they do not attribute the pain to the Divine, but to the Messiah who suffers as a human for us.”⁹

Zephaniahis, without expressing it directly and openly, allows us to understand that Jesus is perceived by Armenians not as a source of the New Testament, which is the criteria of the Christian legal regulations and moral stance that are prevailing for the disciples of all these dogmas, but as a similarity to the atonement sacrifice. Thus, the Armenian theological tradition does not obligate the religious and spiritual values and norms accepted by Jesus by imposing the function of the worship object like an idol, which contradicts all religious aims of Christianity, to Jesus Christ. In other words, the idea of Christianity, including the saving of the spirit of mankind through faith, in the Armenian Christian theology – the teaching Jesus Christ’s existence, did not overcome the ritual of purifying the human soul through the sacrifice of the pagan product or just sacrifice. The continuing sacrificial

9 Архиеп Софония (Сокольский), *Современный быт и литургия христиан инославных, иаковитов и несториан с кратким очерком их иерархического состава, церковности, богослужения и всего, что принадлежит к отправлению их церковных служб, особенно же их литургии. С присовокуплением переводной записки о несогласии Церкви Армянской со Вселенскою Православною* (СПб: Тип. журнала «Странник», 1876): 399-400, 470-471.

cult is inevitably a source of sacrifice cults unique to Armenian cultures. According to the words of Archbishop Zephaniahis (Sokolsky), this is the result of the Armenian Apostolic Church's planned withdrawal of itself from the Christian and Orthodox churches of the 11th century, and to isolate the church-spiritual hierarchy.

The perception of Jesus Christ as a bloody and ritual sacrifice that provides purification and forgiveness to the one who sacrifices has nothing in common with the Orthodox or with the traditions of Christianity. In the Apostolic Armenian history, the worldview of the disciples of the Armenian Apostolic Church for hundreds of years is that it is the essence of the ethnic and religious identity of the Armenian people. In the past, the perception of the victims by the Armenians gave rise to two opposing insights that lifted the moral boundary between them: sacrificing yourself (as in the model set forth by Jesus) and presenting a sacrifice. This, in turn, transforms the world perception of the Armenians into a cult of casting, inevitably, the blood of a victim of a universal ceremony. Every blood shed for the sake of common interests begins to be perceived as a moral victory by the Armenians, whether the blood that has been shed is from themselves or from others. In this context, we can refer to the Armenian Apostolic teaching as a unique socio-cultural structure, since the association of two different religious traditions as a long-accepted religious model (Christianity in this case) and its archetypal foundation (the pagan content of our research). As a result, the Armenian Apostolic teaching, which became the accepted form of Christianity, could not eliminate its own pagan essence, which led to significant consequences for all the rest of the world.

In describing the moral status of the Armenians as a national or religious community in the mid-19th century, Archbishop Zephaniahis (Sokolsky), as an official of the Christian and Russian Orthodox Church, far removed from all kinds of xenophobia against Armenians as related to the formation of a religious organization and ethnicity, states:

“The principles and beliefs of Enlightenment spread amongst the Armenian people only in the previous century [Author's note: 18th century]. Despite their original purity, they did not have time to develop in a completely proper manner, to strengthen their practice and the church discipline. However, what is more important is that they did not have time to free themselves from the influence of solidified pre-Christian and completely barbarian customs that had long persisted among the sons of Haik and Aram after the adoption of Christianity. In such a situation, the variations regarding Orthodoxy that has emerged seem to be an inevitable consequence of their lack mental and moral

maturity, meaning a lack of firmness on the one hand, and a lack of strong political and church pressure on the other hand.”

In other words, when referring to the existence of the Armenians before they were orbiting the official political influence of the Russian Empire, Archbishop Zephaniahis attempted to explain with strong hints (but without directly asserting it) that some of the representatives of this ethnicity (the Armenians) lived within pagan customs while being only formally referred to as a Christian people.

While developing the above-mentioned idea, the archbishop of the Russian Orthodox Church wrote about “rooted pre-Christian and completely barbarian traditions” as:

“First of all, we should pay attention to the traditions that are described as the crudest and inhumane customs. For example, after the spread of the Christian faith, the Armenians drove all the lepers and those carrying the elephantiasis (elephant) disease from their own dwellings, to forests and deserts, where unfortunate long-time sufferers were fed alive to predators and birds; those who were weak and disabled were not driven from their surroundings, but were left to their fate without any charity or help; they did not give shelter nor food to the travelers who were passing by. But, if we were to talk about a full pagan tradition among the Armenians who embraced the Christian religion, it would be about that brutal tradition of voluntarily self-immolation during the burial of relatives.”¹⁰

The expulsion people which inevitably doomed them to death, the abandonment of people without help, and self-immolation according to pagan rules are varieties of purifying sacrifice, which once again demonstrates the existence of archaic and archetypical sacrifice culture in the mentality and ideology of Armenians. This existed and was actively practiced not only in parallel, but contrary to the canons, dogmas, and traditions of Christian teaching. And if Armenians treated their co-religionists and own kinsmen like this, then we should not be surprised when they behaved in a more brutal fashion to people of other beliefs and ethnicities.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the religious worldview of this nation have been incorporated into politics. Thus, the Armenian people’s archaic stereotypes of worldviews were presented to the service of the Armenian

10 Софония, *Современный быт и литургия христиан...*, 482-483.

Revolutionary Federation “Dashnaksutyun” and other similar terrorist organizations. Their leaders and ideologists have actively mobilized their own religious and racial advocates to armed conflict in order to achieve a national state structure and have used the “holy grail of the sacrificial Armenian blood”, an archetype of ethnic worldviews, as time has shown, to reach their broader aims. According to the words of Russian Consul General V. F. Mayevsky in Van, this thesis was the driving force of the popular uprisings surrounding the northern provinces of Anatolia or Asian Turkey in the last five years of the nineteenth century. As a person from those days and a witness, the Consul Mayevskiy conveyed his own impressions of what he saw and heard in his publication titled “Armenian-Tatar Turmoil in the Caucasus as a Stage of the Armenian Question” (1st edition, Tbilisi, 1915, 2nd edition, Bakü 1993);

“However, I can say that during this period (1895-97), I had to travel around the Van, Bitlis, Erzurum and partly in Diyarbakir and Mosul provinces. And I really had to observe some things that were impossible to describe. What could be superior to one’s love for the homeland? ... But how did such love turn into this?

A tremendous tragedy flared up in front of my eyes under the titles ‘Blood needs to be shed! Armenians will get what they want!’ The Armenian language is foreign to me, but I had to hear this sentence dozens of times from the translator, and these sentences traveled to the far corners of Asian Turkey. I have witnessed that hidden Armenian organizations (serving to create a greater confusion in a possibly larger field) exhibited such inhumane and brutal behavior even to their own Armenian brothers, which caused me to doubt the existence of any human emotion within these people.”¹¹

Of course, this Russian diplomat did not understand the facts of ethno-psychology and the subtleties of the Armenians' religious-moral worldview as a person without education and experience in this field, nor did he have to understand it. However, despite this lack of knowledge and experience, being caught in the turbulence of the occurrences he was surrounded by, he was able to see and outline the bloody debauchery of those years in the northeastern Ottoman Empire, the realities of the events taking place and the irrationality of the relations of the members of those events.

11 В.Ф. Маевский, *Армяно-татарская смута на Кавказе как один из фазисов армянского вопроса*, Изд. 2-е (Баку: Шур, 1993): 15.

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The existence of the collective national-religious consciousness of the archetypal within the Armenian ethnicity, the dominant pagan world view fully explains the existence of this mental-psychological phenomenon. According to this; it is not considered a crime for the Armenians to conduct terrorist acts. Moreover, the Armenian Apostolic Church and its whole union perceive them as heroic acts in the name of their followers. We argue that radical (or Orthodox) Armenians subconsciously perceive the conducting of a terrorist act resulting in human victims as a bloody sacrifice to the god Migr, such as killing, bombing, and arson. So far, this culture of sacrifice has been kept up to date, in a veiled form, not only among the Armenian people, but also by the Armenian Apostolic Church. To speak truthfully, it is necessary to say that in the cultural traditions of the Armenians over the past one and a half centuries, the ritual of sacrifice and sacrifice offering, rather than the "field of god-sacrifice" itself, has been made absolute. As a result, the direct action itself is sanctified, not the myth.

The widespread and well-known facts of sacrificial rituals performed by illegal and separatist armed militants of Nagorno-Karabakh during the 1988-1994 Nagorno-Karabagh war serve as proof of this conclusion. The book titled "My Brother's Road: An American's Faithful Journey to Armenia" written by Markar Melkonian, the brother of Monte Melkonian, who was one of the most

well-known Armenian field commanders of Nagorno-Karabakh and killed by Azerbaijani troops in the field of conflict in 1992, depicts the human sacrifice ritual in a very detailed way. Chapter 15 of this book is devoted to the narration of war crimes committed by Armenian militants against the Azerbaijani prisoners of war and the civilian population. He, as a direct participant of the 1988-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh war and as a witness of the events that he wrote, refers to these war crimes only “disciplinary problems” in his book (at least, the title of the relevant chapter –“Disciplinary Problems”- showcases that he views them as such). This text by itself can be a testimony in any international trial regarding the crimes of the Armenian separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh. However, we are interested in this book because it validates our argument that even today, Orthodox or extremist Armenians have not abandoned the pagan tradition of human sacrifice, and are thus not really the followers of today’s Christianity, but are in truth the followers of the of the pagan cult of Migr (the god of war). The value of this source lies in the fact that an Armenian militant, who participated in war activities and undoubtedly did not feel antipathy towards his fellow religionists, wrote about the facts of these kinds of sacrificial actions. Let us look at a few pieces of Markar Melkonian’s book;

“... in November 1990, Kechel¹² had kidnapped a young Azerbaijani Popular Front activist from a village across the border... The young Azeri, Syed, spent a month chained to the wall of a cottage near Yerevan. On New Year’s Eve 1991, Kechel and a couple of buddies, including a local police officer and their friend Ardag, dragged the captive to the top of Yeraplur, the burial hill near Yerevan. There they kicked Syed to his knees under a spreading tree next to the grave of a fellow fighter named Haroot. Then Kechel, a father of three children, began cutting Syed’s throat with a dull knife. At first Syed screamed, but after a while the screaming gave way to moaning and gurgling. Finally, when Ardag could no longer listen, he pushed a knife into Syed’s chest, putting an end to it. They drained Syed’s blood on top of Haroot’s grave and then left...”¹³

As we have seen, the basic elements of the bloody victim ritual are depicted in detail in this citation: killing for revenge in the form of a ritual on the grave by cutting the throat and puncturing the heart with the stab of a blunt knife.

12 The codename of Serzh, one of the militants of the Patriotic team under the command of Monte Melkonian.

13 Markar Melkonian, *My Brother’s Road: An American’s Fateful Journey to Armenia* (London - New-York: I.B. Tauris, 2005): 212.

In addition, in all rural areas, people kill livestock in the same way, to consume their meat as food. If this crime had an individual character, it could have been regarded as the extremity of drunken activists. However, Markar Melkonian's book also contains further evidence of the rituals of human sacrifices carried out by the militants of the illegal armed formations of the Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh separatists. Describing the ethnic cleansing of Karadagli rural area in Azerbaijan, at the end of February 1922, he wrote:

“As news spread that Karadaghlu [Karadagli] had been ‘cleaned out,’ several delegates arrived from the village of Krasnyi Bazar, fifteen kilometers to the south... Now, their fellow villagers politely requested four of the Azeri captives for the *madagh* [madakh] – a blood sacrifice. It was written, after all: an eye for an eye...”¹⁴

The most remarkable thing in this citation is that the name of “madakh” (or “matakh”), which is the ritual of presenting human sacrifice, is mentioned. As understood from the memoirs of Markar Melkonian, the local Karabakh Armenians, who were semi-educated villagers whose consciousness was shaped by ethnographic or national-religious values rather than civic values, emerged with the desire to practice this ritual. With all certainty and clarity, this statement alone proves that the Karabakh Armenians living in the country knew the meaning of the word “madakh” and understood it very well and were ready for this ritual practice in accordance with the preserved tradition. In addition, it is remarkable that this ritual is briefly explained by the principle of “an eye for an eye”, which is not in any way compatible with Christian morality that directly prohibits all forms of revenge, not only blood revenge. The fact that Armenians were present for seventeen centuries within Christianity under the administration or spiritual rule of the Armenian Apostolic Church could not change the pagan worldview of the clear majority. For this clear majority, the liturgical ritual of the Armenian Apostolicism continues to be a convenient cover for the unquestioning and unconditional fulfillment (if favorable external conditions are present) of traditions of archetypal dominant world views consistent with the bloody rituals and rituals of Armenian paganism.

The validity of this conclusion is demonstrated by the example of another traditional or pagan Armenian festival, which acquired an external Christian expression but nevertheless completely preserved its pagan essence in the Armenian Apostolic Church. In this case, we are referring to N. F. Dubrovin's ethnographic description of the Caucasus and the Armenian national festival Vardavar which we encountered in the “Russian Federation Official,

14 Melkonian, *My Brother's Road...*, 215.

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Religious, National and Traditional Holiday Calendar”. Moreover, this festival is interpreted afterwards as the reincarnation of Jesus Christ’s Transfiguration, which is a Christian festival. We read from N.F Dubrovin these words;

“Many of the Armenians, according to their thoughts, respect Anagida, the god of wisdom and glory, who protects the Armenian kingdom... Every year in the summer, when the roses have flowered, they celebrated the goddess’s day and the ceremony was called ‘Vardavar’. These days, in honor of the goddess, they decorate temples, sculptures, public spaces, and even themselves. Still, in honor of the same goddess, the Armenians decorate altars with flowers and sprinkle people with rose water during the ritual.”

At the same time, we read the following from the “Russian Federation’s Official, Religious, National and Traditional Holiday Calendar”:

“This festival dates back to the pre-Christian festival, which is dedicated to Asthik, the goddess of beauty and the guardian of the waters, and had many features of the festival of the goddess Anahit, the fertility god... According to celebration traditions, everybody is willing to pour water and swim. In a series of traditional Armenian festivals, Vartavar is the biggest summer festival, one of the most popular festivals of the Armenian Church and the most popular festivals among the people. Vardavar entertainment was accompanied by games, sporting events, horse races.”

However, these have no commonalities with the worship of Christianity, and are literally repeating the ancient Bacchanalia and Hellenistic Saturnalia.

It must be said that the modern descriptions of the traditions of Vardavar festival among the Armenians are no different from those that were described in the written ethnographic evidence a hundred years ago. In particular, in the festival description carried out in the Village of Chaikend (the Elizavetpol district of the Elizavetpol province), published in the Collection of materials for the description of Caucasian places and tribes in the the official publication of the Caucasian Training District Administration (Tbilisi, 1894, Issue 18), it is written: “... Every one of them necessarily comes with a bagpipe of a considerable size filled with wine and a few sheep to offer sacrifices. All this is eating and drinking on Vardavar day, with the noise and joy of the prayers which are accompanied by the sound of zurna.”¹⁵ This ethnographical writer,

15 А. Калашов, *Вардавар* // *Сборник материалов для описания местностей и племен Кавказа: Издание Управления Кавказского учебного округа. Вып. № 18* (Тифлис: Тип. Канцелярии Главноначальствующего гражданской частью на Кавказе, 1894. Отд. II): 2-3.

A. Kashalov was a teacher of the Elizavetpolsky Mikhailovsky Craft School. It is hard to believe he had a xenophobic attitude against Armenians. Even he was aware of the tradition of the Vardavar festival when he told that there was “sacrifice” and “prayers”; all activities carried out on this day had a concrete ritual character, and had a religious connotation and context that had no relations whatsoever with either Christian belief, Christian liturgical or worshipping tradition.

As we have seen in the example of this traditional Armenian festival, Christian ritualism serves as a camouflage image, a window dressing, to conceal the pagan essence. From here, we can make the following conclusion with great accuracy; a strict adherence to the laws and customs of paganism (which takes different forms depending on the immediate needs of the geopolitical situation) and other ideological world views are the main source of national-religious consolidation in its primitive existence in social and ethnocultural environment conditions based on the principles of common life and communication.

Paganism, which manifested itself most vividly and openly in the Soviet Socialist Armenia period, has always served as a tool in keeping the national consciousness of Armenians. The Soviet government, including the Armenian Apostolic Church, saw all the churches in essence as 'opium for the people', as well-organized opponents against an absolute ideological authority and at the same time as institutions with a dominant role in public life. That is why there was an immediate, effective persecution against all the churches.

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Armenian Apostolic Church, saw all the churches in essence as ‘opium for the people’, as well-organized opponents against an absolute ideological authority and at the same time as institutions with a dominant role in public life. That is why there was an immediate, effective persecution against all the churches. In this case, the Soviet Armenian government showed an effective administrative feature in order to not lose the Armenian national identity, and even directly supported the different phenomena of the Armenian culture. Based on these facts, it contributed to the formation of the national ideological neo-pagan cult. The simple proof of this are the appearance of Armenian pagan gods’ images in the streets of Yerevan and that information regarding them can be found in all modern guide books of the Armenian capital. The most famous of these are the three sculptures made of forged copper by the

sculptor Karlen Nuridzhanyan in the 1970s and 1980s, which has become kind of business card for Yerevan in recent years. These sculptures are the “Vaagn the Dragon Reaper” on Mashtots Avenue, and the “Hayk Nahapet” and “Tork Angeh” monuments in the Nor-Nork area of Yerevan. According to the Armenian pagan mythology, the god or semi-god (hero in antiquity) Vahagn the dragon reaper is a counterpart to Zeus from the god-king pantheon of ancient Greek gods. The mythological hero Hayk Nahapet is considered the founder of the legendary Armenian dynasty, Haykazuni, extending to Armenians until the Patriarch Fogorma, the great-grandson t of Noah. The stonemason god Tork Angeh, who is a deformed giant, is the grandson of Hayk Nahapet.

It is quite clear that in the years when Soviet forces dominated in Armenia, the publication of such sculptures on the streets of Yerevan could not have taken place without direct order or without the permission of the republican authorities. These authorities were trying to fight against the influence of the Armenian Apostolic Church through the propagation of pagan symbols, confirming the spread of neo-paganism (or old paganism) associated with the worst forms of archaic traditional ritualism, including the offering of human sacrifices. Yerevan was the sole capital in the Soviet Union with such monumental representations on the streets, which was far from the official party-state ideology (proletarian internationalism) in form and content. This shows that, according to the worldviews and ideological structures of the Armenian communists, they are no different from the militant pagan that actively contributes to the formation of ideas that are compatible with pre-Christian collective and individual worldview archetypes. Therefore, it is not surprising that the ritual of “madakh” human sacrifice, which is fully consistent with the cultural tradition of the Armenian community established in the 1960-70s by the local Soviet party forces, has been implemented many times by the Nagorno-Karabakh separatist Armenian during the war against Azerbaijan.

If we can come to the conclusion regarding what was mentioned above, we can summarize the characteristic ideas that trigger the aggressive attitude of Armenian nationalists to other peoples and religious groups and the origin of modern ideologies.

As believers of the Christian teachings and as the adherents of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and although their national and religious affiliations are explicitly mentioned, Armenians use rituals similar to Christianity to conceal their archetypal pagan worldviews. Although the basic festivals of the Armenian Apostolic Church coincide with the basic or most important twelve

festivals of traditional Christianity, these festivals ideologically have a pagan character and culture close to the Hellenistic spiritual tradition of antiquity within their sacred tradition. Sacrifice for the sake of common national, religious, or unity interests is the cornerstone of Armenian national-religious worldviews. Moreover, depending on the shape and character of the sacrifice, there is a hierarchy in the Armenian national-cultural tradition, corresponding to practices ending with offering human sacrifice starting from material donations to general, public or religious needs.

The last type of the sacrifice act has its own hierarchy. The first place is the bloody revenge or the ritual killing of the captive enemy to take revenge for the death of his own co-religionist and kinsmen. The killing of the enemy, which threatens the interests of the union, society or religion, takes place in the next step of this hierarchy. In both the first and second case, the victim is perceived as an object of sacrifice to the pagan god Migr. As we have seen from the “official religious, national and traditional holiday calendar of the Russian Federation”, the cult of this god has been respected by the Armenians up to now. At the very top of the ritual of offering the human sacrifice in the perception of the Armenians is voluntary self-sacrifice in the name of national-religious or unity interests. Such people are regarded as folk heroes, and they are included as saints in the Armenian Apostolic Church, regardless of whether these people previously led a pious life or not.

The whole of the above gives us a reason to talk about this; in the worldview system of the Armenian people, terrorist action perpetrated against the enemy or hostile state has not only been permitted, but has also been encouraged by the traditional norms of religion. This is why representatives from Armenian ethno-religious union did not consider such an action as a crime against God’s commandments or against the order of the world, but, in accordance with national and religious traditions (and approved by Armenian society), considered it as a commitment of the cult for pagan god Migr. For this reason, far from being considered a reprehensible act, it is considered to be a duty. And with this, the following can be explained; in the political programs of the Armenian Revolutionary parties “Hunchak” and “Dashnaksutyun”, terrorism has always been the main instrument of political struggle, and the modern Armenian state structure itself is a natural result of the terrorist activities of Armenian national-religious militants, regarded as radicals according to international legal norms.

The dangerous blend of Christianity ritualism and pagan mentality, which has increased with the political efforts of the Soviet-era Armenian administration of this newly-formed state, determines the spread of the neo-pagan ideology

in society and the necessity of moral-psychological dominants and Armenian people lives in the 21st century. As a result, terrorism and the theory and practice of terrorism, or this as a concept of foreign policy activity, as a means of war for national and official interests, have become an instrument of the internal politics of this country. The almost legitimate existence of private or collective armed formations associated with political parties or bureaucratic groups, which are easily used by parliamentarians for extra-parliamentary competition, has become an ordinary rule for modern Armenia.

The most obvious proof of the validity of this assertion is the latest armed revolt in Yerevan in the summer of 2016. During the two weeks between 17 and 30 July, the “Sasna Tsrer” (can be translated as the Daredevils of Sassoun/Sasun) militants with thirty or so people equipped with military-grade automatic weapons and rocket propelled grenades, captured a police precinct in Yerevan, killed four police officers and took hostages. They demanded the release of one of their leaders, the well-known international Armenian terrorist Zhirayr Sefilyan, known as the former specialist in the destructive and subversive activities of the Nagorno-Karabakh separatist illegal armed organizations and partisan warfare, and the formerly known as the “American green beret”. Sefilyan had been arrested multiple times, and in the last time, he was arrested by the Armenian government on suspicion that he was preparing to carry out a coup d'état against the government. The establishment of illegal armed formations in modern countries of the world and the taking of hostages for political demands aimed at the state are considered terrorist offenses. However, such criminal acts are not considered a crime in contemporary Armenia; the militants who surrendered count themselves as “prisoners of war”. The state merely charges these militants for the crimes of killing, subjugation, destroying the property of another, and illegal arms circulation in accordance with the provisions of the national criminal law, as if there has been no mention of a coup d'état attempt by an illegal armed formation and armed revolt.

The situation regarding the rebels from the group “Sasna Tsrer” shows us in an open and effective manner that, while the actions in modern Armenia are described as terrorist offenses according to the criminal law of other countries and international law, the present situation in Armenia is the reality of everyday life. It is even perceived as a principle of the functioning of the country's domestic politics. It is not surprising, however, when one considers the dogmas and moral-ethical imperatives of the religious worldview that have shaped the mentality of Armenian society for centuries. In fact, the political terror practice used by Armenians against the other countries throughout the 20th century is the main threat to the national security and existence of

Armenia, and it is now firmly in place in the everyday life of Armenia's internal political life. Georges Jacques Danton, one of the leaders of the Great French Bourgeois Revolution of 1789, who was sentenced to death by his own brothers-in-arms, said these words as he stepped into the scaffold of the guillotine; "Revolution eats its own children." We can say the following by changing these words: "The terror that gives birth to the state will inevitably destroy its own baby."

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