

RELIGIOUS/CONFESSIONAL PROBLEMS OF THE ARMENIANCY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS

*Gagik Harutyunyan**

A considerable part of ethnic Armenians, at least 10% by various estimates, are not adherents of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In addition to the Armenian Catholics, Evangelicals and Orthodox, there is a sizeable mass of Islamized Armenians. Obviously, forming expert opinions on Armenians of different confessions and religions is not only an issue of self-knowledge, but also an urgent task for spiritual security (SS), which is an important component of the national security (NS). Undoubtedly, without having clear ideas about the different confessional and religious segments it would be impossible to develop mechanisms for consolidated and effective activities by the Armenian public. At the same time it is known that in principle, no isolated areas can exist in the NS system, and even the problems of totally different nature are interconnected to a greater or lesser extent. In this respect the issues related to SS have to do, in particular, with the following:

- Security problems of diaspora: as it is known, most of the Armenians adhering to other confessions and religions reside outside the Republic of Armenia (RA) and Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR)
- Pressing internal political problems of Armenia connected with interrelations between various confessional segments, sectarian manifestations, tax and property issues, problems of the monuments' preservation, etc.

*Executive Director, Noravank Foundation.

- Foreign policy developments, with consideration of the existence and political potential of Armenians adhering to various confessions and religions in Turkey, Middle East, as well as in Europe and the American continent.

It has to be stressed that the research of various confessional/religious segments of the Armenianness must be an integral part of classical Armenian Studies. It encompasses rich historiography intertwined with the history of Armenia, theological matters and many other issues. There are deep historical and scientific traditions in the scholarly studies of these fields. At the same time one may observe some trends that under a pseudoscientific cover attempts are made to over-simplistically interpret the Armenian genealogy or say, compose definitions of being an “Armenian” based exclusively on confessional/religious and linguistic prerequisites.

***The Question “Who is Armenian?”
and the Objectives of the Applied Armenian Studies***

The problem of “Who is Armenian and who is not?” does not and cannot have solutions in form of a mathematical formula, as there are no such formulas for complicated historical/social phenomena. The phenomenon of “the Armenian” is quite a complex notion, and clarification of this issue in each separate case (in these circumstances there are numerous different cases) should be left to the senses of a given person, to the opinion of the Armenian public, to the approaches of government structures and the church, and so forth. The issue of being an Armenian is such a matter where one’s personal approaches should never be overestimated, and in our opinion sometimes it is worth to confide in God only, because concretization attempts and mental exercises of Talmudic sort can only lead to a deadlock, but will never produce any constructive results. In this context it seems appropriate to bring some quotes from the speech of the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan delivered at the

official reception hosted by the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations and leading Armenian-American organizations¹: “Do we realize that cultural, linguistic and confessional diversity is not a deficiency, which has to be overcome, but an advantage which gives us unique opportunities? The Armenian identity should not be intricate and mysterious. It has to reject linguistic, religious, cultural, partisan, or ideological divides. The English-speaking, Turkish-speaking, Russian-speaking, or Armenian-speaking Armenian; the Apostolic, Catholic, Protestant, or Muslim Armenian; the Socialist or Democrat Armenian; the Nationalist or Liberal Armenian – they are just Armenians.” We believe this approach should serve as guidance for the public in the given issue. It has to be noted that Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians has also made statements along the same lines².

Returning to the subject matter, in parallel to the classical Armenian studies the formation of *Applied* Armenian Studies is a somewhat new tradition. Its objectives are outside the scope of the scientific criteria typical to the previous eras and are re-interpreted as a strategy for defending the national/political interests of Armenia and Armenianness³.

Of course, such approach in no way implies forgoing classical concepts and fundamental knowledge, nor does it suggest that the processes of Armenian Studies and self-cognition problems should be pushed to the backburner and turned into mere PR and politicized procedures. Quite the opposite, the goal of Applied Armenian Studies is to use in a most effective way the results of

¹ Speech delivered by President Serzh Sargsyan in the United States at the official reception hosted by the Embassy of Armenia to the US, Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations and leading Armenian-American organizations <http://www.president.am/events/news/arm/?pn=329&id=209>

² “We accept them as children of our nation who abandoned the faith and religion of their fathers due to some sad historical circumstances. We work so that they re-find their national identity, the core of which is the Christian faith.” The answer of Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II to a question asked by the French-Armenian “Nor Haratch” newspaper regarding Islamized Armenians. http://noravank.am/arm/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=6133

³ *Գազիկ Տէր-Հարությունյանց*, Հոգևոր անվտանգությունը որպէս ազգային անվտանգության բաղադրամաս, «Տարածաշրջան» (հատուկ թողարկում), 2(4), p. 29, 2005; *Гагик Арутюнян*, Распад «системы» и формирование будущего, Ереван, НОФ «Нораванк», 2011.

fundamental research in informational, ideological and international/political dimensions, thus putting those in service of modern and urgent matters of Armenia and Armenianness. Such a modernized statement of the problem facilitates the development of interdisciplinary methods and establishment of new fundamental research directions¹. The experience of Western countries (especially the USA) and Russia has shown that activities of such nature, as a rule, are implemented by the so-called “think tanks” and these issues will later be considered in the context of the need to create such national institutions².

The essence of religious/confessional problems of the Armenianness presented in this article is in line with the concepts and approaches of the newly forming traditions in Applied Armenian Studies. In the context of Applied Armenian Studies it has to be noted that the current brisk changes in the global geopolitical and even geo-economic fields cannot leave the Armenian state and the whole Armenian society untouched, and hence they influence also our national religious/confessional problems. This is simply a statement of a well-known fact, since the history of religion and church has always been and remains to be an important component of the world history. In particular, the history of spiritual and religious matters is also a history of wars, if for example we recall the Crusades, modifications of which continue to date, as some analysts and political scientists argue.

Having stated once again that in the modern era of informational revolutions the great changes directly impact the Armenian realities, let us try to answer briefly the question of what is the global situation with the public and spiritual/religious arena. Apparently, without well-developed insights on the surrounding world it would be very difficult for us to act properly in the

¹ *Գազիկ Տեր-Հարությունյան*, Հոգևոր անվտանգությունը որպես ազգային անտանգության բաղադրամաս, «Տարածաշրջան» (հատուկ թողարկում), 2(4), p. 29, 2005; *Гагик Арутюнян*, Распад «системы» и формирование будущего, Ереван, НОФ «Нораванк», 2011.

² *Գազիկ Հարությունյան*, Ուղեղային կենտրոնները և ազգային անվտանգությունը, 21-րդ Դար, #1(35), p. 3, 2011:

modern globalized, interlinked world, which responds quite harshly to the tendencies of isolation.

The Post-Secular, but in Essence Not-So-Spiritual World

As it is known, the contemporary social science in an almost uniform approach describes the current era as “post-secular”¹. The relevance of such wording to the current realities is proved, in particular, by the fact that in the recent period about 105,000 Christians are annually killed for their religious affiliation, or in other words, every five minutes a Christian is martyred for his/her faith. It has been also calculated that about 100 million Christians in the world are persecuted based on religious affiliation (mostly in the Middle East, North Africa, Southeast Asia, countries of Central and Southern Africa, and India). Other religious segments are also persecuted: about 35 million Muslims and representatives of other religions are annually persecuted in the world (suffice it to recall bloody conflicts between Shia and Sunni Muslims that sometimes take the form of mass terror)². These are plausible data presented and discussed at the international conference “Freedom of Religion: Problems of Discrimination and Persecution of Christians.” There is a good reason that the final document of the CIS Inter-Religious Council Session in Yerevan declares an aspiration that the 21st century should become an age of morality, for which the world has to at least accept and use the unique experiences contained in the peoples’ spiritual traditions³.

It can be thus argued that in contrast to the Modern era, the spiritual/religious matters are starting to regain high importance in the 21st century. Although having some positive aspects, which will be discussed later, the

¹ See for example, *Аркадий Малер*, Постсекулярность или неоязычество?
http://www.katehon.ru/html/top/philosophia/postsekularnost_ili_neojazychestvo.htm

² «Каждые пять минут в мире за веру умирает христианин»,
<http://www.stoletie.ru/print.php?ID=112136>

³ Final communique of the CIS Inter-Religious Council Session,
<http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=documents&div=1148>

“post-secular” world brings certain risks. Particularly, two types of threats, geopolitical and societal ones are worth to briefly touch upon.

It is no surprise that the experts community links the beginning of the “post-secular era” to the collapse of USSR and Socialist system and the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The latter actually unleashed a war against extremist Islamism, conditionally named “war on terror” which however, cannot totally disguise its civilizational and partly religious direction. What currently happens in the New Middle East should be viewed as a logical extension of those global events. In particular, the region sees a return of political Islam, or worded differently, theocratic regimes. These forces currently act still using the terminology and rhetoric typical to the “moderate Islam”. However, according to some substantiated forecasts, particularly based on studying the radicalization of Islam currently taking place in Turkey, in the near future such regimes will move to more extreme manifestations with all the consequences that come with it¹.

The fundamental work carried out by the highly reputable American and European “think tanks”, National Intelligence Council and EU Institute of Security Studies, presents near-future scenarios of the world’s division/fragmentation and particularly, the formation of an isolated Islamic world². These trends are clearly shaping up in the context of the Middle Eastern developments, and this is directly associated not only with the safety of our compatriots there, but also the security issues of the RA and NKR. It can be safely stated that Samuel Huntington’s concept of the “Clash of Civilizations” finds increasingly more materialized justifications³.

¹ *Գազինկ Հարությունյան, Մերգեյ Գրինյան*, Հեղափոխություններ. նոր աշխարհակարգի կերտման ավարտը և գլոբալ կառավարման սցենարները. Գլոբուս ազգային անվտանգություն, #2(18) p. 3, 2011:

² *Global Governance 2025: At a Critical Juncture*. National Intelligence Council, European Union Institute for Security Studies, September 2010.
http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Global_Governance_2025.pdf.

³ *Самюэль Хантингтон*, Столкновение цивилизаций, Москва, Изд-во АСТ, 2003.

The second threat is that the spiritual, in particular, the Christian principles are reinstated in the modern consumer or so-called “consumerist” social system, where the main actor is the non-spiritual *Homo economicus* with an overly materialistic mentality. Thus, religious/confessional conceptions seem to be introduced in a social environment where spiritual principles are rejected, which may cause various and not necessarily positive processes. It has to be stressed that in any case this phenomenon should be interpreted above all as a compensation mechanism or a peculiar therapy aimed at filling in the spiritual vacuum of the contemporary societies. However, there are obvious difficulties on this path, prompting some people to describe the modern European societies as the “post-Christian world.”

In parallel with all of this, it has to be considered that the clergy is also affected by the consumerism of the time. This leads to a situation where the contemporary “post-secular” processes sometimes take up a nature of absolutizing and formalizing the ceremonies and rites, which in turn causes clericalization processes. Such approaches are as unacceptable as rejection of the spiritual principles (in this regard it is worth recalling the medieval precedent of selling indulgences or receiving “absolution for sins” for a monetary payment). The situation arisen leads some scholars to present the current “post-secularism” as “neo-paganism”. These trends of clericalization and “neo-paganism” sometimes cause public outcry. For instance, even in Poland, a country with such solid Catholic traditions, an anti-clerical party called Palikot's Movement won about 10% of the vote (40 seats in the parliament) in the 2011 parliamentary elections¹.

With all of this in mind, no wonder one may come across the thought expressed in media that *Homo sovieticus*, the hero of various funny stories (who as it is known did not attend church, performed no ceremonies and never followed any rituals) was often more spiritual and closer to the Chris-

¹ Станислав Кувалдин, Дорога от костела, Эксперт, # 47(780), p. 73, 2011.

tian worldview in essence than the present-day *Homo economicus*, who dutifully performs all the ceremonies.

“Multiculturalism”, Civilizational Factor and External Influences

It is commonly accepted that as an important component of human consciousness, the religious concepts are deeply rooted and are hard to change. Perhaps this is one of the circumstances resting in the foundations of multiculturalism policy that currently suffers a deep crisis in Europe¹. Sometimes this reality prompts viewing the Armenian society through the prism of multiculturalism, too. It has to be noted that in addition to the confessional/religious matters the Armenians of Diaspora are characterized by various geopolitical orientations, linguistically different segments and other differences depending on their place of residence. Sometimes this leads to a conclusion that the Armenianness is a “torn” civilization in Huntington’s definition and is doomed to break apart.

However, it has to be considered that the European and Armenian realities are principally different. The newly established, primarily Muslim communities in Europe represent other, non-European civilizations. In contrast, our society is the bearer of Armenian civilizational values and characteristics, including a common homeland (currently represented by the two Armenian states), a unique and rich history and culture. This civilizational commonality allows being confident that we are able to overcome the existing problems.

It should be noted that the Armenian civilizational factor plays an important role as a security resource in the state-related processes. It is known that the religious factor and existence of different confessional segments in the societies is often used by external powers as leverage for political influence. There are numerous historical precedents of this, including the ones

¹ Эмиль Паин, Мирное сосуществование XXI века, Россия в глобальной политике, т. 9, #2, р. 8, 2011; А.И. Тэвдой-Бурмули, Мультикультурализм: между панацеей и проклятием, Актуальные вопросы Европы, #4, р. 14, 2011.

uncovered recently with regard to the large-scale special actions of such nature used during the Cold War period¹. These actions are hardly different in methodological terms from the activities implemented in information warfare. Hence, solving these problems requires wide use of the measures typical for information security, among which conceivably the most effective one under the given circumstances is boosting the competitiveness of the national spiritual resources, as well as embedding the idea of Armenian civilizational commonality in the consciousness of the public.

At the same time, in the area of national security the challenges are often coupled with opportunities. Such approach suggests that apart from constituting a certain problem, our religious/confessional differences contain significant potential and may render vast practical opportunities. For example, the Armenian Catholics are part of the 1 billion strong Catholic world governed in a rather centralized manner by Vatican, which is not only a spiritual, but also a powerful geopolitical center. The various Evangelical confessions are a very influential political factor in the West and especially in the USA. A number of countries make use of this factor in terms of political lobbying and it is worth a serious consideration. It is also entirely possible that the factor of Islamized Armenians may find a political use, and some attempts are already made in this direction. These circumstances could be used to the benefit of our national interests, if an appropriate strategy existed.

Some Conclusions

The brief thoughts presented above at the very least point out that the modern religious/confessional problems deserve a serious scientific and analytical attention. An atmosphere of silence or outright rejection of these problems is the most ineffective approach for this area. Certainly, there are some problems that should be dealt with not only by the experts, but also by government structures.

¹ *Петер Швейцер*, Победа, Минск, 1995.

At the same time it is obvious that the discussed area of spiritual security should be understood in the deepest and widest possible manner. Meanwhile, it has to be admitted that presently there is a lack of researchers, expert publications and especially practical steps, first of informational actions. These are necessary to reinforce among the various religious/confessional segments of Armenians the ideas of Armenian civilizational commonalty and the need to strengthen both Armenian states (RA and NKR). It should be noted that informational actions do not imply at all mere rhetoric and primitive propaganda, but rather, above all they require development of proper programs, tactics and strategy. The solution of these problems entails consolidation of national intellectual and political resources, which is unthinkable without active involvement of our compatriots of different confessions and religions.

In this respect sometimes opinions are voiced that the current resources of Armenian research community are not nearly sufficient to organize studies of such scale, and that rather, such investigations are typically carried out in large states and powers. Evidently, such statement does contain realistic elements. However, prioritizing an issue in turn triggers a process of forming the necessary intellectual resources.

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