

## MONUMENTS OF RESOLUTIONS

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### Abstract

The paper deals with aspects of the collective memory of Armenians, illustrated by two recent examples. Against the background of the current disputes over Artsakh, some historical components are drawn upon. At the beginning, the erection of the monument in memory of the Nemesis operation in 1920-1922 in April this year is analyzed. This leads back to the 19th century, the time of increasing penetration of the Ottoman Empire by the great European powers in its effects on the Armenian nation, as expressed in the term "Armenian Question." This is combined with the German left's view on this matter. Finally, a discussion of the interweaving of the right to self-determination (SDR) and the right to territorial integrity (TI) follows in this context.

**Keywords** - Right for self-determination, territorial Integrity, Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, German Left, Armenian Question, Artsakh, Karabakh, UN, Azerbaijan, Nemesis.

### Introduction

The German dramaturge Heiner Müller had seen two sentences of different origins side by side on a banner at the time of the fall of the Wall in 1989.<sup>1</sup> In a deeply ironic way, they describe the problematic interweaving of individual and collective, whereby - and this is the additional punchline - one can read "Volker" as a comparative of "Volk" in wrong grammar, thus bringing the main emphasis to bear on the individuality of man against the potential horror of the collective.

In the following, we will discuss two current examples in the context of genocide and the Karabakh question. First, the dispute over the erection of a monument in memory of Operation Nemesis in Yerevan on April 25. Next, the problem of the

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Received 31.05.2023  
Revised 12.12.2023  
Accepted 20.03.2024

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<sup>1</sup> "Wir sind das Volk", "Ich bin Volker" (Translation: "We are the people" "I am Volker"). Matussek, Matthias. 1990. „Now there is a uniform sauce“. Interview with Heiner Müller. 29.7.1990. *Spiegel* 39/90.

relationship between the right of self-determination (SDR) and TI, which, it turns out, can be considered a fundamental component of the Armenian collective memory.

### Controversy over memory

Five years passed between April 24 and the day after: from 1920 to 1922 lasted the so-called “Operation Nemesis,” a carefully prepared campaign of revenge against leading heads of the Turkish planners of the genocide in 1915, including, as is well known, Talaat Pasha. From historical experience of Operation Nemesis, a monument was erected in Yerevan, precisely on April 25. From this, we can see the symbolism of “deed – retribution.” At any rate, this must have been understood superficially in Ankara, because in response to the “re-action” of the Armenian side, those responsible in Ankara seemed to fall back on a simple reflex and closed the airspace over Turkey to an Armenian airline.<sup>2</sup>

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia was not enthusiastic about the erection of the monument and criticized the timing of the action. Not only the action, but already the decision for it was wrong, he said. Based on this, the PM concedes a “new coldness” in the relationship between Turkey and Armenia and draws the following conclusion: “First of all, let’s note that the government did not make the decision to install it, and one of the biggest mistakes of democracy is that the head of the government does not control everything and everyone.”<sup>3</sup> What the prime minister criticizes, perhaps somewhat exaggeratedly, as a flaw in democratic principles is, in the German parliamentary system, democratically cancelled through the chancellor’s directive competence: The chancellor attends a democratic discourse, whether actively or not, but then has the “last word” in case of doubt, precisely by virtue of the competence given to him. However, this would not directly apply in this case, as Pashinyan himself said, it was a decision of the city of Yerevan.

For this decision were also submitted petitions. Kamo Areyan, deputy mayor of Yerevan, was one of the authors. In his appreciation, he transcended the temporal event in terms of its general significance: “The courage shown by the people whose names are on the monument has three main meanings. First of all, it was the act of deciding and carrying out the punishment of the criminals, the second was to give positive charges to the depressed people, and the act is a record of the fact that throughout history, crimes do not go unpunished regardless of how the international community treats them. What Nemesis did was understandable for everyone, it was fair for everyone, but our goal should be to prevent possible crimes, to create mechanisms to bring criminals to justice. That should be our main message.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Tashjian, Yeghia, “The ‘Nemesis’ Monument and Turkey’s Reaction”, *Aravot*, May 14, 2023, <https://www.aravot-en.am/2023/05/14/325836/>.

<sup>3</sup> “The decision to install the ‘Nemesis’ statue is wrong.” Pashinyan. («Նեմիսիս» արձանի սեղադրման որոշումը սխալ է. Փաշինյան), *Newspress*, May 6, 2023, <https://newspress.am/?p=182664&l=am%2Fnemesis+ardzani+texadrmanvoroshumy+sxal+e+pushinyan>, (in Armenian).

<sup>4</sup> “The ‘Nemesis’ monument solemnly opened in Yerevan”. *Armenpress*, April 25, 2023, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1109584.html>.

Although the Turkish side points directly to the existence of the monument as the cause with its decision to close the airspace, one must also assume the election campaign taking place at the same time as the motivation for the closure. Such a decision is seen as attractive for Turkish nationalists.<sup>5</sup> It also fits that further measures are threatened if the monument is not demolished.<sup>6</sup> The Armenian government downplays the significance of the incident and also bases the Turkish reaction on the elections and related increased “emotionality”.<sup>7</sup>

With its decision, the Turkish side disregards the sovereignty of the neighboring state, elections inside are turned politically outside. The Turkish reaction is based on a certain thought formation, which in turn is carried out in the person of Erdogan. In 2011, the German computer trade fair CeBit chose Turkey as its partner country. Erdogan, the MP at the time, was also a guest. Accordingly, the speech came to the recognition of genocide by Erdogan’s government. In this regard, Erdogan said, among other things: “About the events of 1915, there is now a conflict of memories between the Turkish and Armenian people, who lived together peacefully for about 800 years. We do not try to impose our memories on others. And no one has the right to impose their memories on us.”<sup>8</sup>

Here, Turks and Armenians are presented in the context of the memory of 1915 as seemingly equal population groups facing each other. However, they have two different memories. The second part of Erdogan’s answer is to understand in the sense of the assumed equality:

“Turkey does not close its eyes to the sufferings of the Armenians that it has gone through. What we do not accept, however, is that the sorrowful events of 1915 are described as a ‘genocide’ perpetrated by one side against the other. Such a portrayal of the events foregrounds the Armenian point of view and ignores the losses of the Turks.”<sup>9</sup>

The avengers of the “Nemesis” operation were “not only not convicted but acquitted.”<sup>10</sup> These dead Turkish officials had previously been “sentenced to death by Turkish military tribunals for organizing and carrying out ethnically motivated mass exterminations”. However, the sentences were not carried out, but never overturned,

<sup>5</sup> Tashjian, Yeghia, “The ‘Nemesis’ Monument and Turkey’s Reaction”, *Armenian Weekly*, May 11, 2023, <https://armenianweekly.com/2023/05/11/the-nemesis-monument-and-turkeys-reaction/>

<sup>6</sup> “Under Turkish pressure, Armenia’s leaders make excuses for Nemesis monument”, *Armenian Weekly*, May 10, 2023, <https://armenianweekly.com/2023/05/08/under-turkish-pressure-armenias-leaders-make-excuses-for-nemesis-monument/>.

<sup>7</sup> “Has No Intention of ‘Dismantling’ Nemesis Monument”, *Asbarez*, May 10, 2023, <https://asbarez.com/yerevan-has-no-intention-of-dismantling-nemesis-monument/>.

<sup>8</sup> Schacht, Daniel Alexander. ‘Interview Erdogan: ‘We Strengthen Western Values in the Middle East’”, <http://www.haz.de/Nachrichten/Wirtschaft/CeBIT-2011/Erdogan-Wir-staerken-westliche-Werte-im-Nahen-Osten> Februar 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Schacht. 2011.

<sup>10</sup> “The only thing they have done with the verdicts is that all the judges have been beheaded. Gevorg Danielyan about the ‘Nemesis’ monument”, («Միակ բանը, որ արել են դատավորների հետ կապված, այս է, որ բոլոր դատավորներին զիսատել են. Գևորգ Դանիելյանը՝ Նեմիսիսի հուշարձանի մասին»), *Yerkir*, May 6, 2023, <https://yerkir.am/hy/article/2023/05/05/12012> [https://newspress.am/?p=182603&l=am%2Fmiak+banyvor+arel+en+datavcirneri+het+kapvac+ayn+evor+bolor+datavoriner+glxatel+en+gevorg+danielyany%D5%9D+nemesisi+hushardzani+masin+ \(6.5.23\)](https://newspress.am/?p=182603&l=am%2Fmiak+banyvor+arel+en+datavcirneri+het+kapvac+ayn+evor+bolor+datavoriner+glxatel+en+gevorg+danielyany%D5%9D+nemesisi+hushardzani+masin+ (6.5.23))

but the acts of the murderers are glorified to this day. “The only thing they did in relation to the sentences is that they beheaded all the judges.” In a sense, the Nemesis members executed existing death sentences. The Turkish government opposes the erection of the Nemesis monument negatively to the negotiations with Armenia and threatens.<sup>11</sup> If we assume the parity of the two groups of remembrance that Erdogan declared in Hannover in 2011 - which in itself is questionable, since the two groups are historically related to one another - the result, however, is an imbalance: Turkey demands that Armenia renounce its historical memory in order to impose its own. The imbalance is inherent in the narrative that promises parity. This may be claimed as a shortcoming of many explanations on the subject. The pattern concerns the use of the word “parity” and presupposes an equality between sides that does not exist at all or at least would have to be achieved first.

In the case of the 1915 genocide, there can be no parity, since perpetrators and victims are naturally not on the same level. This also influences the quality and intensity of the respective remembrance. The denial of the genocide by the Turkish side and the struggle for recognition on the Armenian side are not on an equal footing. The parity argument is another expression for the denial of the crime. The Turkish and the Armenian memory are differently related to the genocide. Different, but not without connection, which consists of the relations between the perpetrator and the victim. Thus, the Turkish action after the erection of the monument has the quality of another variant of denial. The alleged parity is inscribed with the assault on the other side.

In fact, this is also a demand for the implementation of a ban on memorials to be enforced from one's own side. The method of disputing the other side's own forms of commemoration, of preventing them, is not new: “The assertion that this genocide did not happen or did not happen in the way it was experienced by the victims means an additional insult to the community of remembrance, which is thus denied its perception and the truthfulness of its collective memory, which is thus also deprived of any prospect of redemption from the pain.”<sup>12</sup> The centuries-old cemetery at Djugha in Nakhichevan with its many cross stones, which Aliyev had destroyed in 1998, should be remembered here.<sup>13</sup> Symbolic of the attitude toward Armenian culture was that a shooting range was built instead. Here it also becomes clear why “denial” and actual destruction of cultural goods is discussed as “cultural genocide,” as the final eradication of the Other. Denial of genocide and cultural annihilation arise from shame behavior: “Shame and guilt are related to each other. Shame shows itself through its representation, works with the strategy of concealment, so that nothing penetrates to the outside, what the affected person has to be ashamed of [...]”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> “Ankara demanded to dismantle the monument of ‘Nemesis’ heroes”. («Անկարան պահանջել է ասպամոնտաժել «Նեմեսիս» հերոսների հուշարձանը»), *Verelq*, 8.5.2023, <https://verelq.am/hy-node/126223>

<sup>12</sup> Benz, Wolfgang, *The Armenian Genocide. Jg. 2004 / Armenisch-Deutsche Korrespondenz (ADK) Heft 1 & 2 123/124*, 11-13.

<sup>13</sup> See Gispert, Jürgen, *Armenien gestern und heute – „Die Aschen der Opfer schlagen in unseren Herzen“*. Zu einer Theorie der armenischen Memorialkultur. (Eudora Verlag, Leipzig, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> Gispert, Jürgen., Op. cit., S. 332.

If the erection of the monument concerns the commemoration of the genocide, the Turkish reaction, among other things, takes us back to the 19th century, to the relations of the rulers of the Ottoman Empire at that time with the Armenians as part of the minorities living in the empire.

### The Armenian Question and the German Left

When Marx and Engels are referred to in the following, it is not in order to present “old white men,” but rather to embed what is commonly discussed under “Armenian Question” by both of them in the temporal context of the Middle East at that time.

“The Armenian Question” is conceptually amorphous - it is formed with its instrumentalization, which also affects great powers in their relations with each other. This results in relations from which the positioning of Armenia could be derived. For example, the relationship between the European great powers and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, the “sick man on the Bosphorus,” which, however, must be helped in terms of its opposition to the Tsarist Empire.<sup>15</sup>

Marx and Engels speak of the Armenians as an oppressed “nation” with a “missing state” - Engels speaks of “an oppressed people that has the misfortune of being wedged between the Scylla of Turkish and the Charybdis of Russian despotism.” In this, Engels sees the overthrow of Russian tsarism as a precondition for ‘the liberation of Armenia from Turks and from Russians’ (MEW 39, 327).<sup>16</sup> Engels’ execution is worth considering in that he fundamentally situates Armenia’s position as one between Turkey and Russia. Marx’s article “The Declaration of War - On the History of the Oriental Question”<sup>17</sup> offers clues to the movements under discussion today in both Ukraine and the South Caucasus. Thus, Marx begins with the Crimean War (1853-1856) of that time and calls this designation a “moment shortening the actual movements.” “Oriental question” would characterize this better. Thus, those powers are included which profited from this war. Also, the orientation of the same powers towards the East would be characterized by corresponding counter-movements. Thus, a necessary expansion of the content of space and time succeeds, which is not resolved in the mere naming as “Crimean War.” The same concerns the term “Armenian question.”

The inclusion of the Armenian question in a complex that encompasses and influences it is banal only at first glance, considering the media and political perception of the current Karabakh war. This gives the opportunity not only to derive a continuity from the 19th century to the present day, but also to refute constructs such as that of a non-existent connection between the Ukrainian war and Azerbaijan’s aggressions.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Although the concept of the Armenian Question is temporally fixed to the 19th century, therein the year 1878 (Berlin Conference), in terms of content it contains such important components of the relations between the Armenian nation and the external forces, in particular foreign dominations, that I would like to define the concept deductively broader.

<sup>16</sup> Albrecht, Richard. 2006. „Karl Liebknecht and Comrades - The 'Extermination of the Armenians' during World War I and the German Political Left.“ Scientific essay. <https://www.grin.com/document/110316>.

<sup>17</sup> Marx, Karl. 1961. „The Declaration of War -On the History of the Oriental Question.“ [http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me10/me10\\_168.htm](http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me10/me10_168.htm) (Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels - Workse, Vol. 10, 168-176, Dietz Verlag, Berlin/GDR 1961)

<sup>18</sup> It is worth recalling the metaphor of Armenia as a "piece on the chessboard".

The European penetration policy in the Ottoman Empire was expressed in the Tanzimat reforms. This includes, in particular, the trade privileges for Europeans, which are reflected in the so-called “capitulations,” most-favored-nation clauses that the Ottoman Empire granted to European trading nations. The interaction now was that as European penetration increased, privileges were granted to more and more states and “interpreted by them in an increasingly extensive manner.”<sup>19</sup> The Ottoman Empire was to be presupposed as an independent state subject for the European powers to the extent that it could be useful in this process of expansionist aspirations.

The Turkish field of perception in the 19th century grasped the Western Enlightenment as a condition for the possibility of regaining its own military strength, while the Armenian “zartonk”<sup>20</sup> refers to the Enlightenment as one for its own independence from the Ottoman yoke, which is reflected in the demand for equality and autonomy before the law.

The demand for equality and autonomy before the law are actually core issues of the German left in the 19th century as well as today. Therefore, it is of interest to outline this side. In the following, the attitude of the German left of that time will be illuminated through the lens of Rosa Luxemburg’s<sup>21</sup> notes, which will be followed by a sketch of today’s party “Die Linke” or the bourgeois-liberal GREENS.

According to Luxemburg, for the German imperial side the basic interest was “the preservation of the Ottoman Empire both under old Turkish rule (Abdul Hamid II) as well as under the Young Turk rulers; it was about keeping together this ‘rotten, decaying heap of ruins’ of this oriental despotism of the Turks as a ‘small minority’ of a ‘ruling conqueror caste’ with its manifold ‘national questions, which split the Turkish state: the Armenian, Kurdish, Syrian, Arab, Greek’.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, the “rotten barracks [Turkey]” was kept alive.

It is important to note that the great powers also supported the unstable entity internally through militarization and military aid. Consequently, the pre-existing internal contradictions were reproduced and reinforced. The same applies to the German left in its description of the Armenian situation. Although, as mentioned above, it is called a “nation” according to Marxist theoretical reading, it remains a “booty” of imperialist profit-seeking,” in this “Belgium, Poland, the Baltic states” to be equated. They are “pawns” in the “imperialist game of the great powers.”<sup>23</sup> This highlights an important blind spot in the views of the time, which can be seen in the use of the word “fate” alone. Although there were numerous reports [...] and press articles in “Switzerland 1915/16,”<sup>24</sup> the new quality of the state crime was not seen on the part of the left - in contrast, for example, to Johannes Lepsius, who recognized it.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See Reinkowski, Maurus. 2006. „Das Osmanische Reich - ein antikoloniales Imperium?.“ In: Bösch, Frank; Jarausch, Konrad H.; Sabrow, Martin: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, Online-Ausgabe, 3. <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Reinkowski-1-2006> Section 6.

<sup>20</sup> Zartonk: equality and autonomy before the law

<sup>21</sup> Albrecht. 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Albrecht. 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Albrecht. 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Albrecht. 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Albrecht. 2006.

Instead of concretely speaking of “genocide,” the events are described as “‘rape of the weaker nations’ [goes] abstract-general on ‘protection of national minorities and autonomy of peoples on the ground of full democracy’”<sup>26</sup>

German political scientist Stefan Meister, then head of the Böll Foundation in Tbilisi, which is close to the Greens, still held on to the image of a war that took place primarily between Armenia and Azerbaijan after the agreement of November 9, 2020. He added Russia and Turkey to the pair of opposites, Armenia and Azerbaijan, which were isolated in this way. He also tends to a parity determination of the relations, however, Russia does not have the role for Armenia, which Turkey has for Azerbaijan. Already historically not.<sup>27</sup>

Germany’s position on Azerbaijan is more than obvious today - Germany stands firmly by Azerbaijan’s side - the two have been guest partners since last year.<sup>28</sup> In order to become independent of Russian gas, the much more expensive liquefied gas is bought from the USA. Other substitute sources for the strategic shortfall were also sought, and the dictator Aliyev, of all people, was found to help out, but he can also fall back on Russian gas, which Putin sells to Azerbaijan.<sup>29</sup> The trick in Germany’s argumentation, however transparent, is that two war opponents - Azerbaijan and Armenia - are positioned on the same level, but the dispute is isolated from its superordinate context, for example, in order to distinguish the war in Ukraine from the war of aggression by Azerbaijan. The two should not or must not be officially related to each other: Aliyev is not an aggressor, according to the German choice of words. To be legitimized by this is the gas purchase of von der Leyen, the EU Commission President) in Baku last summer.

In an interview on November 11<sup>30</sup>, Meister analyzes that after the armistice agreement, the “hatred between the ethnic groups” had become even greater. The hatred among the Armenians after the terrible dictate is understandable, but it remains on the level of emotion, especially since it ties in with the trauma that dates to 1915. Thus, the Armenian who has just suffered a loss appears isolated in his pain from that which caused him pain. It is reminiscent in style of the way Erdogan sees the relationship between Armenian and Turkish memory, discussed above: To each nation its memory. The memory of it, the relationship between Armenians and Turks is isolated from each other, have nothing to do with each other in this regard.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Albrecht. 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Stefan Meister is director of the Center for Order and Governance in Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia. Previously, he was Director of the South Caucasus Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Tbilisi (2019-21)

<sup>28</sup> Hauer, Neil. “What Azerbaijan’s assault on Armenia says about the new world order,” *Euractiv*, 13.1.2023. [https://www.euractiv.com/section/azerbaijan/opinion/what-azerbaijans-assault-on-armenia-says-about-the-new-world-order/?fbclid=IwAR2lhVwuxjOzGppAQ0C2-3qC\\_FlcKW8B27u0HEcahrmRr-Eu5GZDmMgIHvY](https://www.euractiv.com/section/azerbaijan/opinion/what-azerbaijans-assault-on-armenia-says-about-the-new-world-order/?fbclid=IwAR2lhVwuxjOzGppAQ0C2-3qC_FlcKW8B27u0HEcahrmRr-Eu5GZDmMgIHvY).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. on the so-called “Caviar Diplomacy” and the German links to Azerbaijan.

<sup>30</sup> Meister, Stefan. 2020. „...in a conversation: The main problem is the hate.“ [https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/abkommen-fuer-bergkarabach-das-hauptproblem-ist-der-hass-in-694.de.html?dram%3Aarticle\\_id=487329&fbclid=IwAR3HIIDtj6GFATedvULZFAZHcyvzlj2NaOCrL1UvTXNXfkMCwF2DdcYgwpI](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/abkommen-fuer-bergkarabach-das-hauptproblem-ist-der-hass-in-694.de.html?dram%3Aarticle_id=487329&fbclid=IwAR3HIIDtj6GFATedvULZFAZHcyvzlj2NaOCrL1UvTXNXfkMCwF2DdcYgwpI)

<sup>31</sup> However, it was not a question of “genocide fixation” on the part of Armenians, implied by Meister, which would rather depict the unpleasantness of German commemorative politics. The manner of the war

Meister's use of the term "ethnic group" must also be questioned. For him, "ethnic group" serves to identify Abkhazians, Georgians, Armenians, etc. within a multi-ethnic state structure. Armenians and other ethnic groups thus refer to the superordinate state as a minority in this relation.<sup>32</sup> Thus, "ethnic group" in the context meant by Meister refers equally to both Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The only question is whether this parity is coherent with regard to the use of the word.

"People," according to Luchterhandt, can be understood on the one hand "in the sense of 'Staatsvolk' (nation) [...] i.e., the totality of the nationals living on a (state territory defined by international law) national territory, on the other hand, in the sense of an ethnic community (ethnos), i.e., a group of people singled out and thus delimited by certain common features such as language, culture, religion [...]."<sup>33</sup>

An ethnic group can thus circumscribe a nation as a whole or denote an (ethnic) minority within a (superordinate) whole.<sup>34</sup> In the case of Armenians in Soviet-era Nagorno-Karabakh, relative to Baku, one was an ethnic minority, i.e. an ethnic group, in this sense and, as a self-attribution, also a nation. In the case of the independent but unrecognized state, one was Armenian, Armenian nationality and Artsakh.

For the question to be discussed here, whether "Azerbaijanis" can get the same quality of an "ethnic group" as "Armenians," let us look at the genesis of Azerbaijan as a state. There are Azerbaijanis as an ethnic group within the state entity of Azerbaijan, but this is something different from the state of Azerbaijan. Therefore, the ethnic group of Armenians is not equal to that of an Azerbaijani as a mere citizen. In the construction of history, the phase of the actual birth, which is closely connected with the father of Azerbaijan, Stalin, is bypassed.

If we look at the statements made by Heiko Langner of the Left Party in the Bundestag regarding the conflict, their ideological basis seems to be an outdated class model: The historical origins of the conflict go back to the time of the bourgeois revolution in tsarist Russia 115 years ago. At that time, social class contradictions between Azerbaijani agricultural workers, who migrated en masse from the countryside in search of work to what was then the world's largest oil-producing area around Baku, and the local, nascent Armenian merchant bourgeoisie first erupted in violent conflict. The conflict, which was essentially social, was later quickly ethnicized as a result of Soviet nationality policy, because the state structure was hierarchized according to

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of aggression, the quality and quantity of the destruction of people and matter are supposed to evoke genocide associations among Armenians, thus do not happen by rummaging around in the box of the past there and assigning (cf. Kolter, Christian. 2020. „Reasons why the current 9/11/2020 ceasefire based on the tripartite declaration will not bring stability to the Karabakh conflict (for a long time yet).“ Mschrpt. Re: KAS - Digital event: "The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict - no stabilization in sight?" 28.11.2020

<sup>32</sup> Meister, Stefan. "Russia as a dominant regional power." *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, December 22, 2020, <https://www.bpb.de/internationales/weltweit/innerstaatliche-konflikte/233506/die-innere-logik-der-konflikte-im-post-sowjetischen-raum> (in German)

<sup>33</sup> Luchterhandt, Otto. 1993. "Nagorno-Karabagh's right to state independence from the perspective of international law." *International Law Archive*; Bd. 31. Tübingen: Mohr, 34.

<sup>34</sup> In: Luchterhandt, Otto, "The annexation of Crimea to Russia from the perspective of international law." *International Law Archive* 52. Bd., No. 2 (Juni 2014), 137-174. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24259334>, 145, 153) Luchterhandt applies the concept of ethnic group as a minority to the case of the Crimean Tatars.

national territories, i.e., “national in form, socialist in content.”<sup>35</sup> This then leads to the wars in 1992-94, 2016 and now. For Langner, the fact is that Armenia is pursuing a policy of occupation, and Armenians are not living in self-determination in Artsakh.

Meister and Langner are two representatives who, from a vantage point on this side of the border fence, throw a grid onto the other side and eliminate or simply ignore what is considered superfluous or harmful by their own ideology. Meister in particular, as a regional expert, divides up the South Caucasus in such a way, bite-sized so to speak for European fare, that the analysis which intends to depict the object is rather a memory image (Maurice Halbwachs) of the West.

### **Right of self-determination and territorial integrity: West meets East**

During the discussion of Luxemburg’s statements, it became clear that Armenians do form a nation, but after that, they compare negatively with other candidates in this regard. In Russia of the pre-revolutionary period, Stalin defined “nation” thus: “A nation is a historically formed stable community of people, created on the basis of the community of language, territory, economic life, and the psychic nature revealed in the community of culture.”<sup>36</sup>

In 1913, confronting “Great Russian chauvinism” in the tsarist empire, he developed the right of self-determination (SDR) as an antidote to rising nationalism on the fringes of the empire. In 1913, Stalin emphasized the right of secession as an “inevitable point in the solution of the national question.”<sup>37</sup> He contrasts territorial autonomy with cultural autonomy and sees in the former the advantage of a unification of a nation that takes place in it, which strengthens the “class struggle.” In the case of cultural autonomy, on the other hand, people share a nation, regardless of where they live. Therefore, only the form of territorial autonomy is worth supporting for socialists.<sup>38</sup> He opposed the concept of cultural autonomy with a “promotion of dispersion,” this “could [...] only support capitalism. The reason lies in the arbitrary connection of people who were separated from each other in real life. These would have adapted their old habits to the new environment over the years, and thus it was questionable whether they could fit back into their original nationality.”<sup>39</sup>

Why does cultural autonomy promote dispersion and is not itself already its expression and, at the same time, a potential demand as the result of a historically coagulated process? Because we know from Armenian history that Armenians did not communicate with foreign rulers in a vacuum and were subject to their arbitrariness.

<sup>35</sup> Langner, Heiko, “A new war over Nagorno-Karabakh. About the current escalation, the background and the possibilities of a pacification of the conflict.” *Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung*, <https://www.rosalux.de/news/id/43074/ein-neuer-krieg-um-bergkarabach?cHash=ffbeca95f83edf2896de63bef963ab52>.

<sup>36</sup> Stalin, Josif. 1952. “Marxism and the National and Colonial Question.” A collection of selected essays and speeches. Berlin 1952, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Stalin, 87.

<sup>38</sup> Stalin, 88.

<sup>39</sup> Bannwarth, o.J. “The right of nations to self-determination in Lenin and Stalin.” 15.2.2012. <http://portal.uni-freiburg.de/geschichte/lehrstuhle/neutatz/Internetprojekt/TermPapers/HA%20Bannwarth%20-%20Right%20of%20Self-Determination%20of%20Nations.pdf>.

Stalin selected the proletariat as candidates for guaranteeing the SDR. However, the proletarians integrated into the Soviet Union in this way, sometimes by force, could not subsequently resort to the means of secession; rather, as in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, they had to tolerate incorporation into a superior territorial unit. For Karabakh, this meant being an autonomous part of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.

Hans-Joachim Heintze, a law professor for international law in Bochum, deals with the agreement in November 2020, but puts it in the EU perspective. A patent solution for all possible cases does not exist, he says: “A decision can only be made by weighing the respective concrete historical, political, (international) legal, as well as ethical-moral circumstances, the weight on historical, political.”<sup>40</sup>

The balancing has as its goal the decision between SDR and TI. Heintze supports his argumentation by the application of “uti possidetis,” i.e., the *de facto* adoption of the borders drawn by the colonial powers by the successor states, which, however, started from Africa. In the case of Karabakh, he sees no problems in applying the SDR within Azerbaijan and points to South Tyrol as a positive example, which functions as a “sub-state administrative unit.” However, one cannot assume such inhomogeneity or heteronomy between South Tyrol and its immediate surroundings as between Artsakh and Azerbaijan. Since Heintze should know the Caucasus when he makes such statements, it is permissible to ask how he comes to contrast the two.

If the then UN Secretary General makes the determination of the OAU<sup>41</sup> to reject any border change between the African states according to *uti possidetis* the norm of customary international law, this means that a 1:1 transfer between the African states and the republics of the USSR, or their successor states is taking place. But is the case of Karabakh similar to that of an African state visited by German colonial rulers or to South Tyrol, which Heintze explicitly contrasts positively with the Karabakh problem? Colonial exploitation of an African state is different from annexation of a country made for strategic considerations. In 1828, after two wars, Tsarist Russia annexed Armenia. The people there perceived this step as a liberation from the Persian rulers before. In discussion with the Eastern European legal scholar Otto Luchterhandt, Heintze seems to prefer the latter variant with regard to emerging conflicts in the dualism between SDR and TI.

Heintze introduces the “inner SDR” to “select and support ethnic and minority rights in the context of self-government within the titular state, where they are then involved as much as possible in the exercise of state powers related to them.”<sup>42</sup> Here it is worth recalling the above discussion on the subject of “ethnic group.” To compare this with the historical and current events in Artsakh/Armenia and with Heintze’s suggestion to send the Armenians in Artsakh under the Aliyev regime into “self-administration” seems rather adventurous!

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<sup>40</sup> Heintze, Hans-Joachim. “Opinion: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Limits of the Right to Self-Determination.” *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, 7.12.2021, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/kriege-konflikte/dossier-kriege-konflikte/344172/meinung-berg-karabach-und-die-grenzen-des-selbstbestimmungsrechts/>

<sup>41</sup> Organization for African Union (former African Union)

<sup>42</sup> Heintze.

With regard to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, Heintze argues in particular for the state quality of the former Union republics for the application of the *uti possidetis* principle. The dissolution of the USSR took place on the basis of the Soviet constitution. This provided for the right of self-determination for all Union republics and, consequently, the right to withdraw from the Union. With the end of CPSU rule in December 1991, this theoretical possibility became practical. According to Heintze, the *uti possidetis* principle was applied when deciding on state succession, i.e., specifically on who should succeed to the USSR's treaties, its state assets and debts, and its state and administrative archives. However, the case is somewhat different.<sup>43</sup> This ignores the fact that at the time of Azerbaijan's withdrawal from the USSR, Soviet jurisdiction was still in force and that this expressly provided for a withdrawal option also for autonomous territorial units from the stock of Soviet republics superior to them, which Nagorno-Karabakh exercised in 1991 in accordance with procedure. Azerbaijan, for its part, made use of the options provided by the Law on Withdrawal, which had been in force since April 1990, without, however, adhering to its procedural rules, which provided, among other things, for the holding of a referendum in all territorial units entitled to the option. Azerbaijan thus made use of the law on withdrawal, which, like no Soviet law before it, strengthened the principle of national self-determination under international law without negating the territorial integrity of the USSR, without, however, granting the Karabakh Armenians their withdrawal options, which followed from the same law.

If Azerbaijan today thinks that by not following the prescribed withdrawal procedure it could have legally denied the Karabakh Armenians their withdrawal option, this "argumentation" is not only cynical, but also groundless in terms of (international) law, because Azerbaijan was undoubtedly still under Soviet jurisdiction even when it withdrew in 1991. Otherwise, Nagorno-Karabakh would be the exit premium for Azerbaijan for not following the exit procedure! However, if the German government should take the legal standpoint that all Soviet law can/should be retroactively invalidated (a mind-ethical purism resp. (un)law-interpretative absolutism, which German governments have never indulged in with regard to the Third Reich), it must also answer the question of why, by recognizing the borders of the former Soviet republics, but not of former autonomous territorial units that are now willing to secede, It must also answer the question of why, by recognizing the borders of the former Soviet republics but not those of former autonomous territorial units that are now willing to secede, it recognized precisely those Soviet border demarcations that, in the case of Karabakh (and Armenia in general), were the result of strategic considerations on the part of Stalin, the commissar of nationalities at the time, to dismember Armenia and were "fueled" by Young Turk and Kemalist interventions

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<sup>43</sup> Paragraphs below are from: Subject: Position Paper of the Working Group on Foreign Policy of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag "20 Years of Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh: A New Impetus for a Peaceful Resolution of the Conflict" („Open Letter to the Working Group on Foreign Policy of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag“). Accessed February 25, 2012. [http://www.deutscharmenischegesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/J%C3%BCrgen-Gispert-Christian-Kolter-Offener-Brief\\_CDU-PP\\_Karabach-Konflikt-1-20120308.pdf](http://www.deutscharmenischegesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/J%C3%BCrgen-Gispert-Christian-Kolter-Offener-Brief_CDU-PP_Karabach-Konflikt-1-20120308.pdf). In: Kantian, Raffi (2012): Positionspapier der CDU/CSU-Bundestagsfraktion zu Berg-Karabach. Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft (DAG): URL: [http://www.deutscharmenischegesellschaft.de/wp-content/DAGimg/bg\\_bottom.jpg](http://www.deutscharmenischegesellschaft.de/wp-content/DAGimg/bg_bottom.jpg).

from 1918 to 1921. Germany and almost all other states thus prefer and preserve in this context precisely the most problematic, even disastrous part of the Soviet and Turkish heritage!

In the first months of the Sovietization of Armenia, Moscow and Baku agreed several times to the annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, thus confirming the Karabakh Armenians' right to self-determination. Only a few months later, however, the Caucasus Bureau of the CP of Russia, although hardly authorized to do so under international law, decided in two contradictory sessions and under Stalin's personal obstruction and instruction to annex Nagorno-Karabakh to Soviet Azerbaijan (July 4-5, 1921). Thus, today's Republic of Azerbaijan, which traces its restored sovereign statehood to the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) of 1918-1920, can present no convincing legal or historical (political, demographic, etc.) arguments for a claim to Azerbaijan's territorial integrity that would include Nagorno-Karabakh! Baku itself has been substantiating this for about 20 years by renouncing the legal succession to Soviet Azerbaijan and by referring back to the ADR in terms of international and state law, although Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan never belonged to it. On the other hand, the reference back to Soviet Azerbaijan is far from Baku's mind, because it would then also recognize the legally binding nature of the Soviet secession law and would thus have to permit or recognize the secession of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan.

What stands out in Luchterhandt's execution of the application of international law in the Karabakh question is that he does not strictly oppose the right of self-determination in Lenin's version to the Charter of the United Nations but brings it into a line of development with it.<sup>44</sup> This is of particular interest for an emic perspective of Armenia, since not only the Stalinist nationality policy came over it, but also said UN resolution, which one must accordingly include both together in the consideration. The UN resolution represents a breakthrough in the recognition of the legally binding nature of the right to self-determination. The resolution was integrated into the human rights covenants of the UN on 16.12.1966.<sup>45</sup>

However, who is the addressee of the right to self-determination remains highly ambivalent and depends on factors external to the addressee's will, even if it meets the criteria that should lead to recognition. In the context of the First Karabakh War of 1992-1994, the UN Security Council adopted several resolutions in 1993 calling on Armenia to cease hostilities and withdraw from the occupied territories. In this context, the following paragraph is of particular interest: "[...] the respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States in the region," let us look at the above discussion of the relationship between SDR and TI. The blockade of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan has been in place since December last year. Already immediately after that there were protests in Europe, including the voice of France and Great Britain. Soon after, however, there was a backdown by the British. James Cleverley, British Foreign Secretary, and counterpart Sergei Lavrov of Russia had worked in parallel in the UNSC to jointly protect Azerbaijan from criticism in the facts of its brutal actions

<sup>44</sup> Luchterhandt, Otto. 1993. 31f.

<sup>45</sup> "All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of this right, they freely determine their political status and freely shape their economic, social and cultural development." International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 1, Abs.1) 1966.

against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. France failed with its resolution. Great Britain saw its oil and gas interests there endangered, and in this and in the EU alliance, especially Germany, which concluded a gas agreement with Aliyev personally to compensate for its opposition to Russia. On the other side, Azerbaijan set to work in the UNSC to ensure that the UN Security Council condemnation never took place. The activities of Russia and England to boycott the UN resolution against Azerbaijan with peacekeepers attached took place at Christmas - even the media did not know about it. Putin said that the decision on the demand for multinational troops did not rest with him, but that Aliyev would also have to agree. Of course, Putin knew that Aliyev would say no; he himself had already done what was necessary, parallel to London. On December 20, there was a UN Security Council meeting at which every nation, including Britain, joined in calling for an end to the blockade. France prepared a statement condemning Azerbaijan's blockade policy. However, Azerbaijan "set to work to ensure that the UN Security Council condemnation never saw the light of day."<sup>46</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The paper deals with aspects of the collective memory of Armenians, illustrated by two recent examples.

On April 25, 2023, a monument was erected in Yerevan in memory of the Nemesis operation (1920-1922), which caused opposition on the Turkish side, this was in the phase of a supposed rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia. Turkey's decision to impose a no-fly zone for Armenian aircraft and interference in Armenian commemorative culture is a disregard for Armenian sovereignty. Turkish President Erdogan assumes a false parity between Turkish and Armenian collective memory, where such a monument seems to disturb their own identity. The current negotiations between Turkey and Armenia are, according to Turkish standards, disturbed by this - in a sense, the negotiations are failing because of the reappraisal of the past, which the Turkish side in particular seems unwilling to do. However, in the case of the 1915 genocide, there can be no parity, since perpetrators and victims are naturally not on the same level.

The Turkish combination of negotiation and past takes us back to the 19th century, including the "Armenian question." The author joins the discussions of Karl Marx about the Armenian question: The Oriental Question involves the Armenian Question, but points beyond it. The Armenian nation exists between Russia and Turkey, then and now.

The History of the "Oriental Question" offers clues to the movements under discussion today in both Ukraine and the South Caucasus. Marx shows that the characterization "Crimean War (1853-1856)" is the designation as a "moment shortening the actual movements." "Oriental question" would characterize this better. Thus, those powers are included which profited from this war. The orientation of the

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<sup>46</sup> Oborne, Peter. "The Cynical Pact Between Russia and the UK Over Azerbaijan's Aggression Towards Armenia," Byline Times, 6.1.2023, <https://bylinetimes.com/2023/01/06/the-cynical-pact-between-russia-and-the-uk-over-azerbaijans-aggression-towards-armenia/>

same powers towards the East corresponds with counter-movements. Thus, a necessary expansion of the content of space and time succeeds, which is not resolved in the mere naming as "Crimean War." The same concerns the term "Armenian question."

In connection with the Armenian question, a look at corresponding explanations of the German left (Rosa Luxemburg, LINKE, and GRÜNEN parties) is taken, whereby the conceptual assignment of "nation" and the Karabakh conflict are at issue. GREENS and LEFT advocate the subordination of Karabakh Armenians to the practice of territorial integrity, which means the subjection to dictator Aliyev.

This leads to a juxtaposition of the right of self-determination and territorial integrity. The author makes use of the discussion of the topic by two jurists, which serves as a preparation for the question, who is the addressee of the right of self-determination and on what it depends that he becomes so, even if he fulfills the given requirements.

The UN on SDR and TI and the practice of the Soviet legislation on this issue have peculiar convergences, which have consequences for Armenia. It got the Charter as a progress-promising substitute - in the case of Karabakh there is no progress - rather the physical extermination of the people in Artsakh is currently threatening as a pre-warning stage for the republic itself. SDR and TI are equated and SDR is swallowed by the latter. Superficially confronted with the preference TI for Azerbaijan, it is said, that those arguments that are made for Ukraine do not apply to Artsakh. The arbitrary nature of this distinction lies not only in the more undifferentiated or indifferent transposition of the OAU decision to the situation of the former republics of the USSR. The arbitrariness with which the West meets the concerns and needs of minorities in its struggle for supremacy with Russia is inscribed in analogous movements of Western expansionist efforts in the 19th century.

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