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**ARTSAKH AND NATIONALISM IN WESTERN IDEOLOGY**

The question of the representation of Armenian nationalism in western newspapers is a pressing one in Armenian politics in Armenia and in the Armenian Diaspora. The characterization of Armenians as "nationalistic" has a powerful impact on how they are understood. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the philosophical assumptions and ideological underpinnings of the concept of "nationalism" as it is understood in western newspapers and academia, and to determine whether the concept as it is used there is applicable to Armenian nationalism. The term "nationalist" is repeatedly used to describe the Artsakh War of Liberation in western newspapers, especially after the resurgence of active fighting at the border early in 2016. The method used to understand the word "nationalism" is a philosophical analysis of the use of the term in the seminal book on the topic of nationalism produced by Elie Kedourian from the London School of Economics in 1960. The conclusion of the study is that underlying its philosophical justification of its characterization of nationalism as a destructive and too-idealistic "children's crusade" is a superhistorical nihilism; consequently, nationalism as it is characterized in the seminal book on the topic is not applicable to Artsakh and new understanding of the social and political significance of the Artsakh War of Liberation is warranted.

**Keywords:** Artsakh, Nagorno-Karabagh, nationalism, philosophy.

**Արմեն Դիլան Կարայան**  
**Երևանի Բրյուսովի անվան Լեզվաբանական և հասարակական գիտությունների համալսարան**

**ԱՐՑԱԽԸ և ԱԶԳԱՅԻՆԱԿԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ԱՐՄԵՆՅԱՆ ԳԱՂՈՓԱՐԱՆՈՍՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԵՉ**

Հայկական ազգայնականության ներկայացումը արևմտյան լրատվամիջոցներում շատ կարևոր խնդիր է Հայաստանի քաղաքականության մեջ Մփյուռքում և ՀՀ-ում: Հայերի՝ որպես ազգայնական ժողովրդի ըմբռնումը, մեծ դերակատարում ունի, թե ինչպիսի կարծիք են կազմում նրանց մասին: Աշխատանքի նպատակն է գնահատել «ազգայնականություն» հասկացության փիլիսոփայական ենթադրությունները և գաղափարական հենքերը, որոնց հարում են արևմտյան լրատվական և գիտական աղբյուրները, ինչպես նաև պարզել, թե որքանով է հասկացության նման ըմբռնումի գործածումը հմայատաստահանում հայկական նացիանալիզմին: «Նացիոնալիստ» տերմինը վերջերս ( հաշվի առնելով 2016 թ. սկզբին հայ-ադրբեջանական սահմանին բռնկված մարտական գործողությունների վերսկսումը) մեծ թափով սկսվել է օգտագործվել արևմտյան լրատվամիջոցներում Արցախի Ազատագրական պայքարը նկարագրելու համար: Այն մեթոդը, որով ուսումնասիրվում է «նացիոնալիզմ» հասկացությունը փիլիսոփայական է. այն առաջին անգամ այդ մոտեցմամբ ուսումնասիրվել է Elie Kedourian-ի գրքում գրված 1960 թ. Լոնդոնի Տնտեսագիտության դպրոցում: Հետազոտության եզրակացությունը փաստում է, որ ազգայնականության փիլիսոփայական բացատրությունը, որը շատ հաճախ բնորոշվում է ապակառուցողական և չափազանց-իդեալիստական պատմական նիհիլիզմ է: Ուստի այն իմաստով, ինչով ազգայնականություն տերմինը օգտագործվում է հայերի մասին խոսելիս համապատասխան և կիրառելի չէ, և Արցախի Ազատագրական պայքարի սոցիալական և քաղաքական նշանակությունը ըմբռնելու համար անհրաժեշտ է նոր մոտեցում:

Հիմնաբառեր՝ Արցախ, Լեռնային Ղարաբաղ, ազգայնականություն, փիլիսոփայություն:

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**АРЦАХ И НАЦИОНАЛИЗМ В ЗАПАДНОЙ ИДЕОЛОГИИ**

Вопрос репрезентации армянского национализма в западных газетах - ключевой вопрос политики Армении и армянской диаспоры. Характеристика армянского "национализма" обладает сильным воздействием на его интерпретацию. В статье оценивается философская и идеологическая интерпретация концепта "национализм" в западной прессе и научных статьях и их соотношение к армянскому национализму. Термин "национализм" используется с целью описания арцахского освободительного движения в западной прессе, в частности последней эскалации конфликта в апреле 2016. Метод использованный для трактовки слова "национализм" был проведен философский анализ термина в исчерпывающей работе по национализму Эли Кедурян опубликованной в 1960г. в Лондонском институте экономики. В заключении работе отмечается, что в философская интерпретация национализма как деструктивного и чрезмерно идеалистического "крестового похода детей" - проявление исторического нигилизма и таким образом термин национализм в этой интерпретации не может быть применен относительно к Арцаху, в результате может привести к осмыслению социального и политического значения арцахского освободительного движения.

Ключевые слова: Арцах, Нагорный Карабах, национализм, философия

Հայկական ազգայնականության ներկայացումը արևմտյան լրատվամիջոցներում շատ կարևոր խնդիր է Հայաստանի քաղաքականության մեջ Միլոսեմովի և ՀՀ-ում: Հայերի՝ որպես ազգայնական ժողովրդի ըմբռնումը, մեծ դերակատարում ունի, թե ինչպիսի կարծիք են կազմում նրանց մասին: Աշխատանքի նպատակն է գնահատել «ազգայնականություն» հասկացության փիլիսոփայական ենթադրությունները և գաղափարական հենքերը, որոնց հարում են արևմտյան լրատվական և գիտական աղբյուրները, ինչպես նաև պարզել, թե որքանով է հասկացության նման ըմբռնումի գործածումը հմայատասխանում հայկական նացիանալիզմին: «Նացիոնալիստ» տերմինը վերջերս ( հաշվի առնելով 2016 թ. սկզբին հայ-ադրբեջանական սահմանին բռնկված մարտական գործողությունների վերսկսումը) մեծ թափով սկսվել է օգտագործվել արևմտյան լրատվամիջոցներում Արցախի Ազատագրական պայքարը նկարագրելու համար: Այն մեթոդը, որով ուսումնասիրվում է «նացիոնալիզմ» հասկացությունը փիլիսոփայական է: այն առաջին անգամ այդ մոտեցմամբ ուսումնասիրվել է Elie Kedourie-ի գրքում՝ գրված 1960 թ. Լոնդոնի Տնտեսագիտության դպրոցում: Հետազոտության եզրակացությունը փաստում է, որ ազգայնականության փիլիսոփայական բացատրությունը, որը շատ հաճախ բնորոշվում է ապակառուցողական և չափազանց-իդեալիստական պատմական նիհիլիզմ է: Ուստի այն իմաստով ինչով ազգայնականություն տերմինը օգտագործվում է հայերի մասին խոսելիս համապատասխան և կիրառելի չէ, և Արցախի Ազատագրական պայքարի սոցիալական և քաղաքական նշանակությունը ըմբռնելու համար անհրաժեշտ է նոր մոտեցում:

In 1977, a little more than a decade before the beginning of the Artsakh War of Liberation, while the Cold War raged between the United States and the Soviet Union, the New York Times ran an article called, "Armenians Ask Moscow for Help, Charging Azerbaijan with Bias." The article voiced the Armenian side of the issue, stating that the Armenians of Karabakh had appealed several times to Moscow to help them with the "cultural oppression and economic discrimination" that they felt at the hands of Azerbaijan. It added that Moscow's decision to assign the region, eighty percent of whose population was Armenian, to Azerbaijan in 1923 was in conflict with earlier promises to the Armenians. The article noted that the Armenians of Artsakh who wanted to join Armenia were called "backwards and ignorant" by the local authorities, and it ended with the story of how the Karabakh Armenians had been sharply rebuked by Moscow, and some of them ousted from the party or imprisoned "on charges of nationalist agitation contrary to 'the principle of Leninist friendship of peoples and proletarian internationalism.'" The quotes in the article around the nature of the violation were meant to encapsulate and emphasize the violation's absurdity to everyone who was in on the joke in the, by contrast, "land of freedom." Nationalism in the article was thus made the victim of Soviet universalism.

Twenty years on, the New York Times ran article which boldly declared something quite different from the 1977 article. "The same ethnocentric nationalism," said the author, Stephen Kinzer, "that has allowed their nation to survive so long and triumph against such powerful odds is now out of fashion in the world. By clinging to it, the Armenians set themselves apart from the Europe they so much want to join." The article was quite right: nationalism is out of fashion, especially in nations with secure borders. But the author was not merely chiding Armenians for the impracticality of their partially understandable nationalism. Below this surface-message of the article there was a characterization of nationalism that suggested something dark, something like a mental illness born of suffering that could explain "the near-fanatical insistence on preserving the ideas of the Armenian nation, church and language" that the article opened with. The author did not boldly declare this characterization like he had earlier in the article. Instead, it came from the mouth of a 22 year old Armenian man. "Always, 'We were,' 'we had,'" Kinzer quotes him as saying. "Our history is present to us as war, pain, killing, robbery. [...] We learn 2,500 dates of struggles, killings and betrayals. Maybe 10 or 20 of them speak of something positive. It is very heavy. It oppresses your psyche and mentality." Freeing oneself from this oppression, the article suggests, is tantamount to renouncing nationalism.

Thus, the New York Times in 1998 accused Armenians of the very same violation against the "friendship of peoples" that Moscow had accused Armenians of, and the New York Times laughed at, in 1977. In fact, the United States and the Soviet Union, both, as a matter of policy, were, and the United States still is, opposed to nationalism, to particularity in physical borders, economy, and in culture. The digestion of the particular by the universal belly has historically provided the lifestream of empires, and this is reflected in western theorizations of nations justifying their elimination from the inception of the academic field of nationalism-studies in the mid 20th century. The ultimate function of western scholarship on nationalism has been to delegitimize nations, to cast doubt on their authenticity, to characterize national struggles as a "children's crusade," as did the godfather of nationalist studies, Elie Kedourie. And yet, if we read these theories closely, we find that they are riddled with ambiguities and contradictions, unfounded generalizations, philosophical misunderstandings, and byzantine language obscuring childish simple concepts—often elitist contempt of common people.

The text that lay the groundwork for the study of nationalism as an academic discipline is Elie Kedourie's *Nationalism*. First published in 1960, it went through several editions until in 1993 it saw its fourth edition with three reprints in the following three years. This sudden resurgence in the book's popularity was due to the collapse of the Soviet Union to which Kedourie refers in the very first lines of his new introduction to the book: "Nationalism has once again come to the fore. The collapse of the Soviet Union with the resulting conflicts between and within its former constituents has meant the disappearance of a political entity put together by the Tsars and inherited (and mismanaged) by the Bolsheviks" (xi). He goes on to refer specifically to Armenians and the Artsakh war as an example of the "problems which made a mockery of national self-determination after 1918 have once more reappeared: Uzbek [sic]-Armenian, Moldovan-Russian and many others" (xvii). Armenians appear twice in this seminal book on nationalism by Kedourie; the second time they appear, they are committing fratricide. In *Nationalism*, Kedourie tries to dismantle nationalism and to characterize it as a destructive force. Subsequent western studies of nationalism have followed Kedourie's agenda and the main lines of his arguments, even as they have criticized particular aspects of his arguments while reaffirming others. A closer look at his ideas, however, makes it clear that it has shortcoming that are far more substantial than any of his followers have pointed out. The fundamental flaw of Kedourie's argument is that it destroys, without rebuilding, the engine of history, and it reduces everything down to a cynical world-weariness.

Kedourie sees the emergence of nationalism as the confluence of mainly two currents, one ideal-philosophical, the other material-historical. He traces the ideological foundation of nationalist thinking to Kant's categorical imperative. After an ambiguous and inadequate overview of the epistemological argument from Descartes to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he fixes on his preliminary main target, Kant's Categorical Imperative in the second critique. Kedourie's first makes the point that the

Categorical Imperative satisfied a *psychological* craving on the part of modern man for *certainty*. Thus, whatever the logically argued philosophical merits of Kant's argument, Kedouri subtly undermines them by tracing its origin—not to reason itself, which is what Kant's goal is in the *Critique of Practical Reason*—but to a psychological need. "Kant's solution," he states, "provided a new certainty to replace the old metaphysical certainties that had ceased to attract" (13). By undermining this central tenet of Kant's philosophy, he undermines Kant's one and only political prescription that he presents in "Perpetual Peace." On quite another level, Kedouri then goes on to argue against Kant by saying that "[Kant says in "Perpetual Peace" that] peace among men will reign only if all states are republics, and states are republics only if their citizens regulate their behavior according to the categorical imperative. A moment's thought will show what an utter social and political upheaval will be required if such a state of affairs is to be established" (xiv). We need to ask the question: What will a moment's thought show about the "utter social and political upheaval" required for Kant's perpetual peace? The answer is something similar to the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution, the many purges, assassinations, and mass killings that have taken place throughout history in the name of universalizing the ideology of a population. Clearly, Kedouri believes that the Categorical Imperative, if it is to reign in men's hearts, will have to get there through their throats. Kant believed differently, or, to be more accurate—Kant *proved* differently. What makes the Categorical Imperative unique in the history of ethics, what makes it absolutely universal, is that it lies inside the minds of men already, inside their reason; there is no need for purges or reeducation camps or terror to force it into the minds of the people from the outside. In fact, it would be perfectly consistent with Kant's idea to say that, in time, the Categorical Imperative will move from potentiality to actuality and will eventually come to reign in the world. Hence, Kedouri's idea that purges would be necessary is false. But what is more, that Kedouri makes this false argument reveals the perspective whence he makes his argument: the superhistorical perspective, the very one that Nietzsche describes his "Uses and Abuses of History for Life." The superhistorical perspective is what makes Kedouri's argument weak, but before discussing this, another example of Kedouri's superhistorical perspective is in order.

I said above that Kedouri argues that two currents merge to create modern nationalism. The second current that Kedouri sees as joining Kantian philosophical ideas to lead to the inception of modern nationalism is the material-historical current. Kedouri points out that in the age of nationalism, the 19th century, there existed a class of youth who had been succored on enlightened ideals, were left out of the monarchical bureaucracies of the time, and harbored romantic notions of freedom, equality, and fraternity. This intellectual class became responsible for the revolutions that overturned the monarchies and established nations. Kedouri calls these revolutions started by alienated youth a "children's crusade," an epithet that strips the revolutionary movements of all of their accomplishments in the real world, which are anything but insignificant considering that the world is mainly divided into democratic, capitalist nation-states, and it judges the revolutions purely by the psychological motivation of their instigators. From this perspective, this superhistorical perspective, the engine of history is a chaotic conflict between appetites that chance has put in opposition to one another. Thus, the nationalist revolutions were really the result of boys rebelling against their fathers, and, as we saw earlier, the perpetual peace that is the ideal of nations will never work because people are psychologically incapable of it. This cynical perspective pervades Kedouri's arguments, and whatever merits they may have, his arguments are undermined by the destructive spirit of the superhistorical perspective that ultimately sees historical movements as futile because their real reasons are always arbitrary. The superhistorical perspective betrays a soul that prefers the stillness of the status quo as opposed to the noise of nationalism, the passive acceptance of the powers that be instead of the risky maneuverings for power, and ultimately the peace and quiet of death. Unsurprisingly, Kedouri never suggests anything in the place of what he has destroyed, perhaps because from the superhistorical perspective, there is no point in trying.

To be sure, there is some truth to the superhistorical perspective, as anyone who has thought about history knows. And yet, it has a blind spot, a very significant one: life. Nietzsche says about the superhistorical standpoint that: "one who has adopted the superhistorical standpoint could no longer be tempted at all to continue to live and cooperate in making history, since he would have understood *that* blindness and injustice in the soul of each agent as the condition of all activity." To superhistorical men, the past and the present are the same. Nietzsche sums up his discussion about historical men with a quote from Giacomo Leopardi, known for his extremely negative view of life and near absolute absence of happiness:

Nothing is worth  
One tremor or one beat; the very earth  
Deserves no sigh. Life  
Has shrunk to dregs and rancour; the world is unclean.  
Calm, calm.

Unsurprisingly, under Kedouri's subtle hand, nationalism turns into a pointless exercise that only children engage in. "Children" because to the superhistorical man, all hope is childish, and all faith in a future better than the one today is delusional: nothing ever changes. The failure of this perspective is clear. It is the very *life* of the superhistorical man that fails. As such, the superhistorical gaze, turned toward nationalism, cannot but be deadly. Subsequent generations of western academics studying nationalism have not changed the quality of Kedouri's critique; they have merely made it more theoretically sophisticated. Instead of going through these later academics and pointing out their modifications of Kedouri's ideas, which, by the way, are carried through through the ideas of his student, Ernest Gellner, I think it would be more fitting if we looked at the arrival of Elie Kedouri on the intellectual scene, itself, from the superhistorical perspective, of course.

Elie Kedouri was aided in his career at the London School of Economics by Michael Oakeshott. Early in his career, Kedouri wrote a thesis stating that it had been a mistake for the English to have encouraged nationalism among the Arabs and that empire, including the Ottoman empire, represented a better system than national government. Oakeshott, described by his colleague as a "lonely nihilist"—which is precisely the superhistorical perspective—favored Kedouri's ideas and brought him back to the London School of Economics after he was driven out of there for his curious, extremist beliefs. Oakeshott had Hegelian pretensions which I would guess, relying on summaries of Oakeshott's work, led to his concept of "modes of experience" each of which is a perspective of experience that is incomplete, with philosophy being the only complete understanding. He wrote much and changed his mind often, but what seems to have been a deep conviction of his was his opposition to socialism, which is thought to have been the reason for his favoring Kedouri.

It is perhaps not surprising that the genesis of the long line of academic studies denying the importance of nationalism is to be found in an intellectual matrix that has nihilism, conservatism, and anti-socialist elitism, not to mention Hegelian pretensions as its hallmarks. In reality, nationalism, for all its faults, has had many positive effects, and especially Armenian nationalism in Artsakh sustains the liberation struggle of the country locally, and it sustains the identity of Armenians in the diaspora. The

academic studies that have been done on the topic of nationalist studies in the west, starting with Elie Kedouri's *Nationalism* and to varying degrees based on its main ideas, bear the mark of the superhistorical, nihilistic perspective that had as its goal the undermining of nationalist movements for the benefit of empire. There are many types of nationalism, each very different from the others. What the Artsakhian type of nationalism represents, the nationalism of a small population whose members live in close proximity to one another and do or can easily actually know one another personally, has not been written.

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