CONFRONTING TURKEY AND AZERBAIJAN

Posted on November 6, 2024 by Keghart

Category: Opinions
Tags: Aliyev, Alma-Ata, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Erdogan, Mirzoyan, Pashinian, Peace, Shusha Declaration, Turkey

By Dikran Abrahamian, Ontario, 5 November 2024

On October 31, 2024, Asbarez reported about an exchange between Ararat Mirzoyan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of theRepublic of Armenia (RoA), and Armen Rustamyan, an opposition MP. The foreign minister stated the RoA government's position on the Genocide of the Armenians (1915) by the Young Turks of the Ottoman Empire and the future of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh). Mirzoyan also highlighted the importance of finalizing a peace treaty with Azerbaijan.

Concerning the Genocide he said, "Studying the tragic passages in history, the Armenian Genocide, or making it the number one priority is not on the agenda of the Foreign Ministry. On the future of Artsakh Mirzoyan made an evasive statement. "When you say NK conflict, we understand the whole conflict. Now I understand one thing when I say conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, you may understand something else; we are currently dealing with what I talked about, that is dealing with the regulation of relations with Azerbaijan."

The statements, couched in diplomatic language, mean that to achieve a "peace treaty" we should forget the Genocide and consign the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) occupation and ethnic cleansing to oblivion. That's what most concerned Armenians will understand. It was not that long ago thatPrime Minister Pashinyan, the prime minister of RoA, and other high-ranking officials questioned the veracity of certain aspects of the Genocide.

Is ROA's version any different from what Turkey and Azerbaijan desire? They plainly state: "The parties , stressing that Armenia's unfounded claims against Turkey, attempts to distort history and politicize historical facts through their distortion, harm peace and stability in the region, strongly support the efforts of Turkey in this context, which has opened its archives in connection with the events of 1915 in order to encourage the opening of archives in Armenia and other countries and enable research to be conducted on this topic by historians."

Whether in Diaspora or in RoA, people understand the present challenges imposed by the geo-political climate surrounding the Caucasus, particularly after the2020 War and the forced exodus of 120,000 Armenians from Artsakh in 2023. A militarily weak Armenia is facing the genocide-inclined expansionist regimes of Azerbaijan and Turkey, treacherous Putin, Israeli armament and espionage, ISIS, and Pakistan.

Hypothetically, concessions would appease the enemy, and miraculously peace would be attained. The RoA diplomacy has adopted that dangerous wishful thinking. While Armenians earnestly desire and talk about peace, its twin erstwhile enemies proclaim RoA to be "Western Azerbaijan". They already have made plans to realize the Pan-Turan corridor which would slice southern Armenia.. To add more salt to the wound, the president of Georgia recently referred to Lori, a province of RoA as being Georgian territory.

So far Turkey and Azerbaijan have shown no tangible evidence that they too are serious about

peace. Besides meetings behind closed doors, the details of which are not made public, they have made no serious attempt to normalize the combustive atmosphere in the southern Caucasus. On the contrary, Israel, among others, continues to arm Azerbaijan which complains about RoA's purchases for defensive purposes, and theUS approved F-16 fighter jet sale to Turkey worth $23bn.

Based on the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991 (not a demarcation document), RoA ceded villages from the Davush region to Azerbaijan, whereas the enemy continued to occupy internationally recognized RoA territories. Pashinyan stated it was the initial step of demarcation and delimitation, a process that will continue along the RoA-Azerbaijan border. He did not preclude ceding other territories.

At every step of the way during the "peace" negotiations Azerbaijan, with the blessing of Turkey, has raised new objections or **demanded** new concessions, such as changing the preamble of the constitution where there is a reference to Artsakh being an Armenian territory. Another "request" by Azerbaijan and Turkey is theremoval of traditional national symbols and insignia, though not stated publicly. These maneuvers are designed to erase the character of the republic. Pashinyan and his entourage are globalists, and it seems they are inclined to go along with these Azeri ultimatum sounding statements, sacrificing the national heritage in the name of "peace".

Several international institutions, including the Criminal Court of Justice, condemned Azerbaijan's actions in Artsakh, and demanded the release of POWs and the illegally arrested individuals who were leaving Artsakh for RoA with their compatriots at the time of exodus in 2023. To this date, Baku has ignored these international organisations and has kept the above Artsakjh Arnenians in captivity. There are reports of thedismal treatment of these captives.

Many political observers have noted that Azerbaijan is biding its time. Some have opined that after the COP29 conference in Baku, Azerbaijan will make new demands turning the "peace" negotiations into a circus. Others argue that, given Baku's behavior so far, it may even engage in a new aggression, ultimately unleashing a new war.

The dream of Erdogan-Aliyev duo is to make sure there will not be real peace in the South Caucasus. Their aim is far-reaching. It remains to be seen what action the RoA leadership will take regarding the so-called "corridor" through Syunik province when Turkey and Azerbaijan have openly declared their intent. "The parties note that the opening of the corridor connecting Azerbaijan and Turkey between western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of the Republic of Azerbaijan {the Zangazur} corridor will make an important contribution to the development of transport and communication links between the two countries.

The duo's aim is to lay their hands on Armenian territories piecemeal, to say the least, and ultimately create such an atmosphere that Armenia would be only a name, a vassal state of the Turkic states. It's the pursuit of the old dream of the Pan-Turanic empire rekindled by Sultan Erdogan. RoA's quest for peace **in the present form** is fraught with dangers, and in the long run it would lead to profound disillusion.

A careful reading of the Shushi Declaration of 2021 (called Shusha by the duo) reveals many references to the **Turkic world** or the **Turkic speaking states** couched in neutral language. The declaration was made two years **before** Azerbaijan's second aggression (2020 and 2023) within three years in violation of OSCE's (Minsk group) ongoing consultations.

- "Combining efforts in promoting joint activities on the regional and international plane aimed at the stable development of the **Turkic world** will deepen bilateral cooperation and support each other within the framework of international and regional organizations, including the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the Cooperation Council of **Turkic-Speaking States,** and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation."

- "In order to further strengthen **Turkic cooperation**, the parties will give an impetus to the activities carried out within the framework of the Cooperation Council of **Turkic-Speaking States**, the Turkic Academy, the Foundation of Turkic Culture and Heritage, TURKSOY and the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-Speaking Countries."

We presume RoA's leadership is aware of the above facts. Yet, it continues on the path of concessions and appeasement without obtaining anything in return. Blunder over blunder is accumulating without tangible return. On the other hand, people are not unaware of the necessary armaments that Armenia has purchased from France and India for self-defence. Also, they are cognizant of the multipronged attempts to establish new international relationships to strengthen RoA's viability as a truly independent country without major liabilities. However, if push comes to shove these measures might not be adequate.

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(Written prior to the US presidential race results - to be continued – next installment in December)

There are no comments yet.