

# ARMENIA'S PREDICAMENT IN CHANGING REGIONAL DYNAMICS

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**By Khajag Aghazarian**

The latest Azerbaijani provocations along the border with Republic of Armenia (RoA) happened amidst declarations from Aliyev that Baku will resort to force in case RoA did not cooperate in opening a corridor that connects "western regions of Azerbaijan" with Nakhichevan through Armenian territories. Is Aliyev to start a new war using this as a pretext? Will Russia cede to the Azerbaijani provocations? What is Turkey's agenda besides encouraging Azerbaijan to occupy southern Armenia? Most importantly, how can RoA confront such an existential threat?

Azerbaijan is not satisfied with the outcomes of the war that it had launched against Artsakh in 2020 for two main reasons. First, it could not occupy the entire territory of Artsakh and establish its hegemony which could have been followed by 'administrative procedures' to impose its "final solution" to that conflict. Throughout the weeks that followed May 12, Aliyev reiterated that "the conflict of Karabakh is over" in a desperate effort to create an "illusion of truth". Aliyev knows that his successes during the 44 days war were limited and not up to the expectations of his country and his major ally Turkey. By creating this "illusion of truth" Aliyev is trying to overcome his shortcomings. Second, the Russian presence in the region through military personnel bothers both Azerbaijan and Turkey who could not establish themselves as the sole decision makers and the main actors in this conflict. Azerbaijan resumed its military aggression this time on the border with RoA for vengeance and to improve its position benefiting from RoA's weakness to maximize its gains. Azerbaijan is trying to redefine provision 9 of the ceasefire signed on November 9, 2021 which does not mention the word 'corridor'.

On several occasions RoA refuted that it has any commitments towards Azerbaijan to establish a corridor through its territories. Prime Minister Pashinyan affirmed this position on August 3 in a meeting with the new defense minister and high-ranking military personnel of RoA. He stated that "the roads and passages in the region must be unblocked as mentioned in point 9 of the ceasefire signed on November 9, 2021." However, Pashinyan denied that he had made any commitments to establish a corridor through RoA as part of that ceasefire or during the tripartite meeting that was held in Moscow on January 11, 2021.

Republic of Armenia appears determined to confront the Azerbaijani border provocations even through military retaliations. This might have been one of the main reasons for the recent de-escalation by Azerbaijan. It must be said that both Azerbaijan and RoA were acting with high restraint throughout these latest Azerbaijani military provocations probably as a sign of lack of willingness to start a new all-out war.

The Russian position towards this new escalation was enunciated on May 13 when President Putin declared that his country was ready to assist Azerbaijan and RoA settle the border demarcation and delineation issues through negotiations. It is true that the Russian position did not fulfill the Armenian

demand to condemn Azeri aggression. At the same time, since May 12 the Russian position demonstrated, at least in the official announcements, a nuanced message of disapproval towards the Azerbaijani demand. Russian officials refrained from using the word "corridor" while consistently insisting that this new issue is a technical matter pending on problems related to border demarcation. Is this an indication that Russia is not willing, at least for the time being, to entertain Azerbaijan's demand to establish such a "corridor"?

Russia is trying to manage this new crisis by placing it on a course of negotiations which will inevitably become a long process that delays any final solutions. In the meantime, Putin is trying to avoid clashes with Turkey and Azerbaijan and following an age-old appeasement policy towards them. This "crisis management" behaviour has become a pattern in Putin's foreign policy towards most regional conflicts that Russia got involved in during the past decade. This attitude falls short of what Armenians expect from a strategic ally.

Instability in the region revived Turkey's expansionist ambitions. Turkey seized the opportunity and pushed forward its regional agenda of nurturing its ties with the Turkic countries in Central Asia. The hegemony of Russia over Southern Caucasus and Central Asia had not been challenged for the past 150 years the way that it was thwarted by Turkey during the past decade. The era of Russian political and military dominance over that vast geography may soon come to an end. If Russia does not take the initiative and act like a global power, it will very soon become incapable to reverse the course of these developments. The Azerbaijani provocations against RoA might be one of the last opportunities for Russia where it can start reversing this regression.

In the midst of Turkish expansionism, Azeri aggression and Russian vacillations, RoA must develop a military power capable of inflicting serious harm to any aggressor. This is the first and most important element in keeping invaders away. Second, RoA should revise its foreign relations and establish a policy that places it in the center of these events through partners in the region and beyond. Fine tuned diplomacy is the key to utilize such relationships to the benefit of the national interests of RoA.

## Comments



**Bedir Memmedli** – 2021-08-13 23:06:51

You are so desperate to save your face and have no courage to admit your humiliation and defeat.



**Hovsep** – 2021-08-10 15:46:04

I too, like Hagop, commend this editorial for its brisk documentation of sequence of events and overall analysis. Yet, how to get out of this existential quagmire is not well articulated. It sounds more like a wish-list than a well thought solution. Hovsep, Ontario



**WAHAKEN VANOYAN** – 2021-08-10 15:41:03

We, Armenians, have two catholicoi, one in Armenia and another in Lebanon; we also have two patriarchs, one in Istanbul and another in Jerusalem; we also have Mekhitarians Catholics in Venice, Italy; now we also have Armenian Protestant Church, Seven Day Adventists, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, we even have some Muslims, maybe even some Jewish Armenians. I guarantee to my nation that we are not short of prayers. Now it's time for us Armenians to have at least five presidents; anyone of our friends: USA, Russia, China, France, Turkey, Georgia...will be very happy to provide us with all the necessary weapons to kill each other on our homeland; at least we will be buried in our land. For over 100 years we cried to the world about our Genocide instead of preparing revenge or at least to be able to defend what's left of us. Next 10 years at most we tell the world the truth that we kill each other, we the first nation in history who committed this act... Let us continue praying, "IN THE NAME OF OUR FATHER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT OF THOSE ARMENIANS WHO DIED FOR HIM, AMEN".



**Hagop** - 2021-08-10 05:43:08

An accurate description of the crisis Armenia faces. Unfortunately, the recommendations sound hollow. 1. The first recommendation is that Armenia "develop military power capable of inflicting serious harm to any aggressor." Serious harm to Azerbaijan would mean the destruction of Yerevan and Medzamor. "...to any aggressor" means Turkey. Considering Putin's cowardly policies in the past decade, we can't expect Russia or CSTO to defend Armenia. Besides, where would Armenia find the money to seriously upgrade its leaderless military not to mention the willpower? 2. Armenia should "revise its foreign relations and places it in the center of these events through partners in the region and beyond," says the editorial. Who are the partner candidates? Tehran has its own problems and would not commit to our defense for reasons known to all. Russia, under unreliable Putin, has shown where it stands when it comes to meeting its treaty obligations to Armenia. Does anyone believe France would send its soldiers to defend Armenia? China's support is impractical and Beijing will not jeopardize its interests in Turkey (think Silk Road). The U.S.? Seventy years have shown the U.S will give priority to "staunch" NATO-ally Turkey over NATO-ally Greece. Why would America change that policy for stamp-size Armenia?