RUSSIAN BETRAYALS OF ARMENIAN SOVEREIGNTY

Posted on February 5, 2025 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

A History of Territorial Appeasement to Turkey

By Berge Jololian, Yerevan, 21 January 2025

Throughout history, Russia has consistently prioritized its geopolitical ambitions at the expense of Armenian sovereignty and security, perpetuating a troubling pattern of betrayal. This legacy spans Tsarist Russia's interventions in Western Armenia, the Bolsheviks' abandonment of the region, the Soviet Union's devastating treaties of Moscow and Kars, and the modern Russian Federation's ongoing undermining of Armenian interests.

From ceding Armenian territories to appease Turkey and Azerbaijan to failing its peacekeeping obligations in protecting Artsakh's population and leadership, Russia has repeatedly sacrificed Armenian sovereignty for its own strategic gains. The most recent example of this betrayal is Russia's support for Azerbaijan's push for the so-called "Zangezur Corridor" - an extraterritorial passage through Armenia's southern Syunik province. This proposed corridor would not only compromise Armenian sovereignty but also isolate the country economically and strategically, further exposing it to manipulation and aggression.

The Withdrawal from Western Armenia

At the turn of the 20th century, Western Armenia - home to historic Armenian regions such as Van, Mush, Sasun, Ani, and Kars - became a tragic symbol of betrayal. During World War I, Russian forces temporarily advanced into these areas, offering Armenians fleeting hope for liberation from Ottoman oppression.

However, the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 and the Bolshevik Revolution shattered these hopes. Russian troops abruptly withdrew, abdicating responsibilities, leaving the Armenian population defenseless against advancing Ottoman forces. This vacuum facilitated the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923), during which Ottoman forces carried out systematic extermination. Cities like Van, a cultural hub of Armenian civilization, and Kars, Ani, and Ardahan, became haunting symbols of abandonment and destruction.

The Treaty of Moscow: Friendship in Name, Betrayal in Action

On March 16, 1921, Soviet Russia and Kemalist Turkey signed the Treaty of Moscow, a deceptive agreement titled the Treaty of "Friendship and Brotherhood." This treaty redrew borders to suit Soviet and Turkish interests, disregarding Armenian sovereignty.

At the time, Soviet Armenia officially included Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan. In December 1920, Soviet Azerbaijan had even declared the transfer of these territories to Armenia, celebrated by Joseph Stalin and published in the *Pravda* newspaper. Yet, within months, under Turkey's insistence, Moscow reversed its decision. The treaty handed Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan to Soviet Azerbaijan, betraying Armenian interests to solidify Soviet ties with Turkey.

The Treaty of Kars: A Final Blow to Western Armenia

Later that same year, the Treaty of Kars, signed on October 13, 1921, formalized the cession of Ani, Kars and Ardahan to Turkey. These territories, integral to Armenian history and culture, were stripped from Armenia in the name of Soviet-Turkish "brotherhood." The combined impact of the Moscow and Kars treaties was devastating, leaving Armenia isolated and diminished, its lands treated as bargaining chips in larger geopolitical games.

Mount Ararat, a symbol of Armenian heritage and identity, was transferred from Armenian to Turkish control as part of the geopolitical maneuvering embedded in the Treaty of Moscow (March 16, 1921) and the Treaty of Kars (October 13, 1921). These treaties were negotiated between Soviet Russia, Kemalist Turkey, handing over territories that belong to a third entity, Armenia. This was presented as a means of ensuring Soviet-Turkish cooperation and stabilizing the Soviet southern frontier.

The Betrayal of Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan

The transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan to Soviet Azerbaijan laid the groundwork for decades of ethnic and territorial conflict. Nagorno-Karabakh, with its predominantly Armenian population, became a flashpoint for violence, culminating in the wars and ethnic cleansing of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Nakhichevan's inclusion in Soviet Azerbaijan further isolated Armenia, creating a strategic vulnerability that persists today.

Azerbaijan's territorial ambitions, including its demand for the so-called "Zangezur Corridor" through southern Armenia, are rooted in this historical betrayal. Russia is now supporting Azerbaijan and Turkey in their push for the Zangezur Corridor, a proposed extraterritorial passage through Armenia's southern Syunik province. This corridor would effectively hand over Armenian sovereignty to Azerbaijan, creating a strategic land link between Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan while isolating Armenia geographically and economically. By aligning itself with Ankara and Baku, Moscow is not only undermining Armenian territorial integrity but also facilitating the geopolitical ambitions of its supposed adversaries, Turkey and Azerbaijan. These actions reveal a troubling pattern: Russia's willingness to sacrifice Armenian sovereignty to serve its own strategic interests, perpetuating a cycle of betrayal that has persisted from the Tsarist and Soviet eras to the modern Russian Federation.

Modern Betrayals: Russia's Role Today

The historical pattern of Russian betrayal persists under the modern Russian Federation, as evidenced during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. Russian peacekeepers, ostensibly deployed to safeguard the Armenian population and maintain stability, stood by as Azerbaijan conducted a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing. Their inaction extended to the failure to protect Armenian civilians from violence and to prevent the arrest and subsequent sham trials of Nagorno-Karabakh's leaders. This glaring negligence underscores Moscow's unwillingness to fulfill its peacekeeping obligations, further eroding trust in Russia as a reliable ally for Armenia and exposing its complicity in enabling

Azerbaijan's aggressive actions.

In 2023, when Azerbaijan launched another offensive, Russia's inaction reinforced its reputation as an unreliable ally. Moscow's growing partnerships with Turkey and Azerbaijan further illustrate its willingness to undermine Armenia for strategic gains.

The Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has similarly failed Armenia. Despite its obligations, the CSTO refused to intervene when Azerbaijan occupied large swaths of Armenian territory and escalated aggression along Armenia's borders. This inaction highlights Russia's complicity in enabling Azerbaijan's actions and its continued practice perpetuating a historical pattern of sacrificing Armenian sovereignty to serve its broader geopolitical goals.

Lessons for Armenia: Charting a Sovereign Future

The history of Russian betrayal underscores the urgency for Armenia to reduce its dependence on unreliable powers. From the Tsarist era's abandonment of Van to the Soviet Union's territorial appeasements and modern failures of the Russian-led CSTO, the lesson is clear: Armenia must prioritize self-reliance and diversified partnerships and alliances.

Armenia's future depends on:

- Building robust national institutions and defense capabilities.
- Fostering unity among its people.
- Strengthening partnerships with the countries like the United States, France, India and with the European Union.

By learning from history, Armenia can secure its sovereignty and ensure that its destiny is shaped by the strength and resolve of its people, not by the whims of foreign powers.

A Sobering Reminder

The betrayal of Western Armenia, the treaties of Moscow and Kars, and the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan serve as stark reminders of the cost of misplaced trust. Armenia's path forward must honor its history by ensuring that its sovereignty is never again bartered away in the name of geopolitical expediency.

*****

Comments



Nicolai (Sr.) Romashuk – 2025-02-10 14:31:32
Dear Berge, 1. You know it better than me, that during the soviet Union, the Armenian people were living like the kings in France. 2.The Armenian people want to keep their norms and values. 3.The Armenian people do not want to adopt the LGBT standards, even president Trump started following the example of the Armenian people. 4.Th Armenian people do not want to integrate with the imperialists and the colonialists. 5.The Armenian people do not want to get involved in the trillions of debt of the bankrupt U.S.A. 6.The Armenian people want to keep their nuclear power station. 7.Russia had signed no treaties with the free Republic of Artsakh The story is very long.



Berge Jololian – 2025-02-10 03:47:37

Dear Nicolai, I must respectfully disagree with the assertion that “betraying Russia is an unforgivable crime” and the notion that Armenia must forever remain in a master-slave relationship with Russia. To begin with, “crime” is a legal term, and Armenians are not - and refuse to be - anyone’s slaves. Armenia’s contributions to Russia over the past century have been monumental. For instance, during World War II, 350,000 Armenians - drawn from a post-genocide population of only about 1 million survivors - fought valiantly alongside Russian forces. Moreover, Armenia produced many generals and marshals during the war who played critical roles in protecting Russia, even as our people suffered heavy losses. These contributions, among countless others in military and cultural spheres, have left an indelible mark on history. The article "Russian Betrayals of Armenian Sovereignty" documents a long history of Russian policies that, in recent decades, have repeatedly undermined Armenian security and sovereignty. Russia’s efforts to appease NATO-Turkey - so as not to jeopardize its own position during the war in Ukraine - have once again come at the expense of Armenian interests, as seen in the bargaining away of our sovereignty and Nagorno-Karabagh to Turkey and Azerbaijan. This echoes a century-old pattern: Russia’s historical appeasement of Turkey in exchange for favors, which led to the transfer of Armenian territories, including the symbolic gifting of Mount Ararat to Turkey under the banner of “friendship and brotherhood.” The failure of Russian peacekeepers to protect Artsakh during Azerbaijan’s attacks, the shifting of Russian strategic priorities toward Turkey and Azerbaijan, and the recent backing of controversial initiatives like the “Zangezur Corridor” are stark examples of how Russian actions have not always aligned with Armenia’s interests. Russia’s tired language of threats, lies, and intimidation is a relic of a colonial mindset that no longer serves us. In today’s world, being Russia’s “friend” often comes at a higher cost than being its adversary, as it means sacrificing our autonomy to maintain outdated alliances. While Armenia’s historical contributions to Russia are indeed commendable, they should inspire pride and self-determination rather than justify continued subordination. Our future lies in forging independent, robust alliances that genuinely support our sovereignty. It is time to move beyond archaic mindsets and focus on a path that truly secures and advances Armenia’s national interests. Goodbye and all the best, До свидания и всего хорошего, Berge Jololian Yerevan,, Armenia



Nicolai (Sr.) Romashuk – 2025-02-09 10:04:12

Blaming Russia is not fair and betraying Russia is an unforgivable crime. Anytime you blame Russia, in the first place, you must analyze 3 important factors. 1) Without Russia, today's Armenia could never exist; it's the Russians who sacrificed with their blood and liberated Armenians from the Persians, see the Russian-Persian war between 1826-1828 and the treaty of Turkmenchay. 2) You don't have to blame the Russians during BOLSHEVISM, because 90% of the Bolshevik leaders were not Russian. 3) Greece and Turkey are full members of NATO, what did NATO do to solve the liberation of Cyprus? Your article is based on misrepresentations.



Berge Jololian – 2025-02-09 04:26:13

I have carefully reviewed Mr. Antranig Bedrossian's critique of the article "Russian Betrayals of Armenian Sovereignty" and would like to offer some clarifications - with a touch of humor for those who appreciate a wry smile at history's absurdities. First, Mr. Bedrossian's assertion that "Kemalist Turkey" was not in power at the time of the Treaty of Moscow (1921) is inaccurate. By 1921, the Turkish National Movement, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, had already established itself as the de facto government, and it was this very administration that signed the treaty with Soviet Russia - proving that sometimes history doesn't wait for the old regime to pack up its bags. While Soviet power did face recognition challenges in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, by 1921 the Bolshevik government was increasingly accepted as the governing authority in Russia. Consequently, the Treaty of Moscow is generally regarded as an international agreement concluded between two de facto powers - a reality as plain as the borders redrawn by the treaties of Moscow and Kars, which continue to shape the region today. Mr. Bedrossian's claim that only the Sultan was the legitimate representative of Turkey during that period seems to come from a time capsule; with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the Turkish National Movement, the old imperial regime had long lost its grip, leaving state affairs in the capable hands of the Kemalist government. Moreover, Turkish nationalist forces under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk did indeed engage in military operations against the First Republic of Armenia in 1920. Atatürk, a key figure in the nationalist movement, organized and led these forces, which ultimately contributed to the tragic ethnic cleansing of Armenians following the withdrawal of Russian troops - events that were later formalized in the Treaty of Kars (signed in October 1921). As for Nakhichevan, Mr. Bedrossian's assertion that it was given to Azerbaijan merely as a protectorate (and that this does not constitute annexation or inclusion) is, frankly, laughable. The transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan from Soviet Armenia to Soviet Azerbaijan occurred under the pressure and insistence of Kemalist Turkey, prompting Moscow to revise the treaty four months after its signing. This revision effectively handed both territories over to Soviet Azerbaijan, a move accompanied by the ethnic cleansing of Nakhichevan's Armenian population during Soviet rule. These actions reflect over a century of Russian betrayals, shifting alliances, and strategic compromises. In sum, the realities of these treaties and historical events underscore a pattern of Russian betrayal and realpolitik rather than the simplistic Pro-Russian narrative Mr. Bedrossian suggests. While his critique may evoke outdated notions, it ultimately fails to accurately portray the realities on the ground and the complex geopolitical landscape we continue to navigate today.



Antranig Bedrossian, MA international relations (UQAM). – 2025-02-06 15:30:58

This article contains many errors, and because of that arguments advanced by the author end up in weak position. The author does not have the necessary understanding of legal terms, their use and misuse. For example, he mentions Kemalist Turkey as one of the signatories of Treaty of Moscow (1921). This is not true. Kemalists were not in power. They were not a subject of international law to sign the document. Soviet power also was not recognized as a subject of international law.Therefore the Treaty of Moscow is illegal. From Turkish side, the Sultan was the power and the only subject of international law to sign on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. Kemalists were just a rebel force. As for Nakhijevan, according to Moscow Treaty it was given to Azerbaijan as a protectorate. This is not annexation nor it is inclusion. The retreat of Russian forces in 1917 from the Western Armenian territories that were under Russian control, was mainly due to internal processes in Russia itself after the Revolution. Therefore this article is flawed scientifically. This is due to the author's lack of knowledge of historical events and juridical terms to support his case.