

THE COMING RUSSIAN DEFEAT IN THE CAUCASUS

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The Coming Russian Defeat in the Caucasus

By David Boyajian, Newton MA, 28 September 2009

Russia will be well along the road to total defeat by the US and NATO in the Caucasus and beyond if the recently proposed Armenian – Turkish "Protocols" are ratified.

Within two months after ratification, Turkey would be required to open its border with Armenia. Subsequently, or perhaps simultaneously, the Azerbaijani – Armenian border will open if, as appears increasingly possible, an Artsakh (Karabagh) peace agreement is signed.

Regardless of whether the Azeri border opens, a fully open Turkish – Armenian border would inevitably result in US and NATO penetration and subjugation of Armenia.

Let us look at US and Russian policy in the Caucasus, both past and present.

The West's Goal: Domination

For two decades, the West, as well as Israel, has dreamt of dominating the Caucasus, which is the gateway from Europe and Turkey into the oil and gas-rich Caspian Sea region. To do so required ripping the Caucasus' three ex-Soviet countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia – from the Russian bear's claws.

The US and NATO have largely succeeded in doing so. The West has already built two major gas and oil pipelines – BTE and BTC – from Azerbaijan's Caspian coast, through Georgia and Turkey. The US insists that all pipelines bypass Russia and Iran.

Though Georgia and Azerbaijan are under continual Russian pressure, both are NATO candidates and have aligned themselves with the US.

That left Armenia, perhaps Russia's only real ally in the world, as the sole obstacle to total American domination of the western land route into the Caspian.

By coaxing Turkey to open its border, Washington is now trying to lure Armenia away from Russia and into the infinitely richer and more modern, attractive, and democratic Western/NATO bloc.

Wealthier, stronger, and about thirty times larger and more populous than its small, besieged eastern neighbor, Turkey has been picked for the lead role in the West's seduction of Armenia.

Armenia's Importance to US Strategy

Until last year's Georgian – Russian war, the US had been silently pleased with Turkey's blockade of Armenia. Washington hoped the blockade, imposed mostly due to the Artsakh war, would create economic pressure on Armenians to resolve that conflict.

Note that only an Artsakh peace agreement could fully pry open the Azeri-Armenian-Turkish corridor that NATO and Washington craved.

But the war in Georgia cast doubt on that country's ability to continue hosting western-bound pipelines. For the US, the only alternative to unstable Georgia is Armenia. This explains why Washington has been dramatically stepping up pressure – and the “Protocols” are part of that pressure – on Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to resolve their differences and thereby create a new American path into the Caspian.

How does Russia feel about Armenia's border issues?

Russia's Fatal Mistakes

The Kremlin had long been silently pleased with the closed Turkish – Armenian border and the Artsakh stalemate. After all, these prevented the US from penetrating Armenia and dominating all three Caucasus countries.

Now, however, confidential and other sources indicate that Moscow favors both the Turkish-Armenian “Protocols” and an Artsakh peace agreement.

Russia reportedly hopes that trade across the Turkish – Armenian border would enable it to profit from its ownership of Armenian industry, particularly electricity production and transportation.

However, given Armenia's small economy and size, the extra revenue for Russia would not be considerable.

The Kremlin is also reportedly worried that a new Russian – Georgian war would hurt Armenia's economy since most Armenian imports/exports must now go through Georgia.

Thus, Russia allegedly hopes that an open Turkish – Armenian border would give its Armenian ally an alternative import/export route in case of a war. Yet, given its alliance with Georgia, Turkey might well close its border with Armenia in such an eventuality. Conversely, were the Turkish-Armenia-Azeri corridor to remain open, this would partly defeat the very purpose of a Russian attack on Georgia.

Moscow and Ankara have developed significant economic and political relations in recent years. And Russia supplies most of Turkey's natural gas. Thus, the Kremlin apparently believes that it can dictate to Ankara. The Kremlin is wrong. Regardless of how friendly it becomes with Russia, Turkey will stay within NATO, its only protection against its historic, nuclear-armed Russian enemy.

Moreover, Turkey – and Georgia, which also depends on Russian gas – will eventually develop alternative energy sources and no longer be vulnerable to Russian pressure. In the meantime, Russia will lose Armenia to the West.

Russia is also trying to buy up future production from Azerbaijan's oil and gas fields in hopes that, in so doing, the West will lose interest in Azerbaijan. In return, Russia is apparently pressuring Armenia to, in effect, hand Artsakh to Azerbaijan.

This is a grave error. Historically, Azeris have betrayed Russia, as happened in WW I when they sided with Turkey, and will do so again. In the meantime, Armenian anger at Russia for selling out Artsakh, combined with the lure of Western wealth, will permanently drive Armenia away from Russia. Only a true Russian alliance with, not economic and military bullying of, Armenia, will keep Armenia as a friend. Armenia's fear of Turkey is not enough.

Russian Policy Blunders

Russia has a long history of disastrous policies. In the space of 75 years, Russia lost two empires – Czarist and Soviet – and the Cold War. Russia allowed false prophets – Bolsheviks – to impose the inefficient and inhumane political and economic system of Communism upon it. Russians let a deranged Georgian, Josef Stalin, maim and murder countless millions of them. Even today, most of Russia's wealth comes not from human productivity but courtesy of Mother Nature: oil and gas.

Recent Kremlin policy has been deeply influenced by Aleksandr Dugin, an extreme nationalist ideologue. His political philosophy, Neo-Eurasianism, advocates a Russian led alliance of Asian and

Slavic countries. Like most Russian analysts, Dugin saw Armenia as a barrier against Turkey, Russia's historic enemy. Dugin then changed his mind. He now thinks that Turkey is a Russian ally. This is a clear sign of Neo-Eurasianism's immaturity.

The Kremlin – this time with Medvedev and Putin at the helm – is once again listening to false prophets. Turkey's arm can indeed be twisted, but not broken, by Russia. Moreover, Turkey is tougher than Russia. During the Cold War, genocidal Turkey would have annihilated Russia had it, rather than the Soviets, possessed nuclear weapons.

While Turks make Russians think they've become friends, Russians foolishly throw their only ally, Armenia, to the Turkish wolf. Russia will lose Armenia but will not win Turkey over. Pan-Turkism will continue, pushed by the West for its own purposes.

Moreover, as I noted two years ago, once NATO enters the Caucasus, it "could then jump across the Caspian Sea and march straight into Muslim Central Asia, posing a possibly mortal threat to Russia."

Reject the Dangerous Protocols

Armenians must openly reject the "Protocols." Besides abrogating long-standing Armenian rights vis-à-vis its genocidal neighbor, they are a formula for Turkish hegemony over Armenia.

If the Turkish – Armenian border is to open, it must be in a way that does not permit Turks to infiltrate, buy up, Ottomanize, and eventually control Armenia.

Armenians must now publicly and bluntly emphasize to their Russian ally that the "Protocols" will result in Russia's being surrounded by NATO and ultimately, along with Armenia, destroyed.

The author is an Armenian American freelance writer.

