FOR TURKEY, EXPEDIENCY TRUMPS PRINCIPLE EVERY TIME

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Category: Opinions

Picture: The two-faced Roman god Janus.

By **Jirair Tutunjian**, Toronto, 29 July 2020

Politicians, journalists, and scholars have distilled the Armenian/Nagorno-Karabakh versus Azerbaijani conflict to a pair of words: Azerbaijan espousing territorial integrity and the Armenians supporting self-determination. Most states automatically support the first view because many of them are challenged by domestic groups demanding autonomy/independence. But reducing the conflict to "territorial integrity versus self-determination" is *Léger-de-main*: it ignores that Azerbaijan gained Nagorno-Karabakh illegally when Stalin handed the territory (85 percent Armenian-populated and part of historic Armenia) to the Turkic Azeris.

Turkey, of course, backs the Azeri "territorial integrity" argument. But Turkey being Turkey is two-faced and duplicitous. There was a time when Turkey was a fervid—even violent-- proponent of self-determination.

The modern history of Turkey's mendacity in the self-determination vs. territorial integrity conflict began at the end of WWI when the League of Nations assigned France the mandate to administer Syria. The French would rule until Syrians had progressed sufficiently to run their country. But after 16 years of incessant Syrian demands for independence, France and Syria negotiated a treaty of independence. Then from distant Ankara, Turks began to make noises that the province (*sanjak*) of Alexandretta should not be included within independent Syria because of the province's large Turkish-speaking population. Accordingly, Ankara demanded special status for the province, apart from the Arab Syrian state. France and Turkey took their case to the League of Nations for resolution.

"The Republic of Turkey thus staked its claim to the sanjak not on geopolitical grounds but on the assertion about identity: the population of the sanjak, they argued, was Turkish. With this identity came a host of affective commitments…Most striking, however, was not that Turkey presented statistics to prove its claim, a number the French could easily dispute, but instead the twin assumptions on which the claim was based. Turkey's argument before the Council of the League of Nations implied both that the identity of the population should determine the future of the territory and that a neighboring power had the right to intervene over issues of identity. Underpinnings this claim was the assertion about the primacy of linguistic affiliation: Turkey could claim neighboring territory because the people there spoke Turkish." --"Fezzes in the River" by Sarah D. Shields, pp. 6-7.

With one swoop, Turkey had arbitrarily changed the rules. The made-in-Ankara rules said if a person spoke Turkish he was a Turk. Because Alexandretta was multi-ethnic, people spoke more than one language. If they could speak Turkish they became Turks, according to Ataturk (father knows best?). Many non-Turks who lived in the province spoke Turkish because they had grown up in the Ottoman Empire. In regions such as nearby Adana, most Armenians couldn't speak Armenian because Turkey had banned Armenian. About 30,000 Armenians had been slain in the Adana region in 1909.

Armenians knew not to enrage the *yataghan*-flashing fanatical Turks. Thus, Adana-area Armenians who had been barred from using their mother tongue, had been subjected to genocide by Turkey for being Armenian, and had sought shelter in French-occupied Alexandretta discovered they were Turks.

According to the French Mandate census (1936), Turks were a minority in the province. Like the Arabs, they were just under 40 percent while the Armenians were 11 percent. Turkey insisted Alexandretta "Turks" had to have special rights although Arabs—who were the same number and lived in their Arab homeland—had no similar privileges.

The Turkish government had "invented a foundational myth to explain its interest in the province," wrote Shields. The French eventually collaborated with Ankara to circumvent the electoral system and invented a Turkish majority where none existed. It was no secret to the French that asserting Alexandretta's population was mostly Turkish was Turkey's cudgel in claiming the province. In the end, France handed Alexandretta to Turkey so that Turkey would not side with Nazi Germany in the impending world war.

Late '30s: Turkey invented three-step logic:

1. A person who speaks Turkish is a Turk
2. Since a majority of the Alexandretta province's residents could speak Turkish, "Turks" were the majority
3. Since the "Turks" were the majority, they were entitled to privileges and eventual ownership of the province.

Mid-2020:

1. Recep Tayyip Erdogan demands that his puppet—the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus—enjoy equal political power to the Republic of Cyprus (the legitimate government of the island), which is four times larger in population and territory than the illegal "republic" installed by Turkey.
2. Although Armenians, who also speak Armenian, are the overwhelming majority of Nagorno-Karabakh, they have no right to self-determination, says preposterous Erdogan. Why should "territorial integrity" in Nagorno-Karabakh take priority over "self-determination"? Because Erdogan says so. Why more than 15 to 17 million Kurds of Turkey should be denied self-determination? Because Erdogan says so.

2070:

1. Turkey demands "self-determination" for Turks in Germany, France, Holland, and Belgium because they are one-third of the population in these countries...

For five centuries, Machiavellian has meant deceitful, devious, unscrupulous, and unprincipled

behavior, especially in politics. It's high time "Machiavellian" was retired and replaced by Erdoganian.

Comments



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History is evidence. Turkey does not recognize the rule of law. It fabricates its own version of universal law and imposes it on civilized nations. It does what suits turkey best. Be it through invasion, Genocide, bullying superpowers et al. The League of Nations in the past, United Nations now, representatives of countries like Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Greece, the rest of the European countries, the United States, and all, are expected to be well versed in real history, to be able to reject turkey's past, present, and future deceitful and manipulative statements. Be prepared to recognize "myth" and impose historical facts on Turkey. Failing that, by sheer number of Turks loyal to the "system" and propagation of Islam, turkey will dominate the world. Not just enclaves that it invades and occupies. Finally, Turkey's membership in NATO is a major detriment to world peace.