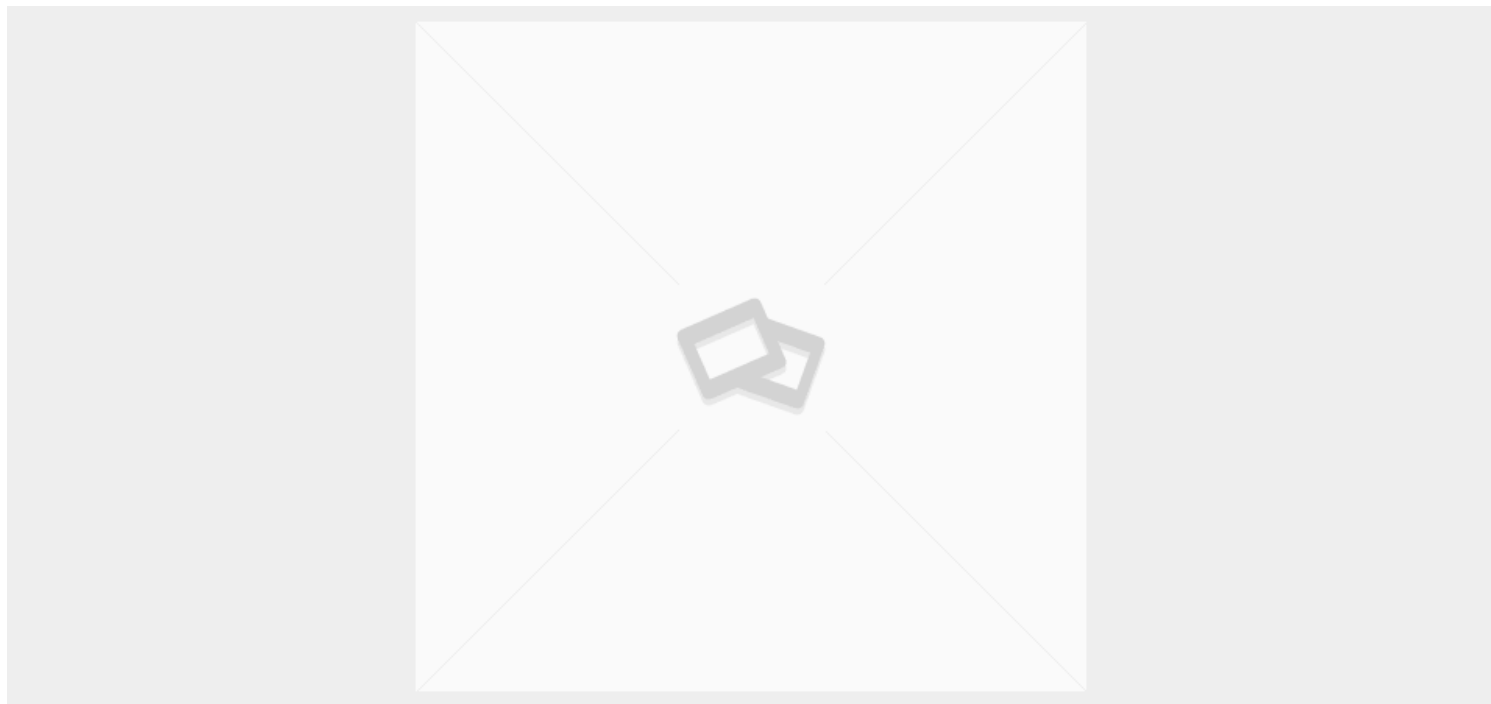
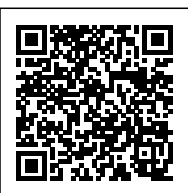


WHY ARTSAKH MATTERS TO THE WEST AND RUSSIA

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By David Boyajian, [Armeniapedia](#)

On April 12th 2009 Tigran, a reader of Keghart, in a comment entitled "In Vain..." stated, "We have to accept the unfortunate fact that Armenia doesn't have the same resources nor the same importance as its two neighbours do. We are a landlocked country, surrounded by two vicious and criminal nations who are being backed by similar countries... Until a miracle happens and our chances and luck improve, the only thing we should be doing is trying to survive the situation and make our fight only for the acceptance of the Genocide and nothing else for the moment. Hopefully, their turn will come and they will be begging for our help against the Turks!"

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David Boyajian, in response, had the following to say, "Dear Tigran: Sadly, like too many Armenians, you do not seem to understand that Armenia (and Artsakh) are tremendously important to the West due to the fact that, aside from Georgia, which is unstable and under pressure, it is the only way into and out of the Caucasus that avoids Russia and Iran. The West knows this very well. Armenia is in a unique and very powerful position. Russia must also know that without Armenia, its entire southern tier, from the Caucasus to Central Asia, will fall to NATO, and Russia will be ripe for the picking. Please read this article, "Why Artsakh Matters to the West and Russia".

Since the Russian-Georgian war (2008), the announcement of "the Roadmap" (April 2009) and the Madrid Principles (July 2009) some geopolitical considerations have changed, but David Boyajian's principal arguments about the importance of Armenia and Artsakh for the West and Russia remain valid. The article penned by him, originally published in Armenia Life USA on **8th June 2007**, and later reproduced in Armeniapedia is brought to the attention of the readers.

A surprising number of people seem to believe that the West couldn't care less whether the longstanding Artsakh (Karabagh) conflict is solved.

That notion may stem partly from the West's habit of playing down legitimate Armenian concerns and boosting the interests of Azerbaijan and Turkey. Sadly, some Armenians who should know better seem to have bought into the lie.

The fact is that the US and NATO attach great importance to an Artsakh peace accord. By the same

token, Russia – though it won't say so publicly – apparently does not presently favor such an agreement.

What would be the results of an Artsakh accord?

The West's Dream

The border between Armenia and Azerbaijan would certainly open. Various kinds of trade would follow.

Turkey might also open its border with Armenia. That is uncertain, however, because Turkey could insist on additional conditions, such as Armenia's dropping the genocide issue.

Yet even if Turkey's border with Armenia were to remain shut, there is always Turkey's 6-mile border with Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan enclave. That by itself would connect Azerbaijan proper to Turkey, via Azerbaijan's open border with southern Armenia .

One way or the other, an Artsakh peace could fulfill the West's dream: a route from Azerbaijan and the oil and gas rich Caspian Sea region, through Armenia and Turkey, to Europe.

The West desires an Armenian route because currently the sole way into and out of Azerbaijan runs through Georgia, which continues to be under heavy economic, political, and even military pressure by Russia. Alternative routes through Russia or Iran are, of course, unacceptable to Washington.

Were Moscow to actually succeed in shutting off Georgia from the West – a possibility, though it would spark a major confrontation with Washington – Armenia would become the only path into the Caucasus. But, again, a prerequisite for all this is a solution to Artsakh.

For many of the same reasons, Russia does not presently want an Artsakh pact.

Russia's Nightmare

The Kremlin, of course, regards the Caucasus as being within its traditional sphere of influence. It wants near exclusive control over Caspian resources.

Therefore, Russia does not wish Armenia to become, like Georgia, yet another route for oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian to Turkey.

How do we know that Russia is satisfied with the status quo in Artsakh? Because for the past decade or more, Moscow has evidently applied no pressure on Yerevan or Baku to come to an agreement. Moreover, we have never heard Moscow ask Ankara to open the border with Armenia.

No, the very thought of NATO's using Armenia to penetrate the Caucasus gives the Kremlin nightmares. The longer the Artsakh conflict remains frozen, the sounder Russian leaders sleep.

Hidden Reasons

You may wonder why, if it's trying to penetrate the Caucasus, Washington has applied little, if any, pressure on Turkey to open its border with Armenia. A likely reason is that Washington feels that the closed border exerts pressure on Yerevan to first sign an agreement with Baku. Washington won't come right out and say that because it would cause a furor in the US Congress and Yerevan.

An additional reason Washington wants an Artsakh peace agreement is that a renewal of war would endanger the outflow of Azeri oil and gas to the West. For the very same reason, a war might actually please Moscow.

To believe that Armenia and Artsakh, even in view of all their problems, are unimportant to the world's major powers is to sell ourselves short and to misunderstand the political dynamics of the region.

Armenia is still the most stable country in the Caucasus. The US has not built a huge embassy in Armenia for nothing. Russia does not regard Armenia as a strategic ally for no reason.

The real challenge is to understand and leverage Armenia and Artsakh's importance.

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