

Who Speaks of the Armenians?

by [Nikos Akritas](#) (April 2024)



Armenian refugees near the border town of Kornidzor, arriving from Nagorno-Karabakh, September 26, 2023. –Alain Jocard, Getty Images

Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians? –Adolf Hitler, speech at Obersalzberg in preparation for the invasion of Poland, August 22, 1939

In the June 2023 edition of *New English Review*, I [wrote](#) of the potential ethnic cleansing of the remnants of the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh. Three months later, that ethnic cleansing became reality. One hundred thousand Armenians were driven from their ancestral homeland because

borders had been drawn, in the not so distant past, which ignored the reality of a land's population.

The enmity between Azerbaijanis and Armenians comes as no surprise to those familiar with the region's politics. Neither is there surprise at Turkey's hand in such an event to anyone familiar with the region's history. Russia seemed to be the only stakeholder who could save the ethnic enclave from calamity. And so, in theory, Russian troops guarded the Lachin Corridor, as peacekeepers, ensuring vital supplies got through. But back in June it was clear the Russians were unable to keep the Corridor open and the population of Nagorno Karabakh was suffering privation – food shortages, no electricity, lack of medical supplies. The area was, basically, as a city under siege being slowly choked to death. Then came the offensive, and the fleeing. Russian troops proved impotent. Russian support proved unreliable.

As a consequence, Armenia now seeks ties with the West in an attempt to stave off further threats from Azerbaijani hostility to its east and Turkish hostility to its west. But it is too late. As demonstrated by the current conflict in Ukraine, Russia's geo-strategic concerns will not allow its tiny neighbour to the south to break free of its influence. Armenia lies in a strategically important area between Turkey (a NATO member) and Iran. And given the current situation in Europe, Russia will not risk further Western meddling in what it sees as its spheres of influence or its desire for neutral buffer zones.

As far as Russia is concerned, it is Western meddling in former Soviet countries which raised its ire in the first place, by going against what Russia perceived as 'promises' not to expand NATO/EU membership after the Soviet collapse towards Russia's borders. This is not to excuse Russia's actions and abandon these relatively newly independent states to their fate but only to highlight Russian realpolitik.

An invasion of Armenia by Russian forces would prove a quick and easy victory. But its troops are already on Armenian soil and so a full scale invasion would probably not be necessary, unless of course it was undertaken to ensure Western or Turkish forces stayed out. It would also be in Turkey's interest if further Russian forces were stationed in Armenia, hindering European support for Armenian independence and maintaining Armenia's vulnerability (miso-Armenianism is a stark reality over a century following the genocides). Turkey is following its own path and will play Russia and the West off against each other, especially under Erdoğan's anti-Western, pro Muslim stance.

Huntington's *clash of civilizations* seems to be coalescing in this tiny spot, a pattern thousands of years old. But long term, Russia may indeed be brought into democracy's, and the West's, fold. It depends on how strong the nationalist, dictatorial players prove after Putin. In any case, Russia is doomed economically if it doesn't eventually join the West – it is, to all intents and purposes, still an empire, with huge areas not actually part of *Russia proper* within its borders. Areas such as Tatarstan, Chechnya, Yakutia and Bashkortostan (although their ethnically non-Russian populations are comparatively tiny to Russia's total population).

The collapse of Russia will not only increase China's power in east Asia, especially in Siberia, but Turkey's influence in the Middle East and Central Asia. The latter could lead to increasing antagonism with the West as Turkey seeks to rekindle its Turanian dream (an idea similar to Aryan supremacy) of the early 20th century, whose ugly head resurfaced on the collapse of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately it met with relative disinterest from the Central Asian stans it claimed as fellow Turks, who were more pragmatic than romantic. This may change though, as Islam takes an increasing hold on the younger generation, which has been a real development over the last thirty years. It won't take much for

a Kazakh (the largest of the stans and rich in energy reserves) turn towards religious sentimentalism and the anti-Westernism that goes with it.

Putin will be gone within a decade but what will his legacy be? Many Russians are fed up with corruption and they thirst for Western values and governmental institutions. A complete collapse of Russia at a time of increased Islamisation of Central Asia will see Turkey, cynically or not, taking advantage of a perfect opportunity. EU and NATO borders will, at that point, stretch all the way along European Russia's borders. But then again, where will Russia's borders be? And how stable will they be? Western Russia will face instability within its borders, eastern Russia from without. China and Turkey will be the new winners. At best, the West will be more secure in Europe but its global security will diminish.

As for the Middle East, if support for Israel is not provided less ambiguously, the weakness will be like fresh blood to a mosquito. The result: an increased Islamisation to eradicate the state of the Jew, as well as a further move towards neo-Ottomanism. The latter embracing not just Islamist politics and influence in Central Asia but an expansion of this further south, ensuring further Turkish dominance over Kurdish minorities agitating for independence. Armenia will be swallowed up in this expanding foreign policy, which will secure Turkey's access to large energy reserves – avoiding reliance on the West and the Arab world and providing a further economic boost to its continued export of soft power through cultural influence. These exports consist of a burgeoning TV and film industry, fashion apparel, much needed engineers in the construction and manufacturing industries of other countries, educational grants, electrical goods, and provision of military drones.

Armenia's attempts to forge closer ties with the West are a desperate bid to retain some semblance of independence and protect itself from Azerbaijani and Turkish aggression.

However, it is too little, too late. Russia's strategic interests will take precedence over Armenia's sovereignty, leaving little room, if any, for manoeuvre; ensuring Armenia remains firmly within its sphere of influence and Western interference is contained. As Putin's reign draws to a close, the future remains uncertain, but one thing is clear: Armenia's fate lies in Russia's and Turkey's hands. Any hopes for Western integration are mere illusions in the current political landscape.

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