

The Developments between Armenia and Azerbaijan

Last week, Moscow accused Azerbaijan over violating the cease fire agreement which was signed in November 2020. Recently, Azerbaijan had seized the village of Parukh in Artsakh, while two Armenian soldiers have been killed in ongoing attacks using combat drones. The Russian defence ministry also accused Azerbaijani troops of using Turkish-made drones to strike Karabakh troops, while the foreign ministry in Moscow expressed "extreme concern" over the spiralling tensions in the region.

The 2020 ceasefire was enacted as a result of the Azeri victory over Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave. Russia was compelled to impose a cease fire agreement and deploy a small quantity of troops for peacekeeping purposes since, it could not risk any further losses within the region. On the other hand, the victory within the enclave was a huge success for Baku, Ankara and most importantly Washington.

The timing of the recent events raises eyebrows given that this event has taken place in the midst of the Ukraine crisis. In order to genuinely understand, the meaning behind the recent skirmishes between Azeri and Armenian forces, several points have to be considered regarding several players and the past implications between Azerbaijan and Armenia:

1. In the past, both countries Armenia and Azerbaijan were part of the Soviet Union until the Union's dissolution in 1991. However, prior to the USSR's dissolution, a heated conflict broke out in the Karabakh region in 1988. The Armenians demanded for the enclave to be incorporated into the Soviet Republic of Armenia. The Oblast Committee of the Communist Party thus, held an unprecedented referendum for the enclave to be situated into Armenia's Republic. This led Azeris to be expelled from the enclave by the Armenians via Moscow's backing, which resulted in a slaughter of thousands of Azeri Muslims. In actuality, the enclave belonged to Azerbaijan, however, in 1924 the Soviet Union decided to create an autonomous region called the Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan. Given that, 94 percent of the region's population was Armenian the Communists decided to exploit the demographic situation to sever and weaken the Muslims of Azerbaijan.

2. After the USSR's disintegration, as the war within the enclave intensified a ceasefire mediated by Russia, Turkey and Iran was implemented in 1994 where Armenia continued to maintain a large control over the enclave. Though the war stopped, occasional skirmishes continued between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Nevertheless, Armenia continued to be pro-Russian whereas Azerbaijan became pro-Western yet, still faced Russian assertiveness. What pushed Azerbaijan to adopt a pro-Western stance was the historical brutality that it faced under the Soviet era and furthermore, the Western sympathy towards its destitute situation pertaining to the enclave. However, the reason for Western sympathy was not the mistreatment of the Muslims in the enclave, but rather due to Azerbaijan's strategic location and its rich energy resources. After the Cold War, Russia decided to further boost its support for Armenia in order to thwart any Western-American attempts from securing Azerbaijan, as this would destabilise Russian influence within Caucasus. Furthermore, such attempts would harm Russia's energy monopoly over Europe since, Azerbaijan's Caspian riches can easily suffice Europe's energy needs. Thus, Russia over the years, has groomed Armenia's political environment and in training its militias to create destabilising effects within the enclave from time to time, as this would prevent Azerbaijan from exporting oil and gas to Europe. Because the only way that Azerbaijan can export energy is through the Karabakh enclave, a small gap called the 'Ganja Gap'.

3. As for America, it has always remained keen for its support towards Azerbaijan in order to strengthen its relationship with the country regardless, of the Armenian lobby's dismissal. In 2002, Section 907 Freedom of Support Act was waived by George Bush Jr, which allowed America to increase its support for the government in Baku. Consequently, the Armenian community in America became sceptical of the Washington's decision. Reason being, is because the Armenians maintain a claim over the Karabakh enclave and thus, view the American policy towards Azerbaijan as a threat to their ethnic territory. However, the US justified its relationship with Azerbaijan under the pretext of "fighting terrorism". For the United States, establishing relations with Azerbaijan played in favor of its national interests, where Section 907 remains waived to this day.

4. During the same period, America also became a main proponent of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) and its success later on, led to successful formation of another pipeline called the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline. The BTC pipeline carries energy from the Baku-Caspian Sea to Georgia and all the way to Turkey, which afterwards is exported to the vast European markets-mainly southern Europe. The BTC pipeline has been geostrategic imperative for the US to weaken Russia and simultaneously reduce Europe's energy dependence upon Russia. In 2008, Zbigniew Brzezinski told the US Senate that Russia's clash with the former Soviet republic of Georgia is a move to control the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. He further mentioned that **"If the Georgian government is destabilized, Western access to Baku, the Caspian Sea and further will be limited."** The former statement highlights the prominence the pipeline poses for America's interests. The US objective has been to utilise the pipeline as a bridgehead to enhance its influence in the region, in doing so, destabilise Russia and in keeping the West-Europe to be precise- independent of Russia's energy monopoly.

5. Thus, it is in America's interest to bolster its political and economic support towards Georgia and endorse its quest to join NATO since, it plays a key role within America's grand geostrategic plan to encircle and eventually, disintegrate Russia. Russia's 2008 occupation of Abkhazia and southern Ossetia has further compelled the United States to increase NATO's willingness to stand firm towards Russian aggression. Because if American decline precipitates in the region it would without a doubt arouse Russian desires to reclaim its historical realm of influence. Georgian subordination to Russia would most definitely create a domino effect on Azerbaijan who is key supplier of energy to Europe.

6. Though America has enough oil of its own nevertheless, it desires to control the resources of the Muslim lands, which would permit it to augment its supremacy over its western allies. The EU is the world's largest energy importer with an annual energy import bill averaging around 300 billion Euros for the last five years. Roughly 85 percent of this amount is paid in US dollars. Thus, the BTC pipeline would further enhance America's dollar primacy even though America would not be receiving the energy for itself but rather Europe!

7. For America, Turkey is another vital element to increasing America's dominion within Central Asia and the Caucasus. Washington's quest for Eurasian supremacy is aligned with Ankara's quest for regional pre-eminence, which is reminiscent of its Ottoman legacy. America has immensely favoured Erdogan's government in comparison to its Kemalist government- which was pro-British. As a consequence, in recent years, much collusion can be witnessed between America and Turkey in [Libya](#) and in [Syria](#) where America has also been accepting of Ankara's superficial utilisation of Islam within mainland Turkey. It is America's belief that, Turkic heritage in addition to Islam can help America exploit the sentiments within Central Asia- geopolitical red lines of Russia - by using Turkey as a vassal.

8. Therefore, when the Karabakh conflict erupted in 2020 America remained silent and tacitly consented to Turkey's immense political and military backing to Azerbaijan. No sanctions were applied on Turkey nor Azerbaijan and furthermore, America praised Azeri victory on twitter. Neither Turkey, over the past three decades of conflict between its Azeri Muslim brothers and the Armenians, never once sought to aid Azerbaijan. Though, Turkey became the second largest force within NATO in 2011. It is clear that, Erdogan's foreign policy is orbiting around American foreign policy. As a result, the Azeri victory was a huge blow for Russia and its puppet Armenia where for the first time Russian influence was dramatically reversed from the enclave. Because over the past three decade, until the Azeri victory, Russia provided arms and training to Armenian militias to create chaotic disruptions within the enclave which hampered Baku's ability to export oil and gas to Europe. For this reason, Russia was compelled in November 2020, to enforce a ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan in order to prevent further humiliation for Russia. Ever since Baku's victory, many American corporations have heavily been involved in developing the necessary infrastructure for Azerbaijan to export more energy to Europe where the idea of connecting Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan have also been under discussions.

In 2021, the US portrayed interest in cooperating with Azerbaijan on railways and attracting new companies in railway infrastructure, the U.S. Deputy Ambassador Michael Dickerson said during the meeting with Azerbaijan's Railways Chairman Javid Gurbanov on March 10. The Azeri Newspaper reported, **"Gurbanov emphasized that the active participation in important projects such as the East-West, North-South and North-West transport corridors, makes Azerbaijan one of the reliable transports and logistics centres of Eurasia."** Further adding, **"Moreover, it was noted that work is underway to make full use of the potential of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which is the shortest route connecting Europe and Asia. In 2021, for the first-time transportation of export cargo through the BTK was launched"**. It shows not only America is diminishing Russia's influence and its economy but also preparing to compete with China in the future and counter its One Belt project.

The Current Developments

Prior to the Turkish-backed Azeri victory, the US always refused to recognise the 1915 atrocities committed by the Turks as a "genocide". Under the Obama administration, the US urged Turkey to normalise its relations with Armenia, which led to the formation of the Zurich protocols from which Armenia withdrew in 2018. The urge for normalisation between the two countries by America was an attempt to sway Armenia into an American orbit, in doing so, such efforts of normalisation constrained Azerbaijan as it recognised Armenia's claim on the Karabakh enclave. However, during the war the US ramped up its support for Turkey and Azerbaijan.

After the Azeri victory within the Nagorno-Karabakh, much unrest was caused in Armenia where Nikol Pashinyan's position began to crumble as the public began to label him as a traitor who ceded the Karabakh enclave to Azerbaijan thus, placing Russia in a complicated position. Regardless, Russia was somehow able to preserve Pashinyan's position as prime minister where he was able to win the re-election. Consequently, after the Turkish-backed Azeri victory, the US under Joe Biden officially recognised the 1915 atrocities as genocide. The reason for such a shift in policy was owing to the fact that Turkey had achieved US objectives of opening up Azerbaijan, securing the Caspian Sea riches and rolling back Armenia (Russian puppet). Therefore, it was in US interests to approach Armenia who suffered a colossal defeat and provide the country with an olive branch hoping they would sway Armenia away from a Russian sphere into an American sphere.

Once again now, Armenia has been pushed in the West's direction by Azerbaijan's recent violation of ceasefire. Given that it has occurred in the midst of the Ukraine crisis, Armenia has lost much confidence in Russia for a solution to its problem. Furthermore, Azerbaijan is remaining stern on its demands where it wants Armenia to cede the remaining territories within the enclave. Thus, providing America and the larger West with an opportunity to sway Armenia into a pro-Western orbit. Additionally, during the peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Brussels, Armenia's prime minister has indirectly hinted that he is willing to fully cede the Karabakh enclave to Azerbaijan. If such an agreement does take place, then the pro-Russian government would simply collapse due to the pre-existing public resentment towards the crisis in the Karabakh region.

It is not a coincidence that Azerbaijan has initiated military assaults on the remaining Armenian villages in the Karabakh enclave with America's green light. In sum, America is trying to constrain Turkey by blasting genocide rhetoric to appease the Armenians while simultaneously using the Turkish-Azeri connection to push Armenia further onto the doorsteps of the West as its only alternative for a political solution. Not only that, but America is also tacitly consenting to Azerbaijan's leverage upon Armenia into ceding the remaining crumbs of the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave to Azerbaijan. If Armenia gives into the pressure and cedes everything then Armenia's pro-Russian government will fall as the public would not accept such weakness thus, giving the West an opportunity to cement its power within the Armenia's political landscape. America by condemning Turkey's past atrocities against Armenians and bombastic rhetoric against Azerbaijan, would please the Armenians and consequently, ferment the ground for a pro-Western government from taking place. On the other hand, if the existing Armenian government is able to resist the Azeri demands where it remains in a Russian orbit then America would pave the way for Azerbaijan to increase its assaults on Armenia, which would pave the way for a second front to open against Russia in midst of the Ukraine crisis. Either way Russia is seriously limited in its options where both of its geopolitical red line are in major jeopardy.

It is sad to see how our Muslim rulers run to aid the interests of the kaffir West. And when they achieve their interests, the kuffar in return, ridicule them showing their true worth. But regardless, our rulers flee back answering the call of the West which gives them no life nor honour. Only the Khilafah Rashidah (rightly guided Caliphate) State upon the method of the Prophethood will be able to get rid of foreign powers and their agents and achieve unity of our lands. Under the Khilafah, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia and the rest of Caucasus and Central Asia would be a united into a single entity, where justice will prevail throughout the lands. Under Islam, the Christians of Armenia would receive dignity and honour rather than being exploited as they currently are.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Mohammed Mustafa**