A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

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Editorial, 12 June 2015

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The book makes a persuasive case on how to connect the fragmented Armenian Diaspora. Dr. Demirdjian believes the creation of a pan-Armenian organization would be the first concrete step to unite Armenians and subsequently proceed with their campaign for compensation and restitution from Turkey. A meta-Armenian organization can be a permanent entity looking after the national interests of all Armenians.

Dr. Demirdjian has written hundreds of articles and editorials in refereed journals and received over twelve best article/author awards for his research. Among his half-a-dozen books are "The Emergence of the Ottoman Empire: A Pattern of Passionate Behavior", "The Demon in Diplomacy" and "The Triangle of Trade in The Cradle of Civilization" where he proved that Armenia was a constituent member of Mesopotamia and the *bona fide* birthplace of civilization.

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He argues that it's time to establish a worldwide meta-organization to unite Armenians with the primary goal of campaigning for the return of Western Armenia and Cilicia to Armenian rule. To reach that goal Armenians need critical mass. "The contention that large number are the common denominators of any organized political effort at achieving results has been a truism in the past,

present, and the future is beyond refutation," he says. It would take an enemy of the Armenians to disagree with the assertion.

The author is not a Pollyanna unaware of the challenges—external and internal. For example, he talks about the famous/notorious individualism of Armenians who always want to be in control ("All chiefs and no Indians") and do not get along with one another. The Lone Ranger trait has resulted in disunity in fragmentation in weakness in defeat and in loss of homeland. Rather than look into the mirror, Armenians have, for hundreds of years, deplored this characteristic of other Armenians. To paraphrase Mark Twain, "Every Armenian talks about unity, but no Armenian does anything about it."

But before demanding land and property, Armenian organizations have to coalesce and to rally around a single strategy. Dr. Demirdjian suggests the coining of a word—"Araratism"—which would serve as the name of the ideology of all Armenians working together to regain at least parts of Western Armenia and "for enhancing conditions for the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh."

While we talk about being a nation of 8 million we collectively punch way below our weight because of fragmentation and our rejection of compromise, he says. A pan-Armenian organization would give us the critical mass so that we would be taken seriously in international fora. The success of Genocide centennial commemorations demonstrated that when we work together we can make our voices heard above the international media din. It's safe to assume that he Pope wouldn't have been familiar with the Armenian Genocide had his Armenian acquaintances in Buenos Aires not familiarized him with the great calamity inflicted upon our nation by Turkey.

While Dr. Demirdjian makes the case for the necessity of a pan-Armenian organization, the nitty-gritty of setting up such an organization is provided by Harut Sassounian, the publisher of "California Courier". In the book's last chapter ("Proposal to Create a Framework for Uniting the Diaspora Armenians") Sassounian provides a toolbox for the construct.

Among the steps Sassounian offers is this: "My proposed scheme involves the establishment of a unity framework representing Armenians throughout the Diaspora, excluding those living in the Republics of Armenia and Artsakh who are already represented by their respective governments. The estimated seven million Diasporans would be entitled to elect one representative for every 20,000 Armenians living in a particular electoral district."

The Sassounian proposal has been out there for more than five years but so far hasn't been put into practice. Following the publication of Dr. Demirdjian's "The Viability of a Worldwide Armenian Organization", a symposium dedicated to the subject was held at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles in November 2010 and another organized by Armenian Women's Association of Canada, Manuel Keusseyan Armenological Lecture Series (AGBU, Montreal), Nakhijevan Institute and Keghart.com in Montreal in March 2011. They were well-attended and received enthusiastically. An attempt to create an all inclusive Armenian representative body along democratic lines was made in Paris but it was short-lived.

There are a number of organizations which are trying to represent the Western Armenians (the National Congress of Western Armenians, the National Council of Western Armenians, Government-in-Exile of Western Armenians). Most Diaspora Armenians know little or nothing about them primarily because the Diaspora media—often controlled by the political parties—are reluctant to cover the activities of "rivals", let alone promote them. It's this divisiveness which Dr. Demirdjian rightly condemns in his timely book.

Will our "leaders" continue to dismiss the concept of a pan-Armenian organization or will they unshackle themselves from the "business as usual" dead-end model? Will they continue to behave like our divisive and destructive 'nakharars' or embrace the bracing idea? When will they realize that the Diaspora could vanish in a few generations if the Diaspora establishment doesn't get its act together?