

STOP THE BLAME GAME

Posted on November 24, 2020 by Keghart



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By Raffi Bedrosyan, Toronto, 20 November 2020

It has been a week since the Statement signed by Presidents Putin, Aliyev and Prime Minister Pashinyan announcing the ceasefire in the Artsakh war. I am sure most Armenians in Armenia, Artsakh and Diaspora were utterly shocked and devastated, as the official Ministry of Defense updates until the previous day still gave upbeat reports about the heroic defense of Artsakh by the Armenian forces against all odds, against a combined army of Azeris, Turks and jihadists which had manpower and resources at least five times larger. Although we do not know the exact details yet, Shushi fell unfortunately, resulting in potentially immense vulnerability for the rest of Artsakh and the Armenian soldiers. Under the circumstances, agreeing to a ceasefire secured by Russian peacekeepers saved the rest of Artsakh and the army, but with harsh conditions difficult to accept by the Armenians.

As soon as the ceasefire conditions became known, initial shock was quickly replaced with a vicious blame game to find a culprit for the lost war. Seventeen political organizations immediately started blaming Pashinyan and demanded his resignation, labelling him a 'traitor' and 'land giver'. Protesters attacked the Parliament, severely beat up the President of the National Assembly. Government spokespersons blamed the protesters for not joining the war effort and not going to the front. The Artsakh President and the Minister of Defense blamed the lack of men and resources. Pashinyan blamed the previous government leaders for bribery and corruption, 'eating' the resources instead of strengthening the army. Several people blamed the previous government leaders for not negotiating seriously, not acknowledging that the 'liberated' or 'occupied' territories would be given away sooner or later in return for some security guarantee for Artsakh. Some analysts blamed Pashinyan for appearing anti-Russian, and for provoking Azeris even more by stating 'Artsakh is Armenian, full stop'. Others blamed the Minister of Defense for boasting that 'the next war will not be to exchange territories for peace, it will be war for more territories'.

All the blames may have some truth in it, but none of the blames will bring back the thousands of young Armenians martyred or wounded during the war. None of the blames will bring back the seven territories around Artsakh, or Shushi and Hadrut within Artsakh. It is time to stop the blame game, assess the facts, accept the facts, see the positives and negatives and start working based on the facts.

First, we need to realize that all Armenians, in Armenia, Artsakh, and the Diaspora, need to share the blame, acknowledge their own mistakes instead of blaming the others. The only persons not to blame in this war are the heroic soldiers and volunteers, who died or got injured, sacrificing for the nation.

Secondly, we need to realize that the ceasefire outcome is a proposal which was put on the negotiating table for almost 25 years, rejected by both sides with maximalist expectations at different times. It is now imposed not by Azeris on Armenians, but imposed on both sides by the

Russians who did allow the occupied territories to be taken back by the Azeris, but also allowed Artsakh to be kept by the Armenians. Artsakh is intact, except for Shushi, which is under Russian control not Azeri control, with roads in and out of it still under Armenian control. As stated earlier, the occupied territories would be exchanged for some sort of security guarantee in the past. Now, that security guarantee for Artsakh is in the form of Russian peacekeepers. Provided Artsakh Armenians feel secure enough to go back to Artsakh, Artsakh will remain Armenian and not controlled by Azeris. Every effort should be undertaken by Armenia, Artsakh and Diaspora leaders to start reconstruction and rebuilding of Stepanakert and rest of Artsakh, and to provide all necessary social and financial assistance to the Artsakh Armenians to return to their homes as soon as possible.



Thirdly, the Armenian army proved itself as a formidable force against all odds. The technological deficiency of not having drones nor much defense against drones was the main obstacle to achieve victory. The critical importance of keeping up with advances in technology, not only in the military sector, but in all sectors including biotechnology, electronics, nuclear, transport, etc. will be the key for survival in a hostile environment. I keep wondering if there was enough emphasis on recognizing the importance of drones in preparing for the war, and whether there were enough steps taken to acquire drones from other countries, including even Israel. Every effort should be undertaken by Armenia, Artsakh and Diaspora leaders to engage, finance and maintain technical advances.

Fourthly, Armenians again discovered that no other state would be able or willing to help Armenia, no matter how sympathetic, supportive and eloquent statements are made by other state leaders. In whose interest is it to recognize Artsakh, no matter how many petitions, protests or road closures we organize in the Diaspora? In whose interest is it to stop the Azeri advance, gross human rights violations, murders or destruction of Armenian churches? The one and only ally would be the Russians, not because they love the Armenians, but because it serves Russian interests to help Armenia, to place their boots between Azeris and Armenians, to keep their control over Caucasus against other states such as Turkey. On that note, it would be wise for Armenia to adopt a more pro-Russian stance than present. After the situation stabilizes in a few weeks, hopefully an orderly process to hold early elections would help find a more suitable leader in Armenia, adaptable to the new realities.

Fifthly, the Diaspora proved that they can quickly mobilize and unite during a crisis. The amount of funds and essential materials transferred during October was more than the totals transferred in the past 20 years. We should recognize that the real crisis is not over, but just starting now, with even more need for uniting the resources of Diaspora with Armenia and Artsakh.

There is now a window of security for at least 5 years or more, without worry of military aggression or sniper attacks by Azeris nor Turks. Armenians of Armenia, Artsakh and Diaspora must use this time wisely, in full cooperation and unity, in order to prepare themselves for the consequences after the Russian security is lifted. During this time, there should also be diplomatic and economic efforts to deal with the Azeris and Turks to fully utilize the benefits of the blockades which will be lifted. No matter how much we are bleeding or burning internally, we will need to appear strong, calm and competent with our neighbors to the east and west, as well as to our allies and peacekeepers. Therefore, let us please stop the blame game and get to work.

Comments



Armen Baghdoyan – 2020-12-01 02:34:06

To all the pashinistas who refuse to admit that they have been fooled all along I have nothing to say. I will just quote here an article by South Front in the November 30 issue of the on-line highly respected publication: Globalresearch.com "This week, the Armenian leadership has reached an unprecedented height in its state management achievements. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his government did not stop at the successful campaign to undermine the Armenian regional position and the epic loss in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War. Now, they are losing their largest gold mine, which was controlled by the Armenians for the last few decades." Armenians need to be less partisan and more politically savvy.



Minas T. – 2020-11-30 14:46:07

I wholeheartedly agree with the article and its recommendations. Historically, one of the main problems Armenians have faced are our own internal conflicts, brother fighting against brother. I have witnessed that up close in the Diaspora and for a while it completely turned me off of anything Armenian. We have historically been our own worst enemy, which made it easier for our real enemies to hurt us. Coming together in times of crises is what gives us a chance to fight another day. Building our infrastructure not only in Armenia and Artsakh but also between the Diaspora and Armenia is what is required if we are to survive and prosper. So, all the hot-headed people have to cool their jets and stop the shouting and get down to the hard work of rebuilding and healing. That is what is going to save us at the end of the day.



Vatche P. - 2020-11-30 05:31:23

Dear Compatriots, Let us presume (and Heaven forbid for our sakes) that Putin dies today. Amidst the ensuing political turmoil in Russia, how long do you think the Russian peacekeeping forces will stay where they are now? Where will they get their orders from? After all, who makes decisions in Russia? Yes, you guessed it; that one person himself. Just imagine the golden opportunity for both our enemies to wage yet another war following our defeat, and by now very much aware of our military inadequacies, they will grab whatever piece of land left to us. Just imagine. Therefore, we have 5 years to regroup and establish a military might - I agree it will still not be as good as our enemies' - but hopefully better than what we have today. I don't know who will be the right person to lead Armenia and Artsakh; I am in fact lost amongst those 16 or so political parties and all those names who are still the same names from our recent, corrupt past. We are arguing here as to who made what mistakes and how it should have been..... It is too bloody late for the 'should have been's'... It is what it is! Time to regroup!



Hovan - 2020-11-30 02:04:10

To Asbed: I disagree with you that we all share the blame. Armenians justifiably consider Artsakh ours. We were also justified in holding on to the occupied lands around Artsakh, because we believed handing them would have made us vulnerable. Finally, there is the "right" of holding to land you have won in battle, especially when the war was imposed upon us. We--Armenians in Armenia and in the Diaspora--wanted to keep what we had conquered because we were assured by the military and politicians that we would win if the Azeris attacked. How would we have known otherwise when the victory party line remained consistent? So, please, don't blame the Armenian public for the debacle.



Asbed Pogarian - 2020-11-29 19:14:53

Armen Baghdoayn, it is attitudes like yours that keep us in the dark and prevent us from learning from our mistakes. I agree with Mr. Bedrosyan 100%, we ALL share in the blame, you and me included. Don't forget that "Not an inch of land" was our national motto for over 2 decades and any leader who diverged from it was considered a traitor. Unless we armed ourselves accordingly to match that claim, this outcome was inevitable regardless of who was at the helm. This is our own doing, these 'decision makers' you refer to are products of our people, our collective thinking and attitudes. We, including you and me, have enabled them to rise to power and stay there. We, including you and me, have enabled them to loot the country, so let's stop looking for scapegoats elsewhere. That will only keep us in the dark longer.



Armen Baghdoyan – 2020-11-29 02:58:29

To whitewash the ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY for the crime, arguably second only to the Armenian Genocide, and nonchalantly hold the people responsible for the historic catastrophe that befell on them cannot be justified by any argument. Nothing can undo the incalculable physical and psychological damage the nation is suffering from. People do not go to war of their own free will. It is the decision makers that lead people to war. To cover up for the actual criminals and condemn the Armenian nation to living forever with the sin of a so-called attempted suicide is not only unacceptable, but also indefensible . No, Five thousand young and heroic Armenian youth gave their life on the battlefield not because they chose to do so, but because the leadership sent them to hell. Just as one cannot blame the German people for W/WII, one cannot absolve the actual people responsible for the historic calamity by planting the infamous guilt on the soul of the nation. The Armenian people are innocent. They are the victims of a leadership that alone will have to bear the responsibility for this immense national tragedy. And so will be recorded in history .



Vatche P. – 2020-11-25 07:29:26

There is not one single word in this article that I disagree with. All that has been aired here is true, and we should now be realistic and stop bickering amongst ourselves and putting the blame on this or that leader. It is done and it is a fact! I don't need to reiterate what Raffi Bedrosyan has called for whether on political, military and technological grounds and use these five years to regroup, not to wage another war, but to be ready for whatever may come. I also agree that we should stop blaming the international arena for not 'coming to our rescue'. Why should they? It would also help if Pashinyan looked towards Russia more than looking towards the EU for they brought no contribution except shouting after the deed was done and after we lost... Enough is enough. All political parties wear your patriotic hats rather than of your political gains.