

GIVE ARTSAKH WINGS FOR VICTORY

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By Prof. Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, Los Angeles, 15 November 2020

The primary instinct of humankind is survival. For all practical purposes, survival means life and death. To sustain life, from time immemorial, humankind had to have land for hunting and gathering, for farming, and for shelter.

Whenever his turf was threatened or taken from him, man went to war under the guise of defending the fatherland rather than for the objective of protecting the essentials for life.

Interestingly enough, historians have chronicled more on wars than on peace. As a result, we have more theories, strategies, laws, protocols on waging war than in living peacefully.

Over the years, two concepts have emerged: Victory and Defeat. Unlike sports, there are no ties.

As civilizations advanced by embracing the concept of civil society, humankind began to use a contingency approach to decide who won and lost by considering a grey area of circumstantial victory: one side loses the war, but the victory goes to the losing side despite being militarily defeated. Thus, the contingency approach says, the outcome of the war is not clear cut: it all depends on the circumstances and the intended and unintended consequences arising from the war.

Against the increasing debate about the war between the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Azerbaijan, let us apply the contingency approach to analyze the circumstances and the intended and unintended consequences to arrive at the outcome of the war that began on September 27, 2020 between the Armed Defense Forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan's "land armada."

After over 44 days of relentless shelling and bombing each other, the sleeping Russian bear finally woke up to mediate a delayed truce between Artsakh and Azerbaijan. The agreement is to last for five years, renewable for another five years if the parties so desired, and each side keeps the geographical position they have attained during the conflict. About 800,000 Azeri refugees of 1994 war will have to return to their homes and Armenia had to acquiesce on giving Azerbaijan an easement to use as a transit route from its exclave Nakhichvan to the mainland Azerbaijan.

Considering the inroads Azerbaijan had made, many people believe Artsakh was the huge loser in agreeing to give up almost all of the seven regions around Artsakh back to Azerbaijan including the second largest city of Shush, revered as the strategic and cultural heart and soul of Artsakh, including the historical city of Tigranakert.

Understandably, some Armenians are upset and even furious at their Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for signing a lopsided truce and losing over 70 percent of the territory that was under the control of Artsakh. An attempt has been made to assassinate Pashinyan. Daily demonstrations in Yerevan demand his resignation even though he had to make a difficult moral decision to stop the further carnage of the Armenian soldiers.

Yusuf Kanli, a Turkish journalist, like many Armenians and non-Armenians, consider Artsakh the big loser and Azerbaijan the big winner. Mr. Kanli raises an interesting question, though, as to who really won the war in the South Caucasus in an article titled "A New Era May Open for Armenia (Hurriyet, Nov. 12, 2020), and answers his question by saying it is Russia which won the war. So, we see that there will be more than two warring parties to whom the victory may go.

As time goes by, many pundits would say Turkey is the winner for it will realize its dream of Pan-Turkism to connect all of the Turkish states from Turkey to China since Armenia has agreed to provide ingress, egress, and regress rights from Nakhitchvan's exclave to Azerbaijan across the Syunik province (marz) of Armenia.

By applying the contingency approach, we may determine whether the loser of the war is the victor. Such an outcome is paradoxical, and yet it has happened many times.

Let us just cite two wars in which the victory went to the losing side. A well-known example of Pyrrhic and moral victory is the Siege of Szigetvar (1566) in the Ottoman-Habsburg wars. Although the Ottomans won the siege, it can be seen as a Pyrrhic and moral victory for the Europeans inflicted Ottomans with heavy casualties, the death of Sultan Suleiman, and the resulting delays for the Ottoman push for capturing Vienna that year, which discouraged and suspended Ottoman expansion in Europe. Thus, the moral victory went to the Austrians even though they had lost the siege.

Another classic example comes from the annals of Armenian history. In the Battle of Avarayr (451 A.D.), Commander Vartan Mamigonian and Armenians rebelled against the Sassanid Empire, which demanded the Armenians to change their religion from Christianity to Zoroastrianism.

Outnumbering and outgunning the Armenians, the Persians ended up with a Pyrrhic victory for the Persian losses were proportionately heavy and Armenia was allowed to remain Christian. Even though the Armenians lost their commander and most of their soldiers, they achieved a moral victory by keeping their faith.

Considering the intention of President Ilham Aliyev to recapture the entirety of Nagorno-Karabagh including the seven Azerbaijani regions under Armenian control, the Artsakh Defense Army and its volunteers stopped Aliyev from realizing his objectives. In terms of intended consequences, Aliyev failed to achieve his goals. Thanks to the heroic efforts of the brave soldiers and their Commander-in-Chief President Arayik Harutyunyan, Artsakh is still free.

As for the unintended consequences, Artsakh will most likely be recognized as an independent state by some members of the international community since it had to fight an unjust, an unholy war against not one (Azerbaijan), not two (Turkey), not three (ISIS jihadists) plus the deadly weapons of Israel and their experts on how to kill the Armenian soldiers and unarmed civilians efficiently. Artsakh had to fight against a gang of rogue states.

Moreover, Azerbaijani allied forces targeted civilian residential areas quarters and their infrastructure to kill them or to drive them out of their homes.

In view of the use of NATO weapons by Turkey, the deployment of 1,200 specially trained mountain troupes, and Turkey's terrorist soldiers from Syria and Libya and because of Azerbaijan's crimes of aggression, and on account of Armenia conducting a clean war, the unintended consequence will be the motivation of the international community to recognize the sovereignty of Artsakh as being the underdog in this war and as a way to punish Turkey for its neo-Ottoman aspirations, which is disturbing world peace and stability.

France, Canada, the United States, and several other nations are considering recognizing Artsakh's independence based on self-determination. Moreover, Armenians cannot live again under the genocidal regime of Azerbaijan.

Since Aliyev failed to realise his objective of capturing all of Nagorno-Karabakh as the intended consequence of the war, and because Artsakh survived against the combined forces of several states, and due to Aliyev's crimes of aggression, the moral victory goes to Artsakh even though Armenians there have lost a lot of the territories under their control.

Let us assume you have accepted the argument presented here that Artsakh has achieved a moral victory over Azerbaijan. Fine, but the struggle is not over. Within five years, Aliyev will resume his strategy of nibbling inch by inch, mile by mile, region by region until the entire Republic of Artsakh is swallowed by Azerbaijan.

What can we do to avoid another loss of our ancestral lands in five years' time? How can we give WINGS to Artsakh for a victory over Azerbaijan to save our ancestral province? By wings I meant cognitive faculty, imagination, thought, weapons, strategy, "immense power," funds for freedom and un-circumstantial, unequivocal victory.

Warfare, in general, takes place on many levels: Physical, Analytical, and Psychological. On the physical level, warfare is a test of firepower, weapons, troop strength, and logistics. For example, we need to think seriously of production of weapons in Armenia. It is time we learned to depend on ourselves. Furthermore, we have to have a program to identify and train those Diaspora young men and women who would like to participate when the next conflict erupts. Being prepaid is half the battle.

At the analytical level, warfare challenges the ability of commanders to assess complex battlefield situations, make effective decisions, and formulate tactically superior plans to carry out those decisions. To rectify our problems of military leadership, we should start paying them the minimum wages so they won't be able to build mansions at the ritzy Vahakni Community or frequent casinos, or to go to Europe for lengthy summer vacations. We need to attract the type of leadership which is dedicated to serving the nation rather than being egocentric to get high salaries and act as though they are retired.

At the psychological level, warfare involves intangibles such as morale, unity, leadership, solidarity, and courage. We have to work on these attributes, especially on unity. Where there is unity, there is progress toward victory. As an example, we must make Armenia to entrust the Diaspora to solve many of its problems and not just treating them as "Turka Hyes" only good for their donations.

Also, we need to find ways to organize the vast Armenian Diaspora into a single, powerful world organization to reckon with.

The human mind is conditioned to respond spontaneously in pairs to a stimulus. When we say male, we think of female; winner, we think of loser; victory, we think of defeat, etc. The real world is, however, different; it always has a grey area or an exception to a pattern.

So, let us be kind to ourselves. Had we fought the enemy alone without its allies and mercenaries, our soldiers would have given them a bloody nose, or even whipped them into a humiliating defeat just like the one was done in 1994.

In the near future, we will be facing again a large enemy of 100 million strong, (the "Turkbaijan" enemy as Jirair Tutunjian coined the word). We have to get ready this time to rise to the occasion to defend our ancestral lands by preparing in advance to protect our territorial rights against the "Turkbaijans."

What President Vladimir Putin did advertently or inadvertently cocooned another frozen conflict for the Armenians. Although he packaged it as a solution, the future looks better for Azerbaijan since by acquiring Shushi it came close within striking distance of Stepanakert. Besides, all of the seven regions used by Artsakh as buffer zone are gone now, exposing a vulnerable boundary between Artsakh and Azerbaijan.

Armenians fought against five "gangs" consisting of Azerbaijan, Turkey, ISIS jihadists, Syrian and Libyan mercenaries, Pakistani soldiers including Israel's deadly weapons, supported by Israeli experts, operated against civilian population. To help Azerbaijan, Turkey provided commandos to take Shushi.

For Armenians who are still mourning, I'd say rejoice and be proud. It is a miracle that our ill-equipped soldiers, albeit brave, could endure the onslaught for six weeks and in the process gave a valiant defense of Artsakh on a dozen of fronts. Once Armenians are out of the shell-shock, they will realize what actually transpired, and one day Artsakh's moral victory over Azerbaijan will be celebrated as the Armenian Spartans against a sea of Azerbaijani allied soldiers.

When one of my relatives (Aunt Azadouhie) of almost 95 years old asked what I was writing about, I told her Artsakh's war. She inquired how our soldiers were doing against the enemy. I told her that we had lost nearly 1,200 soldiers. She exclaimed: "Vagh, vagh, janes," and burst into tears! Shaking like a leaf, she lamented, tears streaming down her face: "They have left no young men in Armenia! How difficult for their parents, for their loved ones" and sobbed like a child. Frankly, I could not stop

Let us not make Aunt Azadouhie cry again while she is still with us or in heaven by getting united and ready to face the enemy in the year 2025. This time, we should be able to negotiate any settlement from a position of strength. We should hope and pray and work diligently for each and every Armenian to become part of Artsakh's WINGS for the third un-circumstantial, unequivocal victory over "Turkbaijan" to save our remaining ancestral lands and by liberating the crown jewel city of Shush.

There are no comments yet.