

# NEW MINDSET, NEW ARMENIA

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## Defeat and Opportunity

By Harut Der-Tavitian, Los Angeles, March 2021

***"A high heart ought to bear calamities and not flee them, since bearing them reveals the grandeur of the mind and fleeing them the cowardice of the heart."*** Pietro Aretino, 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian author who influenced art and politics.

***"To be brave in misfortune is to be worthy of manhood; to be wise in misfortune is to conquer fate."*** Agnes Repplier, 19<sup>th</sup> century American essayist.

We must admit our defeat in the Second Artsakh War put every patriotic Armenian in a difficult state of mind. We must also admit that as much as the agony of defeat, we are concerned in the disgraceful situation we are witnessing in Armenia. **In life as in the life of nations, progress is made by those who learn from defeat or failure and create the opportunity to make up for the loss.** We are witnessing the opposite in Armenia.

Just as in the past three decades, when opportunists exploited the victory of the First Artsakh War for their enrichment, today they are exploiting defeat. Thus, we have become vulnerable to new disasters. Our leaders lack the brilliance of Aretino and the wisdom of Repplier to overcome defeat and become masters of our destiny. Here are practical steps we should take to recover and put Armenia on the path to strength, security, peace, democracy, and prosperity. Throughout many articles in the past three decades, we had stressed the importance of implementing these steps.

### Being Aware of the Responsibility of Generations

Every generation is a link in the long chain of history. As such, it has a responsibility to contribute to the strengthening of that chain. To succeed as a nation, the following must be ingrained in the mind of each Armenian: "What can I do for my NATION?" Let us not be cognizant only of our weaknesses and correct them, but also be aware of our strengths. We are a strong and hardy nation. Otherwise, we would not have existed today when nations that were much stronger than us have disappeared. Now our generation is facing a historic mission. However, our newest national awakening that began in 1988 has a long way to go before our dreams come true.

### Perception of the Value of the "Whole"

When we take a look at our millennial history, it becomes clear that whenever we were guided by the interests of the "whole", that is, the Armenian nation, we were victorious. When the interests of the "part", that is, the individual-clan-party dominated, the "whole" has suffered. Instead of developing the consciousness of the 'whole', we have often plunged into the labyrinth of regimes and ideologies that have divided our national spirit. The greats of the Armenian nation were

immortalized partly because they sought to serve beyond the transient. They were immortalized because they sought to serve the long-term interests of the nation. Unfortunately, this consciousness is not apparent among the leaders who claim to lead our nation. Otherwise, we would not have fallen into these dire times.

### **Prominence of National Orientation**

It's essential that we pursue a policy of national orientation in shaping our independent destiny. Our efforts should be directed towards serving the interests of our nation and not those of foreign powers. Let us not be carried away by vain and dreamy promises and empty hopes. Let's not seek justice from the right or the left. Let's realize that this so-called justice is directly related to our strength. If we harbor that power, we can demand and assert our rights. If we don't, then our demands become ridiculous...we become impoverished and despised by the left and the right.

### **The Need to Free Ourselves from Self-deception**

While it is hard to accept that as a nation we suffer from self-deception, it is necessary to acknowledge this fact as a vital step to overcome the misfortunes we have suffered and the dangers that still threaten us. As a nation, we don't realize that we are wasting the heritage we have inherited. We dismiss our shortcomings and besmirch and discredit nations that appeared in history centuries after us but are now far ahead of us.

Every Armenian must ask: "Was this my Big Dream?" Unfortunately, a majority of Armenians will give a negative response to the question--from those who were driven from their homeland as a result of the Genocide to those who emigrated from Armenia in recent years. We must express our dissatisfaction over all shameful aspects and abhorrent behavior, especially those in leadership positions that have caused national disappointment. More than 150 years ago Raffi said: "Self-deception is moral suicide, the cure for which lies in self-awareness. It is self-awareness that moves the individual to enduring enterprises. It inspires the person to relentless progress. It gives birth to genius, craft, science and the well-being of the world. Dissatisfaction with his condition is an honest stimulus that leads to his well-being."

### **The Essence of Democracy and the Rule of Law**

As pleasing as the image of the hero achieving miracles may seem, he cannot ensure the long-term well-being of a state. On the other hand, the dictator who considers himself a do-gooder and hero is just as much a curse for his country and people. The rule of law and democracy are fundamental to the well-being and progress of a country. The situation in the country could not be improved by replacing one feudal lord with another. Institutional change and change in people's mentality and psychology are what make a difference. The wider the base of democracy, stronger is the country's position and the right of its citizenry to have a dignified life and future. This is fact because the country does not depend on a few people who are prone to bribery or even subject to assassination. Rather than depend for our salvation on individuals, we should strengthen Yeghishe Charents'

message in the minds of the people, i.e. the necessity to form a collective force.

The importance of democracy and the rule of law can't be overstated. If we are truly concerned in a dignified future for our country, its economic growth, the improvement of its image, and the just solution of the Artsakh issue, then we must first create a legal, just and democratic framework. We must be aware that the degree of stability of any state depends first and foremost on the quality of the principles of justice, law, freedom and democracy that its citizens profess.

### **The Importance of Learning from History**

There are many parallels between the past and the present. Thus, the past should be a textbook which should teach us what not to repeat. From the heroic Battle of Sartarapat to the disgrace of Kars, from the heroic Battle of Artsakh to the recent calamity we observe the following: Do victories achieved by the sacrifices of idealists in desperate situations become prey to peacetime opportunists and exploiters who lack national consciousness and patriotism? The catastrophe of the Second Artsakh War proved that we are not heeding the lessons of history and thus are repeating our mistakes.

There is enough evidence to confirm that if our political leaders, intelligentsia and people had acted in accordance with the above-mentioned points, our current situation would have been more favorable. On many occasions the alarm has been sounded by far-sighted Armenians that we are on the wrong track and that we need "an ACUTE CHANGE OF COURSE in our way of thinking and acting to stop the process of decay." Our leaders have been warned that the calm but destructive process must be DISTURBED in search of new ways and new perspectives. Our feckless leaders have been told many times that we have to build our future with our hands trusting our own power and the call of our heritage and joint forces. Our so-called leaders have been told we should not tolerate any force--internal or external--which restrains our critical thinking. A leader who restrains people's thoughts cannot lead the nation to a dignified future. The main guarantee of a secure and dignified future for a small nation like ours lies in the empowerment of its people and in the establishment of a democratic, just and lawful society. It must be the responsibility of all of us to strive for that goal. We must support the struggle of those who are fighting for that cause and spread their ideas. As the saying goes: "only those who believe they can, will win."

Our defeat in the recent Artsakh war should not subdue us but strengthen our fighting spirit, help us atone for our mistakes and move forward. We are hopeful the young generation of Armenia will lead us in that direction. More than 400 years ago, French essayist Montaigne wrote: "There are defeats more triumphant than victories." The process of justifying Montaigne's statement begins with revealing the reasons for our failures and holding those responsible accountable.

Finally, from the most successful American professional football coach and often quoted Vince Lombardi: "It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get up." And one more: "Individual commitment to a group effort. That's what makes a team work."



**There are no comments yet.**