INTERNAL DICHOTOMIES THREATEN ARMENIAN STATEHOOD

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In a unicameral parliamentary democracy, such as in the Republic of Armenia (RoA), parliamentarians of both the ruling majority and the opposition minority work together closely to formulate and draft legislations and policies. All critical decisions are made through debates, discussions, lobbying and voting. In RoA this is not foreseen to happen in the newly elected parliament due to the acute political and ideological dichotomies between the different factions. Unfortunately, what is foreseen is continuation of the political impasse that the country went through since the end of the Second Artsakh war in November 2020.

This political gridlock is now transferred to the parliament where all major decisions should be made, a situation that brings forward serious concerns such as: how can the fragile democratic system in RoA sustain such a standoff without falling apart? How can the antagonistic factions collaborate to preserve political processes that are the minimum requirements for the functioning of the state? Are there any points of agreement that can constitute the basis for political dialogue and collaboration? Are the political factions showing awareness regarding the essentiality of collaboration?

The political system in RoA is not designed to have checks and balances between the legislative and the executive bodies, rather, the opposition must work closely with the ruling majority to be able to influence policies and legislation. Furthermore, small interest groups and parties can have a say in the political process and voice their ideas and concerns in the parliament. Parties and coalitions that could not win seats in the elections can still contribute to the political process by diligently working with members of parliament and presenting their positions. All this is contingent upon the will of these opposing factions to communicate with each other in a constructive manner. The alternative to this will be dictatorship of the majority mentioned by the re-elected acting Prime Minister Pashinyan during the victory rally on June 21 in Yerevan, although he referred to it as “dictatorship of law”. On the other hand, the parliamentary opposition factions did not show any deference or efforts to reverse their animosity towards the ruling party. The opposition continued accusing the acting prime minister of treason and being a foreign agent, while the latter verbally assailed his opponents with “steel revolution” and threats of dictatorship. As such, the democratic process in RoA is in danger of paralysis or in the best-case scenario survival with malfunction.

One of the advantages of a unicameral parliamentary system is that bills can be passed easier through a simple majority of only 3/5th of the votes. More importantly, in unicameral system the approval process of legislations is shorter and more efficient because they are not passed through ratification by a second chamber such as a senate. However, in a highly divided political milieu such a system can be used as a platform to marginalize the opposition voices and set aside their constructive criticisms and contributions. This is what is expected to happen in RoA knowing that the opposing factions do not express the minimum consensus over any of the national strategic issues

such as territorial threats, the status of Artsakh, RoA's foreign policies and orientation, institutional reforms and fighting corruption, to name only some of the major issues.

In the foreseen future, the internal animosity between the ruling and opposition factions will constitute the prime and most serious challenge for the sustainability of democracy and state institutions in RoA. This is said simply because neither of the two camps have shown any awareness towards the essentiality of collaboration and constructive criticism. Both the ruling party and the opposition have, on the contrary, highlighted during the days following June 20 elections their willingness to continue their pre-elections political rhetoric and behaviour that can only be defined as divisive and prejudicial towards each other.

Armenians should start to realize that statehood requires certain modicum of behaviors, attitudes, etiquettes and approaches; otherwise, they will fail in running a state. Every game in life has its rules and processes including the game of party politics and administering a state, Armenians are not an exception compared to other nations who have a similar political system or who faced similar crises.

The necessity to make political concessions and de-escalate the internal political animosity through constructive dialogue and collaboration within the constitutional institutions is a prerequisite for the sustainability of the statehood. Continuation of the current contentious, intolerant attitudes and behaviours will only contribute to the dismantling of the state structure in the Republic of Armenia. The opposition's intent to grab power by engaging in non-parliamentary methods is a sure prescription for failure of the state functions.

The Diaspora looks at these developments with great apprehension. The vast majority of its engaged observers decry all actions that lead to destabilize the country once more. It calls upon all factions, parties, coalitions to come to their senses and prevent a likely catastrophe if this insane course of intolerance is permitted to persist. People have spoken. Let us move on.

There are no comments yet.