

LET'S PARTY. NOT!

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At a time when Russia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey are trying to determine the future of Artsakh and Azeri troops are harassing civilians in southern Armenia, the Yerevan government is in limbo and the traumatized people in the grip of inertia. Meanwhile, a redundant prime minister is amazingly the most popular politician although he is the person most responsible for the calamity of September. Ex-president and major domo of the corrupt oligarchs Robert Kocharyan advocates "full-fledged modern integration between Armenia and Russia" without bothering to explain what "full-fledged" means. Will Armenia become a Russian colony, a military base or a very junior member of the Russian Federation? "Back to the U.S.S.R"? The Great White Hunter has stopped badgering the wildlife of the African savannah and now talks in the following manner: "The world is being regionalized and global processes are replaced by certain regional integration processes."

Then there are political parties which stick to Armenia's body politic like carbuncle to a rusty vessel. Some of Armenia's problems are obviously self-inflicted and the multitude of obstreperous political parties is one such self-wound. One of the ways the National Assembly can be made more efficient and focused is to limit 'clubs' which call themselves political parties. Why would a country of three million need seventeen-plus political parties? Some don't even have seats in parliament because they received less than five percent of the votes. But despite their humiliating showing they loiter year after year dragging down the democratic process. When Armenia became independent, 500 "political parties" registered with the government.

The first post-independence political party was the Armenian National Movement. But soon after, it split up. So did the Communist Party. Splitting-up and changing name has been the pattern in the past three decades as parties and leaders have come and gone at a dizzying pace. Since 1995, there have been about 80 political parties. One of the earliest was Shamiram. Why Shamiram? Because many members were the wives of senior government officials. It's a mystery as to why an Armenian political party would adopt the name of an Assyrian queen who was obsessed by an Armenian king whose death she had caused.

The names of these parties betray their airy-fairy ideology. What's the difference between the National Democratic Party, Democratic Way Party, Democratic Party of Armenia, Christian Democratic Party, Democratic Motherland Party, and Armenian Democratic Liberal Party?

There are also parties with absurd names. How many people would vote for parties named Fist of Armenian Bravest Party, Impeachment Alliance, Will and Federation Alliance, Dignified Future Party, Country of Apricot Party, Citizen Decision, Armenian Scientific Industrial and Civic Drive, and Industrialists and Women's Union?

Some "political parties" received as few as 0.3 percent of the votes. Support for the Communist Party of Armenia dropped from 12.4 percent in 1995 to 0.7 in 2017. Traditional diaspora political parties, which settled in Armenia with great promise and greater hopes, failed to leave their mark on

Armenia's politics. During eight parliamentary elections since independence, ARF's best showing has been 13.2 percent of the votes (2007). In the latest (2018) elections, it was down to 3.9 percent. The two other diaspora parties (Ramgavars, Hnchags) have had similar dismal numbers. The Republican Party of Kocharyan and Sargsyan which through illegal means received 44.1 percent of the votes in 2012 received 4.7 percent in 2018 in the wake of Pashinyan's victory.

Why so many parties? Why can't similarly inclined parties (Communist Party of Armenia, Alliance of Communist and Socialist Parties, Marxist Party of Armenia) find common ground? Why the cacophony of crickets? Why do parties which receive fewer than a thousand votes don't roll their tents and go home? Is there something in the Armenian culture or character that encourages single-mindedness, self-importance, obstinacy, short-sightedness, bickering, and arrogance?

More than fifty years ago there was a popular theory that propounded there are two kinds of people—type A and type B. Type A people, according to the theory tend to be competitive, ambitious, high-achieving, high-strung, high-status seekers, jealous, can't work in groups, are immensely individualistic, lack group mentality, lack respect for others, are creative, pioneering, selfish, don't give credit to others, have a short fuse, and are imbued with free-floating hostility. Type B people are supposedly the opposite.

If the theory of A and B Types is valid, Armenians could be in deep trouble: we demonstrate many of the above characteristics in our political life. Long before the theory had gained currency, in "Cilicia Armenian Rule" by Paguran (1904), the author pointed out how individualism of the elite had accelerated the demise of the Cilicia kingdom. Paguran (the name is a pseudonym) said individualism is so ingrained in the Armenian psyche that it has become a racial characteristic. Throughout our long history, our national unity has also been plagued by the individualism of *nakharars*. The Cilician royalty indulged in almost as many internecine quarrels as it did against the Turks, Arabs, Mamluks, Crusaders, and Byzantium. Since the Genocide, we have witnessed multiple fissures in our diasporic life. And whenever a proposal is made for a unified body representing the diaspora, someone throws in the monkey wrench.

When we have two dozen political parties with leaders bathed in self regard, how can we have an effective state, army, and civic institutions? If all of us insist at being the top dog at all times how can we lead anyone?

Even if the A and B Type theory were not scientific, the number of political parties in our homeland indicates we have a problem about working in unison. We should take a long look at ourselves and acknowledge that we suffer from the "too many chiefs and a few Indians" phenomenon. If we don't correct the fatal flaw, Armenia could become a vassal of the Turkbeijan Twins. Right now, we need a coalition government following parliamentary elections: a government with a single agenda... to put the country on the right track. Armenia needs a coalition government that would put aside bickering, petty jealousies, and self-aggrandizement, and devise a National Reconstruction Plan. Let's bring

back the spirit of 1995. Let our politicians park their egos outside the National Assembly. It could be our last chance to have an independent homeland.

*"The former regional governor of Syunik on Wednesday announced the launch of a new political party in a move which he claimed to be part of an anti-government campaign 'to oust the current regime.'"
Tert.am, March 11, 2021.*

Comments



Tavit – 2021-03-20 00:51:13

The 44-Day war was a *Russian* war. Putin let it happen or even wanted it to happen. Putin sat on his hands in the leadup to the war as Turkey flew American F-16s, other weapons, and thousands of terrorists into Azerbaijan. Putin stopped the war on November 9, which means he could have stopped it before September 27. Is this not obvious? Think about it: Putin favored Russia's Turkic adversaries (one of them a NATO member) over a loyal ally who had never done anything to orient Armenian policy away from Russia. A few possible slipups by Pashinyan amounted to nothing except in the eyes of irrational Russians. In other words, Putin's policies were and are totally backwards and upside down. Few Armenians want to admit any of this because they are afraid that Putin will throw another of his famous irrational temper tantrums. And what did Russia gain from this war? Nothing. In fact, Russia lost. Turkey and NATO have penetrated the Caucasus once again.. That's in addition to their long-standing penetration by way of Georgia. That's why you hear few complaints from the U.S., NATO, and EU. They liked the war. So Putin likes what NATO likes. Totally irrational. For some strange reason that only a psychologist may be able to determine, Putin can't recognize an ally when he sees one. Neither can the half-Armenian Foreign Minister Lavrov and the half-Tartar Russian Defense Minister. Something is seriously wrong with Russia. You are never going to please someone as unstable as Putin and his cohorts. Armenians may need to depend on Russia, but only in the sense that a kidnapped person must depend on its kidnapper. The Armenian - Russian relationship is psychologically sick.



Aha – 2021-03-19 17:02:47

Excellent and timely article from Keghart (and wise comment from M. Baghdoyan). As for the current administration not understanding Russia's role in its security and playing the independent minded teenage rebel, I'll simply quote the great Warren Buffet: "It is difficult to make one understand a concept if his/her salary depends upon not understanding it".



Lusine Natbandyan - 2021-03-19 03:16:19

How much choice does today's Armenia have? Russia owns Armenia's strategic resources: gas, water and power, railroads and communication, Russian soldiers guard our borders with Turkey and Iran, plus Russian peacekeepers now are present in Artsakh. But before Russia re-gains its trust with common Armenians like myself we want to see a few simple steps taken to strengthen/validate our partnership: a) no arms can be provided or sold to Azerbaijan b) Treaty of Moscow of 1921 should be denounced c) Russia should support legalization of 1989 Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) referendum of MIACUM with Armenia, d) Armenia should freely exercise its right to involve diaspora and their countries of residence in its militarization, economic and social development programs. We have very strong Armenian presence in Russia, let them work hand-to-hand with authorities. Is it too much to ask? I don't think so.



art hagopian - 2021-03-18 19:17:50

During the corrupt Kocharian/Sarkisyan era Aliyev never tried a large scale attack, because they had the support of Russia and Putin. Pashinian since 2011 had been advocating to move away from Russia and when he came to power he moved towards NATO and the European Union. Russia punished all Armenia because of that advocacy. As far as corruption in politicians, name one who is not corrupt and that will be a failed politician. Remember Mulroneys and under the table envelopes (airbus issue)? To survive we have to align with Russia.



H - 2021-03-18 15:33:53

Good assessment. Thank you. Could it be that the "odars" know the essence of the Armenian ego more than Armenians do? Search the sources of all the parties competing. Not one works for unity. One theory is that if Armenians unite, the "odars", including the arch enemies of the nation, force of feeding Armenian ego and greed with money, flimsy jobs, bribes, stocks in the oil pipe, will be neutralized, while Armenia prospers. Kocharian for Russia, others for others. I don't see another theory. Good to vent. Yet are we going anywhere by writing and recommending compromises for unity...



Minas Tanietian – 2021-03-18 13:08:06

Very well said. However, in response to some of the comments, I don't believe having Armenia be a vassal state of Russia is the right answer. I am sure with the right leadership Armenia can build a close relationship with Russia without being totally under their control. Something akin to the relationship of Israel and the US. The diaspora has the responsibility to help but they are just as divided as the the people in Armenia. It reminds me of the adage, "One Armenian - one free man, Two Armenians - an argument, Three Armenians - two of them are plotting against the third". I hope we can overcome this sad period of our history and form a Government of national unity that includes not only the people in Armenia but also the people in the diaspora. I know it is asking for a lot but at least for once in our history let us focus on the common good instead of individual interests.



Arsen Gülistanyan – 2021-03-18 05:38:58

Verry correct assessments and recommendations. Hopefully will be considered and implemented by the political responsables and by the public as whole... Arsen Gülistanyan



armen baghdoyan – 2021-03-18 03:33:04

Ex-president and major domo of the corrupt oligarchs Robert Kocharyan advocates "full-fledged modern integration between Armenia and Russia". Kocharyan is right on the money, whether you like him or not is irrelevant . It is the only way Armenia can come out of the existential crisis never before faced in her history. Do you want Armenia to become a vassal of Turkey, or be totally depleted of Armenians? Would you rather have an Armenia like Guatemala or Honduras? Words like Independence, Freedom, Democracy , etc. are meaningless in practice. As a matter of fact even state boundaries have become inconsequential in the modern world. I dare anybody to come up with a country that is independent, where freedom is universal, and where democracy rules. We are living in the age of regionalism and globalization. Can you tell me why the European Union is acceptable but the Eurasian Union is not. Margarita Simonyan put it very simply for every Armenian to understand: "Armenia is doomed to live with Russia, or doomed." Do you expect Kocharyan to issue a hundred page white paper to explain all the modalities and details of what his proposal entails? The whole editorial is an excellent advocacy of the rationality of the proposal. Armenia has once in a history chance to turn the unimaginable calamity befell on it into an timeless blessing . Armenia should be with Russia now and for centuries to come. As simple as that. I must conclude this comment with my great appreciation for the editorial. I really enjoyed it and respect your erudition.



Lusine Natbandyan – 2021-03-18 03:03:46

What else did we expect? In the last 30 years we transitioned from one-party totalitarian system to an option of having unlimited number of parties. We were "hungry" for freedoms, we were "thirsty" for free speech! In good times I would allow ourselves to go through natural maturing process and the right party with the right leader and the right national plan would eventually surface, but we all know that we don't have the luxury of time! So Let us individually LISTEN to all and each of them and make a choice.



Mesrob – 2021-03-18 02:19:20

Rather than condemnation or support of Nikol Pashinyan, my comment is directed at the 17 parties which are demanding his resignation. In the 2018 election, Pashinyan won 70.44 percent of the votes while Prosperous Armenia won 8.26 percent and Bright Armenia 6.37 percent. Thus, the latter two had 14.63 percent of the votes. They are part of the 17 political parties demanding Pashinyan's resignation. If we remove these two parties from the group of 17 parties, the remaining 15 (it includes the ARF) would have 15.47 percent of the votes. In other words, in 2018, each of these protesting political parties won, on average, 1 percent of the vote. How mighty do the mice roar.



Houry Ellezian – 2021-03-18 01:18:21

Two days ago, a friend was asking on Facebook: Which are more abundant in Armenia, taxi drivers or political parties? I remembered also a joke on Homs (Syrian town), it asks: why a bus full of Homsis, goes sideways? The answer: because they all want to drive!