COMMENTARY ON "A NATION IN PERIL"

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Category: Opinions

By Zaven Kalayjian, PhD, Virginia, 6 September 2025

"Everything that is Armenian"? Really? This diatribe sorely misinterprets history and recent events. It is typical political rhetoric: hyperventilating, alarmist, and revolutionary without proposing concrete alternatives, and thus ultimately destructive. It elucidates only the author's and fellow travellers' lack of insight into international politics and the Church.

We do not need hot-headed sloganeering. We need rational leadership, wise planning, humble spirits, and quiet and coordinated execution. I don't claim Pashinyan exemplifies these ideals, but Sarkeesian's writing here certainly does not.

Anyone with the least perspective on regional politics understands that Artsakh was resting on a lit fuse. The signs that this day was coming were evident even from the time of LTP, whose prescience can today be fully acknowledged. He saw then, and we witnessed unfold, the reversing of the balance of power in the region. Azerbaijan, following the most basic law of international politics regarding local disputes (which is: between two countries with significant power disparities, the weaker country loses and the international community can/will do nothing about it), slowly built up its economic/political/military clout until it could achieve its goal of absorbing Artsakh. For decades, Armenian authorities sat indolently and expected Russia to maintain the status quo. They ignored the signs of a gathering storm.

Pashinyan's role was largely circumstantial. He had neither the time nor the resources to avoid the loss of Artsakh. After the war, as the loser country, terms were dictated to Armenia/Pashinyan, as is typical between two countries with gross power imbalances. As much as we all would like it (dream it) to be otherwise, that's the way the ball bounces in international politics. To hang the loss/surrender/betrayal of Artsakh around one politician instead of examining the 25 year process of allowing Artsakh to slip away is foolish, irresponsible, and will result in future losses.

Political prisoners: I know little about the internal goings-on surrounding this matter and am unwilling to comment on it. However, I would note that many of the political prisoners of today were the oligarchs of yesteryear who were active participants in the degeneration of Armenia's political/economic/military strength.

Armenian Church: Here I have much to say, and here I believe Pashinyan is (perhaps inadvertently) right in his approach. First, let's dispense with Sarkessian's condescending attitude toward the Church – that it's the cornerstone of cultural and spiritual identity. It is precisely this attitude that has corrupted the Church. The Church is either the eternal Kingdom of God on Earth, or it is a farce – the actual opiate Marx claims it to be. The Church does not serve Armenia or Armenian Culture as a cornerstone. To think of it so buries and instrumentalizes the Gospel, thus reducing it to a component within our existence and our control. No. The Gospel and the Church are eternal Truths within which/through which/in the light of which Armenians have flourished and survived. We share the Church with the rest of Christendom. We need to understand, remember, and live within this

shared and eternal gift to humanity.

The components of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church that are particularly Armenian, those that reflect our history and culture and identity, are the expressions of the divine Spirit of God working with and through Armenians in history. The Armenian Church is Armenian, but much more than that, and first of all, it is the Church of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All rests on the Gospel; the Church is not there merely to maintain our Armenian "spirit" through persecutions, Genocide, or Communism.

For those who understand and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Church is preeminent: above nation, above language, above art, above all. It is the Church, which is eternal, that gives any of these human endeavors an aspect of divinity and eternity. Otherwise, nation, land, etc. are mortal, fleeting, and ultimately of secondary importance. Let's put aside this childishness of "severing Armenians from their soul." No external force can do that, even if the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church were completely erased from the Earth.

Pashinyan's so-called "crusade" against the Armenian Church, whatever else it might be (political ploy, populist move, whatever) at least reflects a fundamental understanding of the character of the Church: that it is preeminent, that it ought to be consistent with the Gospel and with its own canons. Pashinyan has diagnosed, even if accidentally, a fatal misunderstanding in the Armenian people: we have put the "Armenian" Church before the Gospel. Jesus said: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you." The corollary is: if we seek the earthly things first, we will have nothing. Pashinyan has called attention to this truth, even if his approach in addressing the problem has been juvenile and wrong-headed.

Genocide denial: Sarkeesian's criticism is overblown and cherry-picked. Has Pashinyan dismantled Tsitsernakabert? No. Has he or his government prevented scholarly or legal work? No. Has he himself ceased commemorating April 24, or directed the government to do so? No. So then, looking beyond the polemics of both Sarkeesian and Pashinyan, we see something else: what we see is a politician playing the cards he *has* in the international arena, not the cards we wish he had. If he had different cards, we'd see a different hand played. Why Sarkeesian picks this quote instead of "Artsakh is Armenia" is an interesting question. In both cases, what Pashinyan has said does not correspond to reality. That, unfortunately, is the lot of politicians and a tool in the hands of yellow journalists.

The Call to Wake Up: Indeed, I agree with this sentiment, as the reader who has gotten this far can tell, but not in the same way Sarkeesian intended. We do need to wake up – from the miasma of self-delusion that's afflicted us for lo these many decades, from superficial geo-political and historical analysis and understanding that leads to petty criticism and poor leadership, and from misplaced faith. I'm not a fan of Pashinyan's "Real Armenia" approach because, as far as I've seen, it does not aspire to what Armenians could achieve. However, a good dose of reality would be good

for us, as well as true Faith that leads to Salvation.

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Comments

Aha – 2025-09-14 13:45:39
Mr. Davidian's article was excellent, thanks! Unfortunately, a large portion of Armenians in and outside of Armenia (including highly educated ones) still believes that Nikol came to power to catch the thieves, end corruption, return Sashik's 50% and remove speed detectors from highways! That is why even after the 2020 war/defeat, after thousands of bodies had yet to be be burried, and after the area of yerablur military cemetary had doubled, the Armenian people overwhelmingly and from the first round reelected Nikol, implicitly saying that 'we like the way you govern, we're with you all the way, keep doing what you do'. And he kept doing it, the short war of September 2022 (224 casualties), 9 month Artsakh blocade, and Artsakh being emptied (at least 200 casualties) were all in his style. Pretty sure the population will reelect him in 2026. I repeat: Nikol is probably the fairest thing to have happened to the Armenian people ;)

Garen – 2025-09-12 11:27:34
So amusing... sardonically so.... So many Armenians with their ostrich head in the sand.... The psychology of the frightened.... All of you who are in denial of reality, you should read Mr. Davidian's article here: https://keghart.org/davidian-manifesto-to-policy/ Just remember... the metaphor about the ostrich with his (or her) head in the sand... the only effect is that, when the lion charges, the head gets eaten last.



Aha – 2025-09-12 11:14:08

My very quick on the go 2 take on your (Zaven) reply (sorry for writing mistakes) It is not true that repeated Azerbaijani aggression had remained unanswered in the decades preceding the 2020 (or 2016) war. The Azerbaijani special forces were never able to take positions from the Armenians (until 2016) and were often repelled with casualties, a culmination point being the August 2014 skirmishes. It is reported that following those altercations, special force units sent from Baku had refused to go forward with new provocations because of the impossibility to prevail over Armenian troops. The situation started changing from 2015 onward as Russia started to get involved in Syria and had no choice to negotiate with Turkey, which naturally implied that the status quo over Karabakh could not be maintained (Turkish demand and Russian gesture). This is the big change, Moscow letting a power external to the caucasus to get involved in the Karabakh conflict on Azerbaijan's side to make the Armenians more flexible. 2016 was a first manifestation of that (largely unsuccessful for the Aazerbaijanis), Nikol's rise to power without Russian opposition or interference to protect Serj Sargsyan was another, as it was hoped that an Armenian leader with popular support would be able to walk Armenia towards a compromise solution (as Nikol himself admits in a recording). Nikol had thus a very good starting position and a chance to aim for a peace plan offered by the Minsk group, where Russians would be the main player. He recently (August 2025) admitted that he refused to make concessions as it would increase our dependence (on Russia, the latter would eventually move its peace keepers in Karabakh). Nikol's favorite antagonists (Serj Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan) had at least reached culmination points in Kazan (2011) and Key West (2001), where a peace deal was at reach (in both cases Azerbaijan walked away) and war could have been avoided. Nikol didn't even try to reach his own Kazan or Key West, he started from 0 (as he had said pompously) and remained on 0. My overall diagnostic is that the first president LTP was right in 1997 (history proved it). Nevertheless in 2019, even if Serj and Robert had many flaws, the result of their 20 year foreign and defense policy was that the Armenian side had still one last train to catch (i.e. avoid a war where Turkey would be active and thus a major defeat, with Karabakh reaching an interim status short of independence but with a future perspective of a referendum). Nikol's mistake is to not have catched that train.



ANTOINE STÉPANE TERJANIAN – 2025-09-09 18:18:49

An excellent, sober and timely analysis by Dr. Kalayjian. Thank you Dr. Kalayjian for sharing your thoughts.



hovol – 2025-09-09 12:14:48
For those still believing in the democratic and strong leader image of Pashinyan, listen to this long interview from two Armenian apolitical scholars. It's about time that the Zaven Kalayjian's of the Armenian world wake-up. Listen all the way to the end.
https://youtu.be/T49XvdKa6X4?si=kkmCL8iQH206fIIJ



Zaven Kalayjian – 2025-09-08 23:31:48
Well said, Mr. Balabanian. We sometimes forget that, in geopolitics, we Armenians are together on one side of the chess board playing against the world - we are not (should not be) competing against each other.



Zaven Kalayjian – 2025-09-08 23:28:29
It may interest you to know that ever since joining the CSTO, Armenia's hands were tied when it came to acquiring new military technology. As part of CSTO membership, any military acquisitions were required to be shared with all other allies, including Russia. No Western arms manufacturers were prepared to allow their technology into the hands of Russia, including drone manufacturers like Israel. It was not a matter of Pashinian being "not interested." He could ask for military aid from any country - aside from innocuous materiel, like vehicles, nothing would be given to Armenia (excepting systems that Russia already had). To say that Pashinyan didn't need to sign anything (a peace deal) simply ignores the facts on the ground. The alternatives were much worse, including further Azeri aggression through Zangezur. As a so-called nation of chess players, I'm surprised how often we don't look at all the possibilities on the chess board. Please show us the "deal" that Pashinyan signed to allow Azeri's to pass through Armenia without anything in return. There is no such deal, and talking about non-existent documents/treaties does not help our country or raise the level of discourse.



Zaven Kalayjian – 2025-09-08 23:17:12
Dear Bedros, if I've prevaricated, I should be exposed. Where did I lie? Please elaborate. Without dialogue, we will never reach the truth. If we don't correct each other, we'll never become better people, or better as a people.



Zaven Kalayjian – 2025-09-08 23:13:47

Thank you for your comment. If Armenia's military strategy was to handle only Azerbaijan/Karabagh, as you claim, it did an extraordinarily poor job. During the "no-war/no-peace" period, many Azeri aggressions at the line of contact - often costing Armenian casualties - remained unanswered, After the 2016 four-day war, where the first fatal drone strike was registered, no changes in doctrine or materiel were made to rise to this new challenge. For years, Armenia watched Azeri military budgets rise and dwarf ours. In the one area where Azerbaijan and Armenia had relative parity - on the ground - Armenian troops were not prepared with the ground defense structures one would have expected after 20 years of conflict. The only conclusion that can be drawn here is that either Armenia simply did not properly estimate its foe's capability (an intelligence and analysis failure), or that it expected outside help from Russia to cover its shortcomings. Evidence across multiple administrations favors the latter hypothesis, in my opinion. As for ignoring peace offerings and signs that Russia was moving toward (and Azerbaijan away from) a negotiated settlement, I agree with you. But, it would take a true and extraordinary leader to convince the Armenian nation to settle the conflict at the cost of Artsakh, which is the only way it could be settled. Since the time of LTP, the nation has shown no stomach for this move. I would suggest that if our people had a more realistic vision of our local geopolitical reality, we might have been spared the loss of our men and an ignominious defeat.



Vahe Balabanian – 2025-09-07 21:18:34

Dr Zaven Kalayjian, PhD, has put lots of thought and realism in his commentary. I resemble Armenia to a climber who wanted to attain the peak of the mountain but lost his foothold and the only way he could get back to resume his climb is to get back his foothold. We are a nation of dreams, but dreams sometimes give place to audacity that makes you lose your foothold. Dreams alone are not sufficient. Here comes Pashinyan with all of his oddities and came to realize that as Armenians we need to have a dose of reality. He is telling what we need to hear rather than what we want to hear. That is a good start for rebuilding Armenia. A nation needs a strong economy in order to buttress its defenses. Armenia unfortunately is not situated in the best geopolitical environment. It cannot survive by battling neighbours with superior armies. So the only option is to use the peace initiative to rebuild the country to put it on a better footing. I believe that the organizations in the diaspora need to catch up with him and support his efforts to build a stronger and more prosperous Armenia. The world has changed and is still changing very fast. We need to protect and strengthen Armenia and not get into hopeless ventures. The diaspora organizations have yet to get this message. Instead, they are in the process of demonizing the Armenian authorities by every way they can. It is easy to criticize when you are not at the helm facing imminent dangers.



Vrej M. – 2025-09-07 21:10:45
Sorry, the reality is that Armenians made a poor choice. It is a neighborhood of Muslims. How are we as Christians managing in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Egypt? The same goes for Greeks and Assyrians. Secondly, Armenians are acting as defenders for Europe since it is at the border of Europe. Europe didn't care back in 1200s when Armenia was being invaded and hasn't cared since then; so, the entire Asia Minor region has been lost to Turks. Look at the situation of Ukraine. Ukraine is the neighbor of Russia so it is the first to get invaded. Ukraine is losing a lot of soldiers in that war and Europe is living comfortably. I have said that every European country, Canada, Australia, the USA should be sending soldiers. What I actually hear is a lot of Canadians and Americans say, "It is not our war. Why are we sending them weapons/money?" Being a christian has no value to the west. Some Armenians still haven't figured this out. The only reason that they are sending weapons to Ukraine is so that Ukraine does the job for them and weaken their old enemy, Russia.



Vrej M. – 2025-09-07 20:52:16
To Aha: It is my understanding that Pashinyan was living in the past. There were requests to invest in its military and to develop drones. Pashinyan was not interested in this. The Sep 2020 war was the first war that a country used drones in large numbers and thus gained victory easily. Previously, Pashinyan had said that Artsakh is Armenia and that is for sure. After losing the war, he started to say that it is only land. He could have said nothing yet he said those words. He went to sign a peace deal with Azerbaijan. He didn't have to sign anything. Apparently, so far, Armenia has never declared that Artsakh was Armenian territory. I was shocked. Apparently, France (president Macron) said that they would accept Artsakh as Armenian territory but they are waiting on Armenia. Pashinyan took no action. Did he even ask for military aid from France? With the peace deal, they placed Russian soldiers in Artsakh who apparently did nothing. They never shot at Azerbaijan while Azerbaijan had shot some Russian soldiers. How is this possible? Russia (Putin) said nothing as Armenians were being starved. Pashinyan then gave away some more territory to Azerbaijan. There are still soldiers on Armenian territory. Pashinyan signs a deal to allow Azerbaijan to pass through Armenia without asking for anything in return. What is this guy doing? Let me guess. His plan is to give anything the turks want.



Bedros – 2025-09-07 11:59:49
The author sounds like a Pashinyan minion... or a compromised "Armenian" taking money from certain US institutions, Turks, and Azeris..... This is how it happens: prevaricating rhetoric that slowly puts the people into a deeper and deeper slumber....



Aha – 2025-09-07 11:53:02

"For decades, Armenian authorities sat indolently and expected Russia to maintain the status quo. They ignored the signs of a gathering storm" Not quite accurate as Armenia's strategy aimed to be capable of handling the Karabakh conflict vs. Azerbaijan on its own, without direct Russian interference. The latter's assistance was needed to neutralize Turkey and not let it threaten Armenia or actively assist Azerbaijan. Which brings us to the author's next statement. "Pashinyan's role was largely circumstantial. He had neither the time nor the resources to avoid the loss of Artsakh." Starting from the 2016 4 day war, it was clear that Russia wanted a peace deal between Armenia-Azerbaijan and that it was ready to make gestures to Turkey in this regard. Thus, Armenia's own ally pushed it towards accepting a peace deal, to save it's face if you will. A leaked recording where Lukashenko and Poutin in 2018 try to convince Pashinyan to accept the peace plan they put forward with the Minsk Group, proves that Russia's objective was to avoid having a war in the caucasus. Armenia refused, and this was therefore our choice, not an unavoidable fatality. Very recently (August 23, 2025) the premier publicly acknowledged that he did not accept.the peace plan during the 2018-2020 period because that would increase our dependence on foreign powers (i.e. Russia). Therefore, the risk of imminent war, the risk of losing Karabakh and thousands of lives was intentionally/consciously valued as the better option compared to a peace plan that implied Russian troops in Karabakh. Armenia had a choice to make post-revolution in 2018, the 2020 war and the 2023 emptying of Karabakh were its calculated choices. A consolation or validation if you will, of that choice is that the Armenian people overwhelming reelected the Premier in 2021 (probably will do so again in 2026). The latter blamed (still does) the Russians, then the previous regime, then Sashik's 50%, then the speed detectors on highways, then Robik's 4 billion dollars, then general Manvel's tushonkas, then the Karabakhtsis, then Ruben Vardanyan, then Samvel Karapetyan, then the catholicos, then archbishop Bagrat's uncle's wife, etc. The people wanted this and they now have it, so nothing catastrophic or tragic, Pashinyan is probably the fairest thing to have happened to our nation.



wally Sarkeesian – 2025-09-07 10:14:49

Replay Zaven Kalayjian, PhD, Virginia, 6 September 2025
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2596399397375549&set=a.356056911409820



Vatché – 2025-09-07 07:42:09

This is one of the 'healthiest' and realistic commentaries that I have read so far with regard to Armenia and its current state - whether we agree or not. Despite the unpleasantness of what Pashinyan has been doing with the Europeans and, recently, with the Americans, I see no other choice! One of our old revolutionary songs - " I am convinced that the only solution for Armenians' redemption is the weapon!" (miyayn zenkov ga hayotz prgootyun). Well, where is that zenk? We lost what we lost because we had no military might against the likes of Azerbaijan, not to mention Turkey. We lost 5000 young men and some of us, especially in the Diaspora, were still eager to lose more to regain Artzakh? A dream or what? So, let us stop singing and mumbling those antiquated songs of the past long gone.... The only redemption (prgootyun) left for us now - whether we like it or not, or whether we like him or not - is what this current government and/or the prime minister is doing or trying to do. Tough on us all sitting thousands of miles away and criticising the current developments. Emotionally, I don't like it either; I don't like the corridors, I don't like losing Artzakh, and other losses that we have incurred... I ask: What or Who is the next option? A clergyman? As regards the Church and being the first nation to accept Christianity, I am getting sick and tired of this proclamation to the world, as if expecting the world and, indeed God Himself, to do us special favours because of it? That the World at large owes us favours for being the first Christian nation? That Christ Himself should fix all our injustices? The Church, Christianity are above the material world. I am sad to see and hear from the new generation of Armenians that this is still owed to us by God, by the EU, by the Russians, by the U.S., by other Christian nations...and the list goes on.



Giligian's Island – 2025-09-07 07:10:54

Our PM only wants peace! "Don't make the Turks mad, or they won't like us anymore!" It's true; We went from General Antony Ozanian to Secretary Antony Blinkin in one generation. Armenia First CIA Nation. we used to be Christians.