SECOND BEST IN CONTRAST TO IDEAL GOALS

Posted on September 20, 2009 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

The following is an exchange between John Havoonjian and Nareg Nalbandian. It appeared following the announcement of the "Road Map". The issues raised are relevant to the discussions held today. Do the Armenians want to pursue "ideal goals" or do they want to settle for the "second best"? Very little attention is devoted to economic benefits or their absence. Beyond conjectures nothing substantial is provided. There is lack of informed opinion.
This exchange between the two commentators is upgraded to the front page with minor cosmetic editorial changes.

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"Road Map" indicates real "reconciliation" will be a long haul
Submitted by John Havoonjian on Fri, 2009-04-24
As an idealistic Diasporan Armenian, I would like to see the memory of our genocidal martyrs honored and justice done regarding the illegitimate usurpation of the land and properties of Armenians. However, the pragmatic streak in me advocates the opening of borders between Armenia and Turkey, and benefit from the geopolitical and economic trends of the Caucasus region - without sacrificing our concerns for issues like the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh).

The Republic of Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora should cooperate and coordinate plans and policies, at the same time allow for two-pronged approach in dealing with Turkey and the rest of the world. I am envisioning a very long haul in dealing with Turkey - a formidable antagonist with superb bargaining and diplomatic talent. Add to this the geopolitical and economic significance of Turkey with a population of 70 million.

Call it Fate or Providence; we are destined to live as neighbors with Turkey and other Muslim countries. We are also in the unenviable predicament of depending on both Russia and the West for our well-being. The other alternative of being permanently in the camp of either one is definitely not in our advantage either; so must develop the delicate skills of diplomacy and coexistence.

On a more philosophical level, Armenians have to develop a healthy balance between historical and ethnic concerns, and current existential considerations. Moreover, in real world relations and politics, it is incumbent on us to recognize and not miss second best achievements in contrast to

unattainable ideal goals.

Respectfully,
Hovannes

Where is the economic benefit?
Submitted by Nareg Nalbandian on Fri, 2009-05-01 22:09.

Dear John,

My impression is that nobody is against opening the borders. That is not what's being argued about. It is at what price? A week and a day have gone by and nobody has a clue what this road map is. When the Israeli-Palestinian Road Map was proposed, at least some crucial details were shared with the people. Why this silence of the Sphinx? Russian, Turk and Azeri authorities, or at least people in high offices are talking about it, but our leaders in Armenia are engaged in double-talk. You cannot make sense of what they are saying.

Additionally, there is as if a concerted effort to convince Armenians that Armenia will benefit from it. The only benefit at present - if major concessions are not made - is relieving the pressure.

Economic advantages? That's very doubtful. For example, will the pipeline go through Armenia? If yes, then fine, Armenia will benefit. Similarly, if Armenia will sell electricity to its neighbour, then it may profit. The contemplated atomic station in my view will be a huge burden for as long as it is not clear who the potential shareholders will be. We may end up financing the station and being under tremendous debts for years to come. Can we afford it?

Armenia would economically benefit if it had a strong manufacturing base, to sell goods to Turkey. That is not the case. On the contrary, it is the other way round. Turkish goods, from what I hear, have flooded Armenia and that within the context of closed borders. The argument that the presence of 70 million people constitutes potentially a large market does not hold true.

Additionally, it is argued that the Turkish ports on the Black Sea will open up their doors to the outside world for Armenia. As far as I know, nobody has done a cost estimate of what it would cost if Armenia were to carry its business through the port of Trabzon, the nearest, for example. So far, people in the know agree that Batumi in Georgia is much more cost effective.

I would rather prefer to deal with the Georgians, who after the Georgian-Russian conflict are less dangerous to Armenia than the Turks who have not yet renounced Pan-Turanism and Pan-Turkic aspirations. Opening to the world through Trabzon will always be under the mercy of Turkey. Any future eventuality can close that window based on the whim of Turkey and its ally Azerbaijan.