'I DID IT MY WAY' NIKOL'S MAD GAMBLE

Posted on March 31, 2021 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

By Jirair Tutunjian, Toronto, 28 March 2021

In the deliberate absence of facts, logical speculation becomes a legitimate channel for understanding or at least getting closer to the truth.

Two years ago, the Global Militarization Index of the Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC) reported that Armenia was the third-most militarized (after Israel and Singapore) country in the world. Azerbaijan was 12th while Turkey was 23rd. The BICC statistics might have given false comfort to some Armenians who might have misunderstood what "most militarized means" in this context. It means these countries allocate high levels of resources to their military in comparison to other areas of society. The United States, which has the biggest defense budget in the world, was 29th. The United Kingdom was 64th and Canada 94th.

Trying to become most- or second-most militarized would have been impossible for economically fragile Armenia. Armenia militarized to the hilt but not at the expense of the economy. Meanwhile, *we* watched helplessly as petrol-enriched Baku piled high-tech armaments from diverse sources. How much could we buy, borrow or get at cut prices from Russia is a secret that Armenia and Russia would not divulge. The obvious question is this: knowing its financial limitations compared to that of Azerbaijan's and Baku's huge military budget, why didn't Armenia act before the balance of power shifted to Baku and the threatening foe took action? Why did we wait for almost-doomsday?

What should Armenia have done?

1. A pre-emptive strike would have been justified in response to the frequent threats by Baku and the frequent violations of the ceasefire line between Artsakh and Azerbaijan. The world would have condemned us. But better be condemned than suffer calamitous defeat.
2. We should have lobbied/pressured for more cutting-edge military assistance from Russia rather than purchase planes which were delivered without missiles.
3. We should have given to Azerbaijan parts of Artsakh and returned the seven Azeri territories. It's true that the return of some would have made us vulnerable but an internationally-recognized peace treaty backed by Russia could have given us peace of mind. At the beginning of the September invasion, Pashinyan said he couldn't negotiate with Aliyev because the latter "wanted everything." Common sense would dictate that Yerevan should have cooperated long before Baku had reached the point where it knew of its guaranteed victory. Consider that Baku thought it would wrap up the war in five days. Were it not for the heroism of Armenian fighters, Turkbeijan's calculation could have been on the money. That the war lasted forty-four days was testimony to the dedication and bravery of the Armenian fighters and not because of Armenia's military expertise or military strategy.

Why didn't Armenia negotiate from a position of power when it and Artsakh had been victorious in

the First Artsakh War? We were drunk with victory. The victory was especially sweet because we had won for the first time in a long while and we had recovered our lands. The public in Armenia/Artsakh/Diaspora were in no mood to relinquish what we had won on the battlefield and at great cost. Diaspora's "not an inch conceded" to Azerbaijan was fueled by frequent guarantees by Armenia official sources that our army could have coffee in Baku in a few days if the Azeris made the mistake of attacking us.

The third option could have brought down the government. President Levon Ter-Petrossian was toppled for advising such an idea. Cognizant of this reality, the next two leaders of Armenia, remained rejectionist despite the looming threat to the country and to Artsakh.

What did Pashinyan do? He obviously saw the challenge Armenia and Artsakh faced. More arms were bought from Russia and negotiations continued but now Aliyev had become craven. As Pashinyan said, Aliyev wanted it all. Did Pashinyan decide he couldn't cede land because that would have resulted in his toppling? Did he decide to let events take their course: wait for the Azeri attack...hoping against hope of a miraculous victory?

Pashinyan didn't want to endanger Armenia while defending Artsakh. Artsakh was dispensable so Pashinyan fought with one arm tied behind his back: he didn't commit the Armenian Army to the war. If Armenians lost the war, Pashinyan could say he did his best and congratulate the brave Armenians of Artsakh, etc. etc. So what if several thousand men would be killed, Artsakh shrunk and ravaged and many of its inhabitants homeless? If the Azeris were victorious, Armenia would no longer be hamstrung by Artsakh. Nikol and his (deliberate Freudian slip) Sauros-coached coterie could focus on endearing Armenia to the West.

Robert Kocharyan and Serge Sargsyan had also become realists/fatalists as they had waited for the inevitable. But by the time Pashinyan took power, Armenia had run out of time. The Azeris had lost faith in the negotiations. The Azeri public was pressuring Aliyev to attack .while the dictator was becoming increasingly certain he would win with Israeli and Turkish help. Azerbaijan refrained from attacking Armenia because that would have forced Russia to come to Armenia's rescue.

Some outcomes of Nikol's Gamble:

--The death of at least 5,000 Armenian soldiers mostly from Artsakh plus young men from Armenia
--The loss of the occupied territories and a large chunk of Artsakh
--Civilian casualties and heavy damage to Artsakh infrastructure
--Catastrophic damage to Armenia's economy
--The loss of $3-billion plus of weapons, ammunition, and other war material
--Political unrest
--Demoralized Armenia with deep chasms among various groups
--Greater dependence on Russia
--Possible significant immigration

--Damaged industries, damaged academia
--Turkish military presence in Azerbaijan and in Artsakh
--Societal malaise and depression
--Demoralized Diaspora
--Damaged Diaspora trust in the ROA government
--Diminution of Armenia's international prestige.

The above list is not exhaustive.

Pashinyan would probably win the upcoming snap election. The electorate would have forgiven/forgotten his many crimes, including his rejection (twice) of ceasefires suggested by Vladimir Putin in October—before the damage to our side had become too severe. Once re-elected, Pashinyan would have a "clean" slate to run Armenia without the Artsakh "nuisance."

Now everybody is happy. Victorious Aliyev is happy. Victorious Erdogan is happy. Putin is happy to finally have a foothold in Artsakh. Georgia is happy at the humiliation of Armenia. And MyStep Nikol is happy.

The Armenian nation is not happy. It justifiably feels bamboozled by its own, especially by the feckless and blundering Nikol whose name means victory in Greek.

Comments

Jirair Tutunjian – 2021-04-09 20:14:52
Ms. Ellezian claims my comment questions her judgment. I was commenting on her choice of sources. I sympathize with her because four months after the end of the invasion, the fog of war persists. She should try harder to dig for the truth. She should also re-read the first sentence of the editorial. It was written for a reason. She should have understood that. As I wrote in my earlier reply, I feared Ms. Ellezian's refusal to understand the editorial, would degenerate the exchange with her into "he said this and she said that" or if she prefers to "she said this and he said that." Bottom line. The editorial is about the criminal incompetence of Boy Scout Nikol. The only reason he maintains some popularity (30 percent down from 70 percent) is because many Armenia voters fear the alternative...the return of the hoods and the corrupt oligarchs. As mentioned, the litany of St. Nikol's crimes will one day fill books. However, one crime alone is reason enough for Armenia to replace Wrong Step Preacher: he precipitated the war when he publicly declared that Artsakh is Armenia. As I said before and for the final time, he offered Aliyev and Erdogan casus belli. He offered the present to Aliyev when he knew we were weaker than Azerbaijan. He told the world that 25 years of negotiations were a sham... that Armenia was playing games not only with Azerbaijan but with world opinion. After those words, Armenia had no legs to stand on. You may pursue what Vahe said to Onnik who said what to Vazken ad nauseum but please don't cultivate that furrow for my benefit.

Houry Ellezian – 2021-04-09 02:15:49
That comment implies that I don't have a judgment. And Instead of a convincing argument, you prefer to add more adjectives and more insult. You say that I am a Pashinyan fan? That was not our point.



Jirair Tutunjian – 2021-04-06 19:48:54

Ms. Ellezyan, unfortunately, there's nothing in your comment that I haven't heard from acolytes of St. Nikol. The words are so similar that they sound suspiciously like a catechism. I also don't know what to make of your words when you say you are not convinced or satisfied. What can I say? Would caveat emptor do? I can't afford the indulgence of responding categorically to you because that would take reams of text. As well, your tone doesn't encourage one to believe that you are prepared to acknowledge the sad truth about the disastrous St. Nikol. That same tone also makes me suspect the exchange would degenerate into "he said this and she said that." I have said my piece. I hate to repeat myself. You have sources and I have mine. Allow me to mention two facts that should spell "the end" to Pashinyan calamitous recent career. The irascible and undisciplined man nonchalantly provided Azerbaijan with casus belli when he proclaimed, during a rally in Artsakh, that Artsakh was Armenia. That indicated he had been playing games with Azerbaijan and the OSCE (Russia, America, and France). How could we claim we had been negotiating honestly for a permanent peace when we had no intention of giving an inch of land to Azerbaijan? The stupidity of stating the above in public couldn't have been more of a death wish. Another St. Nikol gem was his insistence that Artsakh leaders be part of the Armenian negotiations team. That too was a deal-breaker. You might simplistically assume that because I am not a Pashinyan fan, I must be pro another candidate. Let me disabuse you of that notion. I don't see credible candidates among those who have declared their intention to run.



Houry Ellezian – 2021-04-06 13:19:32

No, Mr. Tutunjian, I am neither convinced nor satisfied with this characterization, all of which is based on circumstantial evidence, accusations, and counter accusations. Pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, yet to be completed. We know that: 1. Vasken Manoukian later confesses, (recorded on tape), that he personally called army generals not to obey orders coming from Pashinyan, during the war. I don't know how you characterize that! 2. Samvel Babayan, Artsakh war hero, in his interview, states that Movses Hakobyan, another army general, disobeyed his orders, just because they were coming from him, and this fact was also confirmed by Movses Hakobyan himself. 3. The army was entrusted to Onik Gasparyan (by Pashinyan), meaning he is as responsible in this defeat. What about Davit Donoyan? I wonder how Pashinyan, a nonmilitary person, was accountable for the many faults inside the army. 4. Countless videos from soldiers on social media, each describing their own experience during the war, speak good of Pashinyan's decisions. 5. The story that word spread among soldiers: "don't fight in vain, Pashinyan has sold the lands"! With this logic, turns out, we were responsible for our own genocides, all before 1915 and in 1915 and 2020, and our historic heroes, including Vartan Mamigonian, were all criminals. Where is or are the real criminals in your equation Mr. Tutunjian? The Turks, Azeris, Pakistanis, ISIS militants, who attacked with a barrage of drones and beheading, dismembering, mutilating our soldiers and civilians? Despite everything our soldiers fought and resisted heroically for 44 days, since all of Artsakh was at stake and now Armenia is at stake.



Armen H. – 2021-04-02 18:31:53

I have been waiting for an article like this. Thank you. We have to face reality; it's a defeat. I'm not playing the blame game but was it right to suffer the loss of thousands of young men for one man's ego or so that he could consolidate his power? I'm surprised he's still there as leader of the country. Aliyev said before the war started that he was negotiating with the previous government leaders step by step when Pashinyan came he spoiled the peace plan. Did this mean did it his way? I don't trust him... Armen Canberra



Jirair Tutunjian – 2021-04-02 13:10:33

To: Jean A. To describe the article as "another Monday morning quarterbacking" is a rhetorical device that doesn't advance understanding of the issues. Post-event analysis is legitimate and can be constructive as a means for learning from mistakes. To Houri A. You ask: "When you say Gamble (sic), you mean he wanted to start the war?" That he gambled doesn't mean he wanted to start war. When it was obvious Baku was about to invade, Pashinyan tried belatedly to prepare Armenians for war. What he did was no gamble. He had no options. Re the previous two presidents, Keghart and yours truly have frequently criticized Kocharyan and Sargsyan and their administrations. Re the rumor-mongering of Kocharyan and Sargsyan during and after the war: that's a standard propaganda tactic against political foes. To Hovhanes B. The challenge in replying to your query is how to be comprehensive in listing Pashinyan's numerous crimes when those crimes are open-ended. Books can and will be written about the parade of his crimes. He made his crimes worse by rationalizing, justifying, prevaricating, dissembling, and obfuscating in his Uriah Heep delivery. "Can Rant, Should Govern" should be the slogan of the shrieking hollow man. Here are some of his more egregious crimes: 1. While knowing we were much weaker than the enemy, he made no attempt (give the seven Azeri territories) to Baku. He says that citizens of Armenia would have opposed giving the territories to the enemy. It was his job, as prime minister, to explain the realities of life to Armenians who, for years, had been fed false government propaganda that we could beat the enemy. One also can't dismiss his fear that revealing the truth might cost him his job. 2. Mikael Hambartzumyan, the former head of the National Security Service, advised Pashinyan to stop the fighting three weeks before the ceasefire brokered by Russia. There was an offer on the table which Azerbaijan accepted. That ceasefire agreement was more favorable to Armenia than the final agreement. Putin said Armenia would have suffered fewer territorial losses and retained Shushi. Putin said he was taken aback by Pashinyan's inexplicable decision. Ten days later, General Onnik Gasparyan, head of the army's General Staff, warned Pashinyan that the Armenian side was heading to defeat and war must be stopped ASAP. Defense Minister David Tonoyan repeated the warning. Military genius Pashinyan ignored the warning. 3. Rather than admit his military incompetence, Pashinyan said battlefield losses were not his fault. 4. Igor Popov, the Russian co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), exposed Pashinyan's criminal lie that the three mediating partners (Russia, U.S., and France) had pressured Pashinyan to give up the districts around Artsakh to Azerbaijan and offered nothing in return. In playing with the truth, Pashinyan insulted three big states and perhaps put us in the dog house of Russia, France, and America. 5. Three "minor" crimes: Throughout the war, Pashinyan--to Macron's astonishment--never contacted the French president, the leader of the only (other than Greece) European country sympathetic to Armenia; Pashinyan said Shushi was an Azeri city; Pashinyan said Iskander--the most-advanced Russia-made missile--was a dud. Did he realize the damage his hollow accusation could cause Russia, a country that relies significantly on the sale of weapons to balance its books? Pashinyan later said he was misinformed. 6. When he came to power, he saw Armenia was much weaker than Azerbaijan. Considering Azerbaijan's gushing-petrodollars, he could also see that Armenia--with its limited financial resources--could not compete with Azerbaijan. Rather than come up with creative ideas for resolving the conflict, Pashinyan spent large sums of money to strengthen the army. 7. He falsely accused Armenia's army heads of attempting a coup. 8. He surrounded himself with inexperienced and incompetent young bureaucrats who were Soros factory replicas. The above eight are a small sample of incompetent Pashinyan's crimes. The man is blessed with incompetent and corrupt rivals.



Jean Adjemian – 2021-04-01 11:10:30
Another Monday morning quarterback



Hovanes Boyadjian – 2021-04-01 10:43:49
Mr Tutunjian, You raised good points in your article. However,you mentioned that Pashinyan rejected twice the ceasefire from Putin. I remember clearly Azerbaijan not honoring the ceasefires,twice. Also, you should let us know what you think Pashinyan's "many crimes" were, failure to do so puts your article's worth at risk. Hovanes B.



Houry Ellezian – 2021-04-01 02:42:55
When you say Gamble, you mean he wanted to start this war? I remember him very well, addressing the nation and the parliament, asking if they wanted to go to painful concessions, and they all said no, let's continue. What would his gain be in all of this? Damage to his reputation? His legacy was achieving a velvet revolution and now he is called a "traitor". There is a lot of information yet coming out, so this case is not closed. There are even more fundamental questions: 1 - Why did previous presidents convert our victory into failure, and convert us from being the rightful owners into aggressors and occupants, in the negotiations? Didn't they know Armenian history or were they pressured into it? 2 - Why did they start the rumors from day one, that Pashinyan came to surrender the lands. This and many other baseless rumors. Because they new they had signed for it, to return the 7 regions, or 5 + 2 known as Lavrov's plan.