

# WHAT NOW?

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**✘ Editorial**, 10 March 2015

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Few people—other than the *naïve*, eager to believe crowd in the Diaspora or Armenian citizens who benefited from the corrupt policies of Serzh Sargsyan gave credence to Yerevan's pretensions that life was improving in Armenia. This week we learned, thanks to Sargsyan's brutal tactics, that Yerevan authorities can no longer pretend and boast that Armenia is a liberal democracy. Sargsyan has proven he's no slouch when compared to Aliyev Junior. The Armenian president might be more adept than the clumsy heir or Heydar Aliyev, but he is as nasty and as contemptuous of democracy.

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But first let's go to the Global Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum. As usual, the report is dominated by Western European and a few South East Asian countries. In overall quality of infrastructure Azerbaijan received 4.4 points; Georgia (4.6) and Armenia (4), behind Cambodia, Syria, Albania, Swaziland, Suriname, Jamaica, Botswana, Gambia, Rwanda, Guatemala, just some of the 76 states which are ahead of Armenia in overall quality of infrastructure.

In quality of roads, Azerbaijan registered 3.8 points; Georgia (4.2); Armenia 3.3. Armenia was number 92, behind Nicaragua, Ghana, Tajikistan, Honduras, Indonesia, Guyana, Jamaica,

Guatemala...Considering how tiny Armenia is, the 92<sup>nd</sup> place in road quality is particularly galling. In

quality of railroad infrastructure, Armenia was at the encouraging position of 69 but way behind Azerbaijan (34) and Georgia (35). In airport transport infrastructure, Azerbaijan received 5 points; Georgia (4.2), Armenia (4.5). Armenia was 98<sup>th</sup> while Azerbaijan was 87<sup>th</sup>. In quality of electricity supply, Georgia with 5.4 points was in 52<sup>nd</sup> position, Armenia was 71<sup>st</sup> with 4.8 points. Inexplicably, Azerbaijan was in 78<sup>th</sup> position with 4.5 points. While in fixed telephone lines Armenia (69<sup>th</sup>) was behind Azerbaijan, it was ahead of Georgia (85<sup>th</sup>). Perhaps a mini-thesis can be written why in mobile telephone subscriptions Armenia was in 33<sup>rd</sup> position (125 points) while Azerbaijan was 75<sup>th</sup> and Georgia 104<sup>th</sup>.

Last week the London-based Mercer human-resources consultancy ranked Yerevan 183<sup>rd</sup> in terms of quality of life among 230 largest cities in the world. Its neighbors in the ranking are Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras and one of the most dangerous cities in the world and Beirut. The latter thanks to the ravages of war and the influx of Syrian refugees. It's no comfort that Tbilisi (Georgia) and Baku (Azerbaijan) ranked 194<sup>th</sup> and 197<sup>th</sup>. Tbilisi is bedlam and Baku is a mess because of the horizon-to-horizon construction projects and pollution from too many cars and the fuel industry.

We might be poor, but we are a liberal democracy, Sargsyan used to the say to the world and to Armenians. We are poor but we believe in Western democratic values, Sargsyan liked to say to Western leaders and media. We wanted to join Europe but tsk, tsk, Nasty Vlad of Kremlin forced me into the Eurasian Union, hinted Sargsyan. Now, with his brutal machinations, he has unmasked himself without anyone's help. He has revealed that he doesn't believe in democracy and that brute force is his *modus operandi*. His old friends in Artsakh, who attacked a peaceful rally in Berdzor a few weeks ago, might have been doing "follow the leader".

Sargsyan has demonstrated that he is an unreconstructed military man. He believes the strong takes all. It made him successful in the Artsakh War—a war where he played a major role. The Armenian people are grateful to him, but a martial set of mind has no place in parliament.

Soon after the Artsakh War there were complaints there that some young soldiers, who had returned to civilian life, continued to behave violently—carrying the ethos of the battlefield to the civic arena and even to their homes. There was talk that they would be indoctrinated to fit into civilian life. We don't know whether that program was implemented. If it did, it's obvious Sargsyan didn't attend any of the classes.

His decisions of the past few weeks have left Armenia bereft of an opposition party. He has destroyed the Prosperous Armenia (PA). In doing so he has pushed Robert Kocharian—the 'godfather' of that party—into a lonely corner. By destroying the political career of Gagik Tsarukian, the former head of PA, he has also delivered a serious blow to PA's erstwhile allies—Raffi

~~Hovannisian of Heritage and Levon Ter-Petrosyan of the Armenian National Congress.~~

Now Sargsyan can dictate without pretense. He can change the constitution to succeed himself in 2018. He can put a crown on his head.

Hail to Chief. Hail to King Serzh of Armenia—our first king since 1375.

