

Nationalisme et Globalisation , par Harut (Harout) Der-Tavitian

Let's begin our end of the year reflections with a question. While taking a stroll, if you find a stranger's wallet containing a large amount of money, will you return it to the owner or pocket it? You can pause and ponder about it or continue reading to find out our answer.

In a community, the more the number of returners of a stranger's lost wallet, the more united, strong, and progressive that community is, because every one of its members is conscious and zealous for the common good as well. And the more the number who pocket it, the more fragmented, vulnerable, and primitive that community is, because every person thinks only of his own interest, even at the expense of usurping and harming his fellow countryman. What would be the reaction of those who have a "finders keeper" mentality, had they lost their wallet?

Let's ask another question: What type of a community are we? It is important that this issue is discussed publicly, in order to reveal the positive and negative features of our nation. By doing so, we will be able to enhance the positive and reduce the negative.

One more question: What drives us to write these reflections? A careful reader, looking at the headline above, would have grasped our concern. A new world is being formed and if we, as a nation, do not orient ourselves correctly, the consequences can be catastrophic. So with this article, we will strive to explain our understanding of world developments and in the light of it, make suggestions that may be helpful for us to orient ourselves in the right direction.

Important World History Events and Us

When we look back at world history, we can single out a few events that have had a major impact on the development of new world orders. These include the spread of Christianity in the 4th century, the spread of Islam in the 7th century, the invention of printing in the 15th century and the Renaissance movement associated with it, and finally the invention of the Internet and its development over the last fifty years.

In order to not overload our article, let us mention briefly how we Armenians came to grips with these events.

We became the first state to adopt Christianity as the official state religion. Why? Because in it we saw the force that could help us withstand the danger of being assimilated by the Sasanian Empire/Zoroastrianism. But when the globalization of the Christian religion threatened the preservation of our identity, we “nationalized” it with the creation of the Armenian alphabet and the resulting Golden Age. The architects of these developments were Gregory the Illuminator and King Trdat III, Mesrop Mashtots, Catholicos Sahak and King Vramshapuh, and the Mamikonian dynasty, a pillar of the Arshakuni royal family.

When the Arabs became a world power in the 7th century and by capturing Armenia threatened our identity, it was the Bagratid dynasty that found a “modus vivendi” with them, as the Mamikonians, backers of Christianity in Armenia faded away. With the subsidence of the Arab threat towards the end of the 9th century, Christian Byzantium increased its pressure upon us. However, with the advent of the Seljuks in the second half of 11th century, there was a major demographic relocation towards Asia Minor and especially to Cilicia, where the Rubenid dynasty established the Cilician kingdom (1198-1375). The Armenians once again tied their destiny with Christian Europe through the Crusaders.

The invention of the printing press (1439) became the impetus for the proliferation of the Renaissance movement (1300-1600), and the resulting reformations and revolutions in religious, political, scientific, cultural and other sectors, once again transforming the world order. Notable examples are the discovery of America (1492), the Protestant Reformation of Martin Luther (1517), the advance of modern science, spurred by Galileo (1632) and later, the French Revolution (1789). Almost simultaneously, the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the assaults of the Ottoman Empire on Europe in the 16th-17th centuries had profound consequences on many nationalities, including certainly the Armenians.

The idea of nationalism fostered by the French Revolution contributed to the creation of nation-states, as evidenced by the unification of Germany as well as Italy (1871). It was during this period that the Mekhitarist movement, led by Mkhitar of Sebastia (1676-1749), revived nationalist sentiments among Armenians, following the example of Mesrop Mashtots, in harvesting the best ideas of the era and introducing it to the Armenian communities around the world. Had it not been for the Mekhitarist movement, the future of the Armenians would have been endangered.

The advances of the Internet over the past five decades is having a similar and greater ripple effect than the printing press had and at a much faster rate. The demolition of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the reunification of Germany (1990), as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), can be considered a starting point in the process of creating a new world order. One of the results of this process was the newly independent Republic of Armenia. But in order for it to last, it must arm itself with the “weapons” that will help it to preserve its identity, and not get devoured by the process of globalization. In our opinion, there is a need for a modern-day Awakening that can be achieved through the spread of healthy nationalistic ideas among all classes of the people. It is interesting to note the influence that the idea of nationalism is having not only on small states like us, but even on major powers. To fully grasp the important role that nationalism is playing in the life of nations, it is enough to look at the examples of Donald Trump (USA), Xi Jinping (China) and Vladimir Putin (Russia), just to have mentioned the major ones. If the concern of the little nations is self-defensive, the major powers are using it to expand their influence and domination over other nations, be that in the spheres of the military, telecommunication, economy, etc. To accomplish their goals, they are creating “controlled” crises around the world. But if the “controlled” somehow suddenly gets out of control, it is likely to cause the outbreak of World War III. We all know what terrible losses we, Armenians suffered during World War I and World War II. Therefore, we need to be seriously concerned about the potential consequences of a World War III and prepare accordingly.

In light of the above, it becomes clear that we must endeavor to become a nation where the majority will understand the benefits of being “returners of a stranger’s lost wallet.” That consciousness will urge us to uphold our national interests over sectarian ones, which in turn, will help us maintain our peculiar place among

the nations of the world. If that national consciousness had prevailed among us in the pre-Genocide era, our destiny would have been different. It is true that delving into “ifs” will not alter our current reality, however, it can help us learn from it to avoid committing similar mistakes in the future. Therefore, it is worthwhile here to briefly review our recent history.

Lessons From Our Recent History

The spread of the idea of nationalism in Europe in the 19th century contributed to the dismemberment of the “sick man” of the continent, the Ottoman Empire. Let’s only mention the examples of Greece and Bulgaria, which gained independence in 1832 and 1878 respectively. Encouraged by these examples, other nationalities of the empire began pursuing similar goals, including the Armenians. That fact instinctively led the ruling elite of the empire to counter react, to maintain the status quo and the privileges they enjoyed. It is no coincidence that in the last quarter of the 19th century we see the creation of the Social Democratic Hunchakian Party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the Committee of Union and Progress, as well as the Zionist organization. The Armenians and the Jews wanted to have their own states, while the

