

Beyond Self-Deception or How to Take the Right Direction on the “Road to Europe”



International
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What is Europe, anyway? Are we part of it, or not really?

Geographically quite probably, no, since the South Caucasus Mountain Range actually divides Europe from Asia. Politically - partially, since we are part of the OSCE stretching from “Vancouver to Vladivostok” (attention, please, none of these destinations is in Europe) and the Council of Europe. Of course, there is also NATO, the so called Euro-Atlantic integration, where we are a ‘partner for peace’. Our membership to the Council of Europe already dates back for several years; we are engaged in cooperation and partnership with the European Union and have been recognized as a “new neighbor”. The latter, which unlike the OSCE, leaves out the USA and the Russian Federation, can be called a “Europe from Brest (France) to Brest (Belarus)”. When we talk about ‘European standards’ we refer to the standards applicable within this territory.

It is extremely important to understand all these not to lose the meaning behind the word game.

Do they wait for us in the European Union? Let’s be honest: no, they don’t. They were not waiting even for Poland or Romania (not to mention of the new EU members), which were hoping to get subsidies and other forms of assistance, like Spain, Portugal and Greece did, in order to become the countries of the intended standards; and even to Turkey, which possesses a significant geographical-strategic position and is in the line for quite a while, they say, “well, we’ll see...”

Then what can be said about the little Armenia when the European Union is not sure yet what it should do with its new neighbors? How long can one talk of European values and do nothing (this does not refer to Armenia, but to other former communist countries)? On the other hand, it is clear that changes and reforms are not easy. To criticize in comfort is not difficult.

Whereas the reality is that at the moment we are out of the chessboard where the game goes on. Constantly convincing ourselves that we are also in the center of EU attention is at least harmful, when next to us we have Iran, Turkey, Russia, Central Asia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Let’s be rational: where do we live? What can we do? And what can we expect living where we do? Change the geographical location? We can’t. Armenia still needs to introduce European rules of the game, which in our case, first and foremost are constitutional and legal rules. This is the real issue.

About reforms, elites and time

Notwithstanding its glorious history in Western Europe and North America, democracy is a comparatively new phenomenon. This may sound paradoxical, but the explanation is right within the statement.

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Though enjoying a glorious history, democracies were very few from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th. The voting right was both de jure and de facto reserved for the rich, leaving out not only the poor, slaves or oppressed, but also women and ethnic or racial minorities. The problems of these marginalized groups have not been fully addressed even today. Modern democracies were in fact developed after the Second World War when in all these countries a certain national consensus was formed against communism/communists and fascism/fascists. (It is sarcastic that a 'union against' always seems to be formed much easily, than a 'union for'.) This agenda is still valid.

The ownership for the agenda belongs to the elites of these countries, who eventually saw what results the fascist or communist directions yield. These elites invested all their efforts to keep away their people from these obsessions and to guarantee their own prosperity, personal safety and security of their property. Here's a legitimate question: why did western elites succeed in formation of national consensus, which a number of other countries fail to do today? The answer to this question is very significant, at the same time, very simple: INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY.

Interpretation of the question is also found in the history. The abovementioned western elites certainly could not gain trust and feed their people with words and slogans only. It was necessary to create an institute of an independent judge and intermediary. It was necessary for these very elites, in order for their people to start trusting them; for these people not to kill, not to steal, but to come and work at their plants and factories, knowing that there is justice in this world. If their rights were violated, they could restore justice through the court.

Did elites really care about nurturing the sense of justice among their people? Certainly, no! All they cared for was their own property and personal safety, so that they could protect their right to property and do so with the assistance of the same court. Through developing the judiciary power elites restricted their unlimited power and privileges. Were they not to do this, they would have lost a lot: if not their lives, then at least their prosperity. There was no other alternative.

Conclusion

A stable political system and elite are being formed in Armenia. If the top of the elite manages not to give in to a nervous breakdown, which may push them to undertaking extraordinary measures, 2009-2012 will turn into a period of constitutional stabilization in our country. The elite can be continuously rebuked, but we don't have a better one. Even if we eliminate this one and try to form a new elite again, it is difficult to anticipate anything positive from this process of "extermination and development of the new", with the exception of the highly probably regress, of course.

What may be done in this case? Urge and push the elite to invest its efforts for securing the independence and supremacy of the judiciary power for the sake of their own safety and prosperity, since otherwise, developments will necessarily be negative.

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