

The Political Dialogue after 2 October



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Resources necessary to maintain a political dialogue and to resolve issues through negotiations have considerably shrank after what happened in the National Assembly on 2 October and what followed. Perhaps it is only but natural. It is a truism that sides are willing to negotiate when there is trust, even little. When trust is breached, people do not see the need for negotiating.

At the moment, a week after 2 October, the opposing political poles, which were supposed to negotiate, are not ready to do so.

The Government is not Ready to Negotiate

Understandably, the government has reasons why it does not trust and is not willing to negotiate. Most probably, they consider that the bill adopted on 2 October is a sufficient ground for hindering any process of negotiation, as, ultimately, it damages trust: how can one negotiate when the opposite side is ready to use and abuse any moment to change the situation or to play dirty?

The Opposition is not Ready to Negotiate

The current opposition also has grounds for refusing to negotiate. They believe that the what the government understands by 'negotiations' means one thing only: accepting their terms without even bothering to listen. The opposition has perceived the short period preceding 2 October as a period of unabated demands for annihilation, and they have decided that the proposition *'If not, this is what we shall do' shall be met with a similar one: 'In that case this is what WE shall do!'*. What came out of this chicken game, is what we are all witnessing now.

The Sides' Best Alternatives to Negotiations

The paradox in the current situation is that both the government and the opposition are not only unanimous in their positions not to negotiate, but their best alternatives to negotiations are also the same. The alternative to negotiations summed up as the following: 'Do not negotiate. The next time it will be impossible to stop the people's flow to the National Assembly' is countered with a similar one: *'Do not negotiate and don't even stop the people's flow to the National Assembly; you will end up with a country which was handed to us in 2008'*. These are the best alternatives to negotiations which are not yet pronounced and not even quite visible yet.

In this political melting pot which is spiced with emotions and calls for respect, other truths which have a right to existence, remain unheard.

The Government is the One that Needs Negotiations

The current government is the winner. The winner of today is the loser of tomorrow, and if such perception is accepted, it is clear that negotiations are first of all necessary for the winners. The winner, the current government, actually negotiates not with the opposition per se, but with itself of tomorrow. Today's 'we' negotiate with tomorrow's 'we'.

"About what shall we negotiate with them? Them, that has no legitimacy, and no real power to back them up?" Understandably, such statements prevail on this side, but these are only for now and here. Democracy is not about the majority being right. The majority has always been right, since the prehistoric communal societies to modern cages of bears in Yerevan Zoo. Democracy is about the



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powerful, the majority, talking to the weak, the minority, for the sake of co-existence, common good and future.

Therefore, negotiations are necessary for the government, in order to keep the minority, even if it is crumbling, even if it lacks trust and has no power, away from despairing. Because even the slightest despair is a threat to the strongest government.

The Opposition is Also the One that Needs Negotiations

The opposition likes to repeat that in the current situation they have nothing to lose. Common sense hints that those that 'have nothing to lose' should be the ones to benefit from negotiations, because negotiations are not about losing, but about meeting the interests of the sides and moving forward based on common agreements. Moreover, negotiations are not about winning as well, as the current opposition used to claim a while ago. No matter how complex and 'offending' it may seem, negotiations can push one forward, can break vain perceptions and eventually make one understand the reality better. 'No negotiations' means that the alternatives of the sides are all that is left, and as seen above, these alternatives do not differ much.

These are the truths which are not heard. Eventually, it is the political poles that will decide. They are the ones to decide. They or the masses are the ones to implement The world is the one to watch and the country that will come tomorrow is the one that waits in suspense...

The paper is elaborated based on the opinions passed by the participants of the discussion "Political Dialogue and Monologue", which took place on 5 October, 2018. The roundtable discussion was attended by independent analysts, government officials, and representatives of the international organizations.

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