

## **The speech of Professor Nikos Lygeros at the International Scientific Conference**

**“The 20th anniversary of the Karabakh movement: realities and perspectives”**

**Stepanakert**

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### **GEOSTRATEGIC MENTAL SCHEMATA FOR ARTSAKH**

I will speak about geostrategic mental schemata for Artsakh. So I will use the language of strategy and mathematics, because I am a little bit tired of listening to diplomatic speeches for years now about the same problem also in Ukrainia, also in Cyprus, also in Greece.

The problem is, if you consider for example the Mediterranean Sea as a closed sea, you will not see anything. We have a tendency to see closed things, because we think we can solve them easily. In fact, the Mediterranean Sea has three gates. If you look into this case, you will notice that all these three gates do have problems: Bosphorus, Suez and Gibraltar. But if you only see the closure, i.e. Mediterranean Sea as a closed structure, these points are not important. In reality, they constitute the key to the problem. If you control these three gates, you control the Mediterranean Sea.

So, let's come back to the problem of Artsakh: the approach is rather classical for many of you. You consider Artsakh only as an extension of Armenia or a detail of the collapsed system of Russia. I think you should try another approach, more dynamic and based on game theory, percolation theory, decision theory, and try to find a solution in an interesting way. Today we attended many lectures on Artsakh, but we heard very few things about its geography.

In fact, I think that the motto of Artsakh is most appropriate : “Our mountains and us”. I believe that if Artsakh was not mountains, there would have been no Artsakh. So, we would have no congress, no discussion, no progress. In reality, this problem is also the solution. So, Artsakh is a problem because of its mountains and Artsakh offers a solution because it is mountains. Without mountains, there is nothing. So, do not try to persuade mathematicians with diplomatic speeches. The only thing that is important here is the mountains and the love of the people for these mountains. Nothing else is important.

We speak all the time about the big players. But you see if you have a balance and two masses, more or less equal, and you try to find an exact equilibrium, it is very difficult. The important thing is the strategic behaviour of a fly. If you take Artsakh as a fly, it will go freely everywhere, there is no stability. Everything is dynamic. So, when it touches one of the masses, this will be the winner. We often try to think that the fly could be a mass. Each time we do that, we end up with a dead fly. When the fly is conscious of being a fly, it can manipulate the masses.

Artsakh is not just a detail of the armenian system. In fact, the geographical configuration and the strategy prove that Artsakh is a strategic point for Armenia, much more important than others. In reality, instead of listening advices about Artsakh, we should teach the others what Artsakh is all about. Because, you know, in strategy, we understand better the fields when we try to teach them, not when we try to learn them. I think that Artsakh could be an example for East Armenia, it could also be an example for Javakh, it could also be an example for other local systems. In any case, we can see that the configuration of Artsakh is much more important from the strategic point of view. Because the problem with the geopolitical issues is that before we start looking for a solution, we start speaking about politics. And when we start speaking about politics, in fact, we forget humans. Strategy never forgets humans, because it belongs to time.

We do not need an efficient solution for Artsakh, we need a robust solution. An efficient solution is very good but for a very short period of time. We need a long-term solution, so we have to find a robust solution. So, that's why, when I was asked how I saw the evolution for Artsakh, I answered that it was good because it was slow. Everything that is slow, it's bound to be robust in time. Everything that is fast, it is related to forgotten things.

So, considering its population and its geographical configuration, Artsakh constitutes a real paradigm. I use this paradigm also in my university classes because it is very rare to come across all these geostrategic schemata in a single case. The problem for Artsakh is that everybody, except its people, thinks that everything is lost. This is a key point, because when you play a game and the others think that you are going to lose, and they are sure about that, then you have a chance to win because the slightest error on the part of the "winner" can change things. If you consider Caucasus in a dynamic system, you will see that there are certain characteristics which remain and are similar in several cases. For example, the Balkans seems to be an entity which is not stable. In fact, we can explain using a dynamic system approach: Each time we have three big countries, which we call attractors, we have a problem of stability in the centre. In the case of the Balkans we have Austrian-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. In the case of Caucasus we have Iran, Russia and Turkey. In mathematics, each time we have a dynamic system of three attractors, we have less stability in the centre. We have a configuration which seems like the Mercedes emblem. So, for these countries there is no hope for general stability, because this is against the dynamic system. The way to stay stable is to have stability on second thought; in other words, to realise that the system is unstable and try to get the stability. I will give you a practical example.

When you are on a bicycle, you are never stable. You always try to fall. That's why you stay stable. When you are stable, you fall. So, do not always try to apply the stability dynamic system on a singularity, because we know that this singularity is impossible. In Artsakh, we have a singular system. So the solution has to be more robust in order to be efficient and not deficient otherwise it will not be robust. So, the difference of the approach consists in the fact that you should consider Artsakh as a singular system and not an extension of the armenian system. In reality, if we change the players, we won't have the same game. By the way, some of you are afraid of Azeri systems. You know that when we speak about Azeris, in reality we speak about Turks. I would like to use Artsakh to prove that one big theory does not apply to

diplomacy. This theory says that Turkey is a stable and efficient country. Why is this wrong? Because Turkey is against Armenia, Turkey is against Artsakh, Turkey supports Azeris. Nevertheless, Artsakh does exist! So, if a small country like Artsakh can cause so many problems to a big country which pretends to be a stabilizing factor in the whole Caucasian region and even part of Asia, you are, no doubt a counter-example! When you get a blister on your feet because you have been walking on stones, you have a problem; the stones too have a problem because there are feet on them. But it's the feet that have the real problem, not the stones. Each Karabakhian is a stone!