

Armenia and Azerbaijan:

Opinions and Comments

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An excerpt from the online interview with the director of the Regional studies center Richard Giragosian

The parallel interviews with Armenian and Azerbaijani experts present the situation in various fields of activity in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The issues dwelt upon here hardly relate to the Armenian - Azerbaijani conflict. As usual, these are the issues that fall out of the scope of the mass media coverage in both countries when they write on each other: youth, the educational system, the level of employment, leisure, opportunities for the social security of the population, labor and other forms of migration, mass media, democratic freedoms, the European vector of development, courts, modern Armenian and Azerbaijani Diasporas, religious freedoms and so on. The interviews meant to help draw the general sketches of the modern life in Armenia and Azerbaijan are part of a joint project implemented by Region Research Center (Armenia) and the Institute for Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan).

The series of pair interviews with 40 different experts from Armenia and Azerbaijan on 20 topics will be simultaneously published in the Hetq newspaper in Armenia and the Novoye Vremya newspaper in Azerbaijan.

The interviews in Armenia will be conducted by Region Research Center, and those in Azerbaijan - by the Institute for Peace and Democracy.

Perspective 9: The Role of the Diaspora in the Life of Armenia and Azerbaijan



Immigration is a Way Out for People In Search for Answers and a Different Life Style

An Interview with the Director of Civilitas Foundation Salbi Kazarian

What is the attitude to the calls to do everything for the benefit of the historical motherland and to strengthen national self-consciousness in the countries with a more organized Armenian Diaspora?

They do not question the necessity for such a choice. Now the USA is helping Africa not because they have relatives or acquaintances there. By the way, the aid is allocated by both individuals and charity organizations and the state. At least in the developed countries (US and Europe) it is widely accepted and is considered an absolutely positive deed when the representative of another nationality participates in the life of his/her country of immigration fully, decently and in a morally acceptable way, and at the same time, is willing to help people in

another country.

In the developed world people often and at the same time live in different countries and cities, and this is not considered nonsense. It may not be so in Russia, but this country currently has problems with its own identity and is striving for solving them. This can be the reason for accusing immigrants supporting their homelands of treachery and putting forth requirements, making them decide which side they adhere to, sometimes even by radical methods. The Russians cannot tell an Armenian from an Azerbaijani, and for them the issue is not that one of them is Armenian, but rather that the person is not Russian. However, if Russia positions itself as a superpower, it must acknowledge the need for being tolerant to other peoples.



We Cannot Weep But We Can Struggle And Die

An Interview with the Chairman of the Control and Auditing Commission of the Congress of Azerbaijanis in the World Samir Asadli

What does Diaspora mean to Azerbaijan, and how does the state encourage the development of the Azerbaijani Diaspora?

The Diaspora plays a significant role for Azerbaijan. The input of the Azerbaijani Diaspora in making the truth on Azerbaijan known to the world is incomparable. In particular, especially if we take into account that Armenia has occupied Nagorno Karabakh and seven adhering regions, and the Armenians have a strong Diaspora that is propagating the truth beneficial to them. In this case it becomes especially clear how much Azerbaijan needs a Diaspora. This is the very reason why a State Committee on Work with Diaspora has been established. However, I do not think that this very body does a lot for the expansion of the Diaspora. On

the contrary, it even hinders this process and in the view of the incorrect political course led it sometimes weakens the Diaspora. For example, some Azerbaijanis residing outside the country are rather interested in both politics and the activities of the Diaspora. Some of these political activists emigrated for different reasons during the past 15 - 20 years. However, as the State Committee on Work with Diaspora wants these people to propagate not the state of Azerbaijan, but the administration of the country, it is natural that these people simply withdraw from the Diaspora. This is one of the "encouragements" of the power for the development of the Diaspora.

Полные версии интервью см.: <http://hetq.am/arm/interviews/2923/>, <http://hetq.am/arm/interviews/2924/>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/07/14/get=50457>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/07/14/get=50456>

Perspective 10: The Role of Religion in the Life of Contemporary Armenian and Azerbaijani Societies



Faith Is in Human Essence

An Interview with the Chairman of DEVAMM, Imam-Jamaat of Juma Mosque Haji Ilgar Ibrahimoghlu

What's the dynamics of public interest in religion in the recent years, what is such dynamics conditioned by?

Speaking of the dynamics of public interest in religion, it is necessary to take into account the phenomenon of the post-Soviet reality. Bolshevism declared religion out of law, prohibited religious propaganda, and persecuted believers. However, as we have already mentioned above, religion is in human essence. It is impossible to eradicate faith from man. It is not accidental that the Soviets were trying to inculcate a certain surrogate of faith - communism. But when people finally found out that it was an ersatz faith, everything collapsed in no time. The spiritual vacuum that had formed up began to be filled with religion very quickly. It is true that this process was not proper always and everywhere, in some cases it was not religious enlightening, but sort of an invention. However, regardless of all the side effects there has been a mass return to religion in the end. And this process has not reached its climax yet. Currently

we are in the process of passing from quantity to quality. The number of believers is rising year by year, along with this the educational level and the general erudition of believers is rising, too. Qualitatively, the degree of the believers' involvement in social life is increasing. It is interesting to note that this process is synchronously underway in the whole of post-Soviet space. And our country is no exception in this regard. In this context the degree of authorities' understanding of their role in terms of the harmonious integration of believers in social life becomes very important. Unfortunately, attempts are being made to marginalize believers, to hinder their integration into the society. It is necessary to understand the contrary effect of such a position, the destructive essence and the negative potential of such an approach since the development of an individual as well as the society as a whole depends on how fully the rights and freedoms of an individual are secured, how harmoniously various social groups coexist.



In the New Conditions It Is Wrong to Separate the Church from the State

An Interview with the Project Director of the Bible Society of Armenia Arshavir Ghabuchyan

Is there freedom of faith in the country in practice and what does the society think of it? How is this freedom reflected in the legislation of the republic?

If there is a group of 1000 Jehovah's Witnesses followers, they must act inside their own group and not try their best to recruit people from other religious groups by all possible means. Recently, in the South Western district of the capital, at Saint Trinity church, an incident took place with the participation of the "landing force" of this organization who was realizing very aggressive agitation.

Both here and abroad our compatriots have normal mutual

relations and peacefully coexist with Islam. At first sight, it may seem that Christianity and Islam are mutually exclusive religions, but in practice this is not true. Both religions lead to monotheism and preach love and charity for one another. In Armenia Islam believers do not do provocations. It is strange that suddenly a conflict arouse among Christian organizations. This happens because such organizations (as Jehovah's Witnesses) act beyond the groups of their followers and propagate, "hunt for souls," which in my understanding is a reprehensible phenomenon.

Полные версии интервью см.: <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/3099/>, <http://hetq.am/arm/interviews/3099/>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/07/21/get=50695>, <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/3097/>, <http://hetq.am/arm/interviews/3097/>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/07/21/get=50694>

Perspective 11: Eastern Partnership for Armenia and Azerbaijan



The Eastern Partnership Program Is Not a Means of One-Sided Exploitation of the European Space

An Interview with the Head of the Parliamentary bloc of Zharangutyun (Heritage) Party, a member of the Armenian delegation to Euronest, Stepan Safaryan

How do you think the everyday life of the citizens of our country will change in practice due to the realization of the outlined plan within the Eastern Partnership framework? What is the difference of principle from the European Neighborhood Program which our country has been involved in, too?

The knowledge, experience and technology used for the development of state bodies and their efficiency, will naturally become the bases for improving the citizens' living conditions. The standards in all the spheres of life will be raised. The European Neighborhood can be considered the preliminary stage of the Eastern Partnership. The European Neighborhood involved a higher number of member-states and was more declarative. At that time the EU and South Caucasus were connected by only one link - the representative of the EU in the region. Also the region was regularly visited by the EU delegation. Now within the framework

of the Eastern Partnership we have a richer toolbox - Parliamentary and civil formats and so on. Besides, the European Neighborhood Program was mostly of a two-way format - Armenia - EU, Azerbaijan - EU, and so on. Currently, the regional element has been added to it, and it is assumed that the cooperation will develop not only between the countries and the EU, but also among the countries themselves. Within the European Neighborhood Program there was cooperation between the executive power and the administration of the EU over which civil society had almost no lever of control. Now there are more parties who would make one another work and implement various projects.



The Success of the Eastern Partnership Program Depends on the Country's Interest in Integration into Europe

An Interview with the Director of the Society for Humanitarian Studies Avaz Hasanov

How do you think the everyday life of the citizens of our country will change in practice due to the realization of the outlined plan within the Eastern Partnership framework? What is the difference of principle from the European Neighborhood Program which our country has been involved in, too?

In fact, the Eastern Partnership Program is aimed at the prevention of any negative consequences of the relations between the European Union and its neighboring countries. The program is also aimed at implementing the decision, adopted in 2004, on the expansion of the European Union, strengthening stability and security, creating conditions to meet the interests of all parties. This program declares that 16 states are neighbors to Europe, and cooperation will be established with them in compliance with the Action Plans, signed with these states. Since the relations between the European Union and Azerbaijan are regulated by the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between the European Union

and Azerbaijan signed in 1996 and came into force in 1999, there is no substantial difference between the European Neighborhood Program and the Eastern Partnership Program in terms of technical cooperation.

While the European Neighborhood Program is designed to deepen the relations among the states geographically located close to the European Union and establish economic and political cooperation with the European Union, the Eastern Partnership Program is envisaged for states that have a common border with Europe and are deeper integrated into it. Unlike the European Neighborhood Program, the Eastern Partnership Program envisages cooperation with countries within the frames of Platform 4, and the civil society that has concrete possibilities to monitor the fulfillment of obligations between the European Union and the partner state is also involved in the program as a partner.

Полные версии интервью см.: <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/3273/>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/07/28/anons=3,>
<http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/3274/>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/07/28/get=50924>

Perspective 12: Military and Strategic Partnership of Armenia and Azerbaijan



CSTO Membership Determines Fighting Efficiency of Armenian Armed Forces

An Interview with Deputy Director of Noravank Foundation Sergey Sargsyan

Does Armenia have a new military doctrine? What is its purpose?

The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Armenia was ratified on December 25, 2007, and is of defensive character. The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Armenia is an open and generally accessible document, and is posted in particular on the website of the RA Ministry of Defense (www.mil.am).

Who is the military and strategic partner of Armenia, and how much can our country rely on the support of its partner?

Upon signing the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, and the Declaration on Allied Interaction between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia Oriented into the 21 Century, strategic partnership was established between the two countries. The above-

mentioned treaties and close cooperation of both countries in the sphere of defense, including cooperation within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, are the basis of Armenia's security system.

Meanwhile, the interests of Armenia go in line with the strategic interests of many other states and actors within and beyond our region, in particular the USA, the EU, Iran and others, on separate regional and military and political issues, such as the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the normalization of bilateral relations with Azerbaijan by exclusively peaceful means - through the negotiation process. That is why we should expect that these countries are also strategic partners on these issues, partners who are ready and willing to do their best for the achievement of common strategic interests.



There Is No Civil Control over the Army

An Interview with the Director of Doktrina Center of Journalist Union on Military Research Jasur Sumerinli

Does Azerbaijan have its own military doctrine? What is its purpose?

The Military Doctrine of Azerbaijan was adopted by the Parliament of the country in 2010. The document reflects quite a balanced, but an indefinite strategy, unlike the Concept of National Security, passed in 2007.

If the Concept on National Security stated that the strategic aim of the Azerbaijan Republic was integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures in terms of politics, security, and economy and so on and emphasized a striving for cooperation with NATO, these ideas are rather fuzzy in the Military Doctrine.

Thus, the Military Doctrine does not reflect the joint cooperation between Azerbaijan and NATO in eliminating instability, conflicts, challenges and threats in the European and Euro-Atlantic space.

Who is the military and strategic partner of Azerbaijan, and

how much can our country rely on the support of its partner?

Turkey is the real military and strategic partner of Azerbaijan. However, Azerbaijan does not have a document on military and strategic partnership with this country. As for your question on the extent to which Azerbaijan can rely on the support of its partner, in the opinions of most experts the above-mentioned agreement with Turkey does not provide for military support from that country. However, Turkey will continue to support Azerbaijan in the issues of Karabakh conflict resolution and maintaining the negotiation process. At the same time, the document signed between Azerbaijan and Turkey ascribed more responsibility to Turkey in supporting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. If before, on the basis on the Kars Treaty, Turkey was obliged to ensure the security of Nakhijevan Autonomous Region, now this responsibility relates to the whole of Azerbaijan territory.

Полные версии интервью см.: <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/08/04/anons=3> , <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/3439/> , <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/3438/>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/08/04/anons=3>

Perspective 13: TV and Society



Television Is Already Unable to Show Anything Trustworthy

An Interview with the TV Director Ara Shirinyan

Are there any really independent TV channels in the country? Who can be seen on TV more often - the opposition or the activists of civil society?

Discussions on some Facebook pages testify that the intellectual potential of the nation is currently in full opposition with the ruling establishment. This is not accidental: the latest studies have shown that the citizens of Armenia who are in search for trustworthy information are gradually shifting to the Internet, 30 percent of the population already have Internet access. The authorities already seem to realize that a shamefully controlled TV only discredits them, but they are unable to undertake anything reasonable. However, some reaction can be noticed. On many TV channels you can come across "staged" debates, where self-styled "politicians" fruitlessly debate with "experts" of the same kind, creating an illusion of a public discussion on topical issues.

How does TV impact on the moral values and the development of the society?

Today the Armenian TV is a day-to-day failure. The ratings do not take into consideration absolute values whatsoever; they only illustrate which show on which channels drew a certain percent of audience. But the ratings do not take account of the fact that the audience itself has shrunk several times. When we switch on the TV, we automatically become the viewers of a show that has been staged by the authorities in the genres of TV news, documentary or drama. The obvious lie or falsification is officially presented as the truth that serves only as an ingredient, or to be more exact a half-finished product for full TV manipulation. The viewer is not surprised that the same reality can have several interpretations. Forming a "society of the spectacle" (the term was coined by the French philosopher Guy Debord) TV is already unable to show anything trustworthy. And even though everyone realizes this, still most viewers are not able to completely block their brains to lies: this is the specificity of TV perception.



TV Ignores Pluralism

An Interview with a Teacher at the TV and Radio Journalism Chair at Baku State University Zeinal Memedli

How does TV influence the moral values and development of the society?

The present reality does not allow for critical thinking on TV, they do not inspire creative thinking. As a result, the Azerbaijani TV stations, being both politically and financially dependent (in fact, being owned by the authorities) have turned into means of ignoring pluralism, tolerance, free market, human rights and freedoms. TV stations that are quite like one another are doomed to preserve the status quo, to ensure complete manipulation of public opinion, but in no way contribute to harmonization with the world and movement towards democratization.

Which TV channels are accessible for the population of the country, which are more preferred by the public?

In the conditions of very popular satellite and cable TV, the

viewers do not have any obvious limitations. In view of the lack of any academic surveys among the population it is not clear the TV channels of which country are most preferred by Azerbaijani viewers. However, one can assert that the older generation prefers Russian TV channels, and the younger generation prefers Turkish TV channels. Observations testify that after the ban on broadcasting Turkish films on Azerbaijani channels, the interest of the population in Turkish TV has increased. Another reason for this may be the increase in the quantity of materials about Azerbaijan, shown by Turkish channels. There is a growing interest in American and European TV channels. This interest is especially obvious among the youth. The development of the Internet, and in particular, broadband Internet, has augmented the interest in Internet TV.

Полные версии интервью см.: <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/3514/>, <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/3513/>



An excerpt from the online interview with the Director of Regional Studies Center Richard Giragosyan

● And yet, this may seem complicated, and neither party is ready to compromise. However, there are two key factors. The first one is diplomacy, for Azerbaijan acts out from maximalist positions. To provide a contrast, I should say that the Armenian official diplomacy supposes the return of territories, whereas the Azerbaijani diplomacy wants everything here and now. Moreover, Azerbaijan is the only cause for instability in the region. It should be added that Azerbaijan is the only party involved in the conflict that threatens to start a war and the only side who threatens to quit the negotiation process. For this reason the peace-making process is currently directed to the prevention of war rather than the resolution of the conflict. And it is clear that Nagorno Karabakh will never go back to being a part of Azerbaijan. The issue here consists in finding easy ways for Azerbaijan to leave Karabakh alone, and Armenia would return the territories. In this context the discord is based on the different expectations the parties have from Madrid principles. The second factor is the society; the Azerbaijani people are more unwilling to compromise than the Armenian people are.

● Even though I do not expect that the situation will change, for at least 5 - 10 years, I am convinced that Karabakh will never address the needs of Azerbaijan. Taking into consideration the national interest of Armenia, I have doubts as to the reasonability of the independence of Karabakh. Karabakh is small demographically and will not be economically viable. And the international community will not acknowledge the independence of Karabakh. This means the probable results will not fully satisfy either party.

● There are different and principally opposite perceptions of Madrid principles. They have different implications for different parties. We forget that there actually are Madrid

principles. The only thing Madrid principles stand for is the agenda of the negotiations, an agenda containing all and nothing at the same time. Since this is no plan for peace, any of its points can be deleted any time. There is even no agreement on the subject of negotiations. If even this is problematic, how can we speak of peace negotiations and peace agreements? And to answer your question, I must say yes, there is the principle of self-determination. Just like the principle of territorial integrity. But this is not important, for the Madrid principles are only a form of peace agreement, real peace agreements are more important.

The interview was held in Caucasus Journalists Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net) on July 25, 2011. R.Giragosyan answered the questions of the journalists from Armenia, representing News Agency ArmInfo - www.arminfo.am, News and Analysis Agency News.am - www.news.am, and of those from Azerbaijan, representing the newspapers Zerkalo - www.zerkalo.am, Novoye Vremya - www.novoye-vremya.com, Bizim Yol - www.bizimyol.az, News Agency Turan - www.contact.az.

For the full version of the interview see <http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/interview.asp?idinterview=131>

Current project



Alternative Information for the Armenian-Azerbaijani Dialogue

Region Research Center (Armenia, Director Laura Baghdasaryan) and the Institute for Peace and Democracy in Azerbaijan (Director Leyla Yunus) have started the implementation of the project called Alternative Information in the Armenian and Azerbaijani Dialogue under the support of the British Embassy in Armenia and the British Embassy in Azerbaijan.

During the period of May - December 2011 the partners of the project will be working along a number of lines to give the Armenian and Azerbaijani mass media a possibility to receive first-hand information on various spheres of activity in contemporary Armenia and Azerbaijan.

■ The preparation and publication of a series of parallel interviews with Armenian and Azerbaijani experts (interviews with 40 experts on 20 different topics) on issues of youth, education, mass media, democratic freedoms, migration, judicial system,

the development of information technologies, civil sector, freedom of faith and religion, the system of social security of the population, economic development and so on. All the interviews will be published in Caucasus Journalists Net, as well as the newspapers Hetq (www.hetq.am, Armenia) and Novoye Vremya (www.novoye-vremya.com, Azerbaijan).

■ Organizing and conducting online interviews with journalists from Armenia and Azerbaijan with experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and other countries on topical issues and developments, arousing interest in both countries. These topical first-hand interviews will be published by the Armenian and Azerbaijani journalists in their media outlets. All the interviews will be held live, and later they will be made accessible in the Online Interviews section of Caucasus Journalists Net (www.caucasusjournalists.net).

■ Organizing and conducting an Internet-conference in Caucasus

Journalists Net with the participation of Armenian and Azerbaijani political scientists and analysts on the present issues and ongoing processes on the international arena that may influence the Karabakh negotiation process.

The materials of the Internet conference will be available in the Discussions section on Caucasus Journalists Net (www.caucasusjournalists.net), as well as the Armenian and Azerbaijani press.

Throughout the project the readers who feel interested in the contemporary Armenian - Azerbaijani realia can regularly familiarize themselves with the new materials in the issues of the electronic bulletin Armenia - Azerbaijan - 2011: Events and Comments, too.

The bulletin will be disseminated among users in different countries. All the issues of the bulletin will be accessible at the Caucasus Journalists Network.