

Armenia and Azerbaijan:

Opinions and Comments

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20 Perspectives on Life in Armenia and Azerbaijan - 2011

Perspective 14. Social Security of People in Armenia and Azerbaijan



Human Poverty Is Lack of Both Material Means and Possibilities

An Interview with Nairuhi Jrbashyan, a University teacher at the Department of Economics at the Yerevan State University



There Is No Definite Index in the Country to Indicate the Level of Poverty

An interview with Khalid Mikailov, the expert of the Center for Economic and Social Development

Internet conference

The Karabakh Status Quo against the Geopolitical Processes in 2011: Motives for (Non) Preservation of Status Quo



Online-interview: Ilgar Mamedov



Excerpts from the online interview with the Co-Chairman of the Republican Alternative (REAL) movement Ilgar Mamedov

Online-interview: Fyodor Lukyanov



An excerpt from the online interview with the editor-in-chief of the journal "Russia in Global Affairs" Fyodor Lukyanov

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 14. Social Security of People in Armenia and Azerbaijan



Human Poverty Is Lack of Both Material Means and Possibilities

An Interview with Nairuhi Jrbashyan, a University teacher at the Department of Economics at the Yerevan State University

How large is the consumer basket in Armenia at this point? To what extent does the living wage and other types of cash receipts correspond to the real needs of the people?

According to the data published by the RA NSS, as for last June the size of the minimal foods basket amounted to 21,330 AMD (57.6\$), and the size of the minimal consumer basket amounted to 30,060 AMD (89\$). To determine the poverty line, Armenia is using the survey of the living standards of households implemented by the methodology of the World Bank. The data provided by the Ministry of Healthcare of the RA differ from these figures: the monthly minimal volume of the consumer basket defined by the Ministry of Healthcare is 41,052 AMD (111\$), and the minimal foods basket is 26,485 AMD (71.5\$).

It should be added here that poverty is quite a broad notion and is defined differently. In Armenia we can now detect material

poverty, while this phenomenon cannot be defined in that way only to cover the whole of its meaning and volume. There is the notion of human poverty that includes not only the lack or insufficiency of material means, but also those of possibilities. If a person has money, but does not have education, knowledge, is not informed, is not healthy or lives in an unhealthy environment, according to the UN Concept of Human Development that person is considered poor. If we consider human development and poverty as opposite poles, Armenia has a mid position on the scale being among those countries that have average indicators of human development. However, we should also take into consideration the circumstance that the standard of living and health of 30 - 40% of the Armenian population was formed back in the Soviet times, and we cannot say with certainty what the level of human development in the country will be in 50 years.



There Is No Definite Index in the Country to Indicate the Level of Poverty

An interview with the expert of the Center for Economic and Social Development Khalid Mikailov

How large is the consumer basket in Azerbaijan at this point? To what extent does the living wage and other types of cash receipts correspond to the real needs of the people?

The Cabinet of Ministers made a decision on the changes in the structure and composition of the consumer basket. According to this document, ratified in 2005, the minimal consumer basket is presented in a new edition. The calculation of the minimal consumer basket is conducted on the bases of the categories of the population: able-bodied population, pensioners and children below 14. The content of the basket, as before, consists of three groups - foods, non-foods, and services. The content of the basket has not changed with regard to the first two groups. Internet services have been added to group three. An hour a day of Internet services has been added to the basket for one family. The composition of the Foods basket has undergone significant changes. The quantity of vegetables, vegetable crops, potatoes, milk and dairy, and eggs has increased. The quantity of sugar and caramel products has been reduced. The volume of fish and fish products has changed. As for Nonfoods, no obvious changes have been introduced.

The living-wage in Azerbaijan in 2011 has amounted to 95 Manats. It is 72 Manats for pensioners, 102 Manats for the able-bodied population, and 76 Manats for children. However, the calculations carried out by the Center of Economic Studies the living wage per able-bodied capita is 166.66 Manats, it is 146,16 Manats for pensioners, and 199.39 for children below 14. The monthly expenses of the able-bodied population for foods is 105,40 Manats, 94.27 Manates for pensioners, and the parents of children below 14 spend 118.00 on them. The minimum expense on non-foods of the able-bodied population is 35,31 Manats, 33,08 Manats for pensioners, and 68,54 Manats for children below 14. The expenses for services amount to 25,10 Manats, 22,26 Manats and 17,47 Manats respectively. The dynamics of change in the amount of the living wage in the period between 2006 and 2010 looks as follows: in 2006 it was equal to 30 Manats, in 2007 it was 50 Manats, in 2008 it was raised twice - first up to 60, and then up to 75 Manats. The last increase of the living wage happened in 2010. Since then it has been 85 Manats. In Azerbaijan the amount of the living wage is set by the President of the country.

Полные версии интервью см.: <http://hetq.am/arm/interviews/4881/>, <http://hetq.am/arm/interviews/4882/>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/09/30/get=52752>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/09/30/get=52753>



Excerpts from the online interview with the Co-Chairman of the Republican Alternative (REAL) movement Ilgar Mamedov

● Minister Mamedyarov used to be the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Italy. He was the one to remember of Tirol. If any of our Ministers became the Ambassador to Sweden, Baku could officially speak of, for example, the Aland model. I think that we need our own variant of settlement that reflects the realia and the objective anticipations of the people in Azerbaijan and Armenia, the two communities of the former autonomy, as well as the Azerbaijanis in Zangezur. It will emerge at a certain stage in the evolution of negotiations and the conflict itself. Its details are difficult to foresee now. Much depends on the means of resolution - that is to say whether it will be peaceful or military in this way or other. We do not know this yet.

● The political dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia, between the communities of Karabakh and Zangezur must be established and must actively develop. Now it is somehow precipitous. All who can contribute to the peaceful settlement, must actively converse with one another. If it is impossible to solve a routine conflict without speaking to one another, how can political issues be solved without talking to one another? You see, they are all geneticists, historians, or professionals of other fields. An active dialogue among intelligent people is necessary in order to muffle the noise of the unintelligent that propagate hate.

● The logic of these meetings and lack of meetings is different. They have uncovered the failure of the Russian orientation of Ilham Aliyev's policy. It is quite easy to notice the disappointment of Aliyev himself. Since 2003 Ilham Aliyev has done everything to normalize the relations with Russia and to restore its reputation in Azerbaijan. We expressed our criticism of this biased and short-sighted policy. Unfortunately, Moscow has not aban-

doned the inertia of the three-hundred-year-old Russian policy in South Caucasus. It is not serious to hope for the positive role of Moscow in the Karabakh resolution process without such abandonment. That is exactly what happened. The failure in Kazan, and then the threatening statements made by Medvedev and directed against Baku right before the meeting in Sochi had a sobering effect on Baku. I hope this is the beginning of a new cycle of relations between Azerbaijan and Russia. With his benevolent policy Ilham Aliyev was unable to cause Russia to regret for its role in the occupation of the Azerbaijani lands. Correspondingly, Baku will reciprocate and will recall a lot. Aliyev's refusal to leave for Dushanbe for the CIS summit is only the first sign. The period of self-deception in the relations with Russia was to be over for Aliyev some time, and it seems that this is what really happened.

The interview was conducted in the Caucasus Journalists' Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net) on August 26, 2011. I. Mamedov answered the questions of the journalists from Armenia (news agency "News.am" - www.news.am, newspaper "Zhamanak" - www.1in.am, internet newspaper "Panorama" - www.panorama.am) and from Azerbaijan (the newspapers "Zerkalo" - www.zerkalo.az, newspaper "Novoye Vremya" - www.novoye-vremya.com, newspaper "Bizim Yol" - www.bizimyol.az, News Agency "Turan" - www.contact.az).

For the full script of the interview see <http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/interview.asp?idinterview=133>



An excerpt from the online interview with the editor-in-chief of the journal "Russia in Global Affairs Fyodor Lukyanov"

● There is the position of Azerbaijan and there is Karabakh, Turkey cannot sidestep them, as the developments have proved so far. Turkey is now taking quite serious risks attacking in all directions - Israel, Cyprus, and the EU. It is rather twisty with the US, plus its onslaught to the Arabic world, hence its relations have tensed up in many directions. This is not the best time to antagonize Baku either. I think that in the foreseeable future the Turkish and Armenian process will not have any progress.

● It appears from your question that the key is in the hands of Russia. It is so to a certain degree, however, you should not overestimate the possibilities of Moscow. The Armenian and Azerbaijani relations are a matter of complex military and political and psychological balance. I cannot see any readiness on the part of either side to take steps to alter the model. Simply, there is no readiness in the consciousness. Perhaps, we could try to impose a resolution by force, but even if it is a success, it will not last long and will soon blow up. "Blood and land" are terrible forces. So, Russia is doing all it can - it is trying not to allow for any aggravation, since any change in the status quo is fraught with a collapse. The status quo is better than its potential change fraught with a collapse. We could reflect upon ideal models, but they are not currently available in the reality.

● The energy projects of the EU will be dependent on the state of affairs in the EU, today this state of affairs is,

mildly speaking, very poor. Russia will naturally counter-act, the competition is obvious. The thing is whether the Europeans are ready to spend their efforts and money in the conditions of hard political and economic crisis in the integration process. Russia faces the same issue, but it is easier for us, since we are one nation with an authoritarian power. But on the whole all competition in the Caspian region is slightly fictitious in nature.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalist's Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net) on September 28, 2011. F. Lukyanov answered the questions of journalists from Armenia (news agency "Arminfo" - www.arminfo.am, information analytical agency "News.am" - www.news.am, website "Panarmenian" - www.panarmenian.net) and from Azerbaijan (Newspaper "Zerkalo" - www.zerkalo.az, newspaper "Novoye Vremya" - www.novoye-vremya.com, newspaper "Bizim Yol" - www.bizimyol.az, News Agency "Turan" - www.contact.az)

For the full script of the interview see <http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/interview.asp?idinterview=135>

Internet conference

The Karabakh Status Quo against the Geopolitical Processes in 2011: Motives for (Non) Preservation of Status Quo



Arman
Melikyan



Manvel
Sargsyan



Sergey
Sargsyan



Azad
Isazade



Shahin
Abbasov



Zafar
Guliyev

The Karabakh conflict after Kazan and against the background of the events in Libya and other Arabic countries, on the eve of pre-electoral processes in the USA and Armenia. All these circumstances, along with the traditional specificities of the Karabakh conflict, characterize the current stage of the Karabakh conflict. What is currently happening with the Karabakh process, and what are the possible options for further developments? Will the negotiations be continuously restarted? Will there be a breakdown or conservation? What internal and external motives can rouse the Armenian and Azerbaijani parties to changes, or, on the contrary, to the conservation of the present status quo? Who is currently interested in the Karabakh conflict? Is this beneficial or not to the parties?

Armenian and Azerbaijani experts discussed these and a number of other issues that are undoubtedly of exceptional interest in both societies in the Caucasus Journalists' Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net) on September 20 - 22.

The discussions were held with the participation of the following experts from:

Armenia- Manvel Sargsyan, Director of the Armenian Center for Strategic and National Studies (ACSNS), Sergey Sargsyan - Assistant Director of the Center for Political Studies of the Norvank Foundation, Arman Melikyan - political consultant of the Refugees and International Law Civil Society Network.

Azerbaijan - Zafar Guliyev - Head of the Analytical Department at News Agency Turan, Azad Isazade - military psychologist from the Institute of Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan), Shahin Abbasov - analyst of the eurasianet.org website.

Excerpts from the materials of the Internet conference:

Negotiation Process - Limits for "Restartability" and Prospects for Conservation

Zafar Guliyev - The Karabakh problem has already partially lost the role of an effective and quite sensitive lever for pressure - at least upon Azerbaijan. Nonetheless, the "pressing potential" of the conflict is still high and perhaps it will be used both in the course of the negotiations process, and in association with other issues (the Turkish and Armenian relations, the problem of Iran, gas battles and so on). As for the prospects of the negotiation process and the factor of importance of the Karabakh issue, I assume that in the coming year we could hardly expect any special activity and novelties in this field. The window of opportunity is narrowing inexorably - the electoral processes will soon start in Russia, the USA and Armenia. Besides, the dynamic and intriguing developments in the surrounding region (the Arabic spring, the Turkish and Israeli collisions, NABUCCO and so on) partially deprive the Karabakh conflict of its topicality.

Sergey Sargsyan - The issue of the possibilities for the conservation of the conflict arises in this context, so it does not remain as a factor for uncertainty and does not interfere with the work of the other "levers." But conservation assumes that the parties involved in the conflict undertake the obligation of leaving its resolution until a later date, not applying one-sidedly or in general any attempts to radically change the situation around the conflict. The conflict will become the main and "umbrella" lever, overarching all the others, only if the threat to restart hostilities acutely emerges.

Geopolitical Processes around South Caucasus and Their Impact on Karabakh Conflict

Azad Isazade - Taking into consideration the fact that the Azerbaijani and Russian relations often resemble seesaws, it is difficult to give any assessment whether they have warmed up or cooled off. If before the dialogues between B. Yeltsin - Elchibey or B. Yeltsin - H. Aliyev were of formal character or completely lacked, but the dialogues between I. Aliyev - V. Putin and I. Aliyev - Medvedev are of warmer and more sincere nature. Besides, Russia, unlike the West, does not raise the issue of the democratization and human rights. Kazan has rather brought about an emotional cooling off. Shahin Abbasov - I agree with Azad Isazade! Very often there is an impression that the Government of Russia does not have a united policy towards Baku which is due to the divergent attitudes held by Putin and Medvedev. That is why the future development of mutual relations will to a certain degree also depend on who becomes the president of the Russian Federation in 2012.

Arman Melikyan - The philosophical concept of Eurasianism is actively propagated in Russia. The basic ethnic carriers of this concept must become the Russian and Turkic peoples. Some experts in the USA call V. Putin the leader of the Eurasianistic movement in Russia who is expected by many already today to become the next President of Russia. It is probable that the Turkic peoples of the former USSR will be involved in the implementation of the Eurasianism project, and Azerbaijan will not be the last among those. Since the participation of Turkey is hardly probable, a moment may come when Azerbaijan will have to face a choice who to be friends with and against whom. In a year or two this choice may become very hard to make, catastrophically hard.

Azad Isazade - Karabakh does have an impact on the policy led by Ankara, but it is not a key factor. From time to time there are even some worries in Baku that Turkey may sacrifice Karabakh for the sake of its own interests (provisionally we can name its membership to the EU, the issue of Genocide or others). The issue is sometimes so acute that Erdogan periodically announces of the firmness of their position about Karabakh.

Sergey Sargsyan - And really, it is Turkey who should not be especially yearning to change the status quo of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. For Turkey the "conservation" of the conflict is the best option. In Ankara they believe that the time is not on the side of Karabakh/Armenia. And they are ready to wait for the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic issue in favor of Azerbaijan in the times of any power/President in Azerbaijan. And the present power in the Azerbaijan Republic and I. Aliyev himself cannot eternally put off the resolution of the conflict. The issue of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the high prices for oil, and the huge sums of money taken from the people's pockets and spent on arms are a ticking bomb. It is a different issue who will blast it. The current status quo is beneficial to all, even to Azerbaijan.

Zafar Guliyev - In the recent years the negotiation process has in essence been reduced to primitive bargain: what can and should Azerbaijan offer in response to the stage by stage liberation of the occupied territories by Armenia? In the meantime, the formula "territories in exchange for the status" very much resembles elementary blackmail. Initially these territories were occupied (with the active cooperation of Russia) not for the sake of creating a security belt, but as a powerful lever for subsequent pressure on Azerbaijan to force it to make concessions. But the complexity of the situation is that because of the deep geopoliticization of the conflict the bargain takes place not between the conflicting countries themselves (even though it officially looks so), but on the level of the interested and leading actors involved in the process (the USA, EU, Russia). By the way sometimes Karabakh does not serve as the main stake in the bargaining but as an appendage, a base coin. And that is why the prospects of global regulation of the conflict look quite obscure today.

Sergey Sargsyan - Zafar, and what if you look at it from the other side? It is always reflected like this: "what can and should Armenia offer in exchange for an unknown offer by

Azerbaijan? In the meanwhile, the formula "a status in exchange for territories" resembles elementary blackmail very much." This also sounds nice, doesn't it?

Or perhaps everything just looks like bargaining? Trust me neither Armenia nor Karabakh want to exchange the territories for a status quo. Here they understand it quite well that any territory concession is a shortly procrastinated war, and by the way, leads to less favorable positions. While Azerbaijan considers that the time is on its side, the Armenian parties think just the opposite.

And the "security belt" came to act as not a "belt" and not an object for bargaining in the future, but as a more energy efficient configuration of the balance of powers - first of all, in the military and technical aspect. And if suddenly the conflict comes back into the "hot" stage, it seems that the Armenian parties will face the task of the advance into the depth of the defense of the Azerbaijani military not for the sake of creating a "security belt - 2" or of providing another "product" for bargaining in a more remote future.

Internal and External Motives of Preservation of/Change in the Status Quo of the Karabakh Conflict

Manvel Sargsyan - As a result of the collapse of the USSR Azerbaijan has been reformed on a territory it does not feel satisfied with. It desires to expand its borders to the borders of the former Azerbaijan SSR. It has already been seventeen years that the international community has reserved the legal right to bring such claims for Azerbaijan. At the same time a condition is set before Azerbaijan to achieve its desires by means of negotiations with Armenia on the basis of a compromise. It can be seen with the naked eye that the international condition set before Azerbaijan initially deprives it of the possibilities for the realization of its desire. What is left there for Azerbaijan to do? Only one thing: to lead the course for the preservation of the legal right for the territories lost in 1994. Why should Azerbaijan conclude an agreement with Armenia, as a result of which it must relinquish part of its rights in favor of Armenia and the NKR? Why does Armenia need the exhaustion of conflicting relations with Azerbaijan? Since Armenia does not intend to concede Nagorno Karabakh to Azerbaijan, the conditions for achieving an agreement is of no value to Armenia.

Zafar Guliyev - The lack of real motivation of the parties for a peaceful settlement of the conflict will inevitably intensify the motivation for the military settlement in the Azerbaijani society. If before the war was waged for the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region, currently the problem of the NKAR has been pushed to the sidelines. The de-occupation of the territory around NKAR has become a priority issue for Azerbaijan.

Shahin Abbasov - I think that Russia will remain indifferent to the issue of Azerbaijani hydrocarbons into the European markets. The volumes are not significant enough to constitute real competition for the Russian export into Europe, at least for the upcoming 15 years. However, Russia has a very

firm and clear position not to allow for any direct export of the Turkmen hydrocarbons to Europe, bypassing Russia. This is the issue that has been recently lobbied by the European Union particularly actively (the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline). And here I think that Moscow may take an ultimate measure up to a military destabilization in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict zone or in Georgia. This is an important issue for the national security of Russia.

Azad Isazade - And doesn't the participation of the Russian military subdivisions in the parade in Yerevan testify to the above-mentioned? Has Russia made a concrete choice between Baku and Yerevan or has it simply waved its finger at Baku?

Sergey Sargsyan - Azad, and don't you think that if Russia wanted to provoke a war, it would not balance the chances of the parties? The parade was a very good example and an obvious hint.

Arman Melikyan - The war between Georgia and Russia is a very illustrative example of how by means of a brief military provocation it is possible to achieve serious geopolitical changes on the regional level. The Georgian Establishment had long been trying not to aggravate relations with Russia, realizing that it could have quite a pernicious effect on its aspirations for Abkhazia and Osetia. There was someone who was quite unhappy with this duality. Georgia had to make a difficult choice - either it would decide on a final divorce with Russia and enjoy the full political and diplomatic and significant military and economic support of the USA and the European Union, who would officially consider Abkhazia and South Osetia Georgian territories, or the uncertainty would last, the country would continue to sink into a bog, and would have to face the realistic threat of further territorial disintegration. Saakashvili chose the severance of relations with Russia and did not lose anything - all its territorial losses had happened before the war in August. It seems that the change in the quality of the ruling elite in Georgia was timed for this political somersault.

Manvel Sargsyan - The position of Azerbaijan in the international and domestic dimensions is significantly different from that of Georgia. Azerbaijan has no motives to use the war for introducing changes in the foreign policy parameters for its own favor. The war may have only one immediate aim - to establish control over a concrete territory. Such a war does not have a versatile political aim. But the war unleashed by Azerbaijan brings about considerable political interest among many other external forces. Russia and Iran cannot help taking advantage of such a war to make their positions in the Caspian region stronger. Armenia will go for the acknowledgement of NKR. Turkey may turn the war in Karabakh into a reason for the realization of many of its own plans within the frames of the "Zero Problems with Neighbors" policy. That is to say a war can be started and the emerged situation will be thrown "to the lions," whoever those may be. I think that this circumstance is well-understood by the leadership in Azerbaijan, as well as by all interested external forces.

С полной версией материалов можно ознакомиться:
<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/forumthemes.asp>

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.