

Armenia-Azerbaijan

opinions and comments

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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 5: The level of development of information technologies in Armenia and Azerbaijan



New Technologies Do not Necessarily Mean New Mentality

An interview with the culture expert Hrach Bayadyan

What can you say about Internet resources available in the national (Armenian) language? What social and political role can the virtual communities of social networks play?

The situation here is not at all satisfactory. The need for educational content is especially high. There are also technological difficulties. For example, it is impossible to find quality software for translation from Armenian into foreign languages and vice versa. The active familiarization with social networks in Armenia was related to the social movement in the period of Presidential elections in 2008. I assume that currently their political significance is not very large. As an example of their

social significance, I can mention the fight of Yerevan residents for the survival of the summer cinema in the city center last summer, where a church was planned to be built. The main developments were in Facebook, and as we already know the administration and the clergy gave away. Certainly these communities could become mediators and agents to deliver topical ideas and global cultural trends to the Armenian society, but no such thing has been noticed yet. New technologies do not have to mean new ideas and a new mentality.



The Internet Is an Indicative of Deep Polarization among the Azerbaijani Population

An interview with an independent blogger and new media expert Ali Novruzov

-What concrete spheres in Azerbaijan (administration, education, economy, mass media) are information technologies most introduced into? Are there any examples of achievements?

The ongoing processes that are being immediately controlled by the state are at a very low level. For example, the Tax Ministry offers an online reporting system; however, the software they have offered is impossible to download into

regular PCs, for the latter are outdated. It is also shameful that the universities in Azerbaijan have just started to use the online system. A country that speaks of incomparable development, establishes WIFI systems in its universities with USAID money. In order to be convinced of how unserious state attitude to information technologies is it would only suffice to visit the websites of state agencies.

For the full version of the interviews see <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/>

<http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/06/09/get=49479>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/06/09/get=49480>

Perspective 6: Corruption and the possibilities of fighting against it in Armenia and Azerbaijan.



There Is Profound Tolerance for Corruption

An Interview with the Executive Director of Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center Varuzhan Hochtanyan

What does fight against corruption mean in practice? How does the state and the citizens fight against corruption? Is it realistic that the level of corruption may fall in our country?

There are three components to fight against corruption - prevention, disclosure of cases and public support. Practically I think anti-corruption fight is when all these components are actively involved. I do not see this in Armenia. We stress preventive measures that presuppose improvement of legislative acts and so on. However, taking into account the specific mentality of our people, this option is hardly probable. The other option is the making of the civil society and democracy, as a result of which those phenomena will be revealed and there will be a reaction upon and intolerance of them. If we are speaking of

serious anti-corruption fight, in my opinion everything must start with normal elections. I am not saying that this will abolish corruption, but this will be the beginning of efficient anti-corruption fight, and this fight will have a firm foundation. There is the example of Singapore. Singapore is an authoritarian state, but the elite have decided to be incorrupt and practice it themselves. This is the good will of the ruling system, even though I would prefer that it were people's control rather than the power's good will. Some officials love to bring the example of Singapore, but I cannot imagine how this would work with us. I do not believe that a top official will imprison his relative because the latter has been involved in corruption.



A Power Demoralized by Corruption Becomes Inoperative

An Interview with Rena Safaraliyeva, Executive Director of Transparency Azerbaijan Organization

What does fight against corruption mean in practice? How does the state and the citizens fight against corruption? Is it realistic that the level of corruption may fall in our country?

Effective anti-corruption fight is hindered by the lack of condemnation of corruption among the authorities. Ordinary people better understand the problem in this regard, for they realize the dangers of being operated by a surgeon who received his diploma for money, being killed in a house that may collapse because of illegal extension,

or being run over by a driver who does not know traffic rules. Public intolerance towards corruption creates favorable conditions for fighting against this social vice. When we speak of the systematic and universal character of corruption, this means that there are corruption schemes from the maternity ward to the cemetery where a piece of land is bought for burying the deceased. The fight is not always efficient, but our organization will grant a prize to anyone who finds a sector in the republic that is free from corruption.

For the full version of the interviews see <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/>
<http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/06/15/get=49714>
<http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/06/15/get=49715>

Perspective 7: A Round Table: The Freedom of Speech and Mass Media in Armenia and Azerbaijan

The Freedom of Speech and Mass Media in Armenia

The expert Ashot Melikyan (the Committee on the Protection of Freedom of Speech) and the blogger and journalist Artur Papyan told about the freedom of speech, the possibilities and practices of expressing their positions, the conditions in which mass media operate in Armenia in a round table discussion organized by Region Research Center (Armenia).

The Mass Media Are an Arena for Political Showdowns
Ashot Melikyan

What problems are there in the practical application of the legislation in the sphere of the freedom of press?

We have a fully controlled air on which the authorities are extolled, the opposition is ascribed a very small place, and we have a press that is divided by the principles of its belonging to different political and economic blocks of interest, apart from several media outlets, that are really trying to sell their product - the newspaper. The same division is seen in a number of electronic media. In these conditions it is natural that the journalistic activity is turned into a political one, and the publications in the mass media into the arena of political showdowns.



In Fact, There Was a Need for Self-Expression in Our Country
Artur Papyan

How does the so-called civil journalism develop in Armenia (bloggers, activists in social networks) and how much is the confidence of the population in traditional mass media against this background?

In fact there was a need for self-expression in our country and people began to register in the virtual domain very quickly. People buy new cell phones, use them to go on the Internet, take photos, share information. In another year or two we will be able to register very interesting results and changes in this sphere. Already now there are very interesting figures on the Internet who do have an influence and generate ideas.

The Freedom of Speech and Mass Media in Azerbaijan

The Institute for Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan) invited the Director of the Information Agency TURAN Mehman Aliyev and the Director of the Institute for the Rights of Media Rashid Hajili to take part in the discussion on the issues of freedom of speech, mass media, problems of journalists in Azerbaijan. Our guests answered four questions.

Mehman Aliyev

What problems do the citizens and journalists face with regard to the freedom of speech and press? What role can international organizations play in ensuring the freedom of speech and press in Azerbaijan?

The main source of income for mass media is the advertisement. Its annual volume reaches 50 million Manats a year, when the global norm from GDP equals 1% - 410 million (in 2010 GDP reached 41.6 billion Manats). No more than 3 million Manats is the share of print media and the Internet, whereas it should be no less than 150 million Manats. In fact, 99% of newspapers and Internet media are not self-sufficient. They exist at the cost of illegal funding from the power. The annual illegal volume of media funding reaches 20 million Manats.



Rashid Hajili

What problems are there in the practical application of the legislation in the sphere of the freedom of press?

The advertising market is unofficially regulated. That is why the level of development, the improvement and stimulation of professionalism is very low on TV and the radio. The government has total control over TV and the radio. Even though there are free frequencies, new TV and radio licenses are not granted. There is no regional radio channel in the country, apart from those in Baku and Nakhchivani. In 80% of regions there are no local TV channels.

For the full version of the interviews see <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/2378/>, <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/2380/>, <http://hetq.am/arm/interviews/2380/>, <http://www.novoye-vremya.com/new/2011/06/23/get=50005>

Perspective 8: Migration and Its Consequences in Armenia and Azerbaijan



The Migration Is a Natural Phenomenon Accompanying Man

An Interview with the Head of the Migration Agency under the Ministry of Territorial Administration Gagik Yeganyan

What does the state currently do in order to minimize the negative consequences of migration processes? Can the Eastern Partnership program influence on the improvement of the migration situation? How strongly do migration processes impact on the demographic situation in the country?

I do not think that migration is an Armenian phenomenon, but at the same time I must confess that the Armenian ethnoses is more inclined to associate the improvement of the conditions of its life and survival with resettlement. If we compare the living standards of the people living in a village in the Ararat Valley to those living in villages in the

Russian plains and Central Asian mountains, the living standards of the former the Ararat Valley will evidently be higher. However, the Armenian farmers will be the ones who will have a greater desire to leave.

The attitude to those who leave and to migration in general has currently changed. Now they at least do not say that they are going to "yield themselves." As if we are at war with European countries, and everyone yields themselves to them. As I have already mentioned, now we are living at a stage of intensive resettlements, people leave, but they also return.



Migration in Azerbaijan

An interview with the Chairman of the Social Union of the Azerbaijan Migration Center Alovzat Aliyev

What does the state currently do in order to minimize the negative consequences of migration processes? Can the Eastern Partnership program influence on the improvement of the migration situation? How strongly do migration processes impact on the demographic situation in the country?

Migration processes in Azerbaijan have a strong impact on the demographic situation. In general, any change in one's living place is immediately reflected in the demographic situation. For example, a man who has been raised in a large rural family gets married and forms his own family after he moves to town and has only one or two children. In some cases people who have to face forced migration and who are left with-

out any documents, cannot get married, which immediately entails a decline in the rate of population growth. For example, the citizens who left the Armenian SSR in 1988 and moved to other USSR republics were in the air when they returned to Azerbaijan in 1998 with Soviet birth certificates and passports. They lost their citizenship of Armenia and did not acquire the citizenship of the republic they lived in before their return to Azerbaijan. As a result, Azerbaijan did not acknowledge them as its own citizens. Because of the lack of these documents these citizens could not get married. And those who were born to parents married by kebin (religious marriage) had no identity documents.

For the full version of the interviews see <http://hetq.am/rus/interviews/>



An excerpt from the online interview with the former Speaker of the RA Parliament, and currently an independent MP Tigran Torosyan, held in Caucasus Journalists Network on June 16, 2011.

It is necessary to have negotiation results that comply with the norms of the international law and not the interests of Azerbaijan or Armenia. This would become possible if the Minsk Group Co-Chairs clearly and unambiguously answered the following question: what issues will be solved in compliance with the territorial integrity principle and what issues will be solved in compliance with the right to self-determination? If there is no answer to this question, a very good opportunity (which is being taken advantage of) for manipulations through various wordings persists. In order to fully answer your question I should mention that the principle of territorial integrity, in accordance with international law, is applied to regulate relations between the UNO and OSCE member-states. In our case this principle is applicable to the Armenian and Azerbaijani relations. The right to self-determination is applicable to the relations between Azerbaijan and NKR, and this right can be realized only by the people of NKR. This right is realized in one of the following forms:

- a. Separation and joining another country,
- b. Separation and declaration of independence,
- c. Any other political status, selected by the self-determined people.

I should remind that in 2008 in Baku B. Fassier mentioned that the Karabakh conflict consists of two conflicts - one is between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the other one is between Azerbaijan and NKR. That's why the principle of territorial integrity is applied to the settlement of the first conflict, and the right to self-determination for the settlement of the second. But, unfortunately, the 6 elements do not comply with neither the principles, not the simple logic, that is why the resolution of the conflict on the basis of these six elements is impossible, even if the Basic Principles are signed. I would like to remind that unlike many other conflicts the presence of international peace-making forces was not

needed for the ceasefire and the maintenance of the armistice for 14 years in the case of the Karabakh conflict. If the Basic Principles are amended in compliance with international law, there will be no need for positioning any peace-making forces or for a suspended status for Karabakh. As you know the peace-making divisions of NATO were present in Kosovo in 2004, however the strategy of the resolution of the conflict was based on the principle of "first the standards, then the status:" the armed clashes with new casualties and a new wave of refugees restarted.

Certainly the quality of elections is of great importance to any country. Elections, however, are no panacea, but rather a mirror that reflects of the situation or the problem. That is why achievements in various aspects, for example, the formation of a full-fledged civil society, a multi-party political system, a fair and independent judicial system and so on, are required for the solution of complex issues. All this cannot happen overnight or in a short period of time. Moreover, I am convinced that in the foreseeable future ethnic conflicts may be solved only compulsorily.

The interview was held in Caucasus Journalists Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net) on June 16, 2011.

T.Torosyan answered the questions of the journalists from Armenia representing News Agency Arminfo - www.arminfo.am, newspaper Hetq - www.hetq.am and Azerbaijani journalists representing newspaper Zerkalo - www.zerkalo.az, News Agency Turan, newspaper Novoye Vremya - www.novoye-vremya.com, newspaper Bzim jol - www.bizimjol.az

For the full version see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/interview.asp?idinterview=129>



An Excerpt from an Online Interview with the Director of the Caucasian Program of the International Crisis Group Lawrence Sheets

It is still too early to speak of the funeral of the Madrid principles. However, it is quite possible that rather soon (perhaps not today or tomorrow) it will be necessary to continue the settlement of the conflict with other concepts.

If there are no results with the Minsk process in the near future, naturally the question of other means or formats for the resolution of the conflict will be raised. The activity of the EU should be welcomed. This activity is accounted for by the anxiety for the possible recommencement of the war, and for the concern that the new war will most probably be of a larger scale than the previous one.

Our organization and I have said and written many times that both parties have been using bellicose rhetoric for the last two years. I would like to highlight once again that the new war will be of an absolutely different nature than the one waged before 1994. It is so believed because of the armament of the parties in the recent years and judging by news round-ups the armament is continuing. The new war may take place not only in the Karabakh region, but also beyond it. The war will be dangerous because Russia, Turkey and even Iran may get involved in it. And this is quite an alarming circumstance.

The great attention paid to the Karabakh conflict with so

many other conflicts in the other regions (Yemen, Africa, and so on) testifies to the fact that the USA and the other Western countries are again concerned with the Karabakh conflict. Many have started to understand that with time passing the conflict will become more dangerous than it was in 1994. The attention paid to the Karabakh conflict by the Western countries is indicative of the potential peril of this conflict.

This interview was conducted in Caucasus Journalists Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net) on July 4, 2011. Lawrence Sheets answered the questions of Armenian journalists, representing News Agency ArmInfo (www.arminfo.am), News Agency Novosti Armenii (www.newsarmenia.am), the newspaper Zhamanak (www.1in.am), and Azerbaijani journalists, representing the News Agency Turan (www.contact.az), the newspaper Novoye Vremya (www.novoye-vremya.com), and the newspaper Bizim Yol (www.bizimyol.az).

For the full version see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/interview.asp?idinterview=130>.

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.