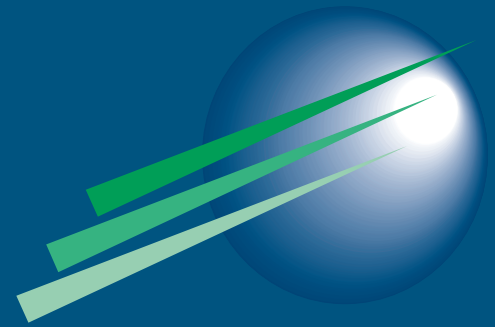


# ACNIS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## No. 6

### October 2011



The Armenian Center for National and International Studies

#### ACNIS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

In the past year, the Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS) launched the publication of a regular series of monthly newsletters. This is the next issue of our new “ACNIS Monthly Newsletter,” a publication that provides a brief summary of our work, activities and projects for the month of October 2011.

#### ACNIS PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

##### ACNIS Explores Limits and Opportunities of Political Forces and Society



On October 27, in light of most recent domestic political developments in Armenia, ACNIS held a policy roundtable to look at the extent of opportunities of political forces and civil society. The meeting brought together representatives from international organizations and the diplomatic community in Yerevan, leading analysts, policy specialists, and members of the press.

ACNIS analyst Saro Saroyan welcomed the audience with opening remarks.

In his intervention, ACNIS Director of Research Manvel Sargsian examined the ways of institutionalization of political parties in the absence of free elections and effective system of justice. Sargsian considered the problem as hard to be solved since, according to him, oligarchic regime is considerably supported by a number of political forces. Therefore, as per the speaker, the modification of political configuration will not result in the establishment of democratic regime in Armenia. “The problem is that due to the absence of proper conditions for political parties to fulfill the functions enshrined in the Constitution, they are engaged in the bargaining with the incumbent regime to get political and economic privileges,” Sargsian maintained. He concluded that under such circumstances the practice of making agreements on distribution of the spheres of influence, as the anchor of oligarchic regime, will sustain.

The next speaker, ACNIS analyst Edgar Vardanian, offered his vision for the avenues toward democratization along with the public opinion on the latter. According to the analyst, it is of high importance to find something in common within the perceptions available to consolidate people and develop a comprehensive agenda. “The aim of coming into power should be distinct from the mechanism of forming the government, as the first one is a very narrow political aspiration and can not become a consolidating factor. The society needs another type of state - system change - namely, more comprehensive and broad concept,” Vardanian stated. The analyst also stressed that in Armenia democratic mechanisms have not been established yet, including the means of political power formation.

The presentations were followed by a series of questions and answers, and featured a lively exchange with the audience.

## Seminar-Course Program Continues Successfully



In October, the Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS) within the framework of its Youth School Program held four more sessions of a series of free Friday seminar-courses.

On October 7, the keynote speaker was ACNIS analyst Edgar Vardanian, who explored “The Concept of Constitutional State in Armenia and Modern Philosophy of Political Struggle.”

The next session of the program, held on October 14, addressed key issues related to the role of civil society in the process of democratization. The presentation was made by Armen Grigoryan, Chairman of the “Democracy for Development” NGO, within the scope of citizen-society-state triangle.

The other two lectures of October agenda, entitled “Key Issues of Human Rights Protection in Armenia” and “The Problem of Freedom of Conscience in States Governed by the Rule of Law” were delivered by Arthur Sakunts, Head of the Helsinki Citizen’s Assembly-Vanadzor Office, and Stepan Danielyan, Chairman of the “Collaboration for Democracy” Center, consequently.

The program with umbrella topic “Establishment of Civil Society and Formation of Constitutional State in Armenia: Key Issues and New Challenges” is made of twelve seminars, seven of which have already been accomplished. The entire course, as expected, will end on December 2.



## Foreign Diplomats’ Collaboration with ACNIS



The Center’s work schedule for October was fairly eventful in terms of meetings with high level representatives from diplomatic community in Yerevan.

On October 25, ACNIS Director of Research Manvel Sargsian met with regional conflicts adviser Claire Dellesard of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and conferred with her on the regional developments and matters of domestic political concern.

On October 15, the Center’s Director of Research met and conversed with Professor Donnacha Ó Beacháin of Dublin City University. During this meeting they discussed a wide range of issues regarding the peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict.

On the invitation of German Ambassador Hans-Jochen Schmidt, Center Director of Research attended, on October 3, German Embassy reception on the Day of German Unity.

## ACNIS is Represented at International Conference Held in Yerevan



From October 6 to 8, ACNIS analysts Edgar Vardanian and Saro Saroyan attended the “What Future for Democracy and Civil Society” international conference, which took place in Yerevan. The event brought together a number of Armenian and international experts and analysts in human rights and democracy.

During plenary sessions presentations were made by vice president Alain Deletroz of the International Crisis Group; media program director Gordana Jankovich of the Open Society Foundations (OSF)-

London; deputy director of international operations Rayna Gavrilova of the OSF-New York; senior policy adviser Jeff Goldstein of the OSF-Washington, D.C.; chairman Krassimir Kanev of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee; program director Goran Buldionski of the Think Tank Fund of the OSF-Budapest; director Dace Akule of the Center for Public Policy "Providus," Riga, Latvia; senior policy analyst on the EU external relations Jacqueline Hale of the OSF-Brussels; and several others. They in particular have looked at the nature of nowadays democratic governance, civil society's role in advancing public interest, as well as patterns and challenges of the European integration and democratization agenda.

### Manvel Sargsian: "Reconsidering the Principles for Settlement is an Imperative"



On October 14, ACNIS Director of Research Manvel Sargsian participated as the keynote speaker at the seminar discussion entitled "Imperatives of Reconsidering the Principles for Settlement of the Artsakh Issue," which took place at Stepanakert Press Club. The event was organized by the Consortium of international organizations (coordinator Masis Mayilyan, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Mountainous Karabakh Republic), including International Alert, focused on peace-building initiatives.

Manvel Sargsian in particular explored the perspectives of settlement of the Karabakh conflict. Among other issues, Sargsian considered the maintaining of the status quo as a factor contributing to a continuation of the impasse over the conflict in the long term.

The presentation was followed by a series of questions and answers, and featured a lively exchange with the audience. The seminar participants also included policy specialist Hrachya Arzumanyan; lecturer Georgi Afanesyan; analyst Davit Karabekyan; and several others.

## MEDIA OUTREACH



# Armenia Today

On October 31, ACNIS Director of Research, political analyst Manvel

Sargsian gave some comments to *Lragir.am* news agency on domestic political developments in Armenia, particularly in regard to the perspectives of possible alignment of political forces.

"No one in Armenia believes free elections to be feasible. It turns out that political forces are making every effort to create conditions for bargaining with the incumbent regime aimed at wresting control over different spheres of political and economic life of the country. The sense and substance of the ongoing processes in political life should be viewed in the very logic of the described situation," Sargsian maintained. He also stressed that one could cherish the hope of changes only in case of emergence of forces, which deny deals with the authorities, and are able to introduce the mechanism of free elections.

The political analyst concluded that due to the absence of the mentioned circumstance, one is compelled to state that Armenia's political forces are "in transition from one vacuum to another."

On October 25, ACNIS analyst Saro Saroyan gave an interview to "Radiolur" program of the *Public Radio* and reflected upon the problem of settlement of the Karabakh conflict, particularly, addressing the issues deriving from the joint statement made by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

According to Saroyan, the statement became the first to declare the role of spiritual leaders of two countries as a prerequisite for ensuring →



← progress in the process of settlement, which, as per the analyst, is an attempt to adopt a new approach to strengthen mutual trust between the societies.

“The Co-Chairs demand to significantly improve the climate of negotiations and enhance the level of confidence by itself proves a persistent divergence in the parties’ standpoints. After the Kazan meeting hopes that the Russian mediation will yield results and make the countries concerned reach an agreement, have begun to fade,” the analyst maintained. Saroyan stated that ten preconditions put forward by Aliev in Kazan have made the Armenian-Russian relations become closer. “In fact, Aliev unwittingly contributed to the construction of the road Sodq-Qelbajar, while due to stubborn behavior, Azerbaijan has found itself in uncertainty and now is looking for ways out of the impasse,” he noted.



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On October 19, ACNIS analyst Edgar Vardanian was hosted by the

“Discourse” online program of *1in.am* news agency during which he examined most recent developments in the opposition domain. Reflecting on the outcomes of nonstop demonstrations staged by the Armenian National Congress (ANC), ACNIS analyst stated that the protests are indicative of the Congress to have a clear set of supporters to pursue its activities.

According to the “Discourse” interlocutor, however, the ANC failed to ensure such level of societal consolidation necessary for the system and power change in Armenia. As per Center analyst, the ANC does not rule out the possibility of its participation in regular parliamentary elections, which could be justified on the grounds of gaining an effective platform for struggle.

In response to the question on the reasons why a democratic movement has not yet emerged in Armenia, the analyst noted that “Movements are not formed through artificially associating people: first of all, there is a need to clarify the issue pivotal to the unification, and mechanisms of decision-making within the movement.” In Vardanian’s view, the development of democratic institutions is a primary task, which is up to the society rather than political forces.

On October 24, in her review entitled “Inertia of the Soviet Thinking” covered by *7or.am* news

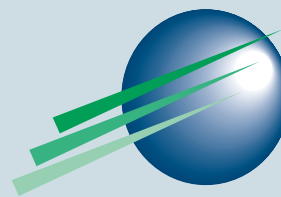


agency, ACNIS analyst Armine Ghazarian explored persistent incidents in our education system, owing to the force of habit, and the peculiarities related to them.

“Habits are endowed with irresistible force. Over time they become hardened and evolve into a character passing down from one generation to the next. All this “works” very easily due to the contributing mechanism behind it - namely, inertia of the psychical described through a complete set of perceptions, emotions and behavior,” commented the analyst. According to her, as yet we do not feel the level of restriction in many domains and matters, and the power of constraints imposed by the latter along with the necessity to provide proper feedback or normally to react, which is an outcome of the totalitarian and oppressive governance.

“Instead of seeking to comprehensively reconsider false decisions, the latter are being reproduced via inertia ceaselessly accompanied with material, political, and ethical losses,” noted the psychologist.

## MORE ABOUT US



**The Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS)** is a leading independent strategic research center located in Yerevan, Armenia. As an independent, objective institution committed to conducting professional policy research and analysis, ACNIS strives to raise the level of public debate and seeks to broaden public engagement in the public policy process, as well as fostering greater and more inclusive public knowledge. Founded in 1994, ACNIS is the institutional initiative of Raffi K. Hovannisian, Armenia’s first Minister of Foreign Affairs. Over the past seventeen years, ACNIS has acquired a prominent reputation as a primary source of professional independent research and analysis covering a wide range of policy issues.

For more information on ACNIS, our work and activities, please contact us at: [root@acnis.am](mailto:root@acnis.am) or visit our website at: [www.acnis.am](http://www.acnis.am).