

**TOWARDS THE 2026
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS:**

**PEACE AND SECURITY AS
FACTORS IN THE
PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN**



POLITICAL DIALOGUES

REPORT

Gyumri · Goris · Yeghegnadzor

1. Purpose and Scope

The meetings held in the towns of Gyumri, Yeghegnadzor, and Goris focused on Armenia's foreign policy, the peace process, and the anticipated agendas of the 2026 elections.

The same thematic text was presented in all three locations, but each setting produced a different subtext:

- **Gyumri:** the discussion centered on the linkage between foreign and domestic policy, competition between peace models, and political responsibility — highly participatory, with questioning and argumentative logic.
- **Yeghegnadzor:** the same topic took the shape of a lecture for a younger generation—an early stage of political socialization. Issues of peace, historical justice, and the “Zangezur Corridor” were framed more as value-based questions than political ones.
- **Goris:** the discussion was filtered through security concerns and fear. Syunik's vulnerability created a cautious space marked by ellipses of silence.

2. Participants

- **Gyumri** – Multilayered and often politically mature groups: local government representatives, NGOs, “political club” members, experienced activists, students.

Accumulated political experience is evident: participants are accustomed to speaking, arguing, doubting, and distrusting, yet also constructing arguments.

- **Yeghegnadzor** – Teenagers and a small number of adults.

This is the only venue where the speech targets **a politically unformed generation**. The discussion is much more open and functions more as **a civic education practice** than a political debate.

- **Goris** – young but cautious audience.

Mainly university and college students. Political knowledge is present, but is expressed with restraint.

3. Discussion Dynamics: Silence, Debate, Lecture

- **Gyumri – high intensity, debate-oriented environment.**

Participants do more than ask questions — they enter the speakers’ field, challenge and reframe the topic (e.g., shifting the conversation to the methodology of sociological surveys), and use sarcasm and humor about official/international discourse (“Trip and Trump”).

- **Goris – quiet, cautious, observational environment.**

Discussion proceeds with **high attentiveness but few voices**.

Asking a question equals political positioning and risk-taking. Political speech here is no longer an exchange of ideas but is tied to a feeling of existential risk (border, roads, security).

- **Yeghegnadzor – educational, lecturing format.**

The audience remains almost completely silent at first. Politics is perceived as “the adults’ world,” and speakers as holders of knowledge.

This contrast shows that the same formal format (urban dialogue) produces **three distinct communication modes** shaped by location, generation, risk perception, and the pre-existing political culture.

4. Interpretations of Peace: Three Different Planes

Gyumri – Peace as a political problem of competing models

In Gyumri, peace is understood:

- as a **political model**, not merely a document;
- as an **electoral core**— trust in specific models rather than just who you “like/dislike”;

Here, the questions were about:

- the price of peace
- is its economic foundations
- and, most importantly, **who shapes the peace agenda, and on what basis?** (distrust of sociological polling becomes central here).

Yeghegnadzor – Peace, defeat, and historical justice

An interesting triangle of ideas about peace.

- How do we measure the value of peace?
- Is a signed peace agreement true peace or a documentation of defeat?
- How does historic justice fit into peace?

These questions demonstrate that among teenagers, peace is **directly associated with defeat, justice, and dignity.**

Goris – Peace as a security risk and existential issue

In Goris, peace is an issue of:

- **borders**
- the corridor
- security
- and the question “Will they reach us?”

Questions are practical, not value-based:

- How do we manage goods transported through the corridor?
- Is Armenia trying to buy time?
- Should we change terminology — say “opponent” instead of “enemy”?

5. Crisis of Trust

The theme of trust/distrust appears in all three cases but takes very different forms.

- **Gyumri – structural distrust toward institutions**

Here, distrust is intellectualized: distrust of polling, political actors, and information “sponsors,” but it turns into **critical reflection**. The question is: who, why, how, and when informs society?

- **Yeghegnadzor – distrust without a specific addressee**

Teenagers express sentiments such as:

- “Great powers don’t protect us.”
- “Will the USA help if we’re in danger?”

But in this case, there is no clearly defined addressee or institutional analysis.

- **Goris - mistrust as a background for self-scrutiny**

Here, the lack of trust is expressed less in speech and more in **silence**.

People know that “no one can be fully trusted,” but what turns into open criticism in Gyumri here becomes self-scrutiny and unexpressed concern.

6. Perceptions of the 2026 Elections

In all three meetings, perceptions of the election differ fundamentally.

- **Gyumri** – Elections as competition between peace models. Here, people see themselves as relatively active political subjects: voters choose not only a party, but a model for how Armenia should enter a peace phase.
- **Goris** – Elections as a process decided “above”. Here, elections are perceived as an existential process, with their outcome determined at higher levels. The sense of personal influence is low, and the motivation is weak.
- **Yeghegnadzor** – Elections as “the adults’ game”. For teenagers, elections have no immediate relevance to their personal lives.

7. Comparative Observations and Potential Conclusions

At the level of observations (not full sociological conclusions), several trends can be noted.

- 1. The form of political speech strongly depends on local perceptions of security and historical experience.**
 - In the conditions of border vulnerability in Syunik (Goris), silence and caution dominate.
 - In Gyumri, socioeconomic vulnerability and a strong civic field together produce a **critical, often sarcastic, but active discourse**.
 - In Yeghegnadzor, a small, more distant, provincial school-like environment produces an educational, probably guarded field. Understanding comes before speech.
- 2. Positions on peace often inversely correlate with political experience.**
 - With the “peace - defeat - justice” triangle, Yeghegnadzor teenagers demonstrate strong value sensitivity, but lack a toolkit.
 - Gyumri frames peace as a political model, an issue of elections and responsibility.

- Goris frames it as an issue of security, existence, and physical safety.
3. **The crisis of trust is universal but articulated in different “languages.”**
- Gyumri: intellectual, structural critique (polls, institutions, communication)
 - Goris: silence, self-scrutiny
 - Yeghegnadzor: emotional distrust toward major powers
4. **Political subjectivity varies across regions and generations.**
- In Gyumri, we can see formed, argumentative, doubtful yet responsible subjects
 - Goris: informed but passive, risk-aware subjects
 - Yeghegnadzor: subjectivity still “under construction” on the schoolkids’ level

8. What Is The Purpose of These Three Meetings

In one sentence: these meetings reveal not what Gyumri, Goris, or Yeghegnadzor “think,” but **how groups with different social compositions approach the same topic through various political and emotional languages.**

This is an important clue:

- for planning political communication (vocabulary, language, risk perception)
- writing civil education and especially **peace education** modules
- and further design of more structured sociological research, for which these three “typical episodes” can be used as a foundation for hypotheses, rather than a final answer