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In this issue:

- Tedo Japaridze, "Georgia: From Geopolitics to Regional Politics. A View from Tbilisi"
- Kornely Kakachia, "Georgia after the Parliamentary Elections: In Search of a New Policy Paradigm"
- Paul Goble, "Contaminated Rivers as Main Threat to Caspian Ecology"
- A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy
- Note to Readers

**GEORGIA:
FROM GEOPOLITICS TO REGIONAL POLITICS.
A VIEW FROM TBILISI**

Tedo Japaridze, Amb.
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Geopolitics is a favorite pastime of many people in this part of the world, journalists, academics, diplomats and voters alike. That is largely because the Caucasus and the Black Sea region in general are at the intersect point between "the European Neighborhood" and the Russian "Near Abroad" aspirations. The countries in this

region—Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Azerbaijan—have dealt with secessionist threats, with Moscow either at the forefront or backstage; Tbilisi and Kyiv also have experienced so called “color” revolutions, which testified to their willingness to make a choice in the proverbial “East or West” dilemma. Both countries were subsequently shunned by NATO; both countries currently are negotiating Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with Brussels, while Ukraine is in parallel being courted by Moscow as a *sine qua non* for its Eurasian Union Project.

For nearly a generation, such contextual factors have forced the countries in the region to make impossible choices or struggle to sit on the fence between East and West. We clearly belong in the middle, not by choice but out of necessity. And while many of our choices appear to be mutually exclusive—and are often seen as being “out of our hands”—we have developed a tendency to design policy, over coffee or tea, filled with “must do” items that the “great powers” must somehow be convinced to deliver. The question, of course, is whether it might be more sensible to make plans founded on what *We* should be doing.

The middle is a hard place to be since every change in the poles of the perceived “East-West” relationship has an immediate effect domestically, often beyond the scope of our action. We have elaborated various strategies of “sitting on the fence,” some more successful than others.

Kyiv, that is, has been stalling on nearly every major strategic decision, because, on one hand, there is close economic and cultural affinity with Moscow as well as an open and unresolved conflict and, on the other hand, sincere desire on the part of many members of the elite for a western trajectory in the pursuit of the country’s foreign policies. The division in Ukraine is as much structural as it is unfortunately geographic.

Tbilisi has been bold in making clear decisions, taking upon itself both direct and opportunity costs.

Baku has been by far the most successful, committing its country only to multilateral frameworks that do not limit its sovereign options while masterminding a balance of power through its engagement with state and non-state actors—the lines here are quite often blurred—as evidenced by the composition of consortia participating in the exploration of Caspian resources.

Yerevan is making binding choices that have tremendous opportunity cost, but, nonetheless, the policies it has so far adopted have been effective in sustaining a *status quo* relatively acceptable to that country.

In all these cases, however, the region’s location between the interests of two regional powers (Ankara and Tehran), one aspirant global power (Moscow), one economic powerhouse in search of identity and direction (Brussels), and one global power that is evolving with regard to its commitment to the region (Washington) presents these states with as volatile and dangerous an environment as one can get.

Being in the middle as we often say begs the question “in the middle of what.” The answer to that is currently far from clear. Many of us, who have been committed to the idea of a democratic and free market oriented transition and the construction of a greater Euro-Atlantic security space, regularly witness the deleterious effect of having elections with the main question being “East or going West.” For obvious

reasons, our constituencies are susceptible to conspiracy theories, and the political climate is dominated by “either or” dilemmas. In some respects, this has also been a “convenient” political culture, diverting attention from domestic politics, allowing a number of people to treat states as booty won by less than free and fair elections. Consequently, there is a sense that political adversaries are divided between “traitors and patriots,” with a side effect of a “winner-takes-all” political culture hardly conducive to democratic consolidation. Each step we make can be compromised at the next election and thus our transitions are not neat, sequential, and unilinear as many imagine them to be. And we in Georgia may well see yet another round of the “East-West” rhetorical encounter in the upcoming Georgian presidential vote in February next year.

In view of the above, what will make or break the incoming administration in Tbilisi is its ability to harness a vision with long-term objectives, as well as an adaptable operational plan with short-to-medium term milestones. In short, this means we must craft a foreign policy that is realistic, and realism in this context implies that we must have a regional scope and depend only on verifiable certainties. We may, for example, wish for an effective collective security framework, but we cannot count on its existence. This was made abundantly clear in 2008. We must work with what we have.

Despite our fondness of viewing ourselves within grand East-West dilemmas—a paradigm rooted in and perhaps more relevant to the times of my generation—that approach increasingly seems passé. In Washington, which took the lead in capacity building for the Georgian state, the South Caucasus is no longer as high on the agenda as it used to be. Rather, the talk in Washington has for some time now been about an elusive “restart” of relations with Moscow. Moreover, today, Washington is more focused on issues other than the Caucasus, including the continued economic crisis, the question of Iran, shifting geopolitical priorities towards the Pacific. This is why Mikheil Saakashvili’s rhetoric about “a new Berlin Wall” received very little favorable attention in Washington, and that is why the prospect of NATO membership remains “very far indeed,” as also confirmed in Chicago last September. Despite all that, Georgia will continue to view its ties with the US as a “special relationship,” something that might imply facilitating the reset rather than standing in the middle, including as part of our understanding that the region, while certainly being a locus upon which many strategic interests may collide and intersect, should be an area of free and fair competition, rather than confrontation.

In Moscow today, most micro-security concerns gravitate on the North rather than the South of Caucasus direction. In light of this tendency, there is some scope for cooperation among Tbilisi, Baku, and Moscow, at least when it comes to dealing with Jihadist movements. As for greater geopolitical narratives, Moscow has bigger concerns, which at times affect the Caucasus landscape, but mostly are completely decoupled. Syria is a major concern for the entire Caucasus, as are the implications for Russia’s relations with Ankara and Teheran. In addition, the discovery of new East Mediterranean gas reservoirs, the race for the Arctic Circle and shale gas exploration dominate traditional geopolitical narratives, which might affect the supply and demand of energy and, hence, the economy of the region as a whole. Ultimately, as the oil and gas sector is itself in transition, securing market share is more about modernization than about conquest, more about exploration rather than monopoly consolidation. The Caucasus is important, but Moscow is comfortable with the regional *status quo*; the global landscape is more worrying and, at times, far beyond its scope for action.

Moscow, as Tbilisi, must maintain a sense of perspective. While Georgia wants to revise the *status quo*, the priority for the incoming administration is addressing specific issues rather than dwell on grand bravado rhetoric. Engagement is not and should not be viewed as “selling out.” And Russia, as well, must remember that too many regional fronts could grow overwhelming for an aspirant “global player.”

In Europe, the landscape is also changing. There is no European strategy for the Caucasus. In 2011, the Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski joined German Foreign Minister Westerwelle in calling for a rapprochement with Russia, but then Vladimir Putin returned to power and the momentum was lost. Berlin, however, still views Moscow as a strategic ally and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Russia is thus fundamentally a strategic partner for Europe, perhaps weaker these days than it was, but as a result perhaps more manageable. To the extent this is true, the ticking bomb of a grand encounter between DCFTA and the Eurasian Union encounter should be diffused. Let me in this sense join Foreign Minister Sikorski of Poland in noting that “German inaction” should be feared. Inevitably, however, we cannot dictate policy to Germany. We could, however—indeed, we should—more clearly express our expectations.

Given all this, Tbilisi will now explore—with caution and realism—the possibility of a more regionally grounded foreign policy. We need to be modest in our objectives and work with what we have. Georgia will be investing in a nexus of bilateral and multilateral frameworks with a regional scope, in recognition that a collective security framework is not for the moment possible. Balance of power and traditional realist discourse will inevitably feature in this scheme, as will “smart and soft” policy instruments. By definition, since Georgia is partially occupied, we will remain a revisionist power; but from now on, we will focus on resolving specific problems rather than simply pursue rhetorical grand plans. We will talk to Ossetians and Abkhazians for a change. We will discuss property, trade, and refugees; we will talk about domestic empowerment of minorities and socioeconomic cohesion; only then shall we address the issue of sovereignty.

We will work on immediate issues with our own minorities and, only then, with good and verifiable precedents behind us will we explore future schemes of cohabitation with those entities. Clearly, cementing durable and non-controversial relations with our minorities in Georgia should solidify our friendly relations with both Baku and Yerevan. And if real progress could be made on these domestic issues, useful precedents could be created for our relations with Tskhinvali and Sukhumi. In short, we shall no longer take up challenges that we are unlikely to be able to carry through. And we will always be cautious and aware of timing. We do not want or need another revolution and one thing that Bidzina Ivanishvili is not addicted to is martyrdom and heroism.

Towards this end, Georgia will build on existing strengths. Our relationship with Azerbaijan and, coextensively, with Turkey is founded on a deepening and widening energy partnership that is likely to have a spillover effect in the sphere of logistics. This vision gravitates around the notion of revitalizing the traditional “silk road,” but beyond that longer-term vision it has already anchored itself on other projects as well, including major high-speed train venture currently under way. This no doubt will not be an easy path to follow, but this “bridging” potential is both the curse and the blessing of the Caucasus. And it is a strategy that Ankara has been pursuing, regrettably, despite the absence of foresight on the part of the EU rather than because of it. At the bilateral level, our relations with Baku must be deepened and

broadened. We hope that our "corridor" potential can develop further, broadening in scope and allowing for far-reaching policy coordination in terms of both macroeconomic issues and security concerns. In both Tbilisi and Baku, there is a consensus that the more stakeholders we have in the business-project called "the South Caucasus," the less likely our region will be transformed from a corridor into a bottleneck. This vision can and should also provide a basis for cooperation with Yerevan as well. Because the scenario of a conflict between Baku and Yerevan would have tangible and considerable consequences for Tbilisi, we in Georgia have a legitimate interest to offer our mediation services or at the very least a forum for proxy cooperation with a regional scope in areas of common interest.

Beyond territorial politics, we need to think as a region in order to present a concerted basis for attracting foreign direct investment, for high returns of our currently decoupled and uncoordinated free trade area policies, as well as for combatting problems that all of us in the region face, including such issues as tariffs, passport control, and crime prevention.

Make no mistake: the context in which the Caucasus exists will continue to limit the content of our regional policies. The Eurasian Union project is likely to collide with plans in Brussels towards the conclusion of a series of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements, a reality that is likely to reflect back on Moldova and Kyiv, less so upon Georgia and Azerbaijan. Our small states, including Yerevan, do not have economic "added value" for Moscow, although bravado is unlikely to disappear from political discourse in the region. True, Moscow has said they would be willing to talk to anyone but Saakashvili, but, if small instances such as moving a monument can cause a major diplomatic crisis, it is clear that one cannot be all too cautious in this part of the world.

Nonetheless, we will seek to engage in addressing "strategic choices" through coordination and consultation with our allies. We will build upon existing alliances, but all our policies will henceforth be regionally rooted. Tbilisi will become a factor of stability in and for the region. This shift is what most Georgians hoped for when they voted for change and, to an extent, this is a change that most of the regional stakeholders wish to see happen in Georgia. If one insists on continuing to draw Cold War parallels, we see Tbilisi as a Vienna, not a Berlin or a Helsinki. If we play this role well, we will serve our country, the region, and global security at large.

GEORGIA AFTER THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: IN SEARCH OF A NEW POLICY PARADIGM

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Recent parliamentary elections in Georgia marked an important point in the country's history, as they marked the first-ever peaceful transfer of power in the country. Even as results of this most competitive elections Georgia ever had were still coming in, and in a gesture rare in the post-Soviet world, President Mikheil Saakashvili accepted his party's loss and announced his intention to appoint a government

formed by the new parliamentary majority. The Georgian leader stated that though the ideas and goals of the Georgian Dream, the oppositional coalition that won the elections, were absolutely unacceptable for his party, he respected the choice Georgian people had made.

Many Georgia watchers noted that civil society and NGOs played a key role in this election by serving as advocates for and monitors of a credible process and by shedding light on concerns about the fairness of the pre-election environment. But as OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission's preliminary assessment still highlighted, "the campaign environment was polarized and tense, with some instances of violence." [1] The observers also underscored that the campaign often centered on the advantages of incumbency on one hand, and private financial assets on the other, rather than on concrete political platforms and programs. Nevertheless, many of them stressed that Georgia had successfully passed what many considered to be its democratic "litmus test" by holding elections in which the outcome cannot be determined in advance.

Competitive elections produced an outcome that represents a significant milestone along Georgia's democratic development path. However, many uncertainties remain, including the development of working relations between Georgian Dream leader Bidzina Ivanishvili, who is now prime minister, and President Saakashvili, who under the constitution will remain in that post until the presidential elections in October 2013. Further complicating matters, over the next 12 months, Georgia's political system will shift from presidential to parliamentary, a development that will strip the office of president of most of powers it currently enjoys. [2]

Current Georgian leaders do not agree among themselves on many issues, but at least so far, it appears that they share a commitment to some key essentials. Like Saakashvili, Prime Minister Ivanishvili and his team have stressed they want to continue to pursue Euro-Atlantic integration and eventual NATO membership. But it is unclear how the new government will be able to do that. On one hand, it says that the country remains committed to its long-term strategy of rapprochement with NATO and the European Union and will never accept even the discussion to recognize the independence of Georgian occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But on the other, officials of the new government have been equally clear that they must normalize diplomatic relations with Moscow. [3]

Many analysts, however, have concluded that Ivanishvili's foreign policy team selections indicate that he plans to tone down the heated rhetoric that marked bilateral relations with Russia. He will certainly seek to adopt a more pragmatic, less ideologically driven approach to Russia and work to improve economic and cultural ties with northern neighbor, starting to recover trade and transportation links with reopening the Russian market for Georgian wine and mineral water. In order to reach that goal, Georgia may remind Moscow that it had by now unilaterally abolished the visa regime and pledged on the non-use of force. By taking such steps, Tbilisi will be able to test whether Russia has changed its approach towards Georgia amidst a new political reality.

Unless there is radical strategic and paradigm shift in Georgia's foreign policy orientation and given that strategic relations between Baku, Tbilisi, and Ankara were never dependent on personalities, Georgia is unlikely to change its strategic relations with its close partners, like Azerbaijan and Turkey. Both Azerbaijan and Georgia are likely to continue to reject Moscow's integrationist initiatives that could compromise

their sovereignty. And Georgia's leaders and people well remember that Azerbaijan provided much-needed energy supplies to Georgia during its standoff with Russia. They also understand the importance of Turkey as a stabilizing security actor in the South Caucasus. Provided that the elections in Georgia result in a smooth transition of power, Ankara and Baku may actually benefit from having a predictable and stable neighbor on their respective frontiers.

What may, however, change is Georgia's energy dependence on Baku. If Georgian-Russian relations grow more stable, Tbilisi could seek a further diversification of its foreign and economic relations. In that case, Baku may find itself to have less economic and energy leverage on Tbilisi than it currently enjoys. A statement of Georgia's new Energy Minister Kakhi Kaladze that all agreements and contracts [4] that have been issued by the previous government will be reviewed suggests that conclusion. [5] However, recent change of government in Georgia is unlikely to change position of Azerbaijani business and investments in Georgia, something of which the recent positive dynamics in bilateral relations are an indication, including SOCAR's acquisition of Itera-Georgia enabling the Azerbaijani company to now sell gas directly to Georgian consumers except in Tbilisi and SOCAR President Rovnag Abdullayev's suggesting that Georgia's new Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, judging by the results of his meeting with the head of SOCAR's Georgian subsidiary and the Azerbaijan ambassador, "values SOCAR's investments in Georgia highly." [6]

In sum, as Tbilisi seeks a new opening with Moscow, most Georgians are going to remain deeply anti-Moscow, given that Russia still occupies 20% of the internationally recognized territories of Georgia. Consequently, the new government will not change Georgia's pro-Western aspirations and its strategic relations with its regional allies. But quite possibly in exchange for mending ties with Moscow, Tbilisi may be tempted to return to the policy of balancing like that pursued by former Georgian President Edward Shevardnadze. There, of course, is a certain risk that Georgia may pause on its path towards Euro-Atlantic integration and NATO membership. And while it remains to be seen whether Georgia is able to obtain the best deal for itself in this delicate situation, one thing is certain—Georgia's place in the region and its relations with both Russia and the West are entering a crucial new phase, one that could make or break the new government in Tbilisi.

Notes

[1] See "Georgia Takes Important Step in Consolidating Conduct of Democratic Elections, but Some Key Issues Remain, Election Observers Say," *OSCE Press Release*, 2 October, available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/94597> (accessed 30 October 2012).

[2] For further detail, see "The Power of the Prime Minister. Who Gets to Choose the Next Government? When? How?" *Geowel Research Blog*, available at http://www.geowel.org/index.php?article_id=80&clang=0 (accessed 30 October 2012).

[3] See "Tbilisi Says No to Diplomatic Ties with Russia while It Occupies Georgian Territory," *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, 26 October, available at <http://www.rferl.org/content/georgia-foreign-minister-russia-occupies-territory-no-diplomatic-relations/24752066.html> (accessed 30 October 2012).

[4] According to *ABC.az*, Georgian citizens pay 0.107 USD/kWh of electricity versus 0.072 USD in Azerbaijan and 0.06 USD in Armenia. In Russia, depending on the region, the rate for the population ranges from 0.13 to 0.06 USD/kWh. See <http://abc.az/eng/news/main/69155.html> (30 October 2012).

[5] See "Kakhi Kaladze is Ready to Begin Talks with the Russian Side on Energy Imports," *Radio Commersant*, 31 October 2012, available at <http://www.commersant.ge/eng/?id=3532> (accessed 31 October 2012).

[6] See "Azerbaijan's SOCAR Acquires Georgian Gas Supplier," *Reuters*, 1 November 2012, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/01/azerbaijan-gas-georgia-idUSL5E8M18P020121101> (accessed 1 November 2012).

CONTAMINATED RIVERS AS MAIN THREAT TO CASPIAN ECOLOGY

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Azerbaijani experts taking part in an international telebridge on October 31 argued that the chief threat to the ecology of the Black Sea comes not from the impact of oil and gas production, but rather from rivers flowing into it whose waters have become contaminated by agricultural and industrial chemicals. That view was disputed by participants from two other littoral states—the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan—and it is thus one that may complicate long-running talks on the territorial demarcation of the sea even as it promotes greater environmental awareness across the region.

Rasim Sattarzade, the head of the department of ecological and nature protection policy at the Azerbaijani ecology and natural resources ministry, said that "only two to three percent" of the environmental contamination of the Black Sea comes from oil and gas extraction. Overwhelmingly, he said, contamination comes from run-off waters, already contaminated by industrial effluents and agricultural fertilizer, flowing into the sea. Obviously, he said, risks associated with oil extraction exist, but they can be "minimized through the application of contemporary technologies and methods of control."

Azerbaijan is already doing its part in both regards. On the one hand, it has introduced the most advanced forms of control against oil and gas spills. And on the other, Baku is currently spending "about a billion dollars every year" to build and modernize new water purification facilities along the Caspian coast." The one at Hovsan, he pointed out, will process 640,000 cubic meters of water each day; that at Sumgait, 200,000; the third at Mardakan-Shuvalan, 20,000; and the last at Buzovna, 10,000.

In the future, Sattarov said, Azerbaijan will construct such plants along "the entire coastline of Azerbaijan." On the Absheron peninsula around Baku, he added, there are plans to set up "mobile purification" facilities to handle particular problems.

Mehman Akhundov, the director of the Azerbaijani Research Institute on Fishing, agreed with his colleague. He also said that Azerbaijan was working to counter the problems caused by the dumping of ballast waters from passing ships. Telman Zeynalov, president of the Azerbaijani National Center for Ecological Forecasting, added that Baku is currently stepping up efforts against poachers, who also by their actions affect the purity of the waters of the Caspian.

Sattarzade spoke for his Azerbaijani colleagues when he said that he hoped that a conference on the ecological framework convention for the Caspian, scheduled to take place in December, will adopt a two-year plan to reduce pollution, including contamination from oil-bearing shipping.

Boris Golubov, a senior scholar at the Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, suggested that his Azerbaijani colleagues are "somewhat understating" the impact of the oil industry on the Caspian's ecology. Indeed, he said, there is "a hypothesis according to which the development of new fields will provoke outflows of oil on the surface of the sea." Thus, the threat "arises of the progressive death of the Caspian." He conceded that "external sources of contamination are important, and preventing this danger is needed," but he insisted that "what is happening" with oil is "much more serious," an "obvious threat to the degradation of the unique biological diversity of this eco-system."

The Russian scholar said that "near Baku are preserved hundreds if not thousands" of wellheads from which oil may flow into the sea. Moreover, oil is one of the effluents of the mud volcanoes. And there is a danger of "the militarization of the region," because "where there is oil, then there are conflicts, social, economic and international." According to Golubov, the five littoral states have not taken sufficient note of "the sad Soviet experience of oil extraction and are not prepared for possible new accidents."

A similar view was offered by Mels Eleusizov, president of Kazakhstan's *Tabigat* Ecological Union, who argued that contaminated rivers in Kazakhstan do threaten the Caspian. However, he insisted that contamination connected with oil and gas exploitation is "much more dangerous than surface water flows." Past agreements to combat these problems, he said, have not worked, and most conferences about it are "simply talk shops." He added that, "the resolution of the problems of the protection of the Caspian will be found only when the societies and leaders of the Caspian littoral states take it up seriously."

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

Ali Ahmadov, deputy chairman of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, says that there must be "serious changes in the format of the Minsk Group" if progress is to be achieved (<http://news.day.az/politics/363413.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that it will take "adequate measures" if Armenia attempts to open an airport in the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/363827.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, head of the political analysis and information support department of the Presidential Administration, says that Armenians "well understand that they have committed an act of aggression and that sooner or later they will be held responsible for it" (<http://news.day.az/politics/363641.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Ismayil Alper Cosgun, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, says that the continuing Armenian occupation of 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan is "the biggest factor threatening security, stability and development" in the region (<http://news.day.az/politics/363519.html>).

Joseph Oded, head of the Eurasian Department of the Israeli foreign ministry, says that Israel, as a country that has suffered from conflicts, "well understands the hurt of Azerbaijan on the issue of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and always supports efforts directed at the peaceful resolution of this problem" (<http://news.day.az/politics/363751.html>).

Irakly Alasania, Georgia's defense minister designate, says that "the problems of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia must be resolved within the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Georgia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/362076.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

31 October

Deputy Prime Minister Abid Sharifov says that Azerbaijan is "proud" that Turkey is one of the strongest countries in the world (<http://news.day.az/politics/363891.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Mohsun Pakayin, Iran's ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/363762.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, head of the political analysis and information support department of the Presidential Administration, says the OSCE Minsk Group and its members must put pressure on Yerevan in order to get a just settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/363889.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that it will take "adequate measures" if Armenia attempts to open an airport in the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/363827.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Australia recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as an inalienable part of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/363831.html>).

Rasim Sattarzade, head of the ecology and natural resources policy department of the Ecological and Natural Resources Ministry, says that protecting the Caspian from pollution is "a most important question of today" (<http://news.day.az/politics/363727.html>).

Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yildiz calls for the closure of the Metsamor atomic power station in Armenia because of the threat it poses to the region (<http://news.day.az/politics/363778.html>).

Ismayil Alper Cosgun, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, says that Turkey will always support the just position of Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue (<http://news.day.az/politics/363887.html>).

Alex Goldman-Shaimon, deputy head of the Central Asian and South Caucasus Department of the Israeli foreign ministry, says that "Azerbaijan is an important strategic partner of Israel's" in the region (<http://news.day.az/politics/363751.html>).

30 October

President Ilham Aliyev receives Belorussian First Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Semashko (<http://news.day.az/politics/363566.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov is named "the positive personality of 2011" by the Slovenian International Institute for Near East and Balkan Research (<http://news.day.az/politics/363626.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Bernardus Brojek, incoming UN resident coordinator in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/363647.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that Azerbaijani uniformed personnel now meet NATO standards (<http://news.day.az/politics/363629.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that any future war over Nagorno-Karabakh, "will enflame the entire region and end with the victory of Azerbaijani soldiers" (<http://news.day.az/politics/363624.html>).

Akram Zeynulla, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Switzerland, meet with Marie-Gabrielle Ineyhen Fleish, state secretary of the Swiss Confederation for economics (<http://news.day.az/economy/363456.html>).

Samad Seyidov, head of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, meets with Gabriela Battaini-Dragoni, deputy secretary general of the Council of Europe (<http://news.day.az/politics/363642.html>).

Fazil Mustafa, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Armenia has become "a victim of its own aggressive policy of conquest" (<http://news.day.az/politics/363440.html>).

Deputy Emergency Situations Minister Etibar Mirzayev meets with his Czech counterpart Jaroslav Hruska (<http://news.day.az/politics/363875.html>).

Belorussian First Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Semashko says that ties between Belarus and Azerbaijan are developing rapidly (<http://news.day.az/politics/363466.html>).

The Iranian foreign ministry says that relations between Tehran and Baku remain "good" (<http://news.day.az/politics/363510.html>).

Israeli Tourism Minister Stas Misezhnikov says Israel is interested in investing in the Azerbaijani tourism sector (<http://news.day.az/economy/363534.html>).

Ismayil Alper Josgun, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, says that the continuing Armenian occupation of 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan is "the biggest factor threatening security, stability and development" in the region (<http://news.day.az/politics/363519.html>).

29 October

President Ilham Aliyev telephones his Turkish counterpart Abdulla Gul (<http://news.day.az/politics/363443.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Rashid Tamrazov, head of the Karachayevo-Cherkess Republic of the Russian Federation (<http://news.day.az/politics/363347.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu, former Romanian prime minister (<http://news.day.az/politics/363347.html>).

Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Washington, says that strategic relations between Azerbaijan and the US are "important" for both countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/363220.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, deputy chairman of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, says that there must be "serious changes in the format of the Minsk Group" if progress is to be achieved (<http://news.day.az/politics/363413.html>).

Bahar Muradova, deputy chairman of the Milli Majlis, says that the OSCE Minsk Group "must devote serious efforts to complete" the peace process by "using its influence on the Armenian side to get Yerevan to move away from its unconstructive position" (<http://news.day.az/politics/363422.html>).

Fazil Ibrahimli, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Yerevan's false accusations against neighboring countries are for a domestic audience (<http://news.day.az/politics/363226.html>).

Rashid Tamrazov, head of the Karachayevo-Cherkess Republic of the Russian Federation, says that Azerbaijan is "one of the most dynamically developing countries in the post-Soviet space" (<http://news.day.az/politics/363428.html>).

Radek Matula, Czech ambassador to Baku, hosts a reception in honor of the 94th anniversary of the independence of his country. Among those in attendance is Transportation Minister Ziya Mammadov (<http://news.day.az/politics/363450.html>).

Ismayil Alper Cosgun, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, hosts a commemoration of the 89th anniversary of the founding of the Turkish Republic (<http://news.day.az/politics/363279.html>).

28 October

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets in Paris with his Armenian counterpart Edvard Nalbandyan as well as with the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (<http://news.day.az/politics/363156.html>).

27 October

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva speaks at a ceremony in Paris commemorating the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and France (<http://news.day.az/politics/363168.html>).

Various Azerbaijani officials and experts speak to the *Vienna Forum of Azerbaijani Students Studying in Europe* (<http://news.day.az/politics/363166.html>).

The Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh says that, "if even one airplane takes off from the Khojaly airport [in the occupied territories], practical steps will be taken" (<http://news.day.az/politics/363133.html>).

The Azerbaijani-Hungarian Subgroup of the International Society for the Development of Trade invites Azerbaijani firms to cooperate with Hungarian ones (<http://news.day.az/economy/363077.html>).

26 October

The Foreign Ministry says that Baku has sent a note to the Australian government asking for an explanation of a resolution by the State Government of New South Wales that media reports suggest constitutes recognition of the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/362972.html>).

Ilgar Mukhtarov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Mexico City, attends a meeting in honor of the victims of the Khojaly genocide (<http://news.day.az/society/362921.html>).

25 October

Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Washington, meets with Michael Madigan, the speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives (<http://news.day.az/politics/362775.html>).

Bakhtiyar Sadykhov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Yerevan's statements about the occupied territories reflect its double standards on international questions (<http://news.day.az/politics/362755.html>).

24 October

The Foreign Ministry says that Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan must understand that crimes against humanity will not remain unpunished (<http://news.day.az/politics/362604.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov receives Richard Prasquier, president of the Representative Council of the Jewish Organizations of France (<http://news.day.az/politics/362708.html>).

Ecology and Natural Resources Minister Huseyngulu Baghirov receives Silvia Meyer-Kaibic, Austria's ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/362760.html>).

Hasan Mammadzade, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Vilnius, meets with Lithuanian Transportation and Communications Minister Eligius Masiulis (<http://news.day.az/politics/362759.html>).

Firudin Nabiyev, head of the State Migration Service, receives Ismayil Alper Cosgun, Turkey's ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/362757.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva and Musa Guliyev, two Milli Majlis deputies, receive Inayatulla Kakar, Pakistan's ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/362628.html>).

Elman Nasirli, director of the Presidential Administration's Institute of Political Research, says that Yerevan hopes to survive by relying on the Armenian diaspora (<http://news.day.az/politics/362605.html>).

23 October

Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov receives Richard Morningstar, US ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/362505.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that Armenian maneuvers in the occupied territories are no cause for concern and that "the time is coming when they will not be able to step on the land of Karabakh" (<http://news.day.az/politics/362393.html>).

Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations, signs a memorandum with Francis Deng, the permanent representative of South Sudan to the UN, establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/362590.html>).

Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Moscow, meets with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin (<http://news.day.az/politics/362601.html>).

The State Committee for Work with the Diaspora says that it does not believe that a meeting in Moscow between the Federal National Cultural Autonomy of Azerbaijanis in Russia and the Armenian diaspora would have a positive influence on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/362527.html>).

Michael Green, director of the USAID mission to Azerbaijan, says that countries with a well-developed banking system, like Azerbaijan, must devote great attention to the struggle with money laundering and the financing of terrorism (<http://news.day.az/economy/362407.html>).

22 October

The Council of Ministers announces new rules for ships passing through the territorial waters of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/society/362356.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that Azerbaijan is one of the leading countries in the region in terms of Internet access and use (<http://news.day.az/politics/362255.html>).

Akram Zeynulla, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Bern, meets with Christian Boner, mayor of the Swiss city of Graubunden (<http://news.day.az/society/362199.html>).

Arturas Jurauskas, Lithuania's ambassador to Baku, says that he is pleased to serve in Azerbaijan, "a country which is traditionally a good partner of Lithuania" (<http://news.day.az/politics/362237.html>).

Igor Popov, Russian co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, says that the date of the meeting between the Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers has not yet been set (<http://news.day.az/politics/362154.html>).

21 October

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with Hans-Dietrich Genscher, former German foreign minister (<http://news.day.az/politics/362008.html>).

Irakly Alasania, Georgia's defense minister designate, says that, "the problems of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia must be resolved within the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Georgia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/362076.html>).

20 October

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva participates in the opening of an Azerbaijani effort to promote information about the country in the regions of France (<http://news.day.az/politics/361909.html>).

US Senator Charles Schumer says that, "Azerbaijanis have experienced genocide" and that he shares their pain (<http://news.day.az/politics/361978.html>).

Silvia Meyer-Kaibic, Austria's ambassador to Baku, says that bilateral trade between Azerbaijan and Austria is growing (<http://news.day.az/economy/362004.html>).

19 October

President Ilham Aliyev receives Bakir Izetbegovic, chairman of the presidium of Bosnia and Herzegovina (<http://news.day.az/politics/361447.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Ryan Lance, president of *ConocoPhillips* (<http://news.day.az/politics/361784.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with his German counterpart Guido Westerwelle (<http://news.day.az/politics/361727.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives General William Fraser, chief of the US transportation command (<http://news.day.az/politics/361712.html>).

Youth and Sports Minister Azad Rahimov says that cooperation among young people in the countries of the CIS is "an important part of humanitarian cooperation of these countries" (<http://news.day.az/society/361708.html>).

Farid Shafiyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Ottawa, meets with Canadian Foreign

Minister John Baird (<http://news.day.az/politics/361650.html>).

The Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy hosts NATO headquarters staff (<http://news.day.az/politics/362296.html>).

Baku hosts the second Caspian-European International Construction Forum (<http://news.day.az/economy/361731.html>).

The Azerbaijani State Economics University hosts the Eurasian Social Science forum on the Paradigm of the Development of the World Economy (<http://news.day.az/society/361676.html>).

Adam Sterling, deputy US ambassador to Baku, says that over the past decade "a great deal has been done in the framework of bilateral dialogue on security issues between Azerbaijan and the United States" and that cooperation on Afghanistan is especially important (<http://news.day.az/politics/361680.html>).

Adam Sterling, deputy US ambassador to Baku, says that the US "continues its work in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group for the creation of conditions and confidence necessary for Azerbaijan and Armenia to make real progress toward a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/361674.html>).

18 October

President Ilham Aliyev receives Gen. William Fraser, chief of the US transportation command (<http://news.day.az/politics/361605.html>).

Akram Zeynulla, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Bern, participates in a Krasnoyarsk forum on transnational crime and hosts a reception in honor of Azerbaijan's independence day (<http://news.day.az/politics/361994.html>).

Zhalya Aliyeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Yerevan's persecution of former Armenian foreign minister Vardan Oskanyan is "clear evidence of the covert struggle for power" in that country (<http://news.day.az/politics/361399.html>).

Bakir Izetbegovic, president of the presidium of Bosnia and Herzegovina, says that his country has "serious potential" for the development of economic cooperation and investment with Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/economy/361547.html>).

Choy Sook-In, Korea's ambassador to Baku, says that bilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan and Korea continues at a high level in the political, economic and cultural spheres (<http://news.day.az/politics/361628.html>).

Omar Medina Quintero, Cuba's ambassador to Baku, says that Havana is interested in Azerbaijan's experience in the energy sector (<http://news.day.az/politics/361424.html>).

Aleksandr Lukashevich, special representative of the Russian foreign ministry, says that planning for the meeting of the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia is "an initiative of not just France" (<http://news.day.az/politics/361624.html>).

Jacques Faure, French co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, says that the Azerbaijani

and Armenian foreign ministers will meet in the near future (<http://news.day.az/politics/361528.html>).

17 October

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that Baku will use its two-year chairmanship of the Organization for Economic Cooperation to resolve issues beyond those the OEC has addressed in the past, including negative issues involving relations among the member countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/361274.html>).

Fuad Akhundov, head of a sector of the Presidential Administration, says that despite Armenia's claims of friendship with the Russian Federation, Yerevan has driven out all but two or three thousand ethnic Russians in the years since 1991 (<http://news.day.az/politics/361179.html>).

Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations, sends a letter to the UN secretary general on Armenian efforts to open an airport in the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/361372.html>).

Tarik Aliyev, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Rabat, gives his letters of credence of King Mohammed VI (<http://news.day.az/politics/361406.html>).

Abel Maharramov, a Milli Majlis deputy, speaks to a special meeting at the Baku State University on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the restoration of Azerbaijan's state independence (<http://news.day.az/politics/361407.html>).

The State Committee for Work with the Diaspora does not see any need for the creation of a Union of Azerbaijani organizations of Russia (<http://news.day.az/politics/361397.html>).

Azerbaijani officials, parliamentarians and scholars attend an international symposium on "The Role of Azerbaijan in the Second World War and in Preventing a Holocaust in the Caucasus" (<http://news.day.az/politics/361412.html>).

Pasqual Meunier, French ambassador to Baku, says that France, together with the two other Minsk Group co-chairs, is organizing a meeting between the Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers (<http://news.day.az/politics/361292.html>).

16 October

President Ilham Aliyev hosts the twelfth summit of the Organization of Economic Cooperation. Among those attending and with whom President Aliyev meets are Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, and Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari (<http://news.day.az/politics/360995.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives his Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (<http://news.day.az/politics/360944.html>).

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, herself a UNESCO good will ambassador, attends the annual meeting of UNESCO good will ambassadors in Paris (<http://news.day.az/politics/361112.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov calls for the establishment of a parliamentary assembly of the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/361064.html>).

Agriculture Minister Ismat Abasov discusses cooperation with Germany with Irina Keiko of the Messe Berlin (<http://news.day.az/economy/361131.html>).

The Foreign Ministry and the Defense Ministry say that Armenian suggestions that Yerevan could attack the oil and gas infrastructure of Azerbaijan are the kind of thing Yerevan has been saying for years and need not cause special concern (<http://news.day.az/politics/360981.html> and <http://news.day.az/politics/361032.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that trade between Turkey and Azerbaijan has risen by a factor of ten over the last ten years (<http://news.day.az/economy/360970.html>).

Moroccan Industry, Trade and New Technology Minister Abdelkader Amar says that there are great opportunities for cooperation between Azerbaijan and Morocco in the investment sector (<http://news.day.az/economy/360965.html>).

Sudanese Trade and Economics Minister Osmar Omar Ali says that there are many opportunities for Azerbaijani investors in his country (<http://news.day.az/economy/360968.html>).

Note to Readers

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