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A satellite map of the Caspian Sea region, showing the sea and surrounding landmasses. The Caspian Sea is a large, dark blue body of water in the center. The surrounding land is a mix of green and brown, indicating different types of terrain and vegetation. The text is overlaid on the map.

Caspian Sea status. The Long-awaited Convention

After 22 years of negotiations Caspian states have finally agreed on how to divide the seabed and waters of the biggest lake on Earth

Issue 4
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EaP Think Bridge is a platform uniting expert communities in the countries of Eastern Partnership region to fill the gap in distributing analytical products for stakeholders

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Security first

Security has been one of the key components of the Eastern Partnership policy. But the content and framework of cooperation in this field set by the EU do not quite match the expectations of the partner countries. How different are the positions of Brussels and the capitals of the region? What deliverables from the partner-states are expected by the European Union? How much have Ukraine and other EaP countries advanced in achieving these goals? The situation is analyzed by Vitaly Martynyuk.

Security issues have also become an important part of the long-awaited Convention on the Caspian Sea Status. But most importantly the principles of dividing the shelf and waters of the Caspian Sea were agreed upon. What this means for the Eastern Partnership and Europe, especially in the energy sector, who lost and who won from signing the document, Sevinj Aliyeva looked for answers.

Meanwhile, September turned out to be intense in the countries of the region. Russia intervened on the agenda of all the six.

The new Armenian government is gaining momentum and developing “partnership and brotherly” relations with the Kremlin. The President of Azerbaijan exchanges visits with Russian vis-a-vis. Moldovan leader also flows to the Kremlin. Belarus continues to negotiate with Moscow in the oil and gas sector without much success. Georgia is fighting off yet other round of accusations from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Ukraine abstains from extending the Treaty on Friendship with its northern neighbor.

The most important events in foreign and domestic policy and the economy in the region are pictured in our traditional reviews of the month.

Olga Chizhova

Editor-in-Chief of the EaP Think Bridge Digest



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Emboldened and empowered Armenian government

Richard Giragosian, Regional Studies Center (Yerevan, Armenia)

The popularity of the Armenian government under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan exceeded expectations by sweeping the municipal election for the capital Yerevan on 23 September. The prime minister's "My Step" bloc secured a landslide victory in the local election, winning an overwhelming 81% of the vote.



The victory of "My Step" bloc at local Yerevan elections confirmed the popularity of the Pashinyan government.
Photo by primeminister.am

DOMESTIC POLICY

Former prime minister faces criminal charges

In an announcement on September 8 by the Special Investigation Service, former Armenian prime minister Hovik Abrahamian has been charged with “exceeding official authorities” and “illegally participating in entrepreneurial activity”. Criminal investigation found that the former premier, together with former police chief and parliamentarian Alik Sargsian, forcibly seized a mining company from a businessman in 2008. The 60-year-old former prime minister was already the target of a separate probe initiated in August 2018 examining his role in the deadly post-election violence of March 2008. That case has already led to the arrest of his brother and another man for the illegal possession of firearms.

Wiretap scandal

A surprising wiretapping scandal that ensnared two senior security officials leaked to the media on September 11. Commenting on the situation, Prime Minister Pashinyan condemned the incident but argued that the conversation did not reveal any undue influence over the judiciary or any attempt to subvert the legal process. The wiretapping and posting of telephone conversations targeted the National Security Service (NSS) Director Artur Vanetsian and the Special Investigation Service (SIS) Head Sasun Khachatryan and, based on the leaked phone call from late July 2018, centered on the prosecution of former president Robert Kocharian and others as part of an investigation into the country's 2008 post-election clashes. The technical capability to wiretap the most senior security officials raised serious questions over security, suggesting that only Russia could have such capability. Nevertheless, the prime

minister instead termed the incident as “a conspiracy and crime against the statehood of Armenia”, and implied that the blame rested with “oligarchs and their so-called bodyguards” who he contended had “imported wiretapping equipment and set up their own special services within the state”. The incident was also used as a political instrument by the former ruling Republican party, however, and triggered their move in the parliament to launch a potentially embarrassing investigation into the case, which they alleged was a possible “obstruction of justice”.

Pro-government party sweeps local election

In an impressive landslide victory, the pro-government “My Step” bloc secured an overwhelming 81% of the 23 September vote in municipal elections in the Armenian capital Yerevan. Far behind, the second-place finisher, the Prosperous Armenia party, surprised many observers with a blatantly dismal performance, garnering a meager 7% of the vote. Although the voter turnout was low, at about 43% of eligible voters, it was still higher than during the last local election in Yerevan and was seen as affirmation of the sustained popularity of the Pashinyan government. The result only emboldened and empowered the government to seek extraordinary parliamentary elections, and negotiations are set to commence in the coming weeks. The snap election was triggered by the resignation of the widely unpopular and allegedly corrupt former Yerevan mayor, Taron Markarian, in July. The election for a 65-member Council of Elders, which will then elect a mayor, was also seen as a sweeping reaffirmation of the Armenian government, and is expected to result in a victory for mayoral candidate and actor Hayk Marutian.

ECONOMY

Government Hails Sharp Surge in Foreign Investment

In a much needed positive economic report to reassure investor confidence, the Armenian government states that foreign direct investment (FDI) in Armenia more than doubled in the first half of the year, totaling some \$81.3 million, a dramatic increase over the \$32.6 million for the same period of last year. Commenting on the figures on September 1, government economists and officials noted, however, that most of this increase stemmed from a surge of foreign

investment which came in the first quarter of the year, well before the forced resignation of the former Armenian government. Equally disturbing was the fact that about 53% of the first-half FDI inflow emanated from the British island of Jersey, a reputed tax haven that is home to Lydian International, which operates a significant gold mine in the country. Both factors tend to raise concerns over longer term sustainability of such increased FDI and do little to improve the overall Armenian investment climate or to reassure the confidence of investors who are already worried over the change in government.

FOREIGN POLICY

Japanese foreign minister visits

Marking the start of a three-day regional visit, Japa-

nese foreign minister Taro Kono arrived in Armenia on September 2, and met with Armenian prime minister Nikol Pashinyan, foreign minister Zohrab Mnatsakanian and

president Armen Sarkissian the next day. The visit follows the signing of an important new bilateral investment treaty in February 2018 and is the latest move to deepen bilateral relations, spurred by last year's decision by Armenia to unilaterally lift visa requirements for Japanese citizens visiting Armenia. The Pashinyan government has identified the development of innovation in the IT sector and related technology, as well as tourism, as key priority areas for Armenian-Japanese relations.

Armenian-Russian Summit

In the third meeting in three months, Armenian prime minister Nikol Pashinyan met Russian president Vladimir Putin in Moscow on September 8. According to the official Russian statements, the summit meeting focused on “key questions of developing allied Russian-Armenian relations as well as cooperation within the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)”. On his part, the Armenian prime minister hailed Armenian-Russian relations as “brilliant” and asserted that “there are no problems in our relations in any direction”. The timing of the meeting was particularly significant, however, as it followed an unusually public display of criticism of the Armenian government by Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov. The criticism concerned investigations targeting former Armenian leaders and officials, which Lavrov referred to as efforts to “persecute its predecessors for political motives”. Following the meeting, Armenian officials also confirmed plans to participate in Russian-led efforts to rebuild Syria as the part of a “humanitarian mission”. Prior to the meeting, the Armenian

premier pledged to develop “much more strategic and cooperative” relations with Russia, which he argued “should be at a much higher level, they should be much more strategic, much more cooperative and much more brotherly”.

Armenian Premier on State Visit to France

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on September 14. The meeting, which followed an earlier initial meeting at NATO headquarters in July 2018, was tied both to the traditionally close bilateral relationship between Armenia and France, but also stemmed from the planned Francophonie summit, which Armenia will host and French president will attend in October 2018.

Meetings at the UN General Assembly

Armenian prime minister Nikol Pashinyan and foreign minister Zohrab Mnatsakian were able to demonstrate a new higher level of statesmanship during the annual

UN General Assembly meeting in New York on September 25, holding meetings with senior officials, including Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and others. Also on the sidelines of the UN summit, the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan met on September 26, for three hours of talks together with the U.S., Russian and French mediators co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group. The Armenian Foreign Ministry called the talks a “useful exchange of thoughts” on the Karabakh conflict and reported that “the interlocutors agreed to continue the dialogue, including within the framework of the co-chairs’ upcoming visit to the region” through next month.

In an impressive landslide victory, the pro-government “My Step” bloc secured an overwhelming 81% of the 23 September vote in municipal elections in the Armenian capital Yerevan

Azerbaijan getting closer to Russia?

Sevinc Aliyeva, Center for Legal Initiatives (Baku, Azerbaijan)

The Constitutional Court verdict regarding the dollar-denominated loans, taken out before the devaluation of manat, has driven the borrowers into despair. Meanwhile, the country's foreign policy was dominated by reciprocal visits of Azerbaijani and Russian leaders. Moreover, Russia's interest in investing in different projects in Azerbaijan proved the importance of the country as an economic partner.



Presidents of Azerbaijan and Russia exchange reciprocal visits.
Photo by president.az

DOMESTIC POLICY:

The 100th anniversary of the liberation of Baku

On September 15, the military parade and sequential events took place in Baku in order to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the liberation of Baku. This date in 1918 was a milestone in the history of Azerbaijan when the Islamic Army of the Caucasus led by Nuri Pasha liberated Baku from the Armenian-Bolshevik occupation. Although the country declared its independence on May 28, 1918, Baku

and some regions were still under occupation. Thus, the liberation of Baku enabled the government to move the capital from Ganja to Baku and set boundaries, which played the baseline for the modern boundaries of the country.

The liberation of Baku by Azerbaijani and Turkish soldiers is seen as the indicator of brotherhood and solidarity between two nations. During the celebrations, Turkish President Erdogan visited Azerbaijan and was welcomed by Azerbaijani first Deputy Prime Minister Yagub Eyyubov, Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov and other au-

thorities. Turkish Ambassador in Azerbaijan Erkan Ozoral stated that the main objective of the celebrations is to ex-

plain and demonstrate the importance of this occasion to the public, [especially to the young generation](#).

ECONOMY

Doubled credits

In September the Constitutional Court of Azerbaijan finally delivered a verdict regarding the dispute between loan borrowers and banks on how to pay off the dollar loans.

In 2015, Azerbaijani manat experienced two devaluations against the dollar, losing its value by nearly two hundred percent. Thus, people who had taken out dollar-denominated loans before 2015 now have to pay twice bigger amount than they originally agreed to. The borrowers claimed that it was unjust for them to pay off more than they bargained for; however, banks did not agree. The banks also asked the Court to make clearer Article 422 of the Civil Code of Azerbaijan, which says that loan conditions may be [changed in times of significant changes](#). The Court verdict did not consider the devaluation a substantial change in this situation and stated that the borrowers should have acknowledged the potential risks when they got dollar-denominated loans since currency devaluation is not an unexpected event.

Vugar Bayramov, The head of the Centre for Economic and Social Development, said that almost a quarter [of the country's population took out bank loans](#).

After the Constitutional Court's decision, it seems that manat devaluation will continue to create difficulties and affect residents adversely.

Three projects

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization plans to launch three important projects in Azerbaijan until the end of autumn within the framework of FAO-Azerbaijan Cooperation Program signed in 2016. The first one, which aims to achieve developments in the agriculture field, will be launched in October. The program will contribute to the knowledge accumulation in the artificial seeding and sheep breeding fields. The other two projects are related to the empowerment and self-employment of women and youth in the rural areas. The projects are expected to “... *increase the income of the population and diversify the sources of income*” said the Head of [the Partnership and Liaison Office of FAO in Azerbaijan, Melek Cakmak](#).

FOREIGN POLICY

Reciprocal visits

In early September, President Ilham Aliyev paid an official visit to the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi. As a result, 16 documents on a wide range of issues from economy to the transportation sector were signed. One of the main documents was the cooperation agreement between the top oil companies of two countries, SOCAR and Rosneft. Afterwards, Russian President Vladimir Putin paid a short official visit to Azerbaijan on September 27 to attend the 9th Azerbaijan-Russia Interregional Forum. This was already the fourth meeting between neighbor countries' leaders this year.

At the beginning of his speech, the Russian leader said that the relationship between two countries was based absolutely on “good-neighborliness and mutual respect” and consensus is the essential factor for finding the balance. In the business forum, Putin talked about the operations of Russian companies in Azerbaijan and developments in the economic relations of two countries. He further added that the number of Russian joint venture companies in Azerbaijan has already reached 700 and the amount of [investment made in the Caspian exceeds \\$1.5 billion](#). Pu-

tin talked about Rosneft's plan to work together in the oilfields of the Caspian with Azerbaijan State Oil Company as well. President Aliyev noted that for the last two years trade turnover between two states has been rapidly increasing which can be attributed to the positive dynamics in the economic ties. According to the Russian political analyst, Ibrahimov, “two countries set a goal to increase [the trade turnover up to \\$10 billion till 2024](#)”.

During his speech, Aliyev referred to Russia as the main import and non-oil products export partner of Azerbaijan. Aliyev mentioned the friendly relations between Azerbaijan and seventy Russian regions by stating bilateral trade missions and cooperation agreements. When talking about the transportation sector, Azerbaijani President stated the importance of the North-South corridor saying that the transportation of goods has increased by a hundred times compared to the last year through the

North-South project. Aliyev also talked about the close relationship between the two nations. “...[Azerbaijani airlines carry out more than 50 flights a week to various cities of Russia. In 9 months, about 700 thousand Russians have visited](#)

[Azerbaijan. I am sure that this figure will also grow in the future](#),” he said.

As a result of presidents' meetings 16 documents on a wide range of issues from economy to the transportation sector were signed

Belarus: Uncertain relations with Russia

Arseny Sivitsky, Center for Strategic and Foreign Policy Studies (Minks, Belarus)

Within the given period the relations between Belarus and Russia have become a source of mostly negative news. As for the country's domestic policy, there are some significant changes in the opposition, while economic indicators are demonstrating lower figures for the first time over a rather long period.



State Border Committee released information on mass arms forfeit that came to the territory of Belarus.

Photo by gpk.gov.by

DOMESTIC POLICY

Opposition changes

In September the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) initiated a campaign against domestic violence, which was quite suddenly met with opposing views. Igor Marzalyuk, an influential MP and the Chairman of the House of Representatives' Commission on Education, Culture and Science issued a statement that said the draft bill on domestic violence prepared by the MIA, assisted by "global funds", "contradicts the traditional values" of Belarusian society. Moreover, the MP also stated that the draft bill unacceptably portrays a man and a father as an "agres-

sor", while a woman and a child are "victims".

Yet as for the political opposition, there are some significant, however, still not so much [meaningful "changes of actors"](#). [Vasiliy Polyakov, the head of the opposition United Civil Party](#) resigned only several months following his election. Nikolai Kozlov, a former MIA official, was appointed as acting Deputy Chairman of the UCP. What's more, last week Denis Mandik [was elected as the new leader for "Moladzi SBN \(Union of Belarusian Youth\)"](#), while the center-right coalition including the Movement for Freedom, United Civil Party and the Belarusian Chris-

tian Democracy party made a [statement regarding the necessity of nominating a single opposition candidate](#)

[for coming presidential elections](#). However, no specific names for potential candidates followed.

ECONOMY

From recovery to stagnation

[In August 2018 Belarusian economy went down 0.5%](#), showing a decrease for the first time since the end of 2017. While in the seven months of 2018 the economic growth made up 4.4%, after the eighth month it was only 3.7%, with the main factor responsible for such a decrease being a decline in producing agricultural goods. 2018 saw a record low harvest of grains and legume crops that made up 5.25 ml tons (which is 30% lower than in 2017). Therefore, agricultural organizations decreased their product release by 34.8%, which led to losing 3.5% of gross domestic product in August (the fact that it was only Minsk, having no agricultural enterprises, that remained in the black among Belarusian regions speaks for itself). Moreover, there is a trend of slower growth in other sectors as well. For instance, in processing industry the added value grew only by 1.7%, wholesale trade by 2.2% and freight transportation – only by 0.1%.

Another factor responsible for Belarusian economy deterioration was the lower level of oil product import from Russia and as a result, “shrinkage” of refinery operations followed by export to the third countries. [In January-July Belarus imported from Russia 2.35 tons of oil products costing \\$912.2 ml](#). Against the same period last year oil product import from the Russian Federation grew in physical terms by 36.8% and in mon-

Minister of Energy of the Russian Federation said the oil product export to Belarus makes no economic sense

etary terms – by 43.7%. Yet in July Belarus got a smaller amount of oil products compared to the previous months – 237 thousand tons (against 365 thousand tons in May). This volume is likely to be even more modest in August.

Within the given period the information was released on the real scale of national debt issue that the authorities will be facing in 2019 and further on. According to the Ministry of Finance, as of September, 1, 2018 the national debt of Belarus made up 44 bn roubles, which is 1.8 bn roubles or 4.3% more than it used to be at the beginning of 2018. As of September 1, foreign national debt made up \$16.6 bn, which is \$173.1 ml less than it was at the beginning of the year taking into account exchange rate fluctuations, or 1% percentagewise. Overall, the budget provides for 2.5 bn roubles for servicing national debt in 2018, which is 25.2% more than 2017 evaluations. Such

exorbitant level of debt pressure will be present for another four years. Moreover, taking into account world market dynamics, it will be extremely difficult for Belarus to restructure its debt while getting lower interest rates. As it was mentioned before, the Belarusian authorities de facto have no alternative to the IMF cooperation agreement. This fact was confirmed by the Minister of Fi-

nance of Belarus Maksim Ermolovich, who issued a statement regarding launching the implementation [of the IMF program in Belarus in 2020](#). The sum mentioned so far is \$3 bn, however, this sum may increase in the future.

FOREIGN POLICY

Stronger diversification

As for the relations between Belarus and Russia, they have provided quite negative news within the given period. The main bad news was yet again connected to oil and gas and Belarusian food export. On September 3, the Minister of Energy of the Russian Federation Alexander Novak took a strong stand [on the issue of oil product export to Belarus saying that it makes no economic sense](#). In this context September's main development was the meeting of the presidents of Belarus and Russia in extended format on September 21. According to the Belarusian side, they managed to achieve Moscow's complete refusal to try and cut re-export of Russian oil by Belarus in 2018 and 2019. In return Minsk continues to pay for Russian gas according to the prices agreed upon earlier (taking into account “surplus payment” for gas transportation).

As for oil product supplies, the results of Sochi negoti-

ations provided a completely clear understanding of their supplies for domestic needs of the Republic of Belarus. [The given volume \(approximately 300 thousand tons a year\) will be supplied and will even increase by 10% in 2019](#). However, the situation is still unclear when it comes to supplies for minimal processing and re-export. As announced by Russia, these supplies will be dramatically reduced in the fourth quarter of 2018, however, they were already cut down in July-September 2018.

Against the backdrop of a new uncertainty in the relations with Russia Minsk tried to diversify its ties, especially in Eastern directions, to the maximum extent. [On September 12-14, Alexander Lukashenko visited Uzbekistan](#), where he signed almost two dozens of agreements including an agreement on military and technical cooperation. Uzbekistan is a rather attractive market for Belarus, as it is also an opportunity to earn the same amount of money in Central Asia as when cooperating with Chinese

partners (for example, in Tajikistan) and when interacting with Kremlin's "new allies".

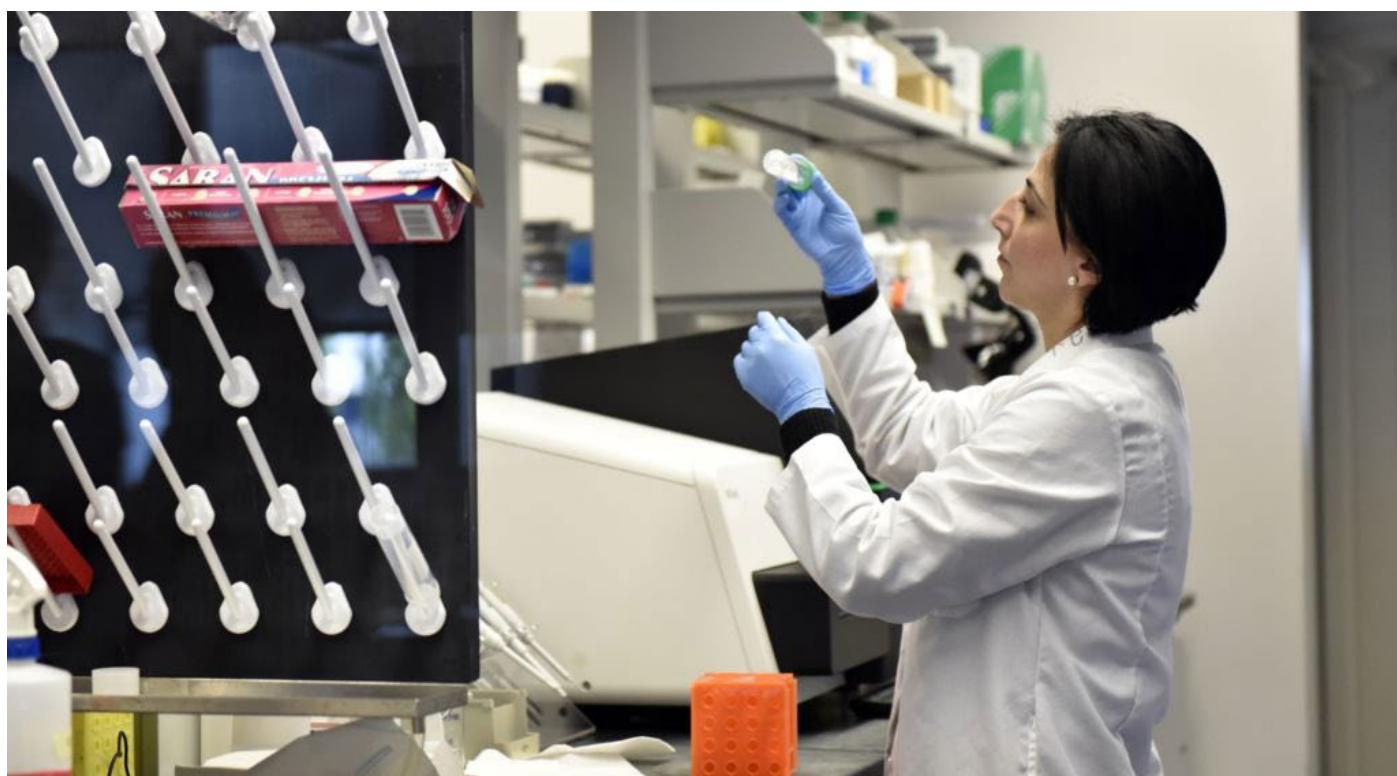
On September 28, the Commonwealth of Independent States summit in Dushanbe did not bring any tangible results. [The focus Alexander Lukashenko made during the Dushanbe summit was on developing the CIS cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization](#) and "One Belt, One Road" Initiative. It was probably meant, among other things, to define Minsk's main "geopolitical card" in the continuous clash which is the support from the Chinese side. Lukashenko also had a [meeting with the president of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon](#); during the meeting the Belarusian president stated that Belarus is ready to take an active part in the industrialization plan of this country.

The State Border Committee of the Republic of Belarus released information on mass arms forfeit that came from the territory of Ukraine to the territory of Belarus. In particular, the SBC provides data on around 100 units of arms and 1200 units of ammunition, with the Ukrainian side stating 100 units of arms and ammunition (therefore, it means a minimal amount of arms and mostly ammunition), while Belarusian data refers to the entire border of the country, not only its Ukrainian part. It is not a secret that illegal migration, drug and arms trafficking to Belarus come from the Russian direction. Already in summer, when Lukashenko visited the border post in Kobrin District, he set a task to work on launching "maneuverable mobile units" in order to transfer them to difficult border parts, first and foremost, to the border between Belarus and Russia.

Georgia: Cannabis smells like politics

Lasha Tughushi, Liberal Academy Tbilisi Foundation (Tbilisi, Georgia)

Legalizing cannabis quite suddenly became the focal point for Georgia's pre-election race. As for the country's economy, all indicators demonstrate its positive growth. However, when it comes to Georgia's foreign policy, its tensions with Russia heighten.



Georgia once again had to fight off Russia's accusations about the Lugar laboratory in Tbilisi.

Photo by ekhokavkaza.com

DOMESTIC POLICY

Focus on elections

One month prior to the presidential elections the relations between the candidates are getting tenser and tenser. Salome Zurbishvili supported by Bidzina Ivanishvili called for public debates with her opponents – Grigol Vashadze, a candidate supported by Mikhail Saakashvili, and Davit Bakradze, a European Georgia representative, former Chairman of the Parliament.

In the recent weeks Zurbishvili made a faux pas several times. First she said that it was Saakashvili who started

military actions in 2008. The society reacted with a rather dramatic negative response following which she clarified that the war was started by Russia 100 years ago (meaning Georgia's Sovietization) and that Misha is really responsible only for the August phase. Then she declared that Saakashvili bombed his own people in Tskhinvali, which also resulted in strong criticism. Moreover, she finally supported the government's initiative to cultivate cannabis for export and medical purposes.

Georgian Orthodox Church together with the opposition turned against this recent initiative and did not lack epithets

when describing Ivanishvili. He was allegedly intending to become a drug lord and encouraging Georgian youth to consume drugs with his very own materialistic interests at heart. Salome Zurabishvili stood up for the government stating that she will lead a special information campaign in order to tell the truth to the people of Georgia.

“The queen of cannabis” – this is the nickname Zurabishvili got from one of the bishops. Zurabishvili reacted immediately stating that the Church should not interfere as much in political processes. What is more, she declared that when she is the president, she will review the Concordat – the agreement between the Georgian state and the Orthodox Church of Georgia on its special status.

Yet another bishop issued a statement that in case Salome becomes the president he will have no choice but

to leave the country as his status will not allow him to do what he needs to do.

Salome herself reminded that while she was the minister, Russian military bases ceased their activities on the territory of Georgia: “We made Russia withdraw its troops, while Saakashvili returned them to Abkhazia and the region of Tskhinvali”. This statement did not remain without a return move, this time coming from the opposition, according to whose representatives, Zurabishvili’s role in withdrawing Russian troops was rather modest. The polar camps of Saakashvili and Ivanishvili almost leave no chance to other presidential candidates. So far voters are having a difficult time since there is not much choice for those who dislike both Misha and Bidzina.

ECONOMY

Georgia’s investment policy improving

According to Georgia’s National Bank, the country’s net international investment as of June 30, 2018 made up \$23,2 mln (56,9 bn lari), that is its GDP made up 144,9% (in the last four quarters). Compared to the numbers in the last quarter, this indicator went up by \$594,6 mln.

As for export and import, according to the National Statistics Office of Georgia, copper ore and concentrates

are among export leaders within seven months of 2018, and oil products are among import ones.

Georgia’s foreign trade turnover in January-August 2018 (not including undeclared trade) made up \$8 100,7 bn, which is 22,6% more against the same period last year.

Export increased by 27,1% and made up \$2,1 bn against the same period last year, while import volume increased by 21% and made up \$ 6 bn.

FOREIGN POLICY

Secret laboratory in Tbilisi?

Georgian politicians, experts, civil society representatives and diplomats are persistent in their claims regarding Georgia’s interest in becoming a NATO and the EU member state. They continue to chant the same phrases despite the annoyance of the West and its tiredness of enlargement. The young Georgian prime minister stood out during his US visit with a harsh anti-Russian rhetoric. He accused Russia of occupying Georgian territories during UN General Assembly. And this is against the backdrop of Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly criticizing Georgia’s Richard Lugar laboratory, named after an American politician and ex-senator, and its alleged military biological experiments.

Producing biological weapons, spreading hazardous viruses, using dangerous insects as part of irregular warfare and poisoning people - Russian government and its mass media have been accusing this laboratory in Tbilisi built by Americans of these crimes for many years already. Russia’s MFA representative made an official statement which said that Russia will not allow such American laboratory to

function near its borders.

The issue was raised by Georgia’s former security minister Igor Giorgadze, persecuted after a terroristic act targeting Eduard Shevardnadze and currently hiding in Russia. In Georgia it was perceived by many people as a response to the developments in England when Russian Special Forces poisoned the Skripals.

It is rather interesting that earlier, on April 12, 2018, Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Maria Zakharova mentioned the Lugar laboratory in a rather dangerous context during the Skripal briefing: “It is clear that such centers conduct research not only for the sanitary and epidemiological well-being of the population living in the neighboring countries. Therefore, the very fact of large-scale medical and biological activities and the presence of the Pentagon-financed laboratory at the borders of Russia cause particular concern for us”.

The situation is portrayed even in a more dramatic way by Russian mass media that more and more frequently state that Georgia will have become a NATO member state by 2021.

Pro-Moldova policy instead of pro-European

Daniela Gologan, Foreign Policy Association of Moldova (Chisinau, Moldova)

Questions regarding the irreversibility of the Moldovan European path re-emerged in spite of the constant statements from the ruling coalition that Moldova will remain committed to the implementation of the provisions under the Association Agreement. The pro-Moldova messages delivered both by the Democratic party and the Presidential institution raise concerns regarding the future parliamentary elections and as a result, possible coalitions. The violations of the Security Zone obligations by the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) remain a topic on the agenda of the Transnistrian settlement as well as the lack of a commonly agreed policy among state institutions.



Relatives of deported Turkish citizens protest in Chisinau airport
Photo europalibera.org

DOMESTIC POLICY

A hectic agenda

During the month of September, several events took place emphasizing once again the lack of the rule of law and inconsistent domestic policies on Moldovan national interests, the Transnistrian conflict settlement being one

of them. The Moldovan president, Igor Dodon for the third time during his mandate met with Vadim Krasnolselski, the leader of the Transnistrian region. The meeting took place at the presidential residence in Condri a, where the two reiterated the importance of the [“peacekeeping oper-](#)

[ation on the Nistru River as a guarantee of the peace and security of the citizens](#)". This came after continuous violations of the Security Zone obligations by the paramilitary forces of the Tiraspol separatist regime in cooperation with the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF). The OGRF conducts offensive military exercises, forcing the Nistru River, without the required approval and coordination [with the Joint Control Commission and the Joint Military Command](#). The president's statements reconfirm the absence of a clear and unified position on the Transnistrian settlement on behalf of the Republic of Moldova. The situation also illustrates the dual vision of one of the key issues about the Moldovan statehood and territorial integrity between the presidential administration and the government. Contrary to Dodon's statement on the importance of the current peacekeeping operation format and the presence of the Russian Federation in different formats, the government of the Republic of Moldova repeatedly signals cases of illegal presence of the OGRF in the Security Zone and requests the withdrawal of the illegal Russian military stationed in the Transnistrian region on international tribunals.

Another disputed event in the name of national security

was carried out by the Security and Intelligence Services (SIS) of the Republic of Moldova. Seven Turkish citizens living in Moldova for more than 20 years [were expelled on the charges of terrorism](#). The SIS Antiterrorist Center invoked the affiliation [to an Islamist group](#) and terrorist activities threatening Moldovan national security. The detained suspects are the Deputy Director and other employees of the Moldovan - Turkish "Orizont" Lyceum network, considered to be one of the most prestigious lyceums in Chisinau. This "complex operation" raised concerns among human rights organization. A common declaration was issued explaining why these actions are a violation of human rights and questioned the justification of the [unannounced expulsion invoking possible hidden political interests](#).

Last but not least, Vlad Plahotniuc the leader of the Democratic Party announced in a press briefing the new strategic communication tactics, emphasizing the pro-Moldova domestic orientation. The change of rhetoric comes as a result of the spiny relation with the Euro-Atlantic partners. The hectic decision reveals the electoral mood on one hand, and confuses and destabilizes the European communication vector even more.

ECONOMY

Optimistic data against reality

The adoption of the new budgetary and fiscal reform was deeply criticized by the development partners because of the major risks that the strategy can be exposed to. Nevertheless, according to the National Bureau of Statistical report, the Moldovan economy registered a 5.2% growth [in the second quarter](#) and 4.5% [in the first quarter](#).

The most important contributions to GDP growth were made by domestic trade, manufacturing and agriculture. On the other hand, because of postponing disbursement of the 100-million-euro EU macro-financial assistance the Government lent over 560 million Lei (28.7 Euro) on the domestic market, or nearly seven times more than initially planned to borrow [in the third quarter of this year](#). Foreign Policy.

Igor Dodon's pilgrimage to Moscow

The end of the month was marked by the visit of president Dodon to Moscow where he met Dmitri Kozak, deputy prime minister and the Kremlin Special Representative for Trade Relations with Moldova. The meeting took place immediately after Dodon's visit to Dushanbe, where he

participated in the summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The appointment of the Dmitri Kozak as a Special Representative on Moldova raised concerns

considering the previous Federalization Plan. Dodon is the first Moldovan leader to meet Kozak after his appointment, and a strong supporter of the idea of federalization, against the general perception of the harmfulness of the possible federalization under the provisions stated by the Russian

authorities. During the visit to Dushanbe, Dodon had a short meeting with Vladimir Putin, presumably discussing the upcoming visit of Patriarch Kirill to Moldova next month [and his next visit to Moscow, planned for 31 October – 1 November](#). Delivering his speech at the Commonwealth of Independent States Summit, he pointed out two main ideas: the pro-Moldova domestic and foreign policy orientation, a message delivered as well by the Democratic party recently, and the need for cooperation both with the EU and Eurasia Union, positioning himself as a promoter of closer relations between the EU and Eurasian Union. If the common messaging delivered by both Dodon and Plahotniuc is a coincidence or a pre-electoral stunting remains a question, but this definitely increases the concerns of the expert's community.

Seven Turkish citizens living in Moldova for more than 20 years were expelled on the charges of terrorism

Ukraine: Obstacle driving

Sergiy Gerasymchuk, Ukrainian Prism Foreign Policy Council (Kyiv, Ukraine)

In September Ukraine's movement away from Moscow accelerated noticeably. The bilateral Friendship Treaty between the two countries is terminated, there is a prospect of defining the European vector of foreign policy in the Constitution of Ukraine, and the power of Moscow patriarchate is getting weaker. In some respect the launch of unofficial electoral campaign acted as a trigger for these processes. However, Ukraine has to face certain difficulties when moving forward: the IMF conclusions regarding Ukrainian reforms are ambiguous, and there is yet another crisis in relations between Ukraine and Hungary.



Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople launched the procedure of granting autocephaly to Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Photo by GOA

DOMESTIC POLICY

Start of new political season

This fall gave a new start to domestic political process. Even though the nearest elections are to come in six months, the unofficial electoral campaign has already started. As one of its components in early September

President Poroshenko submitted constitutional amendments to the Parliament on securing Ukraine's aspirations to [join the European Union and NATO](#). In mid-September 321 MPs voted for the draft amendments in the first reading and sent them to be reviewed by the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, [according to the corresponding](#)

[procedure](#). Among other things, the authorities are trying to mobilize pro-European and pro-NATO electorate, while minimizing the attempts for a return move of pro-Russian forces in Ukraine. It is also significant that the president of Ukraine signed a decree on non-extension of “Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and [Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation](#)”. The agreement is about to be terminated and there are no provisions for

friendship in the near future.

Another sign of the unofficial electoral campaign start is the fact that MPs finally chose [new members of Central Election Commission](#), as according to the legislation, it had to be done already in summer 2014. Appointing new Central Election Commission members was welcomed by [G7 ambassadors](#).

ECONOMY

State Budget and IMF Mission (impossible?)

The state of Ukrainian finances, unfortunately, leaves much to be desired. Therefore, the country will face a lot of challenges without cheap Western loans. It is especially important as next year Ukraine will be at the peak of paying off foreign debts from last years. Against this backdrop the country needs further cooperation with the IMF and new financing.

The IMF mission's visit to Kyiv lasted two weeks. There are still no final results following the negotiations, however, some vital issues were addressed in a positive way by the Mission Head, in particular, [the pension reform](#). As for the sensitive “gas” issue, Ukrainian government is still undecided. The IMF requires to increase gas tariffs, but a year before the elections it is a very sensitive issue.

The only state institution that somehow tries to clarify the gas issue for the population of the country is [the National Bank, and it is only a forecast](#).

Against the background of complex results following the IMF work in Ukraine, signing another Memorandum between Ukraine and the EU in order for Ukraine to [get macro-financial assistance was a comforting development](#).

As for the draft bill on Ukraine's state budget, it was presented in the Parliament on September, 15 as promised by the country's government. In particular, the draft provides for 3% economy growth with GDP deficit making up 2.3%. It also allows [for minimal wages increase up to UAH4125 \(approximately \\$150\)](#). As for the needs of national defense and security, in particular army needs, the prime minister Vladimir [Groysman suggested allocating over UAH200 bn](#) (around \$7 bn).

FOREIGN POLICY

Religious Progress

As for the country's foreign policy, the start of the new political season in Ukraine was marked by a high-profile diplomatic scandal with Hungary following rather tense relations between the two countries after Ukraine adopted its “Law on Education” last year. The mass media provided evidence that Hungarian Consulate in the town of Berehove (Zakarpattia region in Ukraine) holds ceremonies granting Hungarian citizenship to the citizens of Ukraine, with consulate staff strongly recommending the recipients of Hungarians passports to keep the fact of their [dual citizenship secret from Ukrainian authorities](#).

The Head of Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in his video address that the Hungarian consul will be sent home after such an [unfriendly act](#), further attempts to resolve the situation made by the heads of foreign policy institutions Pavlo Klimkin and Peter Szijjarto were unsuccessful. Instead the Hungarian side threatened yet again to slow down [Ukraine's European aspirations to the maximum extent](#).

Regardless of the tense relations between Ukraine and

Hungary, other Western partners, even at the level of local authorities, support Ukraine. In particular, Paris City Hall continues to put pressure on Russia which illegally holds captive Ukrainian political prisoner Oleg Sentsov. On September 24, local City Hall members unanimously granted Kremlin's prisoner the title [of the honorary citizen of the city of Paris](#).

Significant developments of international importance take place on the religious arena. It is well-known that the Ec-

umenical Patriarchate of Constantinople launched the procedure of granting autocephaly to Ukrainian Orthodox Church and [therefore appointed two exarchs \(representatives\)](#). The prospect of autocephaly is significant for all Christians in Ukraine and is supported both inside and outside of the country. In particular, the president

of Ukraine had a meeting with US ambassador-at-large of international religious freedom Samuel Brownback. The latter ensured the Ukrainian leader that Ukraine has the full support of the United States of America in its right for a single [Ukrainian Autocephalic Orthodox Church](#). Moreover, the Orthodox Church of Cyprus also supported granting [autocephaly to Ukrainian Orthodox Church](#).

Hungarian Consulate in the town of Berehove (Zakarpattia region in Ukraine) holds ceremonies granting Hungarian citizenship to the citizens of Ukraine

Caspian Sea status. The Long-awaited Convention

On August 12, after years of discussion, the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea was finally signed in Aktau, Kazakhstan.



Presidents of Caspian states signed the long-awaited Convention.

Photo by president.az

The Caspian Sea or the largest lake on the Earth is bounded by five countries: Kazakhstan, Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkmenistan. The sea is rich in exploitable oil and gas resources, nearly 48 billion barrels of oil and 292 trillion cubic feet of natural gas offshore reserves, and has a strategic location connecting Central Asia and the Caucasus with the Mediterranean. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the legal status of the Caspian Sea has remained ambiguous, creating obstacles for oil and

gas exploitation and preventing the development of major projects in the region.

In this article, we analyze the retrospective of the issue, look at the major stakeholders in the solution process, and discuss the importance of the agreement on the region.

History of the problem

The legal status of the Caspian Sea was regulated by the USSR and Iran before 1991 with Petersburg, Resht,

Gulustan and Turkmenchay treaties, as well as [‘Treaty of Friendship’ and ‘Treaty of Commerce and Navigation’](#). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new subjects of the international law, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, appeared and the geopolitical configuration of the region changed. Since the Caspian is the largest enclosed body of water in the world and rich in hydrocarbon resources, flora, and fauna, it has taken more than two decades for five countries to come to an agreement.

The first summit of all the Caspian Sea littoral countries happened in 2002 in Ashgabat. This meeting was a promising step for the future cooperation. The deputy foreign ministers of five states discussed the draft convention. The protocol signed in Ashgabat also ensured the protection of the marine environment by reducing and controlling pollution. The summit finished with no final declaration. However, the parties agreed to meet in Iran in two years. In 2004 after the death of Turkmenistan President Safarmurat Niyazov and Azerbaijan President Heydar Aliyev, the summit was postponed.

The second Caspian Summit in Tehran in 2007 ended with Tehran Declaration that included a preamble and 25 articles. The parties agreed to do their best in order to achieve political, diplomatic, commercial, economic, scientific, technical, and cultural cooperation for the stability and the development of the region. In addition, it was agreed to continue negotiations, especially in energy and transportation issues. Tehran Declaration included ecological clauses related to pollution, marine life, and efficient use of energy resources. The sides made a commitment not to use armed forces against each other and not to allow other states to use their territory for undertaking military operations. Illegal actions such as terrorism, drug or arms trafficking were considered a serious threat to the whole world under the framework of the declaration. Furthermore, it was confirmed that the legal status of the Caspian Sea can only be determined through consensus and until then aforementioned countries can ship, fish, and navigate. Tehran Summit was considered a turning point in the Caspian dispute because countries managed to come to a consensus through the Tehran Declaration.

The third Summit of the Heads of the Caspian-littoral states was held in Baku in 2010. The parties signed the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Security in the Caspian and a Joint Declaration. In the Joint Declaration, the sides agreed to extend negotiations in order to build the final convention and recognized the sovereign rights [of each state in the use of the Caspian resources](#).

And the fourth summit was held in Astrakhan on September 29, 2014. The Heads of five states met in order to discuss issues related to the legal status, natural resources,

and the environment of the Caspian Sea. North-South Transport Corridor and the Railroad Ring were [among the discussed topics](#). The final Communiqué approved in the summit reaffirmed once again unacceptability of military presence of the [non-Caspian states in the the Caspian](#), which served to the interest of Russia and Iran mainly. Since those two have been the most powerful countries in the region, military-related provisions were considered as a message from Russia and Iran to the West.

Throughout the negotiation process, several bilateral and trilateral agreements were signed between Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Russia for defining their sectors in the Caspian. However, since these agreements excluded Iran and Turkmenistan, no final resolution was adopted. Two major territorial disputes were Turkmen-Azerbaijani and Azerbaijani-Iran disputes over the Serdar/Kapaz field and the Araz-Alov-Sharg field respectively.

In 1997 Azerbaijan State Oil Company signed an agreement with Lukoil and Rosneft for the exploitation of Kapaz field. However, Turkmen side strongly reacted and claimed that the field belongs to Turkmenistan. Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev’s offer to develop the field together was rejected by the Turkmen side and bilateral relations downgraded in the following decade. After new Turkmenistan President Berdymukhamedov started to cooperate with Chevron executives in order to develop the field, Azerbaijani side made the collaboration offer once again but got no response. In 2009, Turkmenistan President claimed that the government would apply to the International Court of Arbitration to solve the issue.

Another dispute was around Alov (Alborz in Iranian) field since 1998. Alov consists of three fields Sharg, Alov and Araz and is estimated [to have 2.6 billion barrels of oil and 2.4 billion cubic meters of gas](#). At the time, Azerbaijan signed an agreement with an oil consortium company, which enabled the company to undertake seismic explorations in the Alov field. Iranian side opposed the decision and asked Azerbaijani side to cease the agreement until the establishment of the legal regime in the Caspian. When this request was rejected, National Iranian Oil Company launched a campaign to make similar operations in the field, which was faced with reactions from the Azerbaijani side. The relations between the two countries deteriorated and the conflict experienced the culmination when Iranian military aircrafts threatened two Azerbaijani vessels researching the field for BP. After the event, BP’s operations and development in the field were frozen. Only after Ilham Aliyev’s 2016 visit to Iran, parties proclaimed that they have agreed to use and develop the field without giving further details on how.

The seabed of Caspian Sea was divided into territorial zones while the surface was accepted as international water



Aktau Summit and the long-long-awaited Convention

The 18-page Convention adopted in Aktau sets the framework for security, economic cooperation, environmental protection, and naval transportation issues based on the principles of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, equality among members, and non-use of the threat of force. However, the convention needs to be fleshed out with additional agreements before talking about the precise division of the Caspian.

First, in the convention, the conceptual approach for establishing the status of the Caspian sea has changed. Now, it is not defined as a sea or a lake, but “intercontinental body of water”. This means that neither UN Convention on the Law of the Sea will apply to the Caspian, nor it will be divided equally [between the five states as a lake](#). The participants also rejected the equal distance division idea, which supports determining boundaries based on a median line; instead, the seabed and the surface were treated differently. The seabed was divided into territorial zones while the surface [was accepted as international water](#).

Throughout the negotiation process, Iran has advocated dividing the seabed into five equal parts, which opposes the other countries’ claims. However, the northern part of the sea has already been fully delimited between Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan with 2001 and 2003 treaties [via using the median line](#). Since the convention keeps the delimitation process in the control of the relevant countries, the demarcation line is not expected to change much. Because of this provision, Iran is considered a potential loser in the

deal. The government was blamed for “selling off” [the Caspian by some Iranian social media users](#).

The Caspian is the home to various species of sturgeon, the fish that produces the highly demanded caviar and the sea provides the big amount of the caviar in the world. In the convention, the future of fishing is not precisely determined yet and fishing quota for each country will need to be set.

The convention may give rise to the digitalization of commerce, trade, and logistics as well as business operations among the five countries. Russian President Vladimir Putin noted that “*Transportation is one of the key factors of sustainable growth and cooperation of our countries*,” and he said about the establishment of Caspian Economic Forum in order to “*develop ties between our countries’ businesses*”.

Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline

The idea of the pipeline dates back to the late 1990s when the Clinton administration made an initiative [for East-West trans-Caspian energy corridor in 1998](#). First, Turkey and Turkmenistan signed a thirty-year agreement in order to transfer Turkmen gas to Turkey. However, due to payment issues and lack of legal framework, the negotiations suspended. In 2006, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan Presidents signed an agreement in order to transfer oil from Kashagan and Tengiz fields to Sengachal terminal near Baku and export Turkmen oil through Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan route. However, some political and economic limitations disabled the implementation of the project. Russian opposition to the issue, based on environmental considerations, made the pipeline project more problem-

atic. Turkmenistan's gas policy regarding the processing of all gas before exporting was another obstacle [for transporting Turkmen gas to Europe](#). In 2015, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan again showed interest in Southern Gas Corridor together with Turkey and EU through Ashgabat Declaration. Still, no tangible steps were made.

The Convention mentions that construction and pipeline issues can only be determined by countries through which those routes are passing as long as the construction complies with [the environmental standards](#). This principle prevents Russia from interfering with the Pipeline project that passes through the Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan sectors. Russia's "give in" may be related to the two factors, the first being changes in the European gas market. Previously, Turkmen gas supply was considered a competitor to Russian gas; however, now it is likely to compete with the US liquefied gas. Second, security was the priority for Russia during the summit, so gas issues were lowered to the second place. Principal Caspian analyst at energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie, Ashley Sherman called the agreement itself "*an unprecedented milestone*"; yet, he stated that [immediate implications in the energy sector would be limited](#).

Military-related clauses of the agreement ban the presence of any third-party armed forces and prohibit member states to commit aggression against other littoral states. Russia and Iran were concerned about the military presence of any non-Caspian states in the Caspian and even about the possibility of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan cooperation with the US in order to use their territory for the transit of non-military cargo. Thus, these clauses can be attributed to the success of Russian and Iran diplomacy since Russia has the strongest military presence in the Caspian and Iran has been under political and economic pressure from the West.

Construction and pipeline issues can only be determined by countries through which those routes are passing as long as the construction complies with the environmental standards

Importance of the Convention

Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General called the agreement "*invaluable*" for adjusting the dispute over the Caspian Sea and "*significant step*" for solving a wide range of issues [among five countries](#). Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, called the meeting "*epochal*", while Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev referred [the Convention as the Constitution of the Caspian](#). Foreign Minister of Russia Sergey Lavrov, on his part, called the Aktau Summit an absolute record among all Caspian negotiations. "[Thanks to the convention, an absolutely universal basis for considering any issues of cooperation in the Caspian Sea appeared.](#)" stated Lavrov.

Following the summit, Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov made a speech about the outcomes of the Aktau meeting and mentioned holding the 6th top-level meeting of the Caspian littoral countries in Turkmenistan.

To sum up, although the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea falls short of being an all-inclusive legal framework, it will be a good benchmark for further negotiations and the Aktau summit can be considered the milestone event in the history of the Caspian.

EP security: EU goals and Ukraine's promotion

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The European Union has clearly defined security priorities according to which it aims to develop its cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries. However, the question remains whether these priorities are also the ones vital for stability and security in the region and partner states and to what extent.



The Ukrainian-Lithuanian-Polish Brigade is a good example of Ukraine's participation in the EU's combat tactical groups.

Photo by wikipedia.org

Security has been one of essential components in Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative since it was launched. According to the European Commission press release on Eastern Partnership of December 3, 2008, security was defined as one of the components of this EU initiative, focusing on border management and effort to combat illegal migration and organized crime. If we analyze the effective document "Eastern Partnership: Focusing on Key Priorities and Deliverables", finally adopted in June 2017, we will see that the European Union retained these priorities for EaP security, logically adding cyber security, fighting cyber threats, arms escalation, radiation, chemical and biological threats and emergency situations.

The list of these security priorities is obviously important to Ukraine and other EaP countries, however, the issue remains as to whether these priorities are important for the stability and security in the region. Ukraine, which has always been a leader when it comes to developing security cooperation with the EU,

and which has been combatting Russian hybrid aggression for five years, has already partially achieved some deliverables defined by the EU. Moreover, Ukraine is likely to be able to fulfill all of them until 2020 as stated in the EU document on the Eastern Partnership mentioned before.

EU goals and real challenges for EaP security

Eastern Partnership security goals do not completely correspond with the interests of the partner states as these goals fail to provide the most important target solution: conflict resolution, and Russia is not mentioned as the main source of security threats. The lack of clear identification of the source of threats makes it difficult to undertake effective combat measures. It is worth noting that in the EU Global Strategy of 2016, the key foreign policy and security document, the EU does not clearly identify the source of threats.

However, it says that they come from the East and accuses Russia of its destabilizing policy: “Russia’s violation of the international law and the destabilization of Ukraine, on top of protracted conflicts in the wider Black Sea region, have [challenged the European security order at its core.](#)”

The European Union, without a doubt, recognizes the importance of efforts to resolve conflicts in the EaP region. For instance, after the 5th Eastern Partnership Summit in November 2017 the President of the European Council Donald Tusk stated: “But while there are indeed good prospects for the future, frozen and armed conflicts continue [to prevent development and create hardships in the Eastern Partnership countries](#)”. However, Brussels is targeting an absolutely pragmatic goal of securing stability and security on the EU eastern borders.

It is sufficient to analyze the EU Eastern Partnership security deliverables to 2020. For instance, “better ability to combat organized crime among partner states” will definitely strengthen their domestic security and their institutional ability; what is more, it will also lower the risks of its infiltration into the EU countries. The same is the situation with combating illegal arms trade, cybercrime, radiation, chemical and biological threats, hybrid threats, emergencies. On these issues the EU interests and the interests of the partner states coincide, thus, this cooperation becomes mutually beneficial. Yet, it is insufficient since it is more important to neutralize the source of hybrid threats rather than continuously prepare to deal with them. However, it is difficult to define counteractions against the exact source of threats in the EU documents, as the Eastern Partnership is not “aimed at any state”, moreover, not all partner states will accept such wording.

The European Union has also suggested the EaP countries to hold joint training for military units, take part in the EU missions and armed units that would make them better prepared for preventing conflicts and resolving crises. Even though Moldova and Georgia used this opportunity to participate in the EU missions, and Ukraine is planning to send its unit to be a part of the EU armed task forces, these steps are of only tactical nature and relate only to separate units with these developments demonstrating mostly the activities of those three countries that signed the association agreements.

Overall, limited Eastern Partnership security deliverables to 2020 can be explained by the following: the EU priority of securing its eastern frontiers; the EU wish to define tasks that would correspond to its interests and the interests of each, without exceptions, partner state; avoiding taking measures against any third country and Russia in particular; radically polar foreign policy courses for different partner states, when some of them are the Eurasian Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization members while others have chosen the EU and NATO membership as their priorities.

Ukrainian achievements in the context of EaP security deliverables

Ukraine has fulfilled a minimum of 50% of its Eastern Partnership security deliverables and has all chances to finish the implementation of those tasks to 2020. An important development took place in June 2018 when the new law on national security was adopted and it clearly documented Ukrainian intentions to integrate into the European security space.

Ukraine has almost fulfilled the deliverables concerning fighting organized crime by improving its cooperation with Eurojust and Europol on the basis of corresponding agreements signed in 2016. Ukraine has assigned a liaison officer to Europol who will be first-hand responsible for coordinating this cooperation. The European Union Advisory Mission continues to conduct its work in Ukraine and it makes a sizable contribution into developing the opportunities for Ukrainian law enforcement agencies fighting organized crime and dealing with cyber security. Yet in Ukraine there is no integral effective state system for combating illegal arms escalation, even though some measures in this respect are indeed taken.

After Ukraine adopted its Cybersecurity Strategy in 2016, the Ukrainian government annually adopts and implements the corresponding action plan that provides for the implementation of the EU Convention on Cybercrime. Moreover, in 2017 Ukraine adopted a law on the Main Principles of Maintaining Cybersecurity of Ukraine. The NSDC National Coordination Center for Cyber Security and the Department for Cyber Police were launched, Ukraine’s SBU Security Service functions as well as CERT-UA (by analogy with CERT-EU) that fulfill the entire range of tasks in this field including cooperation with Ukrainian NGOs and international partners.

In other words, Ukraine has already fulfilled EaP deliverables on cybersecurity.

As for its military agenda, Ukraine took part in the EU “EU NAVFOR ATALANTA” operation in 2014 and EU armed task groups in 2014 and 2016 and is planning to continue its participation in

the future. Ukrainian educational security institutions, for example, academies of internal affairs, SBU (Security Service of Ukraine), border service and state administration, work in close cooperation with the EU, implementing points of EU Common Security and Defence Policy, while military academy is more oriented at cooperation with NATO. It is plausible that given the EU defence component development, observed nowadays, Ukraine’s military structures will strengthen their military cooperation with the European Union.

The process of launching a system for protecting Ukraine’s critical infrastructure has not been finalized yet, even though some work in this respect has been done. In 2017 the State Critical Infrastructure Protection Concept was adopted; however, the corresponding law is yet to be passed. Ukraine is yet to join the EU Civil Protection Mechanism as Macedonia,

Security has been one of essential components in Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative since it was launched

Serbia, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway did, even though the official inquiry was undertaken already in 2014. Ukraine has to do this work by 2020.

Space for better cooperation, differentiation and efficiency

Pursuing the European Union goals which are providing stability and security in Eastern neighborhood, as well as considering interests, visions and abilities of partner states in the field of security, it makes sense for the EU member states and the partner states to concentrate on facing those challenges and threats that are of common and trans-border nature. Moreover, an already known principle of “more for more” has to be used when it comes to the EaP security. In other words, it is necessary not only to define unified tasks for all Eastern partners, but instead to set more ambitious goals and more active cooperation formats for those countries that wish to do it, first and foremost for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.

In particular, countering hybrid threats, the importance of which is constantly highlighted by the EU, and which is among other things reflected in the Joint Declaration of 2017 Eastern Partnership Summit, is supposed to define further cooperation between the EU, on one side, and Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova on the other side, since these three countries have to face hybrid threats posed by Russia almost every day. In order to coordinate their actions within the EaP framework it would make sense to create a platform to combat hybrid threats and resolve conflicts, since the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, launched with the EU involvement, is not able to adequately evaluate hybrid threats in such a distant region without the participation of the countries that are in fact exposed to such threats. The EU and the three mentioned countries should be able to participate in the work of such platform, with other partner states being able to join such a platform in the future.

As for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, their key issues are the following: cyber security and strategic communication including countering the negative influence of propaganda. The countries could move in these two directions in a parallel way, still, in accordance with each other, sharing their experience and implementing joint projects. According to the research, conducted in the framework of “Promoting building of Ukraine’s capacities [to guarantee citizen’s security in the conditions of hy-](#)

[brid threats](#)” project, the three countries that signed the association agreement have similar issues when it comes to information and cyber security. And this, in its turn, means they can resolve those issues together while increasing their endurance to hybrid threats. This cooperation will become especially significant in the context of coming presidential elections in Georgia this October, parliamentary elections in Moldova in February 2019 and both presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine next year. There are no doubts that the Kremlin will try to influence these elections using its information and IT-resources in order for pro-Russian forces to come to power in these countries and to interfere with their closer relations with the EU. It is quite possible that those technologies, after being “tested” during the elections in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, could be used by

the Kremlin to temper with elections for European Parliament that will take place in May 2019. This should stimulate Brussels to seek closer cooperation with these three countries in the context of information and cyber security.

The EU Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), adopted in December 2017,

makes provisions under which third countries could be invited to participate in some projects, while information and cyber security are [listed as top priorities of this new EU initiative](#). Moreover, two out of seventeen initial PESCO projects, adopted by the European Union in March 2018, deal with the fields mentioned above: Cyber Threats and Incident Response Information Sharing Platform and Cyber Rapid Response Teams and Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security. Ukraine as well as Georgia and Moldova could join the Platform, while their cooperation with a rapid response team would not only mean additional sources of information on the nature of cyber threats but would also provide assistance to partner states dealing with cyber security of their elections.

In order to actually create a stable and secure zone in the EaP region it is needed to be more active when it comes to participating in processes dealing with conflict resolution and making them more efficient. Brussels does possess capacities for influencing these matters; the only question is whether there is a will to do it. This could be a test for the EU Common Security and Defence Policy, a demonstration of its efficiency and a contribution to the EU development as a global leader in exactly the way it is envisioned in its Global Strategy.

Ukraine has fulfilled a minimum of 50% of its Eastern Partnership security deliverables and has all chances to finish the implementation of those tasks to 2020

In order to actually create a stable and secure zone in the EaP region it is needed to be more active when it comes to participating in processes dealing with conflict resolution and making them more efficient

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