



The Security of the South Caucasus States and NATO

opinions and comments

ELECTRONIC BULLETIN

#1



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About the project

The Security of the South Caucasus States and NATO

With the support of the Public Diplomacy Division of NATO Headquarters (Brussels) the Region Research Center (Armenia) has started the implementation of the project "The Security of the South Caucasus and NATO" (December 2011 - March 2012).

Within the framework of the project a series of interviews on the most topical issues of international policy and security with experts, analysts, political figures from NATO states and Russia are envisaged to be held for journalists from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. 22 different mass media from the three countries of the South Caucasus are involved in the project. These interviews held "first hand" in the Caucasus Journalists' Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net), journalists publish in different mass media. The participation of the media outlets is arranged on the basis of their applications. Within the framework of the project it is also planned to organize an Internet-conference on the issues of the cooperation of NATO and other security systems with the participation of specialists from different countries.

The full versions of the project materials can be found in the Caucasus Journalists Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net), see: On-line interviews and Discussions.

This electronic bulletin is also prepared within the framework of the project. It is distributed among 600 specialists from different countries and international organizations.

The views expressed in the materials do not necessarily match with those of NATO and Region Research Center (Armenia).

The series of online interviews with experts from different countries (NATO, Russia, etc.) are organized for Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian mass media. The experts answer the questions of the journalists on global topical issues. The journalists publish the obtained interviews in different mass media.

online interview

Marat Terterov

(Brussels)



From the online interview of the director of the European Geopolitical Forum, political scientist **Marat Terterov**

www.1in.am (Armenia)

How is the resolution of the French Parliament on the Armenian Genocide assessed in Europe?

Answer -There are many different positions on this issue inside Europe. Even France itself is divided, with the French foreign minister clearly not being in favour of the motion. Although this is not an issue which is dominated European opinion making or public debates, the question is rather one of which side of the Turkey camp you belong to (inside Europe). Those who are generally supporters of Turkey, be they government or non-government, and favour closer integration and eventual membership of Turkey to the EU, are critical of the motion in the French National Assembly. The British government for example, generally favours closer proximity of Turkey to Europe and the British Prime Minister has made London's support for Ankara's EU bid relatively clear in the past. I would suggest that behind closed doors there are many in British government structures that would be saying "what are the French doing ?"

On the other hand, those who are widely viewed to be opposing closer integration or eventual membership of Turkey to the EU, including political forces in France and Germany, would come closer to endorsing the motion (against Turkey in the National Assembly). The decision would put help those who are less supportive of Turkey to further put the country into a negative light in respect to European public opinion, and all of a sudden people will be talking about current problems with human rights in Turkey, lack of press freedoms, suppression of Kurdish aspirations in the south east, etc. This is a shame, as we should look to move forward in our 21st Century relations and not totally live out history in every day relations. Otherwise we should also associate Germans with Hitler or Georgians with Stalin, which is not really politically correct

www.newsarmenia.am (Armenia)

Mr. Terterov, today many speak of the failure of the European idea of multiculturalism. Do you think the revival of Nazism in Europe is a reaction to this failure? Does such a threat exist?

Answer -Yes, it probably exists as there is a lot of "popular resistance" to the expansion of Islam and Muslim communities inside the EU. This is not an easy question for European society or for policy makers. Europeans try to be politically correct and try to protect their comparatively wealthy societies by creating laws. There are generally no laws across Europe as a whole which prevent religion, religious dress or social practices. Islam, however, is in many ways a very "active" religion in the sense that Muslims tend to be more visible in their adherence to their faith than say Jews or Christians. What I mean is that you can identify a Muslim (by his or her dress, or by the fact that they can prey on the street next to the mosque) far readier than Jews or Christians. Muslim culture still appears alien and even threatening to many Europeans (especially given the violence and political instability that takes place in Muslim countries, and that fact that is sometimes affects Europeans/Westerners).

However there are no laws to stop Muslim communities in Europe from praying or dressing accordingly, although recent efforts have been made to ban mosques in Switzerland and the veil (hijab) in France. This can lead to tension and frustration in both Muslim and non-Muslim circles, and tends to create an "us Vs them" mentality. Reactionary movements and neo-Nazism are comparatively rare in Europe (probably less common than in Russia), but the fact that the tension I have described above exists suggests that the threat is there.

www.PanARMENIAN.net (Armenia)

Regardless of Merkozy's success to somehow stabilize the situation, economists foresee a possible crash of the Euro. What political consequences may such a scenario have (will there be a collapse or a breakup of the EU)? Already now some countries that used to strive for joining the EU in the recent past (the Czech Republic, for example) do not want it any more. There is a split within the euro zone (with the Dutch and Spanish seeking to return to their currencies). And Great Britain has refused to join the budget treaty of the EU.

Answer -Yes, that's true. While the French and German leaders have tried to put on a brave face to the outside world, and to reinforce their commitment to the EURO "no matter what it takes", there must be substantial doubt about the future of the Eurozone. While the crisis has settled a little in recent weeks, at the end of 2011, top financial experts in London and New York were asking the question of not which country will be the first to leave the Eurozone, but whether there will be a Eurozone at all. This debate remains open into 2012 and although I am not a financial expert, I cannot rule out that the Eurozone will be governed by substantially different rules at the end of the year than those which govern it at present.

www.contact.az (Azerbaijan)

Is there a conceptual vision for a way out of the current economic crisis in Europe? Is it realistic to speak about a possible split or collapse of the euro zone, or the expulsion of individual countries from the European Union or underrating their statuses as EU members?

Answer -Clearly, EU leaders are taking the crisis very seriously and are looking at their options at present. While we tend to be critical of EU leaders for "letting it go this far", I would not blame current leaderships too much as they have only been recently elected and have inherited much of the situation from the past. The main approach at the moment seems to be greater fiscal injection to help the troubled Eurozone governments (ie, strengthening the bail out) and tightening of monetary rules for the member states. However many financial analysts feel that this will not do the job and yes, we cannot rule out countries peeling away from the Eurozone. There is no real light at the end of the tun-

nel at present and the French and German leaders gave rather sober economic messages for the EU economies at the start of 2012.

The real problem is the social and political impact of monetary belt tightening for democratically elected governments in the EU. People in the EU have become too accustomed to receiving generous state funded handouts and most are reluctant to see these benefits taken away. This is also one of the reasons why EU member states tend to attract so many migrants from developing countries around the EU. I think that it is no secret that thousands of EU bureaucrats in Brussels have themselves "grown fat" with their own inflated salaries and benefits packages. No one is keen to give up or redistribute largess of this nature.

www.echo-az.com (Azerbaijan)

How does the crisis in Europe (and the situation with the Euro) affect the economies of the countries in South Caucasus? Which countries will the impact be greater on, and which countries will be less affected?

Answer -I have already suggested that we are unlikely to see any change in the immediate donor relationship with the South Caucasus states, but in the longer term there may be less funds available. I would not think that it will impact one country (in the South Caucasus) more than another, as the EU tends to bloc programs such as Eastern Partnership under a regional umbrella (which is not always the right thing to do, but there you go...)

www.bizimyol.az (Azerbaijan)

Russia, being currently in a phase of crisis, offers financial aid to the countries of Europe experiencing economic crisis. Are there any purposes Russia do it for?

Answer - It is clear that the Russian government is, and has been seeking to be, a "player" in the international arena ever since the end of the USSR. While the Soviet Union was a key player, Russia, despite its weaker political reach at the international level, has never reduced its appetite in this respect. Not even in the "weaker" Yeltsin years. During the Putin era, especially from the mid-2000s, it is very clear that any attempt by Russia to assist (or cooperate with) other governments, has a certain "Trojan Horse" element to it. This applies to Ukraine, Iran or Venezuela, just as much as it does to Greece and Iceland.

The oil rich Russian government and allied oligarchs need to ensure that the country cleans up its "own backyard" (ie, pensioners and social sectors, social and public goods, infrastructure, etc) before it starts to play the role of the "good cop" in the international arena. However Moscow has never reduced its appetite for playing geopolitics and promoting its "great power ambitions", and you have to see your present question in this framework.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalists' Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net), January 23, 2012. Marat Terterov answered the questions of the journalists from Armenia (internet newspaper "1in.am" - www.1in.am, National Radio of Armenia, news agency "News Armenia" - www.newsarmenia.am, news agency "PanARMENIAN.net" - www.PanARMENIAN.net, news agency "Arminfo" - www.arminfo.am) and from Azerbaijan (news agency "Turan" -www.contact.az, newspaper "Echo" - www.echo-az.com, newspaper "Bizimyol" - www.bizimyol.az).

For the full script of the interview see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/interview.asp?idinterview=138>

online interview

Aleksandr Arzumanyan

(Armenia)



From the online interview of former Foreign Minister of RA, now one of the leaders of the party "Free Democrats" Aleksandr Arzumanyan

www.1news.az (Azerbaijan)

How important for political circles in Armenia are the results of the Parliamentary elections in the context of the upcoming Presidential elections?

Answer -These are two interconnected processes. The incumbent regime, naturally, views the Parliamentary elections as a dress rehearsal before Presidential elections, and also is getting ready will all the legal and illegal means to ensure its reproduction. The objective of the oppositional forces is not to allow for another instance of falsified elections and to return the right to freedom to the society the latter has been robbed of and to form a government through elections.

www.arminfo.am (Armenia)

What do you think the French government is being led by in its efforts to criminalize the denial of the genocide in France? Do you think it is guided exclusively by the interests of Armenians living in France? What is your personal attitude to such bills?

Answer -I have a negative attitude to cases when someone uses our national tragedy with political views. Naturally, as an Armenian I am satisfied with the fact that once again the historical

fact of the Armenian Genocide has been acknowledged. However, I think that this is France's domestic affair, and it is their Parliament who will make the final decision.

www.zerkalo.az (Azerbaijan)

How would you assess the activities of the Minsk Group? The state bodies of Azerbaijan are extremely negative towards its activities?

Answer -As of today the Minsk Group is the only forum for negotiations. No one has ever proposed a better format to the conflicting parties - Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh. It is natural that many who are interested in the quick resolution of the conflict, are dissatisfied with the absence of a breakthrough. However, it is also necessary to consider that the solution of such conflicts requires tireless efforts, mutual trust, readiness and compromise. And all this takes time. I do not share this opinion that the Minsk Group has exhausted its possibilities. I call everyone to be optimistic.

www.bizimyol.az (Azerbaijan)

If all the co-chairs of the Minsk Group - the US, France and Russia, approach the resolution of the conflict from the perspective of their own interests, what is your own view of these negotiations without these mediators? Isn't it possible to break away from the Minsk Group and to return into our own frames? The Security Council of the UNO has passed 4 resolutions. Why do you think they are not being implemented?

Answer - The Armenian authorities have made statements many times in favor of immediate negotiations between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh. However, Azerbaijan has always been against this. I agree with you that immediate negotiations between the parties will accelerate the resolution between the parties. However, it will be necessary to ensure an appropriate atmosphere of mutual trust and to stop the so-called "propaganda war." As for the UNO resolution, Azerbaijan is the party that has not met their requirements since the very moment they were passed. I will repeat myself again: in the current situation the Minsk Group is the only format for negotiations.

www.pirweli.com.ge (Georgia)

How do you think disputable issues between the Georgian and

Armenian churches should be resolved - through negotiations between the two churches or the dialogue of the authorities?

Answer - Armenia is a secular state. I think that the interrelation between the two churches is their internal matter, and the state should not interfere with the affairs of the church. In my opinion, the states must guarantee the protection of the basic human rights and freedoms in this context - the freedom of conscience. And it is necessary to create all the conditions for the free activity of the church. And the church, in its turn, must follow the laws of the state and be transparent in its activities, as well as be accountable before its flock.

www.1news.az (Azerbaijan)

Are the attempts at the normalization of the Armenian and Turkish relations mere bluffing on the part of some political circles in the West or are they the imperative of our times?

Answer - Since the declaration of its independence Armenia has been speaking about the necessity of establishing normal relations with Turkey without pre-conditions. Unfortunately, the Turkish side has not only tried to put forth preconditions for the establishment of normal relations, but also has undertaken hostile actions against Armenia, namely it put Armenia in a blockade. I think that all the countries in South Caucasus must be interested in the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey. Besides the apparent bilateral economic benefit, it may also contribute to the establishment of mutual trust, which in its own turn would contribute to the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

www.hetq.am (Armenia)

How different is the position of the Free Democrats Party in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict from that of the Armenian National Congress, and how do you think the process of the resolution of the Karabakh conflict will develop in 2012?

Answer - As for the development of the negotiations process in 2012, I do not see any concrete prerequisites for any breakthrough in the negotiations. All the stakeholders will be more concerned with their own domestic affairs and the elections. However, this does not mean that the process will come to a halt: there will still be visits made by the co-chairs, top meetings and further work on the fundamental principles will continue. As for the position of the Armenian National Congress on Nagorno Karabakh, there is no such thing at all, since the Armenian

National Congress is made up of different political parties with different visions of the resolution. That is why a general formula has been found which claims that the Armenian National Congress will accept any solution acceptable for Nagorno Karabakh. And that is why there is actually nothing to compare. As a liberal and democratic force, the Free Democrats Party is for the realization for the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination. Any possible status of Nagorno Karabakh must include the presence of a land border with Armenia, the right of the Nagorno Karabakh people to lead their autonomous internal and foreign policy and the right of Nagorno Karabakh to individually participate in the general security system for South Caucasus.

www.tribuna.ge (Georgia)

Don't you think that the relations between Yerevan and Moscow are a constraint for the development of the Georgian and Armenian relations?

Answer - Undoubtedly, there are forces in Russia that would like to use the factor of strategic partnership with Armenia to achieve any objectives in the bilateral relations with Georgia. But there is no political force in Armenia that would not realize the importance and weight of friendly and neighborly relations with Georgia and brotherly relations between the two peoples. Certainly, any aggravation in the relations between Georgia and Russia will have an impact on the political and economic situation in Armenia. But Armenia has never tied up its relations with Georgia to relations with third countries.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalists' Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net), January 17, 2012. Aleksandr Arzumanyan answered the questions of the journalists from Armenia (National Radio of Armenia, news agency "Arminfo" - www.arminfo.am, internet newspaper "Hetq" - www.hetq.am, internet newspaper "1in.am" - www.1in.am, news agency "News Armenia" - www.newsarmenia.am) from Azerbaijan (internet newspaper "1news.az" - www.1news.az, newspaper "Bizimyol" - www.bizimyol.az) and from Georgia (news agency "PirWeli" - www.PirWeli.com.ge, internet newspaper "Tribuna.ge" - www.tribuna.ge).

For the full script of the interview see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/interview.asp?idinterview=140>

online interview

Mateusz Piskorski

(Poland)



From the online interview
of the Head of the
European Center for
Geopolitical Analysis
Mateusz Piskorski

www.arminfo.am (Armenia)

In September during his speech in the European Forum of New Ideas in Sopot Yezhi Buzek, announced that the EU "does not have enough leadership." Can we say that Poland has any chances to take up leadership in the EU in the future, taking into consideration its relative economic self-sufficiency and that the country has hardly been affected by the crisis in the Euro zone?

Answer - It will not have any chances for leadership in the near future, since it does not have sufficient economic potential. Germany has this potential, and that's why Berlin will be the main capital of the EU.

www.lnews.az (Azerbaijan)

What conditions the currently more cautious and reserved position of Poland regarding the buildup of some anti-missile defense system elements in its territory, as compared to that in the previous years?

Answer - I think that the Polish political elite came to the conclusion that Poland is a

European country, and not a state within the USA. Anti-missile defense first of all brings a threat of confrontation, and I am convinced that the incumbent Polish government realizes this.

www.bizimyol.az (Azerbaijan)

Poland has long had claims against Russia and has been in confrontation with it. Coming from this fact, what political relations would you like to see established between South Caucasian countries and the state to the North?

Answer - I hope that the administrations of both Poland and South Caucasus will come to understand that the Russian Federation is a partner in the Eurasian region. I think that partnership is better than any claims.

What do you think of the punishment for the denial of the Armenian Genocide stipulated by the French Senate and what is your attitude to the possibility of analogous resolutions to be passed by other countries?

Answer - The Armenian Diaspora is a very active part of the elite circles in EU countries. That is why it can bring its own perspective on Modern History to the public in the EU.

www.panorama.am (Armenia)

Is an escalation of conflicts in South Caucasus possible in the near future?

Answer - Yes, an escalation is possible in the NKR. But I hope that it will not go beyond a clash along the ceasefire line. It is very important to follow the developments in the Near East. Unfortunately, the operations currently implemented by the USA against Syria and Iran may be reflected also on the countries in the Caucasus. Washington has started the realization of their plan on the Greater Near East which, in their view, also embraces South Caucasus.

The experts and politicians of different countries assure that the EU will be able to overcome the current crisis through the rein-

forcement of supranational institutions and mechanisms of control and regulation. Do you think Poland and other newly-joined members of the EU will be ready to share some authority with Brussels?

Answer - Poland, towards the end of the crisis will most likely be eager to maintain most of its sovereignty at least preserving its own currency. Thus, things are developing towards the creation of a Europe of different gears or an EU within the EU...

www.1in.am (Armenia)

Which resolution of the Karabakh conflict do you think is the best for both countries and for the stakeholder states?

Answer - I am afraid that there is no objective resolution. I think that the only way out is the idea of cooperation with local and non-governmental bodies in the Karabakh society. The resolution must be at the same time passed without any external interference, for example, the authorities of the regions in bordering territories.

Public Radio of Armenia

What prospects do you see for regional cooperation among South Caucasus countries within the framework of Eastern Partnership?

Answer - To tell the truth, the Eastern Partnership Program has not started to operate yet. The funds, allocated by the EU for this program, are 25 times less than the EU program of Southern Policy and the Mediterranean.

www.newsarmenia.am (Armenia)

Poland is sometimes called one of the centers of preparation of the so-called "colored revolutions." Do you agree to such a statement? Is the Polish political elite really in the vanguard of "export" of democracy after the Western model? And how effective is such an export?

Answer - Thank you for the interesting question. Unfortunately, before Poland used to be involved in such export, and did export, for example, into Ukraine. Now it exports only

indirectly, allowing for anti-missile defense activities (mostly American) in its own territory. A direct interference is possible only with the neighboring Belarus.

Do you allow for the probability for any further expansion of NATO into the east embracing former Soviet republics?

Answer - There is no such probability at the moment. NATO is currently going through a crisis of its own identity.

www.yerkir.am (Armenia)

What position does Poland have with regard to hostilities against Iran?

Answer - There is no official position yet. More likely, Poland will not take part in the hostilities; its policy is very much similar to that of Germany in this issue.

How probable is it that NATO will use the territories of Georgia and Azerbaijan to strike Iran? Taking into consideration the circumstance that Russia and Turkey are against the use of force, doesn't this add any more threat to our region that is already quite tense?

Answer - I think that the territory of these states will not be used by NATO against Iran. NATO has Turkey who is the main implementer of the plans of the US in the region.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalists' Network

(www.caucasusjournalists.net), January 31, 2012. M.Piskorski answered the questions of the journalists from Armenia (news agency "Arminfo" - www.arminfo.am, internet newspaper "Panorama" - www.panorama.am, internet newspaper "1in.am" - www.1in.am, National Radio of Armenia, news agency "News Armenia"-www.newsarmenia.am, newspaper "Yerkir" - www.yerkir.am) from Azerbaijan (newspaper "Echo" - www.echo-az.com, internet newspaper "1news.az" - www.1news.az, news agency "Vesti.az" - www.vesti.az, newspaper "Zerkalo", newspaper "Bizimyol" - www.bizimyol.az).

For the full script of the interview see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/interview.asp?idinterview=141>

online interview

Alexander Krilov

(Russia)



From the online interview of a leading researcher at the Institute of Global Economics and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the President of the Scientific Society of Caucasian Experts **Alexander Krilov**.

www.PirWeli.com.ge (Georgia)

Both the President of Russia Dmitri Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin have publicly confessed that the war in 2008 did not happen the expansion of NATO into the East would have been inevitable. Do you think that these statements were Kremlin's confession of the real reasons this war was waged for? If in the future the issue of the expansion of NATO is included in the agenda again, what shall we expect from Moscow this time?

Answer - In the conditions of the economic crisis and numerous problems on the international arena the expansion of NATO is not a priority for the EU and the USA any more. In the case of maintaining relations among Russia, the EU and the USA at the current level or their successful development in the future, also between Russia and NATO, this problem will hardly become topical again.

One of the stumbling blocks in the relations between Russia and NATO is the problem of the location of anti-missile systems in Europe. The West has many times declared that these systems will not be directed against Russia. Do you think the placement

of such systems in the Caucasus, for example, in the basin of the Black Sea, possible, and if so, will it lead to the balancing of the power of Russia in the region or will it complicate the situation even more?

Answer - Recently a missile attack early warning radar station (RS) has been put into operation in Turkey. This is part of the system of anti-missile defense of NATO in Europe. If this system is really directed at the defense of Europe from a missile strike by Iran, as Russia has been assured by its Western allies of anti-terrorist coalition, then the current stock is quite sufficient and it will not be necessary to buildup new systems.

Public Radio of Armenia

Do you think the activation of the North Atlantic Alliance in the light of the aggravation of the situation around Syria and Iran is possible?

Answer - The strike of the US on Iran may have quite a negative impact on South Caucasus. Even if it is not involved in the hostilities, the instability and anarchy in the larger border region will extremely complicate the situation in South Caucasus and Central Asia. The military operations undertaken by NATO in Syria will not have such a devastating effect; its negative influence on South Caucasus will be indirect through the destabilization of the whole system of international relations.

www.echo-az.com (Azerbaijan)

Some time ago the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Ahmed Davutoglu declared that either France must withdraw from the OSCE Minsk Group for the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, or Turkey must be represented in this structure. Is the breakup of the Minsk Group possible in such a situation?

Answer - It is not Turkey who defines the composition of the Minsk Group. The inclusion of Turkey will take the consent of both conflicting parties, and in the current situation this is hardly possible. The Minsk Groups deals with its own objectives, and no other option for mediation can be seen regarding its expansion. However, there are other options - a tri-lateral format or others, where the participation of Turkey as a mediator is quite possible.

www.vesti.az (Azerbaijan)

The procrastination of the resolution of the Armenian and Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno Karabakh seems not to hinder the reinforcement of Russia's positions in South Caucasus. Or is Russia any interested in contributing to the resolution of the conflict?

Answer - It is the conflicting parties who must be most interested. Neither Russia, nor any other state will solve this issue for them, Russia has its own interests in South Caucasus, however these interests go beyond dictating this or that solution to Armenia or Azerbaijan. So far Russian diplomacy has managed to develop relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan, to strengthen the position of Russia you have mentioned: all this is mostly a result of such a policy.

What features of Azerbaijan, other than energy and transit, is the global and regional politics interested in?

Answer - These are the main points of interest, the rest is definitely secondary at this point. In the Soviet times agriculture and some branches of industry were quite significant, their development helped to balance the economy and to develop economic relations with potential consumers. The geopolitical position is very important; however, there is a big danger in its manipulation.

www.arminfo.am(Armenia)

Recently the former advisor of the President of Azerbaijan Vafa Ghuluzade announced that Azerbaijan as a small country can harm itself, if it continues to demand the withdrawal of France from the Minsk process over the Nagorno Karabakh conflict resolution as a result of the bill on the denial of the Armenian Genocide passed by the Senate. What is your opinion about this?

Answer - I do not think that the withdrawal of France is possible and that Azerbaijan will so far act in support of Ankara in the current French-Turkish conflict. This will mean the liquidation of the Minsk Group and the aggravation of Azerbaijan's relations not only with France, but also the whole of the EU. Hypothetically, this may be beneficial for Armenia, but not at all for Azerbaijan.

www.lin.am (Armenia)

Can we expect new protest actions in Russia, taking into consideration the oppositional moods against the United Russia Party after the elections for the State Duma?

Answer - The Russian political life has become rather active, there is some potential for the protest voting in the elections. It has already become obvious that the elections will trigger changes in domestic policy, there will be a re-configuration of the political forces, and probably new parties and a new generation of politicians will appear. However, it is not very likely that the protesting potential is so large that the majority would now vote against Vladimir Putin. He will not have any chance to continue his reforms, but if the reforms are not absolutely consistent and efficient in the socio-economic field, the level of protest voting in the next elections will be much higher.

www.hetq.am (Armenia)

What main and real problems does the security of Russia have in relation to NATO and the USA?

Answer - The big problem is the lack of mutual trust. At this point it is obviously too early to speak about mutually beneficial relations, even though formally we are allies in the anti-terror coalition. We have different interests, and this is but natural. It is not natural not to take into consideration the interests of one's own partners, to ignore them (the anti-missile defense system and so on). The balance of coinciding and conflicting interests is constantly changing, that leads to the instability of the whole system of relations. The latest resolutions on the strengthening of the Russian military potential have not been foreseen; they have become the result of the current state of relations between the Russian Federation and NATO/USA.

How do you assess the program of Military Industrial Complex headed by Rogozin and will the contradictions between Russia and the USA in the issues of anti-missile defense system lead to a new stage of arming?

Answer - They already have. I think that Rogozin will be more effective than any of his predecessors.

www.newsarmenia.am(Armenia)

Do you allow for the probability of even greater activation of Turkey and attempts at the reinforcement of the positions of Ankara in the Near East and in the Caucasus after the actual failure of the Turkish policy designed to ensure the admission of Turkey to the EU?

Answer - As Turkish colleagues joke, the EU will collapse before the admission of Turkey. I would not reduce the problem to the failure of the Turkish policy, the EU has very serious problems, especially in terms of its integration and future expansion. I cannot really trace any specific prospects for the strengthening of the Turkish positions in the Caucasus. Turkey has many problems in the Near East, specifically with Israel and the USA, it is likely that the activities regarding Syria will be explained by Ankara's aspirations to relieve the tension. But Turkey has already had problems with Syria, including territorial disputes. That is why it is probable that Turkey will take part in the military operation against Syria. Time will show whether this will strengthen the positions of Turkey or will bring about new problems for it.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalists' Network

(www.caucasusjournalists.net), February 2, 2012. A. Krilov answered the questions of the journalists from Armenia (National Radio of Armenia, news agency "Arminfo" - www.arminfo.am, internet newspaper "1in.am" - www.1in.am, internet newspaper "Hetq" - www.hetq.am, internet newspaper "Panorama" - www.panorama.am, news agency "News Armenia"-www.newsarmenia.am) from Azerbaijan (newspaper "Echo" - www.echo-az.com, internet newspaper "1news.az" - www.1news.az, newspaper "Zerkalo") and from Georgia (news agency "PirWeli" - www.PirWeli.com.ge).

For the full script of the interview see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/interview.asp?idinterview=142>

online interview.

Andrei Ryabov

(Russia)



An excerpt from the online interview with the leading researcher from the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, editor-in-chief of the magazine World Economy and International Relations of IWEIR RAS, the expert of Gorbachyov's Fund and the of the Carnegie Moscow Center **A.V. Ryabov.**

www.pirweli.com.ge (Georgia)

Against the background of the relations between Iran and the USA we have started to more frequently hear statements that the territory of Georgia will probably be used by the US as a military springboard. How realistic do you think such a possibility is and what should be expected in such a case from Moscow?

Answer - In Russia many believe that in order to ensure support from Washington, President Saakashvilil will provide the territory of Georgia for probable strikes on Iran. I do not think so, though. In my opinion, no state in South Caucasus, including Georgia, of course, is interested in participating in a war with Iran for one simple reason - Iran will always have an answer. And here we mean not only reciprocal strikes onto the territories of those countries from which the attacks would be made. Tehran will also have other instruments for the destabilization of the situation in these countries. I think that the government of Georgia realizes this perfectly well, and that is why Tbilisi will not have any participation whatsoever in the Iranian matters. But if the impossible does happen, and Georgia does get somehow drawn into the operation against Iran (and still, I do not believe so) this will become a convenient opportunity for Moscow to continue the buildup of military forces in the countries and regions neighboring upon Georgia. The official explanation to

this is as follows: you see, Tbilisi has today provided its territory for attacking Iran, and tomorrow it will provide its territory for attacks against us. This means we must continue arming ourselves in order to make Georgia realize that such things will not work with us.

www.arminfo.am (Armenia)

A couple of days ago Siyavush Novruzov, representing the Yeni Azerbaijan Party, thought it reasonable to call Azerbaijan a new name - North Azerbaijan, saying that the state is in fact split up. Many Deputies of the Mejlis agreed to the proposal. What motives will the Azerbaijani politicians be guided by, if we take into consideration the building up tension around the Islamic Republic, whose province the territory Baku claims to be Southern Azerbaijan is?

Answer - There is no need to anger Tehran, and again I assume that Azerbaijan realizes this much better than Moscow; Iran will always find effective instruments to put pressure on Baku, and in the worst case also to destabilize the situation in the Azerbaijan Republic. In my opinion, at this quite dangerous moment seriously threatening the peace in the region everyone should show restraint and should not poke one another.

www.1news.az (Azerbaijan)

How does Russia's harsh confrontation with the West on the situation in Syria get reflected on the relations between Russia and NATO in general, and at the sessions of the UN Security Council in particular?

Answer - It surely impacts on these relations and rather negatively. However, it cannot lead to the crisis we witnessed after the August war in 2008.

www.vesti.az (Azerbaijan)

The pending status of the Armenian and Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno Karabakh does not at all seem to hinder the reinforcement of Russia's positions in South Caucasus. Is this because Russia still has some interest in promoting the resolution of the conflict?

Answer - There is certain interest; however, there is also a realization that conditions for a resolution, to be acceptable for all the parties of the conflict, are not there today.

www.contact.az (Azerbaijan)

At what point do the strategic interests of Russia and NATO diverge?

Answer - Today those points belong to two key spheres - the European anti-missile defense systems and the regional conflicts (including Syria). Besides, Russia is not happy with the aspirations of NATO for taking the whole world within its scope of responsibility. NATO, in its turn, does not like the aspirations of Russia to think of the former Soviet space as a field of its interests.

www.Panorama.am(Armenia)

What processes can you envisage around Iran and Syria? What can we expect in the Near East in the near future?

Answer - The chances for Assad's regime to remain in power are decreasing day by day but after his resignation the prospects of a harsh internal conflict or the stepping of radical Islamists into power are very realistic. Either scenario is bad for the whole of the Near East. The Israeli strikes against Iran are becoming quite realistic. The further development of the situation will in the first place depend on Iran. How will it react? Will it not strike back? Then everything may end. Or will it strike Israel or asymmetrically the countries in the Persian Gulf whose air territories the Israeli jets will cross or will it initiate a new war in Iraq? In that case a large-scale war will be waged in the region that will involve the USA and other actors.

www.1in.am (Armenia)

How do you evaluate the Russian and Turkish relations after the bill on the Genocide was passed and what do you think will follow all these developments?

Answer - I think the decision of the French to criminalize the denial of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire will make the Government of Turkey look for ways for the further development of cooperation with Russia. How will Moscow take this? I think

without the former enthusiasm as after the August war in 2008. The reasons for this vary. Turkey, as it is viewed in Moscow, acts as a not quite reliable partner in the energy cooperation sphere that is considered very important by Russia, for it quite often changes its positions or sets additional requirements before Russia. The positions of these parties regarding Karabakh do not converge either, they are quite different. And finally, there are disagreements on the Syrian issue. Certainly, Russia is interested in the expansion of its trade and economic cooperation with Turkey. Commodity circulation between the two countries is growing. However, there are no further prospects than what I described.

www.newsarmenia.am (Armenia)

How do you generally evaluate the prospects of the European Union as a political entity?

Answer - I wish I were an optimist, however with no luck so far. It is clear that the European Union needs to go for closer internal integration measures and take up the policy of gradual transformation into the United States of Europe in order for the European Union to come out of this crisis as a strong organization, capable of competing with not only the USA, China and Japan, but also newly emerging economic giants (the Association of South East Asian Nations), and soon enough and most probably also with Brazil and India. But for now the Europeans obviously have neither will nor leaders, capable of realizing such large-scale objectives. The second problem - it is necessary to get rid of the relaxed lifestyle and a part of the social guarantees, otherwise, it will be difficult to compete with China or the Association of South East Asian Nations. It seems that the Europeans are not yet ready for this.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalists' Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net) on February 8, 2012. A. Ryabov answered the questions of the journalists from Armenia (news agency "Arminfo" - www.arminfo.am, internet newspaper "Panorama" - www.panorama.am, news agency "PanARMENIAN" - www.PanARMENIAN.net, news agency "News Armenia" - www.newsarmenia.am, internet newspaper "1in.am" - www.1in.am), Azerbaijan (newspaper "Bizimyol" - www.bizimyol.az, internet newspaper "1news.az" - www.1news.az, news agency "Vesti.az" - www.vesti.az, news agency "Turan" - www.contact.az) and Georgia (news agency "PirWeli" - www.PirWeli.com.ge).

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