

## China's Activities in the South Caucasus

Issue 19, 26.7.2021 – 8.8.2021

*The digest covers China's political, diplomatic, economic and other activities in the South Caucasus region and relations between China and the South Caucasus countries. It relies on a wide variety of sources, including the Chinese media. It is worth noting that the Chinese media is controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (according to the World Press Freedom [Index](#) China is nearly at the bottom of the list and ranks 177th out of 180 countries)*

- US-sanctioned Chinese Hikvision camera-equipped Chinese buses will arrive in Armenia
- Chinese Military Attachés speak on military cooperation with Azerbaijan, Georgia
- China-Azerbaijan discussed strengthening Azerbaijan's transit capacity
- Chinese MFA cited anti-American statements of an Armenian scholar
- China is ready to reinforce development strategies and deepen cooperation with Armenia
- Chinese state media parrots disinformation about Georgia's laboratory

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26.7.2021 – 1.8.2021

In October, Hikvision camera-equipped Chinese buses will arrive in Armenia



*Sergey Manasaryan at the ceremony. Source: [Hayk Marutyan/Facebook](#)*

On July 31, Yerevan Mayor Hayk Marutyan [wrote](#) that 211 buses Armenia had ordered from China left the Liaocheng factory. From Shanghai port they will arrive at Poti port and, in October, from Poti to Yerevan. Armenian Ambassador to China Sergey Manasaryan took part in the departure ceremony.

The pictures shared by the Mayor show that the buses are equipped with Hikvision cameras.



Source: [Hayk Marutyan/Facebook](#)

41.88% of Hikvision's shares are [owned](#) by Chinese state-owned enterprise. In 2019, Hikvision was [sanctioned](#) by the US after it determined that the company was acting contrary to the American foreign policy interests and was involved in human rights abuses in China's repression campaign, arbitrary mass detention and high-technology surveillance against Uighurs and other ethnic minority groups in Xinjiang, China. In 2020, the US Department of Defense [identified](#) Hikvision as a Chinese military-linked company. Following year, surveillance industry research company IPVM published a [report](#) on Hikvision's partnership with the Chinese military. In 2021, the US Federal Communications Commission has also [designated](#) Hikvision as posing a threat to the US's national security.

### **Azerbaijan and China discuss prospects for expanding cooperation**



Guo Min and Shahin Mustafayev. Source: [Azertac](#)

Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev [met](#) with the Chinese Ambassador to Azerbaijan Guo Min, Azertac reported on July 29.

The two sides welcomed the development of relations between the two countries in various areas. They exchanged views on prospects for expanding cooperation in economic, trade, transport and transit, investment, information and communication technologies, humanitarian, tourism and other fields.

The Ambassador and the Deputy Prime Minister also discussed issues related to holding the next meeting of the Azerbaijan-China Intergovernmental Commission on trade and economic cooperation.

### **Chinese Military Attaché: The trend of dynamic development in the military relations between Georgia and China continues**



*Su Zhu. Source: [Georgian Times](#)*

On August 1, Military Attaché of the Chinese Embassy in Georgia Su Zhu published an [article](#) in the Georgian Times, entitled, “Let’s Introduce the future with peacekeeping, promote the creation of a “community with a shared future for the development of mankind”.

Su Zhu wrote that today, China cooperated with more than 150 countries in the military field, the level of cooperation was constantly improving, and strategic mutual trust was growing day by day. The Chinese Military Attaché noted that the Chinese side attached great importance to relations between the armed forces of China and Georgia.

“In recent years, with the deepening cooperation in various fields, cooperation between China and Georgia in the field of defence and security is also developing rapidly. Despite the epidemic’s impact, the trend of dynamic development in the military relations between the two countries continues. The Chinese side is ready to make more efforts for the further stable development of relations between the armed forces of the two countries,” he wrote.

According to Su Zhu, the Chinese military will continue international cooperation in the military field, help build a “society with a common future for the development of mankind”. Furthermore, he said that the Chinese army was ready to cooperate more pragmatically with the Georgian military, respond to global security challenges, and “build a more beautiful world”.

### **Chinese MFA cited anti-American statements of an Armenian scholar**

On July 30, Chinese state media [reported](#) comments of Benjamin Poghosyan, who had said that the US disinformation campaign against China used COVID-19 out of geopolitical interests, hampering global joint efforts against the pandemic and threatening to shatter millions of lives. Poghosyan said both former US President Donald Trump and his successor, President Joe Biden, have used the Covid-19 to stir up anti-Chinese sentiments around the world, “either by openly referring Covid-19 as the Wuhan virus or by promoting a Wuhan lab-leak conspiracy theory”.

On the same day, Chinese Foreign Ministry speaker Zhao Lijian [cited](#) his remarks “that US was driven by narrow-minded geopolitical purposes and has used origin-tracing to engage in anti-China propaganda, which undermines the international solidarity against the epidemic, and runs counter to the vision of justice and human rights that the US claims to champion”.

In the [article](#) published in an Armenian newspaper, Poghosyan claimed that the United States launched such a campaign to divert attention away from its “evident failures in tackling the pandemic domestically”.

He also wrote that the US was concerned about China’s rise and “wished to curb” its development by all means, including mobilizing allies in a “smear campaign.” Poghosyan said that these “efforts were a big threat to the world because they undermined international cooperation in the fight against the deadly pandemic”.

“To combat the pandemic and prevent millions of new victims in developing countries, it is necessary for the US government to put an end to the propaganda war against China, abandon its strategy of using the pandemic for narrow geopolitical interests, and united with all countries,” he wrote.

### **Chinese Military Attaché believes that military cooperation between Azerbaijan and China will be strengthened**



Zhang Zunguo. Source: [Azertac](#)



On July 30, as part of the summer online lecture of the Confucius Institute at Azerbaijan’s University of Languages, the Director of the Confucius Institute Rafiq Abbasov delivered a lecture about “Armed forces of Azerbaijan and China: safeguarding territorial integrity and sovereignty”, Azertac [reported](#).

During the online lecture, the Military Attaché of the Chinese Embassy in Azerbaijan Zhang Zunguo delivered a speech. He talked about China’s armed forces and cooperation with Azerbaijan.

The Military Attaché noted that bilateral military cooperation contributed to establishing “peace and tranquility on Earth”. He expressed the belief that under the leadership of Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev and General Secretary of the CCP Xi Jinping, military cooperation between the two countries would continue to be strengthened and developed.

The lecture was dedicated to the 94th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army and the 103rd anniversary of the founding of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces.

### **The Georgian Ambassador to China held meetings with Guangdong representatives**



*Archil Kalandia, Bekar Mikaberidze and others. Source: [The Embassy of Georgia to China](#)*

On July 26 and 27, the Georgian Ambassador to China Archil Kalandia went on a working visit to Guangzhou and Dongguan, Guangdong province, China, the Embassy of Georgia to China [reported](#) on July 28.

The Ambassador met with the Director-General of the Guangdong Provincial Foreign Affairs, the President of the Council for the Promotion of International Trade, and the Guangzhou International Trade Promotion Department Director. During the meetings, the Ambassador briefed the Chinese side on Georgia's investment, business and tourism opportunities. According to the Georgian Embassy, a new agenda of cooperation was planned to intensify bilateral trade and economic relations and business contacts.

A trade exhibition centre was opened based on the Belt and Road Georgian Business House in Guangzhou, where along with Georgian products, those from different countries will be presented. Local governmental representatives, the Georgian Ambassador and the founder of Belt and Road Georgian Business House, Bekar Mikaberidze addressed the event's attendees. On July 27, the Ambassador also participated in the opening ceremony of Belt and Road Georgian Business House office in Dongguan.

### **Armenian Ambassador: There is a demand in Armenia for traditional Chinese medicine**

At the opening of a forum dedicated to traditional medicine held in Nanchang, China, Armenian Ambassador to China Sergey Manasaryan said that after Chinese doctors had held meetings with Armenian colleagues, the Armenian public started paying more attention to traditional Chinese medicine, an Armenian news agency [reported](#) on July 29.

"The coronavirus pandemic showed that Chinese medicine is in demand, and its importance has always been highlighted by the Communist Party of China and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping. They have always declared that traditional Chinese medicine is China's "business card", the Ambassador said.

The perception of traditional Chinese medicine beyond China's borders the Ambassador characterized as a problem. He noted that many people did not take it seriously and considered it as a Chinese culture product.

"In reality, it is a symbiosis of culture and science that traces back to the 5th century B.C. when Confucianism and Daoism laid the foundation for traditional medicine," Manasaryan stressed.

According to the Armenian Ambassador, now there is a demand for traditional Chinese medicine in Armenia.

### **Azerbaijani scholar claims that US and West politicized pandemic against China**

On July 30, Seymur Mammadov, the director of the Eurasia-Azerbaijan (EurAsiaAz) international expert club and editor-in-chief of Azerbaijani news agency Baku Tribune, published an [article](#) in the Baku Tribune entitled "Tracking the origin of a virus is a matter of science, not politics".

"The information spread in the world media that the Chinese authorities have abandoned the plan of the so-called second phase of the investigation of the origin of the coronavirus proposed by WHO, in fact, is not an attempt to evade responsibility, as some Western media claim, but only a desire to resist

the black PR machine and the policy of information anti-scientific stuffing launched by the United States,” he wrote.

Mammadov claimed that the world was facing the politicization of the pandemic and it was the campaign “launched by the United States and Western countries against China”.

He also parroted the recent narrative of the Chinese state media trying to blame the origin of the coronavirus on other countries, in this case, the US.

2.8.2021 – 8.8.2021

### **China-Azerbaijan discussed expanding cooperation in ICT, strengthening Azerbaijan’s transit capacity**



*Guo Min, Rashad Nabiyev and other attendees. Source: [Azernews](#)*

Chinese Ambassador Guo Min and Azerbaijan’s Transport, Communications and High Technologies Minister Rashad Nabiyev discussed ways to improve the regulatory framework in the transport field, Azernews reported on August 3.

The two sides discussed increasing the attractiveness of transport corridors through Azerbaijan and improving the efficiency of the China-Europe freight express on the transit route.

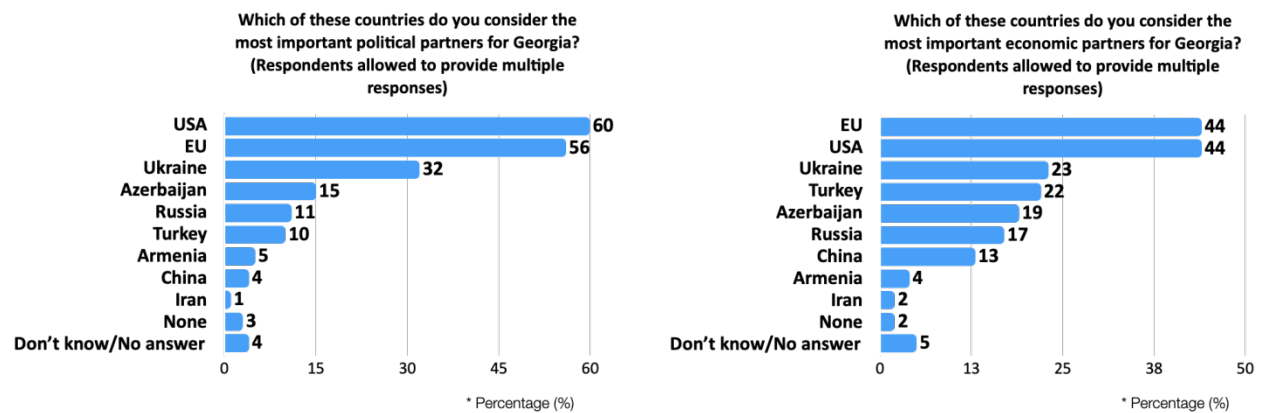
According to the report, the cooperation in postal organizations within the framework of international organizations was high on the meeting agenda.

During the meeting, Azerbaijan’s interest in studying the experience of Chinese companies in artificial intelligence, other big data technologies and establishing cooperation with them was also emphasized.

Guo Min spoke of China’s readiness to expand cooperation with Azerbaijan in transport and information and communications technology and support the strengthening of Azerbaijan’s transit capacity on the China-Europe route.

### China-Georgia relations - a public survey

On August 2, the International Republican Institute [published](#) a public opinion survey in Georgia. The survey included several questions about Georgia-China relations and the perception of China-made Covid-19 vaccines.

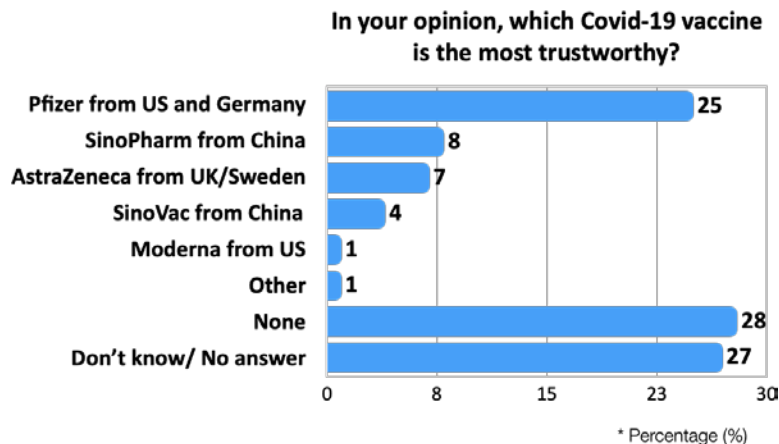


Source: [IRI](#)

To the questions which countries were the greatest political/economic partners to Georgia and which posed the greatest political/economic threat, the answers were following: 13% believes that China is among the most important economic partners; 4% name China among the most important political partners; 3% consider that China is among greatest political threats to Georgia and 4% thinks that China is among greatest economic threats (on these questions, multiple responses were accepted).

According to the survey, 8% and 4% of respondents respectively think that Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines from China are the most trustworthy Covid-19 vaccines.





Source: [IRI](#)

One thousand five hundred adult Georgians and eligible voters took part in the survey which was conducted from June 15 to June 30, 2021.

### **Chinese state media spreads disinformation about Georgian laboratory**

On August 5, a prominent Chinese state news agency China News Service [published](#) an article entitled “Foreign media discloses the secrets of US overseas biological laboratories”.

The article says that some “international experts” pointed out that “secret laboratories established in Georgia, Ukraine” and other countries were constantly found to have “dangerous pathogens” since their establishment and have posed direct threat to these countries.

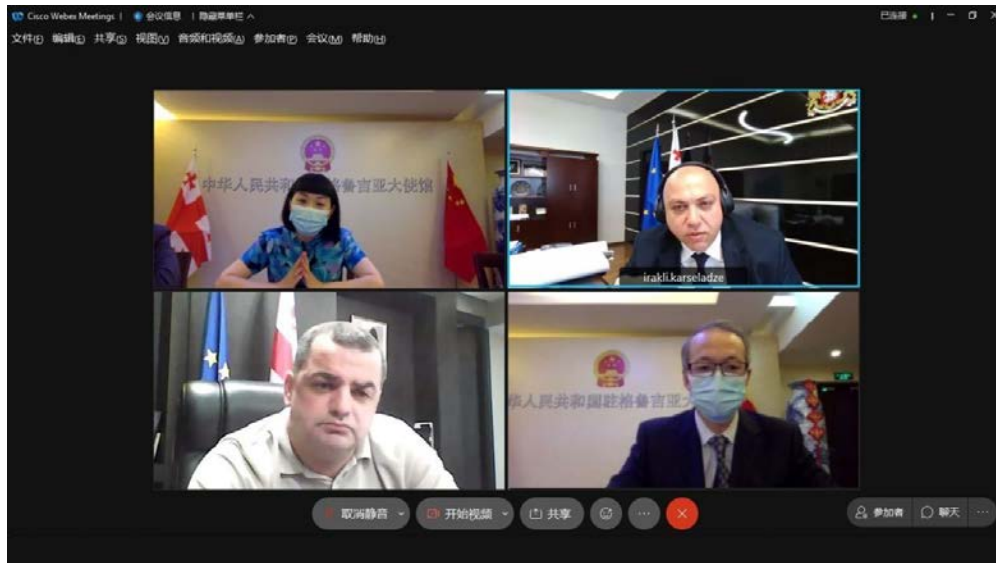
The piece also quotes an [opinion](#) about questioning “what was the purpose of the US to establish biological laboratories in various regions” by Arayik Sargsyan, who, according to the Chinese article, is deputy dean of Russia’s academy of geopolitical issues.

Chinese article says that in 2018, Soviet state official and Georgia’s former Minister of State Security (1993-1995) Igor Giorgadze said that fatal human experiments might be going on in the Lugar laboratory. According to [Myth Detector](#), Giorgadze later acknowledged regarding the so-called experiments that he had no proof.

With [Google search](#), the same article can be found on [numerous Chinese websites](#).

This is [not the first time](#) when propaganda about the Lugar and US laboratories is spread in some of the most prominent Chinese state media outlets.

## Georgia-China discussed bilateral economic relations, trade and projects undertaken by Chinese enterprises in Georgia



*Li Yan, Irakli Karseladze, Giorgi Tsereteli and Zhao Chuanyi. Source: [The Chinese Embassy in Georgia](#)*

On August 6, the Chinese Ambassador to Georgia Li Yan attended an online meeting with Georgian Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Irakli Karseladze, the Chinese Embassy in Georgia [reported](#). They exchanged views on bilateral economic and trade cooperation and the projects undertaken by Chinese enterprises in Georgia.

The Economic and Commercial Counselor of the Embassy Zhao Chuanyi and Chairman of Roads Department of Georgia Giorgi Tsereteli also attended the meeting.

## **Li Keqiang: China is ready to reinforce development strategies and deepen cooperation with Armenia**

The Premier of the State Council of China Li Keqiang sent a congratulatory message to Nikol Pashinyan on being appointed Prime Minister of Armenia, Armenpress [reported](#) on August 6.

“In recent years, Chinese-Armenian relations have recorded stable and healthy development, significant results have been achieved in a wide range of spheres,” Li wrote on China-Armenia relations.

He noted that the Chinese side was ready to reinforce the combination of the development strategies and deepen the mutually beneficial cooperation with the Armenian side, “in order to ensure a continuous upsurge in the content of the friendly relations between China and Armenia for the benefit of both countries and peoples”.

### **Azerbaijani scholar claims that Huawei got stronger amid US pressure**

On August 6, Seymur Mammadov, the director of the Eurasia-Azerbaijan (EurAsiaAz) international expert club and editor-in-chief of Azerbaijani news agency Baku Tribune, [published](#) an article “Huawei gets stronger in response to every attempt at US pressure”.

“Had the Americans had an idea of history, they would not have set themselves such unrealistic goals as curbing China’s development,” he wrote of the US’s sanctions on China.

He wrote that Huawei continued its activities “despite the pressure from Washington” and that it held a show of new products that, in his opinion, once again “proved that it did not intend to retreat before the demands and threats of the West”.

On August 6, Huawei reported a 38% [fall](#) in quarterly revenue - the third straight decline in quarterly revenue for the company.