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A Conversation with Vafa Guluzade Former National Security Advisor to President Heydar Aliyev and Longtime Political Commentator

March 19, 2008
Baku, Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan in the World: How do you evaluate the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of Resolution 10693 reaffirming Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and demanding the immediate withdrawal of all Armenian forces from all occupied territories?

Guluzade: That Azerbaijani diplomacy was able to push through the UN General Assembly a decision reaffirming the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the right of refugees to return, I consider a great success, although in all probability, achieving it was not in reality as difficult as some in Baku have suggested for the simple reason that all the provisions in this resolution are found in the four resolutions of the UN Security Council on Azerbaijan. But despite that, this achievement is significant. Why? Because it highlights and underscores the position of the new leadership of Azerbaijan – President Ilham Aliyev.

Prior to his coming to office, his predecessor, Heydar Aliyev, made several remarkable proposals including a suggestion in 1994 that he was prepared to offer the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh the highest degree of autonomy in the world. And as an example, he suggested to Levon Ter-Petrosyan that it could have a status like that of Tatarstan. The Armenian president was surprised and asked whether he had heard correctly.

Heydar Aliyev responded firmly that he was ready to do so. Thinking about his action later, I concluded that he took this step from despair about the terrible national catastrophe of occupation, ethnic cleansing and refugee flows that his nation faced. President Heydar Aliyev clearly believed that his firm priority was to arrange for the refugees to return to their homes.

But there were three reasons why nothing could come of this. First, there is no precedent in Azerbaijan for such a step and other ethnic groups might exploit this to demand autonomy for themselves, something that would destroy the state. Second, Armenia was even then talking about something more, complete independence for Nagorno-Karabakh or its incorporation into Armenia itself, something that the status similar to that of Tatarstan would pave the way for. And third, Moscow was not willing to allow peace to break out, something that would compromise its ability to maintain its position in the South Caucasus and slow the entrance of Western influence.

In his search for a way out from the national disaster his country faced, Heydar Aliyev was prepared to do something else, something often hinted at but never officially acknowledged – exchanging territory. Again, the Armenians might have agreed but Russia was and is opposed, and for exactly the same reasons. Moscow does not want peace.

That was most obvious when Heydar Aliyev and Kocharyan reached an agreement on the issue. Once they did, the shooting incident occurred in the Armenian parliament and ended that chance for peace. By the way, at that time, I predicted just such a turn of events, one that could prevent any agreement from being realized. Before I retired, I told President Heydar Aliyev that Russia will not allow you to conclude a peace with Armenia in the current political environment. But he believed that he could get one at the Istanbul Summit, not least because the framework document reflecting the agreed-upon principles had already been prepared by the time. Then the violence in the Armenian parliament happened and that was that.

Kocharyan was summoned to Moscow where the Russians explained the facts of life to him. He then told Heydar Aliyev that all the agreements they had reached were vacated. But the Minsk Group co-chairs left the framework document in place. I think that was a mistake. It was never signed and was yet to be discussed at the Istanbul Summit, and no one knew what those discussions would result in. And when it was discussed by the two presidents later at Key West, that document did not advance the discussions. Indeed, there, Heydar Aliyev backed away from all of the concessions he had been prepared to make earlier.

But despite that, the Minsk Group co-chairs continued to stick to this framework document and put pressure on him and then on his successor Ilham Aliyev. But in every case, Ilham Aliyev has rejected their pressure, insisting that he will maintain the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. I consider his position absolutely correct.

Nonetheless, because the West does not have any other mechanism for dealing with the conflict, it continues to talk about and stick to the framework document.

That makes the new UNGA resolution extremely significant because it offers an alternative way forward. It is based on the four UNSC resolutions and insists on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity as a first principle, something President Ilham Aliyev believes and that has the support of every citizen and every political party of Azerbaijan. Indeed, on the basis of my numerous conversations I am convinced that the Azerbaijani people are prepared to wait or to fight as long as they are sure that Azerbaijan will again be whole and free. And the resolution may also help to convince the West that no stable peace will ever be achieved here by means of territorial concessions by Azerbaijan.

There really is only one way out of this problem – the United States, because of its preeminent power, must accept the principle of territorial integrity for Azerbaijan and work to realize it. In Kosovo, Washington did the impossible – it violated the territorial integrity of Serbia and at the same time proclaimed that this is not a precedent. Of course, we are pleased by the American position on that, just as we are pleased by Russian and French declarations of the same kind. But I would like to point out to everybody that this is a diplomatic game. That is, these countries support the principle, but none of them is against the possibility that Azerbaijan could voluntarily yield part of its territory in the name of peace. In their view, that would eliminate a major headache for them. But perhaps the resolution will help them understand that giving the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh autonomy is already a colossal concession, and we cannot and will not do more. In my personal opinion, the country that has carried out ethnic cleansing of the Azerbaijani ethnic minority population on its territory has no moral or legal right to demand any kind of autonomy for its own ethnic minority on our territory. That being said, giving them that autonomy is a great concession on our part.

AIW: Some have suggested that Azerbaijan should reject the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group and seek some other means of conflict resolution. What do you think of such proposals?

Guluzade: I start from the view that Azerbaijan does not have any choice and must continue to work with the Minsk Group while insisting upon the positions I outlined above concerning its territorial integrity. At present, the United States has enormous influence in all international organizations beginning with the UN and ending with the OSCE and other European Organizations. What would we gain by having the Americans come up with another group, say the Warsaw Group, in place of the Minsk Group? That will not change much. I would also like to stress that the governments of the USA, France and Russia are not much interested in the activities of their representatives in the Minsk Group, for they understand that peace in the current geopolitical environment is unachievable. Thus, all the activities of the three co-chairs are the products of their own design. This means that we must continue to defend our positions within the existing formats and to explain why we will not make any concessions on our core commitment to the territorial integrity of our country.

AIW: You mentioned Kosovo. How do you think Kosovo's independence might affect the outcome of other regional conflicts, including the one in Nagorno-Karabakh?

Guluzade: Any question in international affairs must be considered from the point of view of one's own national interests. From the point of view of the national interests

of Baku, the weakening of Russia is very important. Consequently, the dismemberment of the Yugoslav empire, and the eventual membership of both of its parts, Kosovo and Serbia, in NATO may be considered as a positive course of events for Azerbaijan. Russia needs a strong Serbia because quite possibly that is Moscow's only reliable ally in Europe. Consequently, the division of Serbia works against Moscow. I personally am against doing anything that advances the national interests of Russia or alternatively am for anything, like NATO's eastward expansion and further evolution of GUAM, that undercuts them because Russia was the colonizer of Azerbaijan.

Russia enslaved Azerbaijan and all the Muslim peoples, including those which are now within Russia. Moscow is doing everything to deprive them of their national identity. It has changed the names of their lands to purely Russian ones. It is seeking to russify all the peoples living in Russia and has introduced the term "rossiyanin" to designate the product.

This effort, an echo of the one the Soviet Union employed against the Turkic republics, is far from over. And I hope that sometime in the not distant future, the star of freedom will shine for such entities as Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Buryatia and other peoples, and they will be able to speak their own languages again.

AIW: You touched upon NATO and its eastward expansion. How do you rate the pace of Azerbaijan's Euro-Atlantic integration?

Guluzade: Azerbaijan in my mind is integrating into Euro-Atlantic structures without any unnecessary noise. Azerbaijan's approach is working and it is welcome. Baku's policy in this direction is both principled and balanced, and it allows it to move forward without provoking the kind of Russian reaction that Georgia's more outspoken approach has guaranteed.

AIW: You mentioned GUAM. What do you think its prospects are given Russian alleged efforts to force Moldova out of that group?

Guluzade: In my view, the future of GUAM depends primarily on the United States. If the US wants GUAM to transform itself into a military-political-economic union, then that will happen. The Americans also could make Turkey, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic or someone else a member of this group. But I want to stress that the U.S. has now problems with Russia and it must resolve them first. Consequently, having helped get GUAM started, the U.S. is not pushing that group forward in the ways many of its members expected. And in that environment, GUAM will remain a relatively loose consultative body, though a number of important projects are already being realized within its framework.

AIW: What is in this case GUAM's identity? Can GUAM be seen as an alternative to NATO for the GUAM member-states?

Guluzade: There is no alternative to NATO. The point is that the United States currently has a lot of problems with Russia to solve, which is why the US doesn't yet want to give GUAM a concrete shape and identity. GUAM is actually not in the interests of China either. Remember that Uzbekistan has just recently been a member of GUAM, and it can always return back. It is just a matter of leadership in power. So, this is not that easy as it seems. But I see a great future for GUAM.

AIW: What do you make of recent efforts to unite the Turkic speaking world?

Guluzade: Pan-Turkism died once before without even being fully born. International politics do not rest on ethnic kinship; it is about national interests. I am entirely in favor of a common Turkic television channel and other similar initiatives that promote awareness of cultural commonalities, but I think our national approaches should be guided by our national interests rather than something else. Sometimes we Turkic language speakers will agree and sometimes we won't. Our relations with Turkmenistan concerning the future of the Kapaz/Sardar island is a clear example. I also doubt that Anatolian Turkish will become the lingua franca of Turkic countries in this region. Russian used to play that role, now English is assuming that role – and in Turkey itself, English is pushing out Turkish in some sectors.

TERRORISM, SEPARATISM, AND THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

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Over the course of the last two decades, the world has entered into a new and qualitatively different era, one in which the bipolar system of ideological competition between Western democracy and Eastern Communism has been replaced by a conflict between the no less dangerous phenomena of international terrorism and militant separatism, on the one hand, and the system of existing and effective states, on the other. As a result, the political map of the world ever more resembles an extraordinarily complex mosaic, one in which world and regional powers exist alongside small states that to one degree or another have been drawn into the vortex of globalization and international problems.

Not surprisingly, these changes have affected some regions of the world far more profoundly than they have others. Among the most affected have been the geo-strategically important Balkans and the large and resource-rich central Eurasian geopolitical space. In both places, the West is seeking to create a number of geopolitical strong points to promote the further fragmentation of Eurasia, an effort that has intensified since the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States.

Western actions in this regard have generated a countervailing response by others who believe that the new global system should be a "multi-polar" one. They call for a new division of the planet into spheres of influence and insist that no one country or one geopolitical center can act without taking into account the interests of other groupings and their specific religious and cultural backgrounds.

The conflicts that have engulfed the Near and Middle East, in particular those in Iraq and Afghanistan, highlight beyond any doubt the ineffectiveness of the methods and approaches the United States and the West are employing in their struggle with international terrorism. By this point in history, no country or group of countries can hope to be successful, however noble its intentions, if it calls the

values of those in whose name it is fighting alien and if it ignores the centuries' old religious traditions and civilizations of which the latter are a part.

Indeed, the extraordinarily clumsy way in which the "counter-terrorist operation" has been conducted – one in the course of which thousands of innocent people have died – is already costing the world community a great deal. As a result, there is a great danger that contemporary international terrorism is metastasizing into something far more dangerous: geo-terrorism, "a war of all against all." If that in fact occurs, then the international system will not as now have to confront a variety of separate terrorist groups but rather with entire countries or groups of countries, operating on the basis of religious-political ideas and prepared to enter onto "the path of terrorist war." As many have noted, the scientific-technical revolution in military affairs has given even the poorest countries access to weapons of mass destruction.

A major reason for the rise of terrorism is directly connected with the globalization of economic and political life that has divided the world between the well-off "golden billion" and the increasingly impoverished "others" whose values are at risk and who are likely to turn to violence if the limited current efforts to address their economic problems fail. Many of the members of the latter group appear likely to conclude very soon that they have nothing to lose by attacking the "golden billion" and seeking to gain some assets for themselves.

Other factors are at work as well. Religious fundamentalism, unrestrained nationalism and racism, ethnic intolerance, organized crime, demographic explosions and uncontrolled migration, ecological disasters, and the exhaustion of natural resources all are pushing people in the direction of geo-terrorism. And as this threat increases, no country, however well-off it may be, will be able to insure itself completely against attack.

Particularly important, especially in the Southern Caucasus, to the rise of international terrorism is militant separatism, a phenomenon that exists not only there but in many countries of the world. All too often, the future cadres of terrorist groups receive their baptism of fire in such inter-national and inter-confessional fights over territory. And it is entirely appropriate to speak of both the inter-penetration and the mutual and growing reinforcement of international terrorism and militant separatism.

In both the third world and the post-Soviet space, many countries have already experienced the full measure of all the "charms" of the forcible realization of the principle of self-determination of national minorities and of the impact this has on state sovereignty. And more than others, they recognize that any application of this principle almost certainly will entail to still greater chaos and still more terrorism around the world.

When some members of the international community have ignored the principle of the inviolability of borders of sovereign states, as was the case recently with the recognition they extended to the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo, that action undermined the importance and authority of the United Nations as a guarantor of international stability. Not only did that action unleash "the spirit of Munich of 1938," but it created a dangerous precedent that to one degree or another threaten the borders of practically every country in the world and consequently the ability of all states to prevent the rise of terrorism.

One aspect of this pernicious phenomenon is particularly noteworthy. These typically bloody and hysterical bacchanalias are usually justified by what in other contexts are humanistic and democratic ideas, such as "the awakening of national self-consciousness," "the right of nations to self-determination," "the freedom of oppressed peoples," "human rights," "re-unification with the Motherland," and so on. That makes such movements superficially attractive and justified to some, but their underlying reality, as the conflicts in the Caucasus in the 1990s showed, have brought innumerable misfortunes even to those who initially believed in them.

During that decade, a series of illegal and marginal formations emerged with some elements of statehood but no recognition from the international community. In most cases, an essential contributing factor to their appearance was the intense geopolitical competition among outside powers. This was especially obvious during the course of the disintegration of the USSR and Yugoslavia, but it continues throughout "the arc of instability" in the Balkans, the Near and Middle East, Central Asia, and, in particular, the Black Sea-Caucasus-Caspian region.

Because that region has enormous reserves of oil and gas and because it serves as a gigantic bridge between Europe and Asia, the Caucasus is extremely important to a variety of outside powers under conditions of globalization. And their open competition concerning various transportation and communication networks has only added fuel to the fire of the national ambitions, historical enmities, and aspirations of the countries in the region itself.

On the one hand, these conflicts have made it easier for the United States and its NATO allies to prevent Russia from becoming again the single dominant power in this region. But on the other, they have meant that Russia itself has been limited, "chained" to Armenia, its only close ally in the Southern Caucasus in its efforts to block the spread of Atlanticist influence there. Moreover, this competition has profoundly limited the ability of either the United Nations or the OSCE to promote the resolution of the conflicts in the South Caucasus.

Indeed, it is this region that shows the way in which militant separatism and international terrorism can combine, leading to the destabilization of entire regions and countries, when the powers involved fail to see that their actions in promoting their short-term goals may threaten their fundamental interests in the longer term.

The only way to escape from the dangers this situation poses is the careful observation by everyone involved of the universal principles of international law, including the inviolability of inter-state borders even when they are in dispute, the resolution of all questions of an international character exclusively by peaceful means, and the defense of the rights of national minorities on the basis of the fundamental principles of human rights and civic freedoms.

New Book Outlines Baku's Approach to Consular Affairs

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Most of the governments that emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union and most of those who study them have focused on the diplomatic relations their countries have established with other countries, on the state-to-state relationships that first provided the recognition of their independent status and now are the basic framework for working with other governments as they seek to navigate through the new, globalized world.

Far fewer of these states or of those who study them have focused on consular services, on the institutions, often housed alongside those who conduct diplomatic relations and sometimes staffed by diplomats, that first and foremost defend the rights of their citizens abroad - and thus to a degree are seldom appreciated by those who do not have direct contact with them, - establish links between individuals and their country and define the nature of citizenship and national identity.

A happy exception to this pattern is Azerbaijan, whose leaders from the very beginning understood that for their country, consular work is just as important as diplomatic efforts internationally and may be even more important in transforming Azerbaijanis, both those living inside the borders of the country and those living abroad, into full-fledged and completely committed citizens of Azerbaijan.

The reasons for this Azerbaijani understanding and commitment are not far to seek. First, because of the accidents of history and geography, far more ethnic Azerbaijanis live outside of the borders of Azerbaijan, and many of them identify with and want to be citizens of that country. Consular activities, including providing information, approving visas, and even arranging for naturalization, occupy an enormous part in Baku's political calculations.

Second, Azerbaijani identities have been subject to an enormous number of shocks over the last century. The name of the country, its language, and hence its people has changed three times. It has been independent, occupied and independent again, an alteration that has sent many of its people into emigration. And Azerbaijan has emerged again in a new globalized world in which ever more of its people are traveling, studying and working abroad and ever more of the world's people are traveling, studying and working in Azerbaijan. Consequently, Baku's consular officers have no shortage of work.

And third - and this both reflects and informs the current Azerbaijani government's interest in and attention to this area of international relations - consular affairs have been a key concern in Baku for almost a century, often at times when no one would expect it and sometimes when that was the only part of international life in which Azerbaijan was able to be a genuine participant.

Despite its brief and turbulent history, the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (1918-1920) drew up rules for consular work, welcomed consulates from other countries, and established its own consulates in places where many Azerbaijanis were living or where Azerbaijan's economic interests required the greatest defense. Following the Soviet occupation, Azerbaijan's consulates abroad were closed more or less immediately, but some of the consulates of foreign countries in Baku continued to function and, Moscow's rule notwithstanding, Azerbaijani officials continued to deal with them for several years. [1]

From the mid-1920s to 1944, Azerbaijan did not have a diplomatic service or a consular one. But when Moscow directed the union republics to set up foreign ministries at the end of World War II, Azerbaijan developed one that was more attentive to consular matters than almost anything else. That is because it had to deal with all the questions of citizenship, identity and residence that were presented by the rise and then collapse of the Soviet-backed Azerbaijani government in Iran.

As historians of Azerbaijan have pointed out, even as Azerbaijan and the other union republics were permitted by the Soviet government after the death of Stalin and especially after the 1970s to play a larger role in foreign relations, often hosting foreign guests and participating in international conferences and meetings of various kinds, relative to more senior republic party and state officials the union republic foreign ministries saw the scope of their activity never large restricted even further.

In Azerbaijan, that had the effect of leading to a concentration on two things – the gathering of information about neighboring countries for Moscow and the providing of consular advice and assistance both directly and via the Soviet foreign ministry which retained the power to make all decisions.

When the Soviet Union collapsed and Azerbaijan recovered its independence, Baku like the other post-Soviet governments actively sought diplomatic recognition from other countries in order to solidify its status. But unlike many of them, the Azerbaijani government from the very beginning also focused on the opening of consulates either independently or within its new embassies and welcomed the opening of foreign consulates again independently or within embassies in Baku. And thus it is not surprising that documents about Azerbaijan's establishment of diplomatic relations inevitably include a section on consular affairs, something not found in similar accords reached by most other post-Soviet countries.

Given this focus and given the importance of consular work in the life of Azerbaijan, one can only welcome the appearance of a new book, *Contemporary Diplomatic and Consular Law*, by Allimirzamin Askerov (2007), which gives almost equal time to consular and diplomatic affairs, a balance seldom found in analogous texts on the activities of foreign ministries in other countries.

Askerov, who has served for many years in Azerbaijan's foreign ministry and particularly in its consular service, is the ideal man to prepare this study, one intended to serve as a textbook for students but which will inevitably become a basic reference for all those who work in or with Azerbaijani diplomats and consuls.

Divided into five thematic chapters and including more than 200 pages of the basic documents which define Azerbaijan's diplomatic and consular activities, the book makes clear that Azerbaijan's current practices, especially in the consular area,

have three sources: current international law arising from the various Vienna accords on diplomatic and consular practice, Soviet practice both in Moscow and in Baku, and the traditions of Azerbaijan's own diplomatic and consular history.

Askerov's book is in Russian, a language that all Azerbaijani diplomats know. But it is to be hoped that it will be translated into other languages not only to help those who work on a regular basis with Azerbaijani diplomats and consular officials but also as a guide to how other countries, old and new, may want to proceed in their own countries. To the extent that happens, Azerbaijan's longstanding commitment to consular affairs, to the protection and integration of its own citizens into the life of the country will make yet another contribution to the larger world.

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Note

[1] On the history of Azerbaijan's remarkable consular service, see Sadykhov (2004). Unlike most historians of foreign ministries, Sadykhov devotes a significant part of his text to consular affairs and even includes the full text of the 1993 law defining its current consular practice. Perhaps significantly, that law is several times longer than the laws, also reproduced in his book, devoted to diplomatic activities.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

In an interview to Interfax, President Ilham Aliyev reaffirms that Azerbaijan will never accept the secession of Nagorno-Karabakh but will try to resolve the conflict peacefully (www.interfax.az/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18570&Itemid=9).

Azerbaijan Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that the UNGA vote shows the international strength of Azerbaijan's diplomatic position relative to that of Armenia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/112299.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

In an interview to ANS TV broadcast on March 22, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried says the United States continues to support a peaceful resolution of the Karabakh issue (<http://www.anspress.com/nid65229.html>).

Chingiz Aitmatov, Kyrgyz author and sometime ambassador, says that Azerbaijan occupies "one of the leading positions" among countries of the Turkic world (<http://news.trend.az/index.shtml?show=news&newsid=1162011&lang=RU>).

Following their vote against the UNGA resolution on the occupied territories, the Minsk Group co-chairs issue a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to a negotiated settlement.

Baku's Western University issues a new book by Randell Baker entitled "Kavkaziana" and devoted to Azerbaijani traditions of hospitality.

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

31 March

- Azerbaijan marks the Day of the Genocide of Azerbaijanis, the 90th anniversary of Armenian killings of Azerbaijanis in Quba.
- Slovak Foreign Minister Jan Kubich visits Baku.
- President Ilham Aliyev tells international meeting in Baku on fighting corruption that there must not be any double standards in that effort. He also notes that poverty in Azerbaijan has fallen from 49 percent of the population to 16 percent over the last four years (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/112942.html>).
- Kristina Ojuland, deputy speaker of the Estonian parliament, arrives in Baku to discuss economic ties.
- Azerbaijani diaspora organizations hold meetings around the world to mark the Day of the Genocide of Azerbaijanis.

30 March

- Azerbaijani, Iranian and Russian Federation officials meeting in Iran sign a protocol on the construction of the Kasvin-Resht-Astara railroad.

29 March

- President Ilham Aliyev issues a statement in advance of the Day of the Genocide of Azerbaijanis (<http://www.day.az/news/society/112719.html>).
- The United Nations Human Rights Commission adopts an Azerbaijani proposal on the treatment of missing persons during armed conflict.

28 March

- Mario Loudes Aranda Besauri, the deputy foreign minister of Mexico, visits Baku.

26 March

- The Azerbaijan Foreign Minister sends a request to the OSCE for information on procedures for changing the co-chairs of the Minsk Group (<http://www.anspress.com/nid65795.html>).
- The Azerbaijan government announces that it has set up radar stations to guard its territorial waters in the Caspian Sea (<http://www.day.az/news/society/112435.html>).

24 March

- Azerbaijan parliamentarian Adil Aliyev says that no one gave the United States, France and Russia the right to exercise a monopoly over peace talks on Karabakh and the other occupied territories (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/112377.html>).
- Azerbaijan's ambassador in Moscow tells "Nezavimaya gazeta" that Baku will do everything it can to resolve the question of the occupied territories by peaceful means.

20 March

- On the eve of the week-long Novruz holiday, President Ilham Aliyev speaks to his nation, welcoming the recent UNGA vote and reaffirming his commitment to integrate Azerbaijan into Europe.

19 March

- President Ilham Aliyev receives the head of Interfax, praises the role of that Russian news agency and gives an extensive interview.
- Iran informs Azerbaijan that it has sent a letter to the United Nations announcing that it supports the recent UNGA resolution on the occupied territories in Azerbaijan, even though it did not participate in the earlier vote.
- Azerbaijanis and Georgians participate in a tele-bridge concerning the Kura River which flows from Georgia into Azerbaijan.

18 March

- President Ilham Aliyev receives a high-level Saudi Arabian delegation to discuss bilateral ties.
- Azerbaijan and the United Arab Emirates sign an agreement on enhanced political consultation.

17 March

- President Ilham Aliyev receives Sergei Lebedev, the executive secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

- President Ilham Aliyev receives Christos Filias, the economic development minister of Greece.
- The Russian Foreign Ministry criticizes Azerbaijan for its reaction against Moscow's vote against the UNGA resolution on the occupied territories.
- The Azerbaijanis of Georgia form the Congress of Azerbaijanis of Georgia to promote that community's interests in Tbilisi and its relations with Azerbaijan.

Note to Readers

The editors of "Azerbaijan in the World" hope that you find it useful and encourage you to submit your comments and articles via email (adabiweekly@ada.edu.az). The materials it contains reflect the personal views of their authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.