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School of International Affairs

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AZERBAIJAN AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

An Interview with H.E. Mr. Fakhraddin Gurbanov
Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the United Kingdom

March 5, 2010
Baku, Azerbaijan / London, UK

Azerbaijan in the World: What do you see as the central core of relations between Azerbaijan and the UK?

Ambassador Gurbanov: Relations between Azerbaijan and the United Kingdom include a vast spectrum of issues from bilateral political ties to cultural and educational links. Cooperation in these areas rests on a solid foundation and is likely to further deepen in the future. But I regard energy cooperation between our two countries as being at the core of our ties, given that Britain has been a leader in

helping to develop Azerbaijan's energy resources since the mid-1990s and that UK-based companies have since then established strong presence in, and invested heavily in, our country's energy sector. On the basis of success in that area, our ties are now broadening and deepening in many different dimensions.

AIW: How have Azerbaijani-British relations evolved in the post-Soviet era and how would you describe their current status?

Amb. Gurbanov: Initially, after Azerbaijan regained its independence, the ties between our countries were mainly focused on creating and extending energy cooperation and on developing the regional energy export infrastructure. Indeed, nearly all British companies which set up their presence in Azerbaijan during those days were in one way or the other linked to the energy sector. Now, our relations have expanded across the spectrum, and I take pleasure in noting that there are frequent high-level contacts and bilateral visits. President Ilham Aliyev's official visit to London last July, in particular, has moved our relations to a new level.

AIW: What is the state of energy cooperation between Azerbaijan and the UK?

Amb. Gurbanov: UK energy companies led by BP have played a crucial role in bringing the energy infrastructure in our country up to the state of the art as exemplified in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipelines. Today, there are around 5000 British citizens working in Azerbaijan, most of them in the energy sector. Britain has been and remains the largest foreign investor in Azerbaijan's hydrocarbon sector and accounts for more than half of foreign direct investment in our country. In recent years, we have expanded cooperation in this area by joint agreements to exploit offshore oil and gas reserves. Among the most important was the accord signed between SOCAR and BP in the presence of President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Gordon Brown in London, in July of last year.

AIW: What are the main components of trade and areas of cooperation between Azerbaijan and the UK, apart from energy?

Amb. Gurbanov: Our two countries are seeking to expand our cooperation beyond the energy sector. Indeed, that goal lies behind the foundation of the UK-Azerbaijan Business Council, which brings together both UK- and Azerbaijan-based companies. This group has organized two trade missions to Azerbaijan over the last few months, and we are seeing the fruits of that effort as British investments increase in Azerbaijan's finance, insurance, agriculture, and consultancy services sectors, among others. Indeed, one of the priorities that the Business Council has set for itself is to promote Azerbaijani investment in the UK. I see a great potential for cooperation in tourism, renewable and green energy, and banking, and we will do everything we can to promote that.

AIW: What is the state of bilateral cultural and social cooperation?

Amb. Gurbanov: Culture and public diplomacy play a key role in bridging gaps between peoples and supporting diplomatic work. Cultural and public diplomacy have often proved a more effective foreign policy tool as compared to conventional diplomatic practices. With that in mind, we have sought to establish strong people-to-people relations between Azerbaijan and Britain. Our embassy has helped to organize a vast array of cultural events, exhibitions, and concerts featuring

Azerbaijani artists. We have strong ties with the well-established Azerbaijani communities in London and other cities. The Azerbaijan House – a culture, community, friendship and resource center in London – is crucial in supporting us in our efforts to raise awareness among the British of our culture and uphold the sense of belonging of the Azerbaijani community in Britain. And British universities are one of the most favored destinations for Azerbaijanis studying abroad. In 2009 alone, more than 90 Azerbaijani students enrolled in British universities at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Meanwhile, British public diplomacy has established a strong presence in Azerbaijan, in large measure through the British Council. Cultural diplomacy is actually one of the areas in which we are trying to share experience with, and learn from, each other. Several study tours to the UK have been organized to that effect over the last few years.

AIW: Given your experience, what advice would you give young Azerbaijanis beginning their careers in diplomacy?

Amb. Gurbanov: In addition to the obvious requirements of language skills and knowledge of the rules of diplomatic life, Azerbaijanis entering diplomatic work need to acquire a broad knowledge of the world and its rapidly changing nature. Personally, I see both economic and cultural issues becoming the defining elements shaping the future of global affairs. Moreover, young diplomats need to know more about and appreciate the impact of the global communications revolution. Underlying all of this, of course, must be a feeling of devotion to your country, patience and determination in upholding the interests of your country, and a sense of pride in representing it. Azerbaijanis have these things, and I hope they will always bring them to diplomatic work.

DEMOGRAPHY AND FOREIGN POLICY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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Demography is destiny at least in the long term, historians have long insisted, but even in the course of a single generation, changes in the relative size and composition of the populations of countries in particular regions can exert a huge impact on what governments can and want to do and equally on the ability of outside powers to influence the situation. That is very much the case in the South Caucasus at the present time, even though the highly politicized nature of the numbers, not surprising given what is at stake, makes such comparisons difficult but at the same time absolutely necessary.

Over the last two decades, there have been significant changes in the relative size and growth rates of the populations of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, but even more important for the future of domestic and especially foreign policies of these states, there have been changes in the ethnic homogeneity of these countries, the

age structure of their populations, and the numbers of migrants living abroad, especially in the Russian Federation where the host government has shown itself prepared to use them as a lever on their homelands. And all of these both shape the policy options and possibilities of the three governments in the region.

The last common census for the three republics of the South Caucasus was in 1989 prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union. Since then, Azerbaijan has conducted enumerations of its population in 1999 and 2009, Armenia in 2001 with another scheduled for 2011, and Georgia in 2002 with another slated for later this year. Each government has published estimates at various points in the intervening period, and Russian scholars have attempted to maintain data sets on all three. But perhaps the most useful common source is the CIA World Fact Book, which each year provides estimates on all the measures of concern here. Its latest (July 2009) figures will be used here. [1]

Three demographic measures have a particular impact on government policy in the case of the three countries of the South Caucasus: the size and growth rate of the population, its ethnic homogeneity, and the number of its citizens working and living abroad. They are the factors that will be considered here, not in order to predict government policies but rather to suggest the framework or constraints that demography imposes on decision makers in all of them.

First of all, all three countries in the South Caucasus have seen their rate of growth decline but both from a different starting point and to a different level, shifts that point to an even greater divergence in their respective populations in the future. According to the World Fact Book, in July 2009, Azerbaijan had a population of 8.24 million, Armenia a population of 2.97 million, and Georgia a population of 4.62 million. Those figures represent a change in the relative size of the three since 1989, not only because of military conflicts and population shifts but also because of demographic behavior.

As Russian scholars have shown, there has been a dramatic decline in birthrates and fertility rates in all three countries (Vishnevsky 2005). The greatest declines have been in Azerbaijan, but because its population started at vastly higher rates than did the other two, Azerbaijan still has a much higher fertility rate than do the others, 2.04 per woman per lifetime compared to 1.36 for Armenia, and 1.44 for Georgia. While none of these numbers guarantee a replacement of the population—for that, demographers say, a fertility rate of 2.24 is needed—clearly, Azerbaijan is much better positioned to maintain its population than is either of the other two. In 2009, in fact, Azerbaijan had a growth rate of 0.762 percent, while Armenia's population declined 0.03 percent and Georgia's 0.325 percent, according to the World Fact Book.

The declining fertility rate in Armenia has sparked new concerns there about the future. Thirty years ago, Armenian demographer Ruben Yeganyan points out, the average Armenian woman had 2.6 children per lifetime, just over the replacement level requirement, but now Armenia faces a future in which its population will decline quite possibly at an ever more rapidly accelerating rate. He also points out that Armenia's birthrate of 13.7 children per 1,000 population, while roughly the same as Georgia's 13, is far below Azerbaijan's rate of 18.8 children per 1,000 population (Ovanisyan 2010).

These overall fertility and birthrate figures, of course, represent a major determinant of the ability of these states to field and maintain an army and thus to defend or advance in other ways the interests of the state.

Second, all three countries in the South Caucasus have become significantly more ethnically homogeneous, for reasons both common to all three and specific to each one. At present, ethnic Azerbaijanis form 91 percent of the population of that country, ethnic Armenians form 98 percent of the population of Armenia and ethnic Georgians form 84 percent of the population of Georgia, including the population of the two breakaway republics, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

These figures are in all cases dramatically higher than at the end of Soviet times, the result of both political and economic developments. Many ethnic Azerbaijanis fled Armenia during the early stages of the Karabakh conflict, and many ethnic Armenians fled Azerbaijan at the same time, while many non-Georgians fled that country especially during the Gamsakhurdia period when Tbilisi pursued a "Georgia for the Georgians" policy.

But this complex "ethnic sorting out," familiar to students of European history over the last five centuries, is far from over. The percentage of ethnic Georgians will certainly rise if Tbilisi does not regain control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the percentage of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijan could increase or decrease once Baku recovers control over Karabakh and the adjoining regions occupied by Armenia depending on whether the ethnic Armenians there remain in Azerbaijan or decide to leave.

If a significant fraction of ethnic Armenians remain—and some of them arrived in these regions after 1993—then the ethnic homogeneity of Azerbaijan will decline, but if some or all of them decide to leave after Azerbaijan recovers the area as the OSCE Minsk Group proposes and as Baku is committed to achieving, then the percentage of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijan would rise still further, possibly to as high as that measure of ethnic Armenians in Armenia.

The implications of shifts toward greater ethnic homogenization also are uncertain. On the one hand, reductions in the size of ethnic minorities in states may have the effect of eliminating tensions with neighboring countries. But on the other, the rise of ethnically homogeneous states may lead policy makers to pursue more nationally defined policies, measures that could have the effect of making the lives of minorities still more difficult and relations with neighboring states more complicated.

And third, the three countries of the South Caucasus have seen significant outmigration, with the number of workers living abroad and their remittances home playing a key role. Because of the economic dislocations following the demise of the Soviet Union and because of differential growth rates among the post-Soviet states, significant numbers of Azerbaijanis, Armenians, and Georgians have gone abroad to work and in many cases continue to send money home, transfer payments that at various points have been a major source of support for some groups in these countries.

Estimates about the number of migrant workers from these countries vary widely, making any discussion problematic. According to UN estimates, there are more than 1.5 million ethnic Azerbaijanis in the Russian Federation, one million ethnic Armenians there, and a smaller but significant number of ethnic Georgians.

According to the World Fact Book, outmigration, largely driven by economic problems, continues from all three countries. In 2009, 1.69 Azerbaijanis of every 1,000 residents left Azerbaijan, 4.56 Armenians out of every 1,000 left Armenia, and 4.26 Georgians out of every 1,000 left Georgia.

Because its economy is doing relatively better, Azerbaijan is suffering less outmigration than the other two, but officials and experts in both Armenia and Georgia are concerned by these population losses for two reasons. First, such outmigration, while it may reduce social tensions by providing people with jobs, may ultimately cost the countries involved their future because migrants tend to be members of younger age groups, precisely the ones from which another generation will come or out of which the state can draft its soldiers.

And second, and perhaps especially important for the South Caucasus, the Russian government at various points has indicated that it will treat migrant workers from particular countries according to the policies that the governments of those countries adopt toward Moscow. Given the dependence of these countries on transfer payments from their migrants and the very different relations Russia has with Georgia and Armenia, that implicit threat is no small factor in the calculations of the foreign policy elites in Tbilisi and Yerevan.

As students of politics know well, governments have a variety of ways to reduce the impact of demographic trends for a time, but they will be constrained by these changes over the longer term whatever they may assume and in ways that at present they may not have yet taken into account.

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Notes

[1] See <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html> (accessed 14 March 2010).

TURKISH-AZERBAIJANI-ISRAELI AXIS REVIVED

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The visit of Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman to Baku on February 8-11, which has attracted so much comment and speculation, is a constituent part of Tel Aviv's policy in the post-Soviet space. An analysis of the results of this visit shows that the resonance arising from the Baku meetings of the Israeli minister serves only as a cover for the discussion behind the scenes of issues, which have strategic geopolitical importance.

Azerbaijani and Israeli media in their discussion of these meetings devoted most of their attention to several questions, including the broadening of Azerbaijani-Israeli ties at a time when contacts between Ankara and Jerusalem are increasingly tense, Azerbaijani permission for Israeli use of the territory of the country in the event of military actions against Iran, and a mediating role of official Baku in the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. The links among these various issues become obvious upon close examination.

As far as the first question is concerned, one should note that Israel and part of the Jewish lobby, which has spoken out against military actions in Iran, do not consider the territory of Azerbaijan as a place *des armes* for military actions against Iran. Related to this and as part of an effort designed to restrain Iran, the United States and Georgia have signed an agreement on the use of Georgia's territorial waters in the Black Sea if US military bases in the Persian Gulf are used for an attack on Iran.

Correctly assessing the situation, Israeli political analysts understand that Azerbaijan will not under any circumstances agree to the use of its territory for an invasion of Iran but rather will do everything it can to prevent the beginning of military actions against its southern neighbor. Any military invasion, be it a broad scale military action or surgical strike, would entail a humanitarian catastrophe (including an incalculable number of refugees from the northern part of Iran), a collapse of the economy, and a growth of terrorism in Azerbaijan. These threats in turn are entirely capable of delivering a destructive blow to the security of Azerbaijan. Consequently, official Baku cannot agree to such a step even in exchange for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

There is, however, a plethora of other issues that invite attention of Baku and Tel Aviv, as well as Ankara, and could hence serve as a solid foundation upon which the relations among the three could develop further. Since Lieberman's visit to Baku, there have been several extremely interesting events. On February 16, Pinchas Avivi, the deputy director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and head of that organization's Division for Central Europe and Eurasia, made a working visit to Ankara. Not only did the two parties discuss bilateral relations, but they also touched upon the issues of cooperation and interaction in "third countries," in particular those in the South Caucasus (Goldenstein 2010). That suggests that the meeting in Ankara represented a continuation of the Baku negotiations. The possibility of tripartite cooperation in dealing with the regional issues at a time when Turkish-Israeli relations appear to be in "conflict" is not fantastic if one comes to analyze more closely recent events. Despite a certain public cooling in recent months, both countries have enough in common that cooperation with regard to regional issues is far from impossible. As one Turkish official put it, "populism is part of contemporary politics," but "Turkey was and remains a most serious guarantor of Israel's security" (Oguz 2010).

Consequently, while some experts have hurried to bury the Azerbaijan-Israel-Turkish military-political union, it is obvious that precisely this union and not individual states are capable of being a key geopolitical center and playing a defining role in the region. And local conflicts, which are taking place in these countries, are considered not in isolation but as part of regional policies.

This nexus also reflects Azerbaijan's interest in playing a larger international role. Indeed, many countries hope that it will. In May 2009, for example, when Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov was in Washington, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that Azerbaijan could take on itself greater responsibility and leadership in the resolution of important issues in the region of the South Caucasus. She stressed that "Azerbaijan is a strategic location which is important not only for Azerbaijanis, but also for the region and the entire world," including not unimportantly not only the Caucasus but the areas to its south. [1]

Not surprisingly, therefore, during Lieberman's visit to Baku, the two parties discussed in detail the possibility of Azerbaijan's mediating role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Baku's growing interest in playing a greater role in the broader region to its south is also reflected in its continuous reluctance to open up its embassy in Tel Aviv. Experts in Baku often cite relations with the Organization of the Islamic Conference and with Iran as the reasons Azerbaijan has not taken that step, but the experience of Turkey and Israel suggests that in reality there is another reason at work: a desire, on the part of Baku, to demonstrate its respect for, and solidarity with, the Palestinians and the Islamic world more generally, something which will help increase the influence of Azerbaijan as a mediator in the Middle Eastern conflict.

As the situation around the region heats up, the links between Azerbaijan, Turkey and Israel seem certain to become closer, and this axis is destined to bear a direct effect on the broader region for years to come.

Note

[1] See <http://news.mail.ru/politics/2567250/> (accessed 25 February 2010).

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Oguz, Dzhem (2010) "Есть причины, вынудившие Турцию изменить отношение к Израилю" ["There are reasons that prompted Turkey to change its attitude to Israel"], *Regnum*, 11 February, available at <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1252728.html> (accessed 25 February 2010).

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says that Azerbaijan is developing its forces so as to be able "at any moment to liberate our lands from the enemy." He says Baku wants a peaceful settlement, "but no one should forget that the Armenians seized these lands by any but peaceful means... Our lands were occupied by military force," and "we cannot tolerate this situation" forever (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197148.html>).

At the direction of President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijani officials are stepping up their effort to inform the international community about the crimes committed by Armenians against Azerbaijanis," including but not limited to Yerevan's effort to annex part of Azerbaijan and carry out "ethnic cleansing" in the occupied territories (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197801.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev telephones Turkish President Abdulla Gul to tell him that Azerbaijan considers the decision of the US Congressional Committee "unjust" and a "crude distortion of historical truth" that is "capable of leading to the growth of tensions in the region" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198186.html>).

Rabiyat Aslanova, chairman of the Milli Majlis Human Rights Committee, says that the US State Department's 2009 Human Rights Report, which is sharply critical of the situation in Azerbaijan, does not reflect the reality but rather the efforts of "people who hate Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199221.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Jennifer Davis, US representative in NATO, says that the alliance "is conducting discussions with Azerbaijan in the defense sector, on democratic reforms and on the question of preparing a military doctrine" and that "if Azerbaijan will be interested in membership in the Alliance, then it will be possible to work on that" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198630.html> and <http://www.day.az/news/politics/198615.html>).

French President Nicolas Sarkozy says in the course of a joint press conference with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev that "Russia and France intend to continue to work in close cooperation for the resolution of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh."

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

15 March

Fazail Agamaly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the United States, although a co-chair of the Minsk Group, has adopted "a pro-Armenian position" and is seeking to make the resolution of the Karabakh conflict secondary to other goals (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199228.html>).

Goran Lennmarker, special representative of the OSCE PA for Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia, says that "the Armenian community of Nagorno-Karabakh

cannot be included in the negotiating process on the resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199452.html>).

14 March

Ziyafat Askarov, vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that "NATO must take a position toward the aggressive policy of Armenia" and that Azerbaijan will insist on this at the spring session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Alliance meeting in Riga in May (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199348.html>).

13 March

The Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry says that "the renewed Madrid Document [presented by the OSCE Minsk Group] is the basis for further negotiations on Karabakh" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199282.html>).

Armenian military units conduct exercises in the occupied territories (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199330.html>).

Joao Soares, president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, says during a visit to Baku that "the golden time has come for establishing peace and security in the South Caucasus" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199329.html>).

12 March

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov received Joachim Hörster, a deputy of the German Bundestag and head of the German Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the West European Union (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199245.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov says that "the Caspian states are prepared for cooperation in the area of security." His remarks come at the conclusion of the 23rd session of the deputy foreign ministers of the Caspian littoral states that took place in Baku, March 11-12 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199184.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that statements by Bernard Fassier, the French co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, in Yerevan not only vary from those he has made in Baku but could become the basis for Yerevan to adopt a more aggressive policy in the occupied territories (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199225.html>).

Rabiyat Aslanova, chairman of the Milli Majlis Human Rights Committee, says that the US State Department's 2009 Human Rights Report, which is sharply critical of the situation in Azerbaijan, does not reflect the reality but rather the efforts of "people who hate Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199221.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, deputy executive secretary of the ruling *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party, says that "the drawing out of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will create a dangerous situation" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199135.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, is decorated by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev for his work in

promoting cooperation between Azerbaijani and Russian societies
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199137.html>).

Valery Chechelashvili, the secretary general of GUAM, says that reports about the disintegration of that grouping of states are inaccurate and that GUAM, of which Azerbaijan is a member, has a future
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199180.html>).

Nurlan Yermekbayev, deputy foreign minister of Kazakhstan, says that "Azerbaijan has made an enormous contribution to the establishment of the Commission on Mutual Cooperation and Confidence Measures in Asia"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199105.html>).

11 March

President Ilham Aliyev receives Mehdi Safari, Iran's deputy foreign minister and Tehran's special representative for Caspian affairs
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198953.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Korean Minister of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs Chung Jong-hwan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198980.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that the elimination of the visa regime between Azerbaijan and Turkey remains under discussion and that an agreement on all points may be signed this year
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198974.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that "the international community intends to support the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the near future" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198914.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that Baku has prepared a draft agreement on the definition of the legal status of the Caspian which takes into consideration the views of all parties
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198907.html>).

Azerbaijan and Saint Lucia establish diplomatic relations with the signing of a communique by their respective representatives to the United Nations in New York, Akshin Mehdiyev and Donatus St. Aimee
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199059.html>).

Peer Stanchina, German ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that Baku "considers Germany as a platform for integration into the European community"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198930.html>).

Kestutis Kudzmanas, Lithuanian ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that "Azerbaijan is a strategically important country for ensuring the energy security of Europe"
(<http://www.day.az/news/economy/198855.html>).

Sabir Rustamkhanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Armenia is seeking recognition for 'the Armenian genocide' in order to present Turkey with territorial demands" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198667.html>).

10 March

President Ilham Aliyev receives Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198800.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, Milli Majlis deputy and executive secretary of the ruling *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party, says that "having trusted in the mediation of France, Russia and the United States, Azerbaijan agreed that they should become the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group." He adds that "we believe that the co-chairs will carry out their mission in correspondence with the norms of international law" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198806.html>).

Goran Lennmarker, special representative of the OSCE PA for Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia, says that he is "optimistic" that the Karabakh conflict can be solved "in this year" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198675.html>).

The Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe confirms an assistance program for the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/199050.html>).

9 March

President Ilham Aliyev receives Iraqi Ambassador Arshad Omar Esmayeel on the occasion of the completion of his appointment to Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198564.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Karl Lamers, deputy chairman of the German Bundestag Defense Committee and chairman of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Political Committee (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198661.html>).

The Milli Majlis says that the bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will consider the formation of a subcommittee on the Karabakh problem at its upcoming session (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198642.html>).

7 March

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov takes part in the second meeting of the Azerbaijan-Libya inter-governmental commission in Tripoli (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/198291.html>).

Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijani ambassador to the Russian Federation, says that "Moscow knows that Azerbaijan has the just position on the Karabakh question" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198349.html>).

6 March

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov discusses in Paris the Karabakh conflict with Jean-David Levitte, foreign policy advisor to French President Nicolas Sarkozy (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198284.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in Paris (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198282.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "if Congress adopts the resolution on 'Armenian genocide,' this can harm US-Azerbaijani relations" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198313.html>).

The US Embassy in Baku says "that we would not like that discussions in Congress would influence relations with Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198290.html>).

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Denisov discusses, among other issues, the Karabakh conflict with Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Firudin Sinirlioglu (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198242.html>).

5 March

Milli Majlis ratifies two intergovernmental agreements with France, one eliminating visa requirements for persons with diplomatic passports and a second on the creation and operation of cultural centers in the two countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198139.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that reports by Yerevan that two Azerbaijani military planes had overflown Armenian territory are completely without foundation (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198065.html>).

The Foreign Ministry expresses "regret" about the decision of the US Congress concerning the events of 1915 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198184.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the international relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that "we do not consider just the decision of the committee of the US Congress" on the events of 1915 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198193.html>).

Parviz Shahbazov, Azerbaijani ambassador to Germany, makes a presentation on Azerbaijan for an expanded session of the German Christian Democratic Party (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198297.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu calls on the US and the West to answer whether they want an Armenian-Azerbaijani settlement or not (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/198066.html>).

4 March

Prime Minister Arthur Rasizade receives a delegation of senior officials from the International Monetary Fund (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/197971.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197919.html>).

Minister of Education Misir Mardanov receives Amb. Bilge Cankorel, the head of the OSCE office in Baku, who calls for improving the training of journalists in Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/society/197976.html>).

Joao Soares, the president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, says that "a good resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is on the table" in the form of the renewed Madrid Principles (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197858.html>).

Jean Perrin, first French ambassador to Baku and currently chairman of the Friends of Azerbaijan Society, says that "not a single country of the post-Soviet space has observed such grandiose successes as those in Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197838.html>).

3 March

President Ilham Aliyev receives Russian Vice-Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197787.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Dutch Deputy Foreign Minister Ed Kronenberg (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197783.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from incoming Danish, Libyan, Irish, and Philippine Ambassadors (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197789.html>, <http://www.day.az/news/politics/197774.html>, <http://www.day.az/news/politics/197762.html>, <http://www.day.az/news/politics/197761.html>).

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, receives Mark Herward, the UNESCO representative in Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/society/197802.html>).

Prime Minister Arthur Rasizade tells visiting Russian Vice-Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, who serves as Moscow's coordinator for CIS affairs, that Azerbaijan believes measures must be adopted to reform that organization in order to make it more effective (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197686.html>).

Deputy Prime Minister Ali Hasanov, who also heads the State Committee on Refugees and IDPs, says that international organizations should monitor the fulfillment of all resolutions they have adopted connected with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as part of a broader effort to resolve the conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197759.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that Baku would "like to find out the opinion of the Armenian side concerning the renewed Madrid Principles" and that he will be seeking to learn that from the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs in Paris on March 5 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197739.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Emanuelis Zingeris, chairman of the Lithuanian parliament's foreign affairs committee (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197782.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov says that Iranian drilling in the Caspian does not conflict with the issues being discussed between Baku and Tehran (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197785.html>).

Gudsi Osmanov, Azerbaijani consul general in St. Petersburg, meets with Leningrad *Oblast* Governor Valery Serdukov to discuss expanding cooperation between Azerbaijan and that northern Russian region (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197788.html>).

Raimundas Shukis, the vice speaker of the Lithuanian parliament, says Vilnius is "ready to share its experience" with Azerbaijan on questions of European Union integration (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197640.html>).

2 March

President Ilham Aliyev receives Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, whose country is president-in-office of the European Union, to discuss cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197614.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197550.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Wilfried Martens, the president of the European People's Party (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197592.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov reiterates that "the withdrawal of occupation forces from the territory of Azerbaijan, the re-establishment of the territorial integrity of the country, and the return of Azerbaijanis who were forced to resettle to their native lands are the primary conditions for guaranteeing peace and stability in the region" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197568.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Vagif Sadykhov says that the law enforcement agencies of Iran should "take measures" to protect the Azerbaijani embassy in Tehran against the attacks of demonstrators (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197557.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives the ambassadors of Greece and South Korea (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197530.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, the head of the analysis and information department of the Presidential Administration, says that "the Armenians of Karabakh are hostages of the leadership of Armenia and of the field commanders" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197483.html>).

Bahar Muradova, the head of the Azerbaijani delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, says that Armenia will not be able to secure the passage of any measure at that body's upcoming session (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197496.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russian ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that the change of the Russian co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group will not affect the course of negotiations (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197498.html>).

Oktay Vural, a deputy of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, says that "under present conditions, the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border is impossible" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/196679.html>).

1 March

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that there is no need to comment on the statement of Defense Minister Safar Abiyev to French Ambassador Gabrielle Keller that if the Karabakh conflict is not resolved peacefully, it could be resolved by other means. "Azerbaijan cannot wait another 15 years," Abiyev said (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197281.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that the burning of the Azerbaijani flag by some Iranian demonstrators shows that there are "forces" in Iran "which are not interested in the normalization of Azerbaijan-Iranian relations" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197271.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that the OSCE Minsk Group is the only international organization "capable of solving the Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197287.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkish ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that Turkey is willing to assist and support Azerbaijan "in all spheres" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/197297.html>).

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.