



School of International Affairs

Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

AZERBAIJAN IN THE WORLD **ADA Biweekly Newsletter**

Vol. 2, No. 17
September 1, 2009

adabiweekly@ada.edu.az

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AZERBAIJAN AND THE GULF REGION: PROSPECTS OF COOPERATION

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Huge oil and gas reserves, among other things, make the Arabian Gulf region (including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) one of the most strategically important places in the world. The countries of the region contain two-thirds of the world's proven reserves of oil and produce more than a quarter of all the oil, thus meeting one-third of the world market for petroleum. With the growing demand for oil, the Gulf States are set to become even more important. The same conditions and trends hold for natural gas as well.

But as the recent discussion of Iran's alleged nuclear program shows, the geopolitical and geo-economic importance of the Gulf region cannot be limited to the issue of hydrocarbons. By virtue of geography, the region for centuries has served as a major commercial route between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. In recent years, and building on inherited trade traditions, the Gulf States have established themselves as major banking, insurance, and investment centers of global business.

According to the International Monetary Fund, the cumulative current account surplus of the Gulf States for the period 2003 to 2007 amounted to USD 700 billion in 2007, and conservative estimates suggest that the Gulf States owned property and other assets abroad amounting to some two trillion US dollars in 2001. The Sovereign Wealth Funds of these states have played a major role in efforts by the G20 countries to overcome the current economic crisis.

The geopolitical weight of the region is also determined by its geographic position in the heart of the strategic shipping routes. At the present time, the Gulf States are investing some 30 billion US dollars in developing their ports. Among the biggest of these projects are the new Mesaieed Port and Ras Laffan port, both in Qatar; Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah Economic City port; Abu Dhabi's Khalifa Port and Industrial Zone and new container terminal and deepwater port of Bubiyan in Kuwait. And given the increasing threat of sea piracy importance, these ports will play a key role in providing maritime security.

The growing wealth of the Gulf States and their geopolitical position are contributing to a rise in their political influence in an increasingly globalized and multi-polar world. As an oasis of stability and development surrounded by conflicts and wars, the Gulf States not only have played a role in promoting dialogue in the region but promoted sustainable development abroad through a generous set of assistance programs. Kuwait, for example, in some years has contributed more than eight percent of its GDP to others, far more than the average 0.35 percent developed countries have offered.

Being part of the Islamic world and sharing the progressive heritage and spiritual values of Islamic civilization, Azerbaijan, since recovering its independence, has attached great importance to developing relations with the Islamic countries of the world in general and those of the Gulf states in particular. And this interest in closer ties has been fully reciprocated by the Gulf states.

The countries of the Gulf supported Azerbaijan in the difficult years following 1991 and continue to back Azerbaijan's territorial integrity as the basis of any resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict either within the United Nations or the Organization of Islamic Conference. They have also helped to unite the Islamic world behind Azerbaijan on this point. Indeed, the largest country in this region, Saudi Arabia, has chosen not to maintain diplomatic relations with Armenia because of Yerevan's aggression against Azerbaijan. And both it and other Gulf states, including Kuwait and Qatar, have provided humanitarian assistance to Azerbaijan even when some Western countries have restricted their aid. Furthermore, the resolution on the situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan introduced by Baku at the UNGA's 62d session and the way the Gulf States voted on it is indicative of an unwavering support the states in the region provide for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. For its part, Azerbaijan has supported Gulf states and other Arab countries facing territorial problems. Baku has supported the Arab

Peace Initiative and backs the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital.

Alongside these political ties, there exist numerous opportunities for expanding economic cooperation. Unfortunately, despite the cooperative spirit our countries enjoy in their relationship with each other, the level of economic ties between the region and Azerbaijan is not all it could be. The current level of trade does not match the level of political relations or satisfy us. Clearly, mutual visits by businessmen, business forums in each country, market research and other forms of contact can help both sides achieve their goals.

Given growing food security problems and the dependence of Gulf States on food imports, particular emphasis should be placed on agriculture where Azerbaijan can serve as a reliable partner. Tourism is another area. According to the Arab Tourism Organization, the Gulf States are in the leading position in the world in per capita spending on tourism. Kuwait alone spends more than five billion US dollars on tourism annually. Azerbaijan, as an attractive tourist destination, has much to offer visitors in this regard as well. Such tourism can also serve as part of growing public diplomacy efforts, including people-to-people contacts with a particular emphasis on youth exchanges.

And given the central role Azerbaijan has assumed in the redevelopment of the Silk Road and the development of North-South transportation corridors, as well as the Gulf States' port capacities, there are possibilities for cooperation in the field of transportation. Discussions between the Gulf States and Turkey on railway connections and on the exploitation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Akhalkalaki-Kars railway provide additional opportunities for cooperation.

Given the feelings and resources on both sides, there is every reason to expect that these ties will expand in the near term and that the relationship between Azerbaijan and the Gulf States will become ever closer.

**THE ARMENIAN-TURKISH RAPPROCHEMENT
AND
THE REORDERING OF GEOPOLITICS IN THE CAUCASUS**

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Armenia and Turkey have announced that they plan to sign agreements within the next six weeks to re-establish diplomatic relations and open their common border. On the one hand, this announcement will certainly lead opponents of this development to step up their opposition to it and possibly derail or at least delay the signing of these accords. But on the other hand, the declaration itself already points to a reordering of the geopolitics of the Caucasus region, a development that will affect not only all the countries within the region but also major outside powers who have vital interests there.

Because of the uncertainties about the agreements themselves, including both their timing and specific content, and about what supporters and opponents will do, it is far too early to offer a definitive judgment on the way in which such accords will send shockwaves through the governments and societies of all the countries concerned. But some of the likely consequences are quite clear, and this essay is offered as a kind of checklist of what the restoration of diplomatic ties and the opening of the border between Armenia and Turkey will mean.

Armenia. Yerevan will certainly view these accords as a major victory. They will end its geographic isolation, cut the influence of the diaspora on Armenian politics, reduce Yerevan's dependence on Russia, the CIS and Iran, and give Armenia greater freedom of action as a result. The impact of the accord on the Karabakh conflict is uncertain. On the one hand, Turkey will be under enormous pressure domestically to arrange an Armenian withdrawal and Armenia will feel more secure and thus more willing to deal. But on the other, the Armenian government may decide to proceed more slowly lest it generate adverse domestic reaction by appearing to have "sold out" Karabakh to get an accord with Ankara.

Turkey. Turkey will also see these accords as a triumph. They will provide content to its affirmation of a major role in regional politics, give Ankara greater influence throughout the Caucasus, and – perhaps most important – improve Turkey's standing with the European Union and the United States on questions like the evaluation of 1915 and possible membership in the EU. And that in turn will give Turkey leverage on other issues including the status of the Kurds in Iraq and the security architecture of the greater Middle East. At the same time, however, these accords will complicate Turkey's relationship with Baku and with other Turkic and Islamic states, and such complications are certain to resonate within Turkey itself, possibly powering challenges to the government.

Azerbaijan. Unless Turkey can deliver an accord on Karabakh at the same time as it signs the accords with Armenia, many in Azerbaijan are certain to view Ankara's actions as a betrayal of common Turkishness. Indeed, it appears likely that Baku will never look at Ankara in quite the same way again if that course of events occurs. Such feelings will have an impact on a variety of east-west projects and may lead Azerbaijan to expand its links with the Russian Federation and Iran. And those shifts are even more likely if as seems probable Baku finds itself under pressure to reach a compromise with Yerevan. After all, some in the international community are certain to argue, if Turkey and Armenia can overcome their differences, so too should Baku and Yerevan. Such shifts suggest that the impact of the Armenian-Turkish accords may be greater in the public politics of Azerbaijan than anywhere else, even if these agreements do not necessarily result in major changes in Baku's policies.

Georgia. These accords will have a contradictory impact on Georgia. On the one hand, they will reduce pressure on Georgia to allow transit of goods to Armenia: Yerevan now has another route. On the other hand, they will mean that Georgia potentially will have another route out, something that could either quiet or intensify the unsettled border region between Armenia and Georgia and lead to a shift in Tbilisi's views on various pipeline and railway projects. But perhaps the biggest impact will come from the sense these accords are likely to generate in many quarters that sophisticated statesmen are able to solve even the most intractable problems while less capable leaders are now.

Iran. Tehran's influence in Armenia will certainly decline, not only because the Zangazur bridges will become less important – Yerevan will have some new and more attractive choices – but also because Turkey's influence will go up. And consequently, Iran is likely to be one of the biggest losers from these agreements, one of the most unspoken explanations for why Turkey was interested in concluding them.

The Arab and Turkic Worlds. The Arab world is likely to view Turkey's actions as a betrayal of Islam, thus reducing Turkey's influence in some parts of the Middle East. And the Turkic world, especially in Central Asia, is likely to follow Azerbaijan in viewing what Ankara has done as a betrayal of Turkishness, especially given the willingness, even enthusiasm of most Turkic governments to defend Turkey on issues like 1915. But both of these worlds are likely to assume a pragmatic approach, possibly viewing Armenia as yet another channel for imports and exports to the larger region.

Israel. The Armenian-Turkish accords will almost certainly prompt Jerusalem to revisit its ties in the Caucasus and especially its Azerbaijan-centric approach. Some in Baku may view that as a downgrading, but it more likely to be only relative rather than absolute. Israel already has close ties with Turkey: those will increase, as will existing links with Armenia and Georgia.

The Russian Federation. Moscow and the CIS are the big losers as a result of the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement, however much the Russian government can be counted upon to praise the agreements. Armenians have long been sceptical of both Moscow's role and the CIS but have felt they had no choice but to go along given their sense of being surrounded by enemies. That will change. If Moscow wants to maintain its influence in Yerevan, it will have to devote far more resources. That is unlikely. Instead, Moscow is likely to seek to expand its influence elsewhere, most likely in Baku. But the South Caucasus as a Russian preserve with Moscow having a *droit de regard* is a thing of the past.

The European Union. These agreements will reduce the pressure on European countries to adopt resolutions on 1915, something most of them will be pleased about, and it will boost the chances that the EU will look more positively on Turkey as an eventual member, although these accords by themselves will not overcome German and French insistence on going slow. The EU and its member countries will also be among the first looking for possible new routes east-west and north-south that will involve Armenia.

The United States. Washington will be pleased as well. It will praise Turkey and step up its efforts to get Ankara into the EU. It will be pleased to be let off the hook on 1915 given the likely decline of influence of the Armenian diaspora and happy to have a land link with Armenia. But the US will also have to accept a much greater role for Turkey in the region and have to defer to Ankara on questions that the US had thought it was in complete control of.

Given the enormous number of likely or at least possible consequences, the way in which they will interact with each other means that not all of the outcomes sketched above will take place. But the number of likely outcomes also guarantees that fallout from the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement on the geopolitics of the South Caucasus will be one of the most important developments in international relations not only in 2010 but for many years to come.

THE POLITICS OF RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT: THE CASE OF IDPs AND NAGORNO-KARABAKH

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The long-term displacement of internal populations is one of the most politically complex and intricate complications of protracted conflicts today. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) share most of the same legal troubles and logistical difficulties as refugee populations but are overlooked in many aspects of aid. IDPs suffer, particularly in longer-term situations, because it falls upon the already-troubled home state to care for a now almost entirely dependent sector of the public. IDPs, even though they never cross any international borders, often live as outsiders in local communities.

Some analysts suggest that it is often politically advantageous to keep these populations displaced: victims attract donors. But the longer a conflict continues, the more aid wanes and the captive population is more likely to suffer as political battles often wage on. But where does one draw the line and decide to resettle a population?

The case of Nagorno-Karabakh presents precisely this sort of paradoxical conflict. The Azerbaijani population that formerly inhabited the region of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent regions now occupied by Armenians is currently scattered into various states of relocation and resettlement throughout Azerbaijan. I visited one such settlement in Mingachavir. Here, the residents live in long rows of corrugated steel-covered houses. These are set on a dirt lot with small ditches of water running down the side of each street. There are a total of four toilets and two showers to be shared by the entire settlement, and the only source of water is a set of nozzles sticking out of the ground. Across the main road from the camp, there are well built, if not well maintained, Soviet-style housing structures where local Mingachavir families live. There, the markets and shopping centers are busy, and the roads are paved. The contrast is striking.

One IDP woman named S., 47, and her friend V., 65, told me about their lives in the camp. S. has been here for 15 years, since she was forced out of her home in Aghdam in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. After her husband was recruited by the Azerbaijani government to defend his hometown against the Armenian army, he was captured and beaten to death by the invading forces. Then on July 23, 1993, she and her three children left Aghdam and moved into this camp in Mingachavir. There are 88 other families here, mostly from the same region as Aghdam, cities like Shusha and Fizuli. She lives in a two-room unit, divided by curtains to create the closest possible thing to a living/dining area, and room for her son, and a shared room for her and her daughter that still lives in the house. Her eldest daughter is now married, lives in an apartment in Mingachavir and is a teacher at the local IDP school.

The settlement, S. said, was built by the Azerbaijani government with aid from several international organizations. "You have nothing, no money – you have no choice but to live outside," S. said of why she has never resettled into another residence. Until last year, she was living on support from an international organization, until the organization decided to end its work in Azerbaijan. Now she lives on the AZN 100 (USD 120) monthly pension from the Azerbaijani government paid on behalf of her husband's service to the country and whatever help she can get from friends in Mingachavir.

But despite these problems, she says, her life as an IDP has not been all bad. Both her daughters were able to graduate from university free of charge (the government subsidizes free education for IDPs), and the eldest is happily married. Her younger daughter, who studied journalism, now 25, however, has developed a "nervous" disorder and lives here because it has kept her from being able to maintain a job and support herself. Her 23-year-old son chose not to attend university and does whatever temporary work around Mingachavir he can find. But jobs here are scarce and wages low, and most boys who grow up in the camps only have the army as an alternative. Her own heart condition and fulfilling her role as the household caretaker prevent S. from finding employment outside the home. Moving away from the IDP settlement would mean giving up the small advantages of government subsidizing she does have.

Speaking of the times before the war, S. says that "Life was good. Everyone had jobs and was happy. We lived side by side with Armenians and some Azerbaijanis and Armenians even married each other in our town. When I think of home, I think of family. But I will never have that back. It has all been destroyed." Now all she wants is clean housing – roofs that don't leak, and conditions that don't cause people to get sick. "Look at the houses," she says, "What can the health situation be like here?"

S. and V. are both pessimistic about the conflict being resolved in their lifetime. At present, they note, Armenians and Azerbaijanis cannot even sit down together to talk about a solution and larger countries seem to prefer keeping them apart.

Even though the IDPs remain an open wound for Azerbaijanis, there have been few serious analyses of their plight, a shortcoming especially troubling given that the coverage of the OSCE Minsk Group meetings and the declarations about other aspects of the Karabakh conflict by major powers, including the Russian Federation and the United States, suggest that there will not be a resolution of the conflict or of the IDP problem anytime soon. Indeed, as one report put it, the "lack of security prevents [the IDPs] from going home; [and] indecision prevents them from resettling" (Bacon & Lynch 2002/2003, p. 69).

In the years since the 1994 ceasefire, international attention and aid to the IDPs have declined, with assistance falling by more than half between 1993 and 2002 alone (Bacon & Lynch 2002/2003, p. 68). Given that violent conflicts, like the one between Georgia and Russia last year, attract so much attention, Azerbaijani IDPs not surprisingly think, as one put it, "Our situation does not attract attention because we wait for a peaceful solution and do not engage in violent acts. It just doesn't seem right" (Bacon & Lynch 2002/2003, p. 67).

While protracted conflicts are nothing new, IDP populations like those produced by the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute are a major contributor to the erosion of stability in

the developing world. And the longer the IDPs remain displaced, the more seriously they add to the problems faced by the broader society of which they are a part.

Despite the lack of a political settlement, Azerbaijan has taken some promising steps to assist the IDPs. SOFAZ, the State Oil Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan, has implemented large-scale social work projects to benefit the IDPs, something all the more important given the decline in assistance from abroad. In addition, working with the State Committee for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, the oil fund has funnelled more than half a billion dollars into improving the infrastructure of refugee/IDP settlements. And the committee has overseen the construction of thousands of houses, health care facilities, schools, cultural and athletic centers, and other infrastructure (SOFAZ 2009).

These programs highlight Azerbaijan's commitment to its population, a commitment it has been able to undertake because of its unprecedented economic growth. Although conditions are improving, the living situation is still dramatically substandard and most IDPs still live as outsiders around the country. But Azerbaijan seems to be funnelling its resources in the right direction, and the lives of IDPs are largely improving.

However, even having the best IDP infrastructure in the world still implicates a certain degree of volatility and insecurity, and so, Azerbaijan remains stuck between a rock and a hard place. If it resettles IDPs permanently, that could be viewed as a weakening of its resolve to retake Nagorno-Karabakh. Simultaneously, Baku should carefully evaluate how long having almost an eighth of its population displaced can go on without imposing more serious long term damage to Azerbaijan's development. How long will these people remain in limbo, unsettled and unstable? Where and when should Azerbaijan finally draw the line?

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A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

Novruz Mammadov, the head of the international relations department of the Presidential Administration, says that "there must be put an end to the delaying tactics [the Armenian side has employed] to the resolution of the Karabakh conflict." He adds that any peacekeepers employed in the region in the future must as UN rules specify not come from one of the neighboring countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169640.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, deputy head of the Milli Majlis security and defense committee, says that threatening remarks by Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan reflect his loss of authority and are directed "more at the internal market than at influencing the negotiating process" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170167.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, head of the political analysis and information support department of the Presidential Administration, says that the Commonwealth of Independent States has not been able to demonstrate "its usefulness and effectiveness" and that within its framework, "everything is resolved on the basis of bilateral and more often the personal ties of the chiefs of state" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169418.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the international relations department of the Presidential Administration, says "the status of the Caspian must first be defined" before Baku could consider Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's proposal for the creation of an economic organization of the Caspian littoral states (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169121.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov says any pipeline project crossing the Caspian must be approved by all five littoral states (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/168828.html>). Meanwhile, Russia's regional development minister Viktor Basargin proposes the development of "a road map" for defining the status of the Caspian and its seabed in order to prevent the sea from becoming a center of conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/168821.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russian ambassador to Baku, says that "Azerbaijan is a country with a high level of national and religious tolerance" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170209.html>).

Dalia Mogahed, advisor to US President Barak Obama on Muslim affairs, says that "Azerbaijan is proud of its heritage" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170184.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

31 August

Deputy Prime Minister Ali Hasanov says that "Armenia is purchasing arms using money from the sale of narcotics grown on the occupied territories" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170390.html>).

Foreign Ministry spokesman Elkhan Polukhov says, in reaction to the announcement by Turkmenistan that it will build a naval base on the Caspian, that Baku is "for the establishment of the Caspian as a region of peace" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170387.html>).

30 August

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkish ambassador to Baku, says that Turkey is "proud" that Azerbaijan has "the strongest army in the South Caucasus" and is pleased to be working with Azerbaijan to bring its military into conformity with NATO standards (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170356.html>).

29 August

President Ilham Aliyev receives Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Feridun Siniroglu (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170334.html>).

28 August

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the *Treaty on Cooperation of the CIS Countries on Youth Affairs* that Azerbaijan signed on November 25, 2005 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170256.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the agreements signed between Azerbaijan and Syria on July 8 establishing, among other things, a commission for economic, scientific and cultural cooperation between the two countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170264.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev takes a telephone call from Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan to discuss bilateral relations and the status of Turkey's negotiations with Armenia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170261.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the documents signed on August 10, 2009, by Azerbaijan and Latvia concerning expanding cooperation in youth, sports and other areas (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170254.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, a Milli Majlis deputy who is also a senior official of the Yeni Azerbaijan Party, says that Azerbaijan supports "only the peaceful use of nuclear energy" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170191.html>).

Serik Primbetov, Kazakhstan's ambassador to Baku, says that negotiations between Azerbaijan and Kazakh gas/oil companies are continuing "successfully" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170169.html>).

Bilge Cankorel, the head of the Baku office of the OSCE, says that "for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, there is no other international mechanism besides the Minsk Group" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170233.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkish ambassador to Baku, announces Ankara's plans to open a consulate in Khachmaz to service the increasing number of Turkish tourists in that region of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170156.html>).

27 August

President Ilham Aliyev receives Richard Morningstar, US special representative for energy questions in Eurasia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170113.html>).

Eldar Sabiroglu, chief of the press-service of the Defense Ministry of Azerbaijan, says that Azerbaijan prefers a peaceful resolution of the Karabakh dispute but is capable of resolving it militarily if Armenia refuses to negotiate seriously. The occupation, he says, "cannot continue indefinitely" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170038.html>).

Elkhan Polukhov, foreign ministry spokesman, says that Azerbaijan "cooperates with NATO in the framework of peacekeeping operations." He was responding to questions concerning Baku's decision not to permit a flight carrying German military personnel to Afghanistan to use Azerbaijan's airspace (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170091.html>).

Elkhan Polukhov, foreign ministry spokesman, says that the issue of peacekeeping forces after the settlement of the Karabakh dispute, "at the present time is not on the agenda" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/170081.html>).

26 August

President Ilham Aliyev receives Mikhael Lavon-Lotem on the occasion of his arrival to take up his post as Israel's new ambassador in Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169963.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Alan Waddams on the completion of his posting as representative of the European Commission in Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169961.html>).

First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, who serves as president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, Milli Majlis deputy, and as a goodwill ambassador for both UNESCO and ISESCO, celebrates her birthday (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169811.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, a Yeni Azerbaijan deputy in the Milli Majlis, says that Transparency International's assessment of the level of corruption in Azerbaijan is "subjective" and fails to note Baku's progress in this area. In its most recent report, TI says that Azerbaijan is the second most corrupt country on its list (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169945.html>).

25 August

Samad Seidov, the head of Azerbaijan's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that "Armenia is ignoring the recommendations" of that body (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169724.html>) and that Baku is for "an objective assessment of the state of historical monuments in the occupied territories" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169726.html>).

Elkhan Polukhov, foreign ministry spokesman, says that recent comments by some Armenian officials show that they lack information about the details of the negotiating process between Baku and Yerevan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169821.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkey's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that relations between Ankara and Yerevan are linked to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169706.html>).

24 August

Aydin Mirzazade, the deputy chairman of the Milli Majlis security and defense committee, says that the parliament's adoption of a military doctrine for the country scheduled for later this year will have "a positive influence" on the country's defense posture (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169657.html>).

Mark Grossman, former US undersecretary of state for political affairs, says in Baku that "Azerbaijan and Armenia must themselves resolve the Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169607.html>).

22 August

Azad Ragimov, minister of youth and sports, says that reporting about the supposed persecution of Azerbaijanis for having voted for the Armenian competitors in the Eurovision-2009 contest represents "the fruit of the imagination of certain unprofessional journalists." He singles out for particular criticism reporting by the Azerbaijani Service of Radio Liberty (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169481.html>).

21 August

Elkhan Polukhov, the spokesman for the Azerbaijan foreign minister, says that the status of the Caspian will be discussed by the five littoral states at the meeting in Ashkhabad in September. He adds that deputy foreign minister Khalaf Khalafov will represent Baku at the sessions (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169388.html>).

20 August

Agshin Mekhtiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations, says that a resolution on Nagorno-Karabakh will be considered by the 64th session of the UN General Assembly this fall (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169171.html>).

Turkey's energy and natural resources minister Taner Yildiz says that Ankara has sent Baku a new proposal on the purchase of Azerbaijani natural gas (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/169272.html>).

US Assembly Member Bob Blumenfield sends a letter to the Azerbaijan Consulate General in Los Angeles expressing his gratitude to the president and government of Azerbaijan for hosting Israeli President Shimon Peres on June 28-29 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169164.html>).

19 August

Elnur Aslanov, head of the political analysis and information support department in the Presidential Administration, says that the replacement of the current American and Russian co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group is "a rotation of cadres and nothing more than that" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/169040.html>).

18 August

The Georgian embassy in Baku says that relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia will be based on bilateral and multilateral accords now that Georgia has officially left the Commonwealth of Independent States (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/168920.html>). Commenting upon that declaration, Elkhan Polukhov, spokesman for the Azerbaijan foreign ministry, says that Baku is studying Georgia's proposals for future cooperation (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/168877.html>).

17 August

The foreign ministry expands the list of countries to which it recommends Azerbaijanis not travel. That list now includes Indonesia, Nigeria, Honduras, and Somalia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/168818.html>).

Ramil Hasanov, head of the youth organization of the Yeni Azerbaijan Party, announces that the Union of Turkic Youth of the World plan to form a Platform of Young Political Leaders of the Turkic World (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/168772.html>).

Nine young people from Azerbaijan take part in a week-long meeting (August 17-23) with five Armenian young people in Finland to discuss how to overcome divisions between their two countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/168700.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.