



School of International Affairs
Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

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AZERBAIJAN IS A UNIQUE CULTURE

An Interview with Dr. Mohammed Ayoob
University Distinguished Professor of International Relations
Michigan State University
And
Visiting Professor
Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

September 30, 2009
Baku, Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan in the World: This is your first time in Azerbaijan. What were your expectations about the country before you arrived? And have your experiences here changed them?

Professor Ayoob: Never having visited or even done research on this country, it was very difficult for me to come up with a realistic vision before I arrived. Happily, what my wife and I experienced was a positive surprise. Baku turned out to be a much more welcoming and altogether nicer city than we imagined.

AIW: As you know, there is a continuing debate on whether Azerbaijan is part of the Middle East or part of Europe. Now that you have spent some five weeks here, where do you put our country on this map?

Prof. Ayoob: For me, Azerbaijan is Azerbaijan, particularly in cultural terms. Despite a superficial overlay of Russian culture, Azerbaijan is situated between the Turkish cultural zone and the Iranian cultural zone and combines elements of both. This makes Azerbaijan unique in many ways. Consequently, Azerbaijan is not a part of Europe, given the Muslim identity which underlies much of what Azerbaijan is today. Moreover, linguistically, it is far closer to Turkey and Iran than to Europe and even has many words in common with my native language of Urdu. But at the same time, it is not Middle Eastern in the sense that it is not Arab. If one speaks of a Greater Middle East, however, one that includes Iran and Turkey as well as the Arab world, then Azerbaijan is part of that.

AIW: Many report that Islam is increasingly popular among young people in Azerbaijan. Do you consider this a positive or negative trend?

Prof. Ayoob: I don't consider it positive or negative. It is entirely natural. Once the heavy hand of the Soviet empire was lifted, people began to redefine themselves and to look at those forces which had shaped their national cultures. Azerbaijanis are simply recapturing their identities. And consequently, Islam is bound to reassert itself. Whether this will prove to be a positive or negative development depends entirely on who is exploiting it and for what purposes. As I have often said, there is nothing inherently progressive or retrogressive about Islam: Rather, it is what Muslims make of it.

AIW: You have described the distribution of power in the current international system as "a unipolar concert." Could you comment on the implications of that notion and on how countries like Russia, China and Iran fit into such a conception?

Prof. Ayoob: I came up with the idea of a unipolar concert because I do not think that the words "unipolarity" and "unipolar hegemony" adequately describe the world as it is. The US position would not be as hegemonic and secure as it is were that country not supported by a consensus of the countries of Western Europe, the concert to which I refer. The US is economically prominent because it produces more than 20 percent of the world's GNP, but it is even more prominent in the security and military spheres. In a way, it is now the global gendarme of the concert, acting for the concert which is generally agreed on what should be done. States like Russia and China are on the periphery of the concert. But there are tensions within what these countries really want to do. In each case, they want on the one hand to become members of the concert while on the other hand working to oppose it. Iran and Turkey are more distant from the concert: Iran for its own domestic reasons and Turkey because it now recognizes that it is unlikely to become a member of the European Union for the simple reason that it is not Christian. As a result, Turkey is developing greater ties with the Muslim world. But these are nation states, and while Iran and even Turkey are part of the global South, they have their

own national interests and their relations with the concert are contingent on those as well.

AIW: How do non-state actors including trans-national terrorist groups fit into the unipolar concert? Are they the major challenge to the existing system?

Prof. Ayoob: Some may see Al Qaeda primarily as a challenge to the system, but they forget that it was in many ways a creation of the system. Moreover, they tend to blow its significance as a challenge to the system out of proportion to what it is capable of doing. Al Qaeda emerged as a force during the insurgency against the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, encouraged and even supported by the US, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and so on. Moreover, it would not have emerged at all had the Afghan state not collapsed after Moscow's withdrawal. If you take Afghanistan out of the equation, there would be no Al Qaeda. I am convinced that 20 to 30 years from now, it will simply disappear.

AIW: How do you assess Iran's alleged nuclear ambitions and the international community's response to those ambitions?

Prof. Ayoob: I have always insisted that one cannot build a stable and legitimate security structure in the broader Middle East without having Iran as a part of that system. Tehran must be part of the solution. If you treat it only as a problem, you will not achieve that; instead, you will always have instability. Given that many countries in Iran's neighborhood have nuclear weapons, including Israel, Russia, and Pakistan and above all the United States in the Persian Gulf, Tehran wants to have them as well. But I don't think that if Iran goes nuclear, that by itself will push other states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia to go nuclear as well. That is a myth. When Israel went nuclear – and Israel was perceived as a much greater threat – nobody in the region went nuclear. And nobody talks about Israel's nuclear weapons when they talk about Iran. If you want to de-nuclearize the region, then you should de-nuclearize the region all the way from the borders of Pakistan and the borders of India for that matter to the western end of the Middle East.

AIW: Has US President Barak Obama succeeded in overcoming the negative view of the United States the Muslim world had of it during the Bush era? Was Obama's speech in Cairo as historic as some have said? And are the latest US moves in the recent likely to be effective?

Prof. Ayoob: At a rhetorical level, Obama's speech in Cairo represented a significant break with the past. But at the policy level, I do not yet see much of a change. I actually wrote an article after his speech which implied that Muslims and Arabs are not fools. If you say something and don't follow it up, you are acting as if they are. I do not believe there is any expectation in the Middle East that Obama will make any radical changes in US policy in the region.

AIW: Is this because there is a lack of will on the part of the Obama Administration or are there structural constraints?

Prof. Ayoob: The will of the Obama Administration is not strong enough to overcome what you call structural constraints, including the Jewish lobby. But that is not the only constraint. The dominant paradigm – the conventional wisdom – that informs the American foreign policy must change, and openly so. The US needs to re-examine the entire history of the relationship between Israel and Palestine in order

to understand who the victims are and who the oppressors are. And once that is done, there must be public recognition on behalf of the west of the catastrophe the Palestinians have gone through, just as there was recognition of the Holocaust, particularly by the Germans. These two moves would entirely change the terms of the current debate in the Middle East. But there is no sign that the US is going to do either of the two anytime soon.

AIW: Nonetheless, do you believe that some steps could be taken that would lead to peace in the Middle East at some time in the future?

Prof. Ayoob: Peace is a hollow term. What is the context of peace? On whose terms is it defined? In a way, there is peace in the Middle East now as well. But it is not what Arafat called "the peace of the brave." I don't think one should expect any radical change in the Middle East unless what I mentioned in my answer to the previous question happens or the internal dynamics within the Arab Middle East change, which means that the nature of Muslim regimes should change. That is yet another dimension, and I don't see that happening either. So, I don't see the kinds of changes happening either in the US or in the Muslim world that would open the way to a genuine and sustainable peace.

AZERBAIJANI DIPLOMACY MOVES BEYOND THE CHANCERIES INTO THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Farid Shafiyev, Amb.
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Canada

Since recovering its independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has faced two enormous tasks: strengthening its independent statehood and responding to Armenian aggression. It has succeeded beyond the expectations of many with regard to the first, and although it was not able to prevent Armenia from occupying 20 percent of its territory as a result of the support Yerevan received from third parties, Baku has achieved signal successes on the diplomatic front beginning with the UN Security Council resolutions of 1993 affirming its territorial integrity and at the OSCE Lisbon Summit which, thanks to the efforts of President Heydar Aliyev, did the same.

Azerbaijan's Foreign Service, despite initial financial difficulties, succeeded in opening diplomatic representations in key capitals during the 1990s. And President Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov, both of whom were professionally trained as diplomats, have continued the ministry's expansion both in Baku and abroad. At present, the foreign ministry has some 800 employees and maintains 60 missions abroad, more than twice the 25 missions Azerbaijan had some five years ago. As it had built a modern diplomatic service, both domestic and foreign experts have praised Baku for its balanced foreign policy in what is an extremely complex geopolitical environment.

Despite these successes, the challenge of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains. For 15 years, Azerbaijani diplomats have worked on every front – political, economic, humanitarian, and cultural – to try to reach a solution within the

framework of international law. Initially, they focused on a few capitals, but now they are seeking support from a broader range of states, especially because the Armenian diaspora continues to exercise enormous influence in some of the former, although it must be said that the major powers have never accepted the Armenian claims to Azerbaijani territory as legitimate.

This year, many people in Azerbaijan were caught by surprise when Armenia and Turkey began talking about restoring relations and opening their common border, a frontier that Ankara had closed in 1993 in response to Armenian aggression. Some in Turkey were even willing to talk about issuing an apology to Armenia for the events of 1915. All this highlighted a problem for Baku: Too many Azerbaijanis had taken Turkey for granted as an ally and failed to recognize that Baku should have been working harder there with both officials and the public. And that recognition in turn highlighted an even larger challenge.

Over the last generation, diplomacy has shifted from being about government-to-government relations alone to a focus on public relations and public diplomacy. As Matt Armstrong, an American expert on this subject, has pointed out, "*public diplomacy must be redefined not as a tool of simply promoting ideas and values but as a critical element of America's national security based on direct and indirect engagement of foreign publics, states and non-state actors.*"

Already in 2006, when speaking at the Second Azerbaijani Diplomatic Forum, President Ilham Aliyev called attention to the need to expand Azerbaijan's outreach to non-governmental organizations in foreign capitals. Responding to his call, the foreign ministry shifted more funding to work with the media, academia and elected officials. But what has happened with Turkey suggests that more needs to be done.

On the one hand, Azerbaijan clearly needs to redouble its efforts to enhance public support in close allies like Turkey. And on the other, Azerbaijani diplomatic missions in all countries need to expand their efforts with the institutions of civil society. Baku must invite elected officials to visit Azerbaijan more often. It must pay greater attention to the Azerbaijani diaspora and its activities. Other government agencies, such as the National Academy and Ministry of Culture and Tourism, should also work more closely with the foreign ministry to achieve these goals. Public diplomacy requires the concerted actions of Azerbaijani civil servants, scholars, journalists, filmmakers, and the like - altogether. Azerbaijan needs high quality studies, books, movies and other mediums. Besides, public officials should avoid actions which might tarnish the country's image on international arena.

In this strategic effort, the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy plays a key role. Not only has its rector Hafiz Pashayev insisted that it train not just diplomats but all officials working in foreign affairs, but it has developed programs in the fields of media relations and public diplomacy to ensure that all working in this area have public relations skills. In this, the Academy is following the direction laid out by other countries, including taking advantage of new technologies like the Internet.

As an example of this, two Azerbaijani diplomats already two years ago, launched a blog on Baku's foreign policy – <http://www.azerpolicy.blogspot.com/> – and others are taking similar steps. Moreover, Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijan's consul general in Los Angeles is organizing various lectures and programs at American universities, and Nasimi Aghayev, a desk officer in the ministry, is heavily involved with academic research both in Azerbaijan and abroad. Consequently, as the Foreign Ministry

moves toward its centenary – it celebrated its 90th anniversary earlier this year – it is becoming ever more attuned to the new directions of contemporary foreign policy work, the ones which take public relations and public diplomacy seriously.

AZERBAIJAN'S POSITION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Paul Goble
Publications Advisor
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Azerbaijan occupies a unique position in its relations with the Middle East: It is the only country in the world that maintains good relations with all the countries of the region, despite the tensions and conflicts among them and the demands of each that all outside powers take sides. On the one hand, this regional manifestation of Baku's commitment to a balanced foreign policy sometimes creates difficulties for some governments in the region and even for itself. But on the other, it gives Azerbaijan a remarkable opportunity to serve as an intermediary and honest broker far greater than would otherwise be the case.

Three cases illustrate this point. The first of these involves Baku's close ties with Israel and its simultaneous support for Palestinian rights. No Muslim country in the world has closer ties with Jerusalem or is more often praised for its tolerant and supportive approach to Jewish issues than is Azerbaijan. Lacking any tradition of anti-Semitism, Azerbaijan has pursued close ties with the Jewish state. Israel has a large and active embassy in Baku, its president has visited Azerbaijan this year, and Azerbaijani parliamentarians are pressing for the government to open an Azerbaijani embassy in Israel, something the government appears to have resisted doing lest it offend Muslim countries with which Azerbaijan also maintains close ties.

That highlights an aspect of Azerbaijan's balanced policy that rarely attracts much attention. In order to maintain ties with both sides in any international support, Baku frequently finds itself prevented from taking all the steps that either side would like. That may limit Azerbaijan's freedom of action, but in the case of Israel and the Palestinians, both sides appreciate Baku's approach, seeing it as useful to their respective causes even if it is undoubtedly the case that some in each camp would prefer if Azerbaijan would in fact choose sides. And consequently, even while it is constrained in some respects, Baku has both greater freedom of action and perhaps a greater opportunity to help with conflict resolution than would otherwise be the case.

The second case concerns Azerbaijan's relations with Iran, a country whose Shia Islam and Persian tradition puts it at odds with the Arab world and whose nuclear program has put it on a collision course with Israel in the first instance and Europe and the United States more generally. Because Iran is Azerbaijan's neighbor, because Azerbaijanis must pass through Iranian territory to reach Nakhchivan from the rest of Azerbaijan, and because more than a third of Iran's population consists of ethnic Azerbaijanis, Baku has no choice but to seek close working ties with Iran,

however much its partners in Israel, the Arab world, and the West might prefer a different stance.

Here too Azerbaijan experiences both constraints and opportunities. On the one hand, Baku frequently has to explain to its partners why it continues to maintain such close relations with a country others do not trust and why Azerbaijan believes that it can work with a government many other states have the gravest doubts about. But on the other, Baku's ties with Tehran mean that it not only can serve as a channel for information and communication but also help overcome other disputes.

And just as Israel very much appreciates Azerbaijan's stance, even though it wishes Baku would tilt even more in its direction, so too Iran welcomes the approach Azerbaijan has taken, fully appreciating the complexities Baku faces and the questions it raises with its other partners because of its relationship with Iran.

The third case may appear more nebulous, but it is equally important. It involves Azerbaijan's commitment as an Islamic country to maintain and develop relations with the Muslim world even as it maintains and develops ties with the secular West. That is perhaps not surprising given that, in the view of some, Azerbaijan today is the most secular of Muslim countries and the most Muslim of secular ones, a situation that allows it to serve as a bridge between two worlds.

Again, many on each side of this divide often would like to see Azerbaijan come down more firmly on its, but the most sophisticated on both increasingly recognize that Baku's approach works not only to Azerbaijan's benefit, gaining for Baku a prominence in the world that it might otherwise not have, but also to theirs, showing the way in which secularism and Islam can be combined in ways that are not necessarily detrimental to either.

Maintaining these various balancing acts requires a sophistication that one might not expect to find in a country that only recovered its independence 18 years ago, and it is a testament to the careful strategizing of both Heydar Aliyev and his son, President Ilham Aliyev, that Baku has managed these relationships as well as it has. In no case have these ties been without problems, and as tensions increase across all three divides in the coming months, Azerbaijan is going to face ever more challenges.

Some governments and some people in Azerbaijan itself will press for Baku to make a clear choice, backing Israel or the Palestinians, backing Iran or its opponents, or backing Islam or the secular world. They will argue that trying to maintain good ties with both will ultimately preclude close relations with either. Other governments and again some in Azerbaijan itself will argue that Baku's best option is to pull back from engagement not with one side or the other but from both. Such people will say that Azerbaijan is not in a position to be the bridge or intermediary in any of these conflicts and that it must simply defer to others.

But there is a third, intermediate position, which it appears likely the Government of Azerbaijan will pursue: expanded relations with both sides of these pairs of countries and cultures in conflict. That is likely to mean that Baku will be subjected to more criticism both at home and abroad, but it opens the way for something else: a chance that Azerbaijan will be able to serve as the kind of successful intermediary that will simultaneously win it praise from both the parties immediately involved and their backers and elevate Baku in the eyes of the world to a major regional player.

In that event, the balanced foreign policy that Baku has made the cornerstone of its approach to the world will be vindicated, a development that not only could lead other governments to try it but also result in a reduction of tensions and even the end of some longstanding conflicts that many around the world even now assume are beyond the wit of anyone to resolve.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev meets his Romanian counterpart Traian Basescu in Bucharest during his official visit to Romania and says that "from next year, Azerbaijani gas can be delivered to European Union markets"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174228.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that Baku "is ready to observe the rights of the Armenians of Karabakh on the basis of the norms of international law"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174747.html>).

Oktay Asadov, the speaker of the Milli Majlis, tells the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Language Countries that he "believes that a time will come when we will speak a common language." He also notes that the secretariat of the Assembly will have its headquarters in Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174301.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that Azerbaijan intends to put forward its candidacy for non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council for the term 2012-2013 and also to seek the organization of the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 2014 in Baku
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174118.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan says that US President Barak Obama promised him during their meeting in New York to "speed up" the work of the OSCE Minsk Group
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174166.html>).

US Senator Richard Lugar says that "Azerbaijan is an important political ally of the US in the region," particularly in the area of energy supplies
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174657.html>).

Natalya Timakova, press secretary of the Russian president, says that "Russia's proposals on the Gabala radar site remain in force"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174757.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

30 September

President Ilham Aliyev receives Peter Semneby, EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174708.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that the signing of accords between Armenia and Turkey "without taking into account the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem contradicts the interests of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174711.html>).

The Milli Majlis ratifies the agreement on the delimitation of borders with the Russian Federation (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174724.html>).

Philip Gordon, US assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasian affairs, says that "the process of resolving the Karabakh conflict is moving forward" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174617.html>).

The Foreign Ministry lifts the accreditation of journalists of the Turkish NTV channel because their colleagues visited Armenian-occupied portions of Azerbaijan without the permission of Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174738.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that "the Turkish-Armenian protocol will be signed prior to the visit of [Armenian President] Serzh Sargsyan to Turkey" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174700.html>).

Zahid Orudzh, a deputy of the Milli Majlis, calls for a "black list" of persons who have illegally visited Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174678.html>). He also calls for the signing of a "road map" with Turkey governing future bilateral relations given Ankara's rapprochement with Yerevan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174671.html>).

29 September

President Ilham Aliyev meets his Romanian counterpart Traian Basescu in Bucharest during his official visit to Romania and says that "from next year, Azerbaijani gas can be delivered to European Union markets" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174228.html>).

He completes his official visit with a stop at the Heydar Aliyev monument in Bucharest (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174549.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that "the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border today contradicts the national interests of Azerbaijan." His comment comes after his meeting in New York with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174445.html>).

The meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Language Countries completes its meeting in Baku with the adoption of a declaration on behalf of the member countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174473.html>).

Peter Semneby, the EU special representative for the South Caucasus, says that "agreements about association will advance the relations of the EU with the

countries of the South Caucasus to a new level" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174574.html>).

Samad Seyidov, head of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that Baku "hopes that the new secretary general of the Council of Europe will be attentive to the voice of truth of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174577.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a member of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that the Council of Europe must use its leverage against Armenia" to get it to comply with PACE resolutions (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174511.html>).

Gultakin Hajibayli, a member of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says PACE should not punish the Russian Federation without punishing Armenia. Otherwise, the body is guilty of "double standards," she says (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174513.html>).

Yury Merzlyakov, the Russian co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, says that "an updated variant of the Madrid principles has been prepared" and will be discussed with Azerbaijan and Armenia in the near future (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174501.html>).

Bogdan Borusewicz, the speaker of the Polish Senate, says in Baku that he "highly evaluates" the level of inter-parliamentary relations between Azerbaijan and Poland (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174418.html>).

28 September

Asim Mollazade, a member of the Milli Majlis, says that "the opening of the border between Armenia and Turkey will not take place" immediately after the signing of the protocol between those two countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174244.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan says that "Turkey will never betray Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174274.html>).

Rashad Dogru, the leader of the Turkish Party of the Nationalist Movement and a former state minister, says "the Turkish parliament will not ratify the Ankara-Yerevan protocol" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174369.html>).

Lluís Maria de Puig, the president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that the signing of a protocol between Armenia and Turkey is "a significant step" toward stability in the Caucasus (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174330.html>).

Dzhanan Ayrıtman, a deputy of the Republican Peoples Party of Turkey, says that "the development of ties with Armenia serves the interest not of Turkey and Azerbaijan but only of Armenia" and that the Turkish parliament will not confirm the protocol (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174296.html>).

27 September

The Turkish Foreign Ministry responds to Azerbaijan's diplomatic note as says Ankara has made clear that it views the visit by journalists of Turkey's NTV to Armenian-occupied territories in Azerbaijan as "illegal" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174178.html>).

The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group issue an appeal to the sides in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to be constructive in their public statements. The declaration, which was placed on the OSCE website, followed the co-chairs' meeting with Armenian and Azerbaijani officials in New York (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174153.html>).

26 September

President Ilham Aliyev receives Mehmet Ali Shahin, the speaker of the Turkish Parliament (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174129.html>).

Mehmet Ali Shahin, the speaker of the Turkish parliament, says that "the borders will not be open until Armenia liberates the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174129.html>). He also says that the Turkish parliament will not take any decisions capable of harming Azerbaijani-Turkish friendship (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174140.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov in his address to the 64th session of the UN General Assembly says that "the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a major threat to world and regional security" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174040.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with his counterparts in GUAM, GUAM-US, and GUAM-Czech Republic during the UN General Assembly session in New York (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174106.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in New York, and she tells him that "the status quo in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is impermissible" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174101.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in New York (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/174093.html>).

25 September

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that "cooperation with the Muslim umma is one of the priorities of the foreign policy" of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173886.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets his Libyan counterpart Fawzi Salloukh in New York (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173892.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets his Swiss counterpart Micheline Calmy-Rey who tells him that in Switzerland's view, "Azerbaijan is playing an important role in providing energy to Europe" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173881.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan says that "the time has come to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and all other conflicts in the Caucasus taking into account territorial integrity of the states in the region" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173866.html>).

The ruling parties of Azerbaijan, Turkey and Kazakhstan agree to expand their cooperation (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173982.html>).

Vahid Aliyev, advisor to the Azerbaijan president on military issues, says that the country's military doctrine will be completed before the beginning of 2010 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173981.html>).

The Milli Majlis establishes a department for European integration (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173973.html>).

Česlovas Stankevičius, the vice speaker of the Lithuanian parliament, says that Vilnius supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173944.html>).

The tenth meeting of the committee for EU-Azerbaijani cooperation takes place in Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173929.html>).

The constituent meeting of the Azerbaijan-British Business Council takes place in London (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/173894.html>).

24 September

President Ilham Aliyev receives Premysl Sobotka, the speaker of the Senate of the Czech Republic parliament (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173843.html>). During his visit to Baku, Sobotka announces that Prague will open an embassy in Azerbaijan at the end of November. The diplomatic mission of the Czech Republic is already operating there under the leadership of Radek Matula (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173741.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the changes in the composition of the Azerbaijan membership in the Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan inter-governmental commission (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/173677.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu in New York (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173708.html>).

The Milli Majlis ratifies the agreement on the completion of the delimitation of the border with Russia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173781.html>).

The Milli Majlis announces plans to discuss the opening of Azerbaijani embassies in Serbia, Oman, Libya and Estonia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173781.html>).

Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov accuses Azerbaijan, along with Georgia, of being a source of arms for militants fighting his regime (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173775.html>).

Česlovas Stankevičius, the vice speaker of the Lithuanian parliament, says that Vilnius "is prepared for a new stage of cooperation with Azerbaijan in the parliamentary sphere" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173765.html>).

Latif Gandilov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Kazakhstan, receives the Golden Prometheus Prize during Kazakhstan's energy week (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173678.html>).

23 September

Andreas Gross, the former rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on Azerbaijan, says that "Armenia knows that it is too weak to achieve victory by military means" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173645.html>).

Premysl Sobotka, the chairman of the Senate of the Czech Republic, says at the start of a visit to Baku that Prague backs "the strengthening of cooperation with Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173615.html>).

Gultakin Hajibayli, a member of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that "regardless of who is chosen as secretary general, Azerbaijan's relations with the Council of Europe will not change" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173613.html>).

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin says that "the legal status of the Caspian must to the maximum extent possible take into consideration the interests of all littoral states" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173609.html>). And Russian Ambassador to Baku, Vladimir Dorokhin, adds that "Caspian cooperation is a very important element of Russian-Azerbaijani relations" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173608.html>).

Steph Goris, honorary president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the West European Union, says that "Armenia is experiencing great economic and social problems" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173464.html>).

George Vlad Niculesco, NATO representative, says that the Western alliance is prepared to expand cooperation with Baku in responding to disasters (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173538.html>).

22 September

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that "Azerbaijan strives to be in good relations with its neighbors but Armenia needs to take steps in this direction" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173513.html>).

Defense Minister Col. Gen. Safar Abiyev reaches an agreement in Moscow with his Russian counterpart Anatoly Serdyukov on bilateral military cooperation for 2010 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173428.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan says that "the question of the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations will be discussed at the 64th session of the UN General Assembly" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173471.html>).

21 September

Sultan Mahammad ogly Gasymov arrives in Yekaterinburg to take up his post as consul general of Azerbaijan. He is presented to local officials by Azerbaijani Ambassador to Russia Polad Bulbul ogly (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173358.html>).

20 September

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that "relations with Azerbaijan are one of the most important directions of the foreign policy of Turkey" and that Ankara would never take any step which would contradict the interests of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173290.html>).

19 September

Milli Majlis speaker Oktay Asadov says that "the opening of the borders of Turkey with Armenia without the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will exert a heavy shock on the restoration of peace in the South Caucasus" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173280.html>).

US Deputy Secretary of State William Burns tells a conference at Georgetown University that "relations with Azerbaijan mean a great deal for the United States" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173204.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov says that Baku "expects that Yerevan will take a constructive position at the next rounds of talks" on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173235.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov says that the United States has not yet approached Azerbaijan concerning the placement of elements of an American anti-ballistic missile system on its territory (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173217.html>).

Turkish State Minister Egemen Bakys says that "if Azerbaijan puts forward its candidacy for membership in the European Union, it will receive the support of official Ankara" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173228.html>).

18 September

Defense Minister Col. Gen. Safar Abiyev receives newly appointed Israeli ambassador to Baku Lavon Lotem and departing Korean ambassador Kwang-chul Lew (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173152.html>).

Agshin Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations, sends a note of protest to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon protesting the visit by Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan to Armenian-occupied Azerbaijani territory (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173111.html>). The Australian mission to the UN sends the Azerbaijani mission a note in support of Baku's view (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173039.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, head of the political analysis and information support department of the Presidential Administration, says that "Azerbaijan is one of the important

countries in the formation of a conception of regional security of Europe” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173033.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, the deputy chairman of the Milli Majlis security and defense committee, says that the joint use by Russia and the United States would work to the benefit of all sides, although he says that he does not have “open information” on what stage the process of discussions of that possibility are at (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173055.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that the future of Turkish-Armenian relations will “depend on processes in the region,” including the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173120.html>).

Camil Çiçek, deputy prime minister of Turkey, says that “the Turkish-Armenian border will not open on October 14” and that “the unjust occupation of Azerbaijani lands must end” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173094.html>).

Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkish foreign minister, says that “no one will be able to harm Turkish-Azerbaijani relations” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173095.html>).

Caroline Brown, British ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that “one of the important decisions of the government of Azerbaijan was to orient the country toward Europe” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173068.html>).

Giovanni Cremonini, the head of the directorate for the administration of the European Union’s Neighbourhood policy, says that “in the case of necessity, the EU is prepared to support the Nabucco gas pipeline project within the framework of the Eastern Partnership” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173083.html>).

17 September

President Ilham Aliyev receives Dussen Kasseinov, Director-General of TURKSOY (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172947.html>).

Elmira Suleymanova, ombudsman of the Azerbaijan Republic, receives former Polish First Lady Jolanta Kwasniewska (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172996.html>).

Bahar Muradova, the deputy chairman of the Milli Majlis, receives the Honorary President of the Senate of Belgium, Anne-Marie Lisin (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172995.html>).

The Foreign Ministry reaffirms that Baku “has accepted the Madrid Document as the basis for negotiations” on Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172906.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Vagif Sadykhov completes a two-day working visit to London during which he spoke at a conference on Security in the South Caucasus at the Royal United Services Institute (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/173221.html>).

Nasib Nasibli, a Milli Majlis deputy, reminds that Russia's decision to close the land border between Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation to Georgian citizens now that Tbilisi has left the CIS affects the ethnic Azerbaijani community of Georgia. He says that this decision, intended to put pressure on Georgia, is the latest example of Russia's unjust Caucasus policy (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/172928.html>).

Andrey Nesterenko, a spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry, says that "any decisions on the Caspian issue must be taken within the framework of 'the Caspian Quintet.'"

Note to Readers

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