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In this issue:

- Nigar Goksel, "Starting Over? Turkey and Azerbaijan After the Protocols"
- Fariz Rzayev, "The Sources of Russia's Rapprochement with Turkey"
- Paul Goble, "Endgame on Karabakh?"
- A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy
- Note to Readers

STARTING OVER?
TURKEY AND AZERBAIJAN AFTER THE PROTOCOLS

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The two protocols signed by Turkey and Armenia on October 10th are now awaiting action by the Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee. Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev has frequently spoken against any rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia as long as the latter continues to occupy Azerbaijani territory. Baku's strategy to elicit popular concern in Turkey proved effective, since the Turkish government has often tried to defend its foreign policy decisions in terms of public opinion. The AKP government is receptive to public opinion and has by now reiterated at every level that the protocols will not be ratified until the "occupation of Azerbaijan ends," though it is not clear whether this refers to some – or all – occupied Azerbaijani regions around Karabakh, or also Karabakh itself. It is quite feasible in Turkey that protocols wait in the parliament for long stretches of time. In

2005, for example, Turkey signed an agreement extending its customs union with the EU to the new members of the Union, including Cyprus; this has still not been ratified. For now, from the Azerbaijani perspective, the immediate "risk" may thus be averted.

Despite the realignment of Ankara with Baku's red lines, the Turkish decision to sign the protocols in the first place and Azerbaijan's reaction to that have left bitterness on both sides, and the current status quo in relations therefore rests on fragile pillars. Even after the current tension fades, the potential for mutually inflamed emotions is on the horizon. As spring (i.e. April) nears, Ankara is going to be challenged with the resolution in the US Congress on 1915 and is likely to again play the card of "normalization of relations with Armenia." If a breakthrough on the Karabagh front is not witnessed by then, tensions will again rise. It is important at this juncture to take stock of the relationship, identify the weak links and the common interests, and invest in developing a more solid and multi-faceted understanding between the two countries.

Turkey currently struggles with deep divides and existential struggles between institutions, ideologies and interests. However, democracy has been progressing, albeit fitfully, for the past ten years. It is thus ever more important for those who want to influence the public opinion in Turkey and – as an extension – Ankara's decision makers, to engage different interest groups in the country. The AKP itself is not monolithic and includes many diversities, like a coalition, precisely because no single axis is able to win popular support in the complex society Turkey has evolved into. Because of a deep polarization caused by other problems, the debate in Turkey about reconciliation with Armenia and its effects on Azerbaijan has been reduced to an unhealthy and overly-ideological ground. A glance at the positions of Turkey's nationalist far right, the country's liberals, and the increasingly active "moderate Muslim" groups sheds light on this reality.

A large number of Azerbaijan's most vocal supporters are from among the ultranationalist right, a portion of the political spectrum which also opposes pursuing reforms needed for EU membership, advances conspiracy theories about the US and Israel, and regularly voices suspicion of "minority rights" in ways that border fascist rhetoric. Pan-Turkist dreams motivated the involvement of some such groups in Azerbaijan in the early 1990s. Though their solidarity over Karabakh was welcome in Azerbaijan, meddling in Azerbaijan's domestic politics to promote Turkic ideologies was naturally more controversial.

Recently some names of such orientation have been charged of taking part in politically motivated assassinations and mafioso plots to overthrow the Turkish government. The fact that Azerbaijan's case is raised most often by such circles does not bode well for the image of Azerbaijan in Turkey. Instead, it links Azerbaijan in the minds of many with one side of a domestic fight in Turkey, creating skepticism about shared values and visions with Azerbaijan among both the liberals and the conservative supporters of the government. The unfortunate reality is that those in Turkey who keep Azerbaijan on their radar screen are all too often ultra-right nationalists, so called moderate Muslims who see the potential for an Islamic awakening in Azerbaijan or liberals who argue Azerbaijan is hijacking Turkish foreign policy. While this is an unfortunate result of the shallow polarization in Turkish politics today, it is a reality that Azerbaijan should be aware of while judging the debate in Turkey.

This is not to say that the notion of "Turkic solidarity" should be eliminated from discourse, but it should be supplemented and "tamed." Those who believe the bilateral relationship is paramount should take into account the trends in both societies and accordingly try to develop new links and exchanges between a range of actors. Azerbaijan is increasingly developing its relations with the US and Israel, and has the potential to contribute to Turkey's EU vocation by boosting Ankara as a key link in energy supplies to the West. Azerbaijan can and should have a more diverse group of advocates in Turkey.

Among the Turks most enthusiastic about normalization with Armenia (without necessarily conditioning this on progress in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict) are liberal figures who have faced the brunt of years of state repression of free debate, including debate about the wrongs of the Ottoman regime in the events of 1915. They include, for example, former leftists imprisoned in the 1970s for their political thoughts, or individuals who "deconstructed nationalism" in their studies in the West in the 1980s. Their feelings about Turkishness and Turkic nationalism are thus very different than many in Baku because for them these ideas were something to escape in order to modernize rather than a means to modernization as they were for many Azerbaijanis at the time of breaking free from Soviet repression.

The perspective of liberal Turks is that 70 years of closed borders have aggravated dehumanization in Armenian and Turkish perceptions of each other. Even though few, if any, of the Turkish liberals feel any enmity toward Azerbaijan, most of them would prioritize the benefits to Turkey's domestic maturity, for which normal relations with Armenia is needed. Moreover, many who think along these lines believe that the only way for Armenians to be able to open their eyes to the suffering they caused Azerbaijanis is if Turkey recognizes the suffering the Armenians were subjected to in Anatolia. For those who believe that the root of the problem between Turks/Azeris and Armenians is the 1915 tragedies, creating a more conducive environment in Turkey to addressing this issue takes precedence. Labeling such approaches as unpatriotic is not helpful. However a more tailored case can be made, that while historical reconciliation between Turks and Armenians is necessary, it should be independent from the geopolitical case against unconditional opening of the borders.

Divergent mental frameworks sometimes lead to what might seem – from an Azerbaijani perspective – like contradictory actions. For example, much of the most articulate criticism of the ban on Azerbaijani flags in the football stadium on October 14th came from those who roughly fall into the "liberal" camp. Just as they would agree with the principle of Dashnaks protesting President Gul's visit to Yerevan with signs such as "admit genocide, recognize your crime," they insist that Turks should have the right to express their concern and dissent – as embodied in the Azerbaijan flag – during the football game which President Sargsyan attended in Bursa.

At the same time – and this is especially important – despite the internal divisions, the Turkish policies towards Russia, Iran or Israel that have puzzled Azerbaijanis are shared widely in Turkey, across lines of political party and state institution. The stylistic component is more particular to the government but the conviction that the global conjuncture necessitates these policies is common. For those in Azerbaijan who wish to make the case for the bilateral relationship, the most effective arguments thus must be based on geostrategic interests.

The intellectual elite of Turkey for many decades neglected the East, focusing their energies on integration with Europe and the US. The closed borders of the Cold War contributed to that, and since 1991, Turkey and Azerbaijan have not invested enough in the relationship, a shortcoming that has contributed to a shallow understanding of the trends in the two countries' respective societies and policy considerations in their capitals today. Gradually, Turkish intellectuals have begun to explore other regions, including the Caucasus. However there is a lot of catching up to do. While Turkey aims to maximize its pivotal role in the region, it may inadvertently be tipping the regional power balances in the favor of Russia. Azerbaijan needs to become an active participant in this process of intellectual recovery, while Turkey needs to learn far more about Azerbaijan, including the latter's society, sensitivities, and power structures. The patronizing "big brother" approach of the past is a deterrent and no longer justified in light of current realities. Instead, both sides need to recognize that it is time for a new beginning.

THE SOURCES OF RUSSIA'S RAPPROCHEMENT WITH TURKEY

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Since late 1980s the world has experienced a number of processes the significance of which is sometimes described as geopolitical earthquakes. These worldwide events in turn have triggered many regional changes, including Russia's rapprochement with Turkey, that have so far garnered fewer headlines but are increasingly the subject of discussion in diplomatic and academic circles.

Participants in these discussions generally fall into two camps. The first, which might be called "the sceptics," do not deny that there has been a strengthening of relations between Russia and Turkey observed since 1990s, but they argue that these ties lack a strategic foundation, are opportunistic in nature, and thus are subject to change in the future. The second, for which there is no obvious single term, argue that the Russia-Turkey rapprochement is in fact a strategic process based on a commonality of interests, with some stressing the positive nature of this development and others focusing on its negative implications for the broader region's integration with the Euro-Atlantic area. [1] Indeed, some of the latter are expressing serious concern about a possible "reorientation" of Turkish foreign policy. [2]

In order to evaluate the adequacy of these various positions, it is useful both to consider the history of the relationship between the two countries and the way in which specific recent changes have had an impact on it.

Russia and Turkey are old neighbours and traditional adversaries whose competition has involved broader European interests. Indeed and especially relevant to the current context, on at least two occasions – in 1853-56 and again in 1877-78 – the Russian Empire found itself at odds with the European powers precisely because of its drive towards the control of the Black Sea Straits at the expense of the Ottoman

Empire. And this opposition led the two empires to take their places in opposing camps during World War I.

That war exhausted both empires and led to the formation of two new states: Soviet Russia (latterly the USSR) and the Republic of Turkey. Because both were isolated, they not surprisingly moved quickly to recognize one another and establish friendly relations. In 1921, the two concluded important treaties that dealt, among other things, with the delimitation of borders. And during this period, the Soviet government extended much-needed financial and military assistance to the nationalist movement led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

But after the end of the World War II, the Soviet Union made a number of claims on Turkey which had the effect of pushing Turkey into the arms of the West and ultimately leading Ankara to join NATO in 1952 (Leffler 1985; Mark 2005), an arrangement which meant that during the Cold War, the Soviet Union and Turkey were once again on the frontlines of a confrontation.

When the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union disintegrated, the relations between Moscow and Ankara did not immediately change. A major reason was that the Russian Federation viewed Turkish activities in the post-Soviet space with concern or even alarm. Moscow viewed Turkey's activities in the South Caucasus and Central Asia as a form of "infiltration" intended to supplant Russia's role there. During that period, the Russian press routinely accused Ankara of pan-Turanist and pan-Turkic designs. And these Russian fears were exacerbated by a sense that Turkey was in fact serving as a proxy of NATO and the United States in these activities (Hill & Taspinar 2006a, p. 4). That was especially true whenever Turkey was involved in pipeline projects designed to bypass Russia.

At the same time, Ankara had its own concerns, including worries that Russia would continue to support the Kurdish separatist movement in south-eastern regions of Turkey. The Turkish military also closely followed the 1996 talks on weapons supply between Russia and the Republic of Cyprus. And Turkish commentators noted that Russia and Turkey held opposite positions on a variety of issues including the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. And during this period, Turkish governments put integration with the European Union at the top of their agendas, reducing interest in changing relations with Russia.

In short, each government had reasons for seeing the other as a rival and competitor, but during the second half of the 1990s, the two entered a new phase in which each had reasons for viewing the position of the other in a different light. Starting from the mid-1990s, however, the two countries entered a new stage of relations. Among the areas where Ankara and Moscow found new common ground were counter-terrorist operations, military supplies to Cyprus, and especially economic ties.

Turkish business in the early 1990s entered the Russian market on a massive scale, particularly in the field of construction. Later as the Russian economy recovered, Russian tourists chose Turkish resorts as a favorite destination for summer vacations due to affordable prices, geographic proximity, warm climate and a liberal visa regime. As a result, by 2004, Russia had become Turkey's second-largest trade partner, with an annual turnover of about USD 10 billion (CSIS 2009, p. 64). Since then, bilateral trade has continued to expand (Turkish Daily News 2008).

But however important these factors are, they do not explain the changed geopolitical environment in which the two countries find themselves and which has pushed them to revise their historical relationship. By the end of the 1990s, both countries found themselves in strikingly similar geopolitical situations. Russia felt excluded from the European security architecture and felt her interests were threatened by EU and NATO enlargement. [3] Moreover, Moscow accused the West of engineering "color revolutions" in the former Soviet space, an area in which the Russian government insisted it has privileged interests.

At the same time, Turkey was extremely disappointed with the lack of progress in the EU accession talks, especially after the EU admitted the Republic of Cyprus in 2004. Ankara's ties with Washington deteriorated as a result of the Bush Administration's unilateral decision to invade Iraq. Thus, both countries viewed themselves, in some ways as they had in the early 1920s, as having been excluded from institutions and arrangements in which they felt they had a right to take part and as having their immediate interests continually placed at risk by others. [4]

Both Moscow and Ankara have been upset as well by the way in which EU and NATO have expanded toward the shores of the Black Sea, an area where neither Russia nor Turkey believes there is a threat or challenge to justify such actions. They are especially annoyed by attempts to create new mechanisms for cooperation among and the presence of non-littoral states there, and the two have moved to create their own institutions, including, in 2001, the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Force known as BLACKSEAFOR. Moreover, both objected to steps by Western institutions that they felt would erode their dominant positions regarding the straits as established in the 1936 Montreux Convention, especially after some littoral states proposed that US and NATO ships could bypass the restrictions of the convention by flying the flags of a littoral country. [5]

In early 2006, the Romanian Government put forward an initiative to launch the Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue. This initiative was supposed to provide a platform for discussion and further cooperation on the whole range of issues, including the unresolved conflicts. Moscow and Ankara, however, convinced that this particular initiative was in fact being promoted by the US, NATO and EU, and thus represented yet another channel to increase their influence and presence in regional affairs, opposed the establishment of the Black Sea Forum. At a summit of this organization held in Bucharest on 4-6 June 2006, Turkey sent only a state minister, while Russia sent only an ambassador, and as a result of the principled opposition from these two regional powers, since June 2006, the Black Sea Forum has not held another summit.

The most recent example of a joint Russian-Turkish effort to maintain control over the Black Sea occurred in the aftermath of the August 2008 Georgia crisis. At that time, Ankara denied a US request to allow the transit through the Straits of two hospital ships that exceeded the Montreux Convention weight limits, but the Turkish government did approve the passage of three smaller US military vessels to provide humanitarian relief to Georgia. Subsequently, both Ankara and Moscow underscored the importance of the Convention's 21-day limit for non-littoral vessels in the Black Sea while the heads of both countries' navies met on a Turkish warship on 1 September 2008 (CSIS 2009, p. 67).

The developments following the war in Georgia form a special chapter in the growing partnership between Russia and Turkey. While the international community was in

shock and had no clear vision of how exactly to react to the ongoing crisis in the South Caucasus, Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey launched an initiative to establish a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP) – a new mechanism to discuss and cooperate on the issues of regional concern, including the protracted conflicts. Significantly, he made this announcement during a visit to Moscow on August 13, 2008, without consulting Turkey's NATO partners, the EU or any state in the South Caucasus (Today's Zaman 2008). And equally significantly, Moscow reacted positively both in statements in Ankara and in the Russian media especially because it was immediately obvious that Moscow would be a key player in the Turkish project.

The rapprochement between Turkey and Russia has also been reflected in energy questions. In December 1997, the two concluded an agreement to construct a direct underwater pipeline to carry Russian natural gas to Turkey through the Black Sea. Operated since November 2005 and not passing through any third transit country, the Blue Stream became the first major project promoted by Russia as a part of its energy strategy in the post-Soviet era with a view to getting a direct access to the international gas markets. As a result, Turkey is now dependent on Russia for about 65% of its natural gas imports and nearly 40% of its oil imports. Imports of Russian gas are set to increase from 24 billion cubic meters (bcm) in 2007 to 30 bcm in 2010 (CSIS 2009, p. 65).

While Turkey's dependence on Russia has been traditionally assessed as a problem about which Ankara is unhappy, it is worth noting that at least some, including Brenda Shaffer, believe that "...relying primarily on Russia can have enormous benefits for Turkey in cementing the very vital and positive economic and political relationship that has been developing between Turkey and Russia over the last decade." In support of that contention, Shaffer has drawn a parallel with the situation in Europe: "Germany ... by granting Russia a long-term predominant role in its energy market succeeded in fortifying a special relationship with Moscow that reflects on a variety of spheres of cooperation. In this light, Ankara must weigh the benefits and costs of playing a role in the EU's energy diversity policies, which would be aimed at building alternatives to Europe's dependence on Russia (Shaffer 2006, pp. 102-103).

This analysis has focused on recent statements and actions, but a longer term assessment needs to include an examination of the works of Ahmet Davutoğlu (in 2002-2009 Chief Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister and the President of Turkey, since May 2009 Minister of Foreign Affairs) on the doctrine of the *strategic depth* as well as the writings of Russian political scientist Alexander Dugin on Eurasianism. [6]

At present, it is almost certainly premature to speak of a Russian-Turkish axis or entente – there are simply too many areas in which Ankara and Moscow diverge – but it is important to recognize that the two now find, on the basis of *Realpolitik* traditions an increasing number of reasons to cooperate. More to the point, there is no reason to think that this kind of cooperation will not expand in the future.

Notes

[1] A good coverage of arguments of these two groups is provided, respectively, by Torbakov & Ojanen (2009) [skeptical view] and by Kiniklioglu (2006) [positive view].

[2] For further reference on this issue, see CSIS (2009), as well as materials of the hearing on the "US and Turkey: a Model Partnership" held by the Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, on 14 May 2009.

[3] A detailed account of Russia's concerns and the Western reaction is given by former senior officials in the Clinton administration – Strobe Talbott in Talbott (2003) and Ronald D. Asmus in Asmus (2004).

[4] For a good analysis of this thesis, see Hill & Taspinar (2006b).

[5] For a good overview of the existing regional arrangements in the Black Sea, and positions held by Russia and Turkey, see Asmus (2006).

[6] For a detailed account of these issues, see Davutoglu (2001) and Laruelle (2008).

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ENDGAME ON KARABAKH?

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Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's statement that Baku would use force to recover the occupied territories if an agreement on their return is not reached soon, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's suggestion that Yerevan would recognize Karabakh as an independent state if any force were used against that enclave, repeated media suggestions that one or another parties in the dispute is going to turn away from Russia or from the West depending on what occurs next – all these and many other events over the last month have sparked speculation that the South Caucasus is on the verge of a new outbreak of violence.

That is of course possible in one of the world's most dangerous neighborhoods, but there is another possibility, one that students of negotiations would find more probable: As talks on a conflict that has dragged on for two decades approach a key turning point on the resolution of the most fundamental issues, participants tend to strike the most intransigent positions in public, leading those who have not followed the negotiations closely to assume that what they are seeing is not an endgame but rather an end of the talks.

There are three reasons for those involved to do so. First, taking a hard even threatening line in public may help to extract some last concessions from the other side. Second, doing so reassures those supporting one side or the other that their leaders are not going to sell them out by making concessions they cannot live with. And third, if the agreement later collapses, having taken such a stance at the end of talks provides a justification for renewing the conflict if an accord is reached and then falls apart for one reason or another.

Those calculations would explain all the statements and actions of the parties over the last weeks or even longer, all the more so because various officials, authorized or not, have released details on what appears to be the shape of an accord on the occupied territories. Their comments suggest that the agreement, which could be announced in the coming weeks, will include the following features:

An immediate Armenian withdrawal from five and a half of the seven Azerbaijani districts that have been under its control since the early 1990s;

A continuing Armenian presence in part of Lachin and in Karabakh itself for a still undetermined period at the end of which there will be some possibility for its residents to express their will about the future; and

A drawing down of forces and various confidence building measures, allowing for the opening of borders and equally important transportation arteries crossing these borders, not only between Armenia and Turkey but between Azerbaijan proper and Nakhchivan.

Such an accord, if indeed it happens, will create a variety of new challenges: Azerbaijan will have to deal with the reconstruction of an enormous region and the return of some but initially not all of the internally displaced persons. It will have to document acts of genocide on its territory that have taken place under the occupation. And it will have to deal with a significantly larger ethnic minority than in recent times. (Indeed, one of the reasons for thinking the situation is at an endgame is that the Milli Majlis this month began consideration of a law on national minorities).

Armenia will have to confront another set of problems, perhaps equally difficult. It has maintained itself over the last 15 years by arguing that it is surrounded by enemies. When that is no longer true, the government will have to deliver on its promises. Yerevan also will have to cope with the costs of withdrawal and with the psychological impact of the Masada-like complex so brilliantly described in Franz Werfel's novel *The 40 Days of Musa Dagh*. And it will have to redirect the anger of Armenian maximalists both at home and in the diaspora who have seen its policies in Azerbaijan as a signal that Armenia will never retreat.

Moreover, both sides, albeit to a different degree, will have to cope with a changed international environment. On the one hand, much of the international community may decide that after a partial agreement is reached, there will be little reason to keep the pressure on to get a final one. That could work to Armenia's benefit, but Yerevan may find there is less interest in it in some quarters because as one South Caucasus commentator put it, for Russia in the South Caucasus, "Georgia is the way, Armenia is the tool, and Azerbaijan is the prize."

On the other hand, each country will have to work out new relations with its allies and competitors, each of whom will be recalibrating relations with one or the other or both. And that means that the months following any accord could prove just as diplomatically complicated as those which have just passed. Consequently, even if an agreement is reached, it may not lead to the celebrations some now hope for or many expect.

And that in turn means that there may not in fact be an agreement as soon as the standard model of negotiations suggests. But there is one last indication that the endgame on Karabakh is near: The Azerbaijani foreign ministry reminded the world that Baku is proceeding on the principle that "nothing is agreed to until everything is," yet another way of putting pressure on Yerevan for an agreement but also another indication that a great deal of that "everything" has been agreed to already.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says that "without the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, Turkish-Armenian relations cannot be normalized." He also says that Baku is prepared to resolve the conflict by force if an agreement is not reached (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182156.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that at the meeting between President Ilham Aliyev and his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan that Turkish media reports about specific agreements are inaccurate because "in the negotiation process, the principle 'nothing has been agreed to until everything is agreed' operates." And on that basis, the two sides will continue to talk "until the final agreement on all questions" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183140.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev meets with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Ulyanovsk where the two take part in a ceremony on the erection of a monument to former Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev. Both sides characterize the relationship of their two countries as one of "strategic partnership" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182761.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that the destruction of an Azerbaijani cemetery in the occupied territories "is confirmation of the barbaric approach of Armenia toward spiritual and material values" there (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181584.html>). Milli Majlis deputy Aydyn Mirzazade points out that "a cemetery does not have a nationality or a state," something that makes this Armenian action especially horrifying (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181576.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, head of the Presidential Administration's Department of International Relations, says that the West has provided support for Armenia and thus given Yerevan the opportunity to behave in the way that it has (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182298.html>). In other comments, he says that Article 907 in the US is considered "unjust not only in Azerbaijan but in the United States" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182181.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev says that there have been "positive steps forward in the process of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181888.html>).

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says that "there is no crisis in negotiations on the status of the Caspian Sea" and that work toward an agreement is "continuing" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181574.html>).

Former US Energy Secretary Federico Pena says that Article 907 is unjust and "should not be applied to such a strong ally and strategic partner of the United States as Azerbaijan." Instead, it should be repealed (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182153.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

30 November

Kazakhstan Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev, who will become the OSCE chairman-in-office in 2010, says that "we will actively participate in the negotiation process under the aegis of the OSCE Minsk Group" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183530.html>).

28 November

President Ilham Aliyev sends a message of sympathy to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev concerning the Nevsky Express disaster (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183415.html>).

27 November

Lt. Gen. Zakir Hasanov, commander of Azerbaijan's internal troops, receives Lt. Gen. Tsu Tsin Lu, deputy commissar of the internal militia forces of China (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183327.html>).

26 November

President Ilham Aliyev greets the Azerbaijani people on the occasion of the Gurban Bayram holiday (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183258.html>).

US President Barak Obama sends a message of greetings to President Ilham Aliyev and the Azerbaijani people on the occasion of the Gurban Bayram holiday (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183269.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Polish National Defense Minister Bogdan Klich (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183213.html>). Klich is also received by Azerbaijani defense industry minister Yaver Jamalov (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183194.html>).

The Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry says that at the meeting between President Ilham Aliyev and his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan that Turkish media reports about specific agreements are inaccurate because "in the negotiation process, the principle 'nothing has been agreed to until everything is agreed' operates." And on that basis, the two sides will continue to talk "until the final agreement on all questions" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183140.html>).

The Milli Majlis ratifies the Nakhchivan agreement on the creation of a cooperation council for the Turkic language countries. At the same time, it ratifies agreements between Azerbaijan and Romania in a variety of areas (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183222.html>).

Milli Majlis deputies propose including representatives of Azerbaijan's political parties in the negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh and also call for the adoption of a law on the occupied territories (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183190.html>).

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, EU commissioner for foreign policy and European neighborhood policy, says on the occasion of the completion of her term that "the EU has always offered to make a contribution to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183215.html>).

Maj. Gen. Husein Zulfugari, commander of Iran's border forces, says that Tehran is ready to conduct with Baku "a joint struggle against illegal drug trafficking" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183156.html>). Kamil Salimov, an Azerbaijani expert on drug trafficking, says that much of the flow is going through the occupied territories (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183080.html>).

The heads of the border services of the five Caspian littoral states agree on creating an automated information sharing center (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183151.html>).

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization may be considering creating a commission to study damage to the environment in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, according to Milli Majlis deputy Asef Gadzhiyev (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183148.html>).

25 November

President Ilham Aliyev receives Stelian Stoian, Romanian ambassador to the Council of Europe and head of the *Ago* monitoring group (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183061.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Petri Salo, Finnish ambassador to Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183066.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Ion Robu, outgoing Moldovan ambassador to Azerbaijan at the completion of his tour (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183019.html>).

Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Safar Abiyev receives Polish National Defense Minister Bogdan Klich (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183064.html>).

Metin Yilmaz, a Turkish deputy of the ruling *Justice and Development Party*, says that Turkey's "main goal is the liberation of the occupied lands of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183063.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, the deputy chairman and executive secretary of the *Yeni Azerbaijan Party*, receives Nicolas Briec and Juan Magaz of the European People's Party (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/183034.html>).

Gultakin Hajibayli, the deputy head of Azerbaijan's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that in its 15 years of existence, the OSCE Minsk Group has "not been able to contribute anything to the resolution of the conflict," having occupied itself with "tourist visits" to the region (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182990.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russian ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that "Russian-Azerbaijani ties are one of the more successful models of arranging relations" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182937.html>).

James Appathurai, NATO spokesman, says that "Azerbaijan is our long and very active partner in the frameworks of all measures of the North Atlantic Alliance, in particular, in programs like 'Partnership for Peace'" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182916.html>).

24 November

President Ilham Aliyev meets with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Ulyanovsk where the two take part in a ceremony on the erection of a monument to former Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev. Both sides characterize the relationship of their two countries as one of "strategic partnership" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182761.html>).

Ziyafat Askarov, first vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that "Turkey is our strategic ally; consequently, it will find a worthy place in [Baku's] military doctrine" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182710.html>).

Rabiyat Aslanova, chairman of the Milli Majlis committee on human rights, says that no one can put pressure on Azerbaijan now because it has fulfilled its obligations and can stand up for itself (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182824.html>).

Gultakin Hajibayli, the deputy chairman of the Milli Majlis committee on international relations, says that "Azerbaijan has fulfilled the majority of the obligations taken before the Council of Europe and today there is close cooperation between our country and this structure" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182774.html>).

US Congressman Michael McMahon says that "with the ratification of the protocols between Turkey and Armenia, the role of Azerbaijan in the region will grow" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182768.html>).

The UN General Assembly postpones the discussion of a draft resolution offered by Azerbaijan on the situation in the occupied territories (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182689.html>).

23 November

President Ilham Aliyev receives US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Celeste Wallander. Earlier, Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov tells her that "Azerbaijan is interested in a further broadening of cooperation with the United States." She also meets with Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Safar Abiyev (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182660.html>);

<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182668.html> and
<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182579.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that "at the meeting of Presidents Ilham Aliyev and Serzh Sargsyan in Munich forward movement was achieved"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182673.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov speaks with his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu by telephone (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182672.html>).

Ziyafat Askarov, first vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that if Armenia continues to delay a resolution of the Karabakh conflict, then "Azerbaijan will be forced to liberate its occupied lands by military means"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182650.html>).

Azay Guliyev, chairman of the Council of State Support of NGOs, receives Andrey Adamcik, the European Union official who has prepared a report on the status of such groups in Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182652.html>).

Milli Majlis speaker Ogtay Asadov meets with his Russian and Turkish counterparts, Boris Gryzlov and Mehmet Ali Shahin, during a Moscow session of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182649.html>).

Bahar Muradova, vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, tells the Congress of Azerbaijanis in Europe and the Coordination Council of Azerbaijani-Turkish Diaspora Organizations that "now the question of solidarity of the Azerbaijani and Turkish governments has come into greater focus"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182555.html>).

Nazim Ibrahimov, chairman of the Government Committee on Work with the Diaspora, says that "the opening of borders with Armenia can bring harm to the position of Turkey in the world" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182546.html>).

Ayдын Mirzazade, a deputy of the Milli Majlis, says that "the process of negotiations [between Azerbaijan and Armenia] has lasted almost 17 years," forcing one to ask "how much longer will it continue?"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182517.html>).

Mehmet Shandyr, the deputy chairman of the Nationalist Movement Party of Turkey, says that "the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border is impossible"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182093.html>).

22 November

President Ilham Aliyev meets in Munich with his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan. Also in attendance at the session are the foreign ministers of the two countries, the three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, and the personal representative of the OSCE chairman-in-office
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182410.html>).

Bernard Fassier, French-co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, says that "important progress" was made at the meeting between President Ilham Aliyev and his

Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182469.html>).

21 November

President Ilham Aliyev says that "without the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, Turkish-Armenian relations cannot be normalized." He also says that Baku is prepared to resolve the conflict by force if an agreement is not reached (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182156.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev departs for a working visit in Germany
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182410.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, head of the Presidential Administration's Department of Political Analysis and Information Support, says that "the position of the Armenian leaders bears a tactical character and is insincere." In other comments, he says that "relations with countries of the South Caucasus built on double standards prevent a resolution of the conflicts" there
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182402.html>).

Maj. Gen. Elbrus Orujev, military attaché at the Azerbaijani embassy in Tbilisi, says that "the Armenians of Javakhetia will strike Georgia in the back"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182380.html>).

20 November

Ogtay Asadov, Speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that criticism by international organizations regarding the so-called "bloggers" case represent an interference in the internal affairs of Azerbaijan by individuals and groups "who do not know" the reasons for the arrest of these two young people
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182232.html>).

Safa Mirzoyev, the head of the apparatus of the Milli Majlis, says that Baku needs to set up "a structure for integration into Europe"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182287.html>).

Kazakhstani Deputy Foreign Minister Konstantin Zhigalov says that Astana is prepared to help with negotiations on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182254.html>).

Eldar Ibrahimov, a member of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that PACE had failed to adopt a report about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict even though Azerbaijan has pressed for this
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182170.html>).

Tahir Taghizade, Azerbaijan's ambassador in Prague, says that Azerbaijan and the Czech Republic will conduct negotiations on strategic partnership in a week's time
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182109.html>).

Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey says that Azerbaijan is a significant partner for [her] country (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182108.html>).

The government of Azerbaijan signs a credit agreement with the Saudi Development Foundation (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/182379.html>).

Rovnag Abdullayev, president of SOCAR, says that Baku will consider all routes for diversifying the export of gas from the Caspian basin toward both Europe and Asia (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/182306.html>).

19 November

President Ilham Aliyev appoints Elkhan Gahramanov Azerbaijan's ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182095.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov says that "Azerbaijan is now at the middle of the bridge [in talks about Karabakh and the other occupied territories] and expects that Armenia will also move" to meet Baku half way (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181939.html>).

The Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry welcomes the proposal of US senators to support the Azerbaijani community of Karabakh (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181979.html>). Milli Mejlis deputy Nasib Nasibli, a member of the Azerbaijan-US inter-parliamentary group, says the proposal merits "attention and support" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181942.html>).

The Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry declares the Turkish journalist who visited Armenian-occupied Nagorno-Karabakh without Baku's permission is persona non grata (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182005.html>).

Tahir Taghizade, Azerbaijani ambassador in Prague, announces that the Czech Embassy in Baku will begin operation in the first week of December when Radek Matula, the Czech ambassador to Azerbaijan, is slated to arrive (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181997.html>).

Turkish Ambassador to Azerbaijan Hulusi Kılıç says there is no truth to media reports that Armenia is moving nuclear fuel for its reactor through Turkish territory. "The Turkish-Armenian border is closed," he points out, and so such "transit is impossible" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182017.html>).

Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey says that "the processes of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Turkish-Armenian rapprochement formally are not connected" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181952.html>).

Slovenian Foreign Minister Samuel Žbogar, on the occasion of his passing the presidency of the committee of ministers of the Council of Europe to Switzerland, says that "the European Union can do much to contribute to the development of an atmosphere of trust between Azerbaijan and Armenia" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181943.html>).

Onur Oymen, deputy head of the National Republican Party of Turkey, says members of his party will "continue to oppose ratification of the Ankara-Yerevan protocols" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181764.html>).

Ion Robu, Moldova's ambassador to Azerbaijan, is recalled by Chisinau as part of a major reshuffling of that country's representatives abroad (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/182018.html>).

18 November

President Ilham Aliyev receives a delegation of MEDEF, the Organization of Entrepreneurs of France (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181902.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Daniel Stein, senior advisor to special ambassador of the United States for Eurasian energy issues (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181880.html>).

Fuad Alaskarov, head of the Presidential Administration's Department for Work with Law Enforcement Organs, says that Transparency International's report on corruption in Azerbaijan fails to reflect the existence of corruption in all countries and the progress Azerbaijan has made in combating this evil (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181772.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a member of Azerbaijan's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that "the fact of the destruction of an Azerbaijani cemetery on the occupied territories will be brought to the attention of PACE" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181670.html>).

The Azerbaijani government is providing offices for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic Language Countries in the new building of the Milli Majlis (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181810.html>).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev says that there have been "positive steps forward in the process of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181888.html>).

Richard Morningstar, Special Representative of the US State Department for Energy Policy in Eurasia, says that the Nabucco project and the southern corridor have "vital importance" for the energy security of Europe (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/181883.html>).

Azay Guliyev, president of the Presidential Council for State Support for Non-Governmental Organizations in Azerbaijan, announces that his group will cooperate with the representation of the European Commission in Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181855.html>).

Yury Merzlyakov, the Russian co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, says that he and his colleagues have not yet made arrangements for their next visit to the region (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181808.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that Ankara "devotes great importance to the defense of the territory of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181778.html>).

British Foreign Minister David Miliband says that he hopes for a rapid solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181767.html>).

Joseph Debono Grech of Malta is named the new co-rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181794.html>).

US Congressman Michael McMahon, says that "for decades, the question about ties of Turkey and Armenia was connected with the Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181730.html>).

17 November

Azerbaijan marks its Day of National Rebirth (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181481.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev signs a decree on the establishment of a consulate general in Batumi, Georgia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181683.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Richard Jones, the director of the executive committee of the International Energy Agency (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181616.html>). The IEA official says that "the best policy of Azerbaijan is the development of energy effectiveness" (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/181642.html>).

The Foreign Ministry calls in representatives of the German and Norwegian embassies to protest comments by their diplomats concerning the so-called "blogger" case, saying that their remarks were not only uninformed but represented interference in Azerbaijan's domestic affairs (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181506.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that anyone who visits the occupied territory without official permission from Baku is violating Azerbaijani law. Its statement comes in response to a visit to Nagorno-Karabakh by a Turkish journalist (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181633.html>).

Parviz Shahbazov, Azerbaijani ambassador in Germany, jointly with the Institute of European Policy, organizes a conference on "The Ties of the European Union with Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181650.html>).

Hidayat Orujov, head of the Azerbaijani State Committee on Religious Affairs, is received by Temur Yakobashvili, the Georgian minister for reintegration, who presents to him Tbilisi's strategy on national minorities (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181587.html>).

Deputy Justice Minister Vilayat Zakirov speaks to a conference in the Dutch city of Utrecht on local and regional democracy (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181639.html>).

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says that "the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must be resolved in the format confirmed earlier" by the OSCE (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181567.html>).

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says that "there is no crisis in negotiations on the status of the Caspian Sea" and that work toward an agreement is "continuing" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181574.html>).

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Andrey Nesterenko says that "in the course of the negotiations on ties between Yerevan and Ankara, questions about Nagorno-Karabakh were also raised" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181664.html>). In other comments, Nesterenko says that the Nagorno-Karabakh problem "has a large number of sides" and that Moscow will do all that it can to resolve the issues they present (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181612.html>).

US Congressman Robert Wechsler says that "the normalization of ties between Turkey and Armenia will add impetus to the resolution of other problems of the region," including the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181533.html>).

16 November

President Ilham Aliyev receives Peter Semneby, special representative of the European Union for the South Caucasus (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181470.html>). Earlier in his visit to Baku, Semneby says that the EU "must create all the conditions necessary for the supply of gas from the Caspian region to European consumers" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181447.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from incoming Kuwaiti Ambassador Hassan Abdulbari al-Zavavi (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181463.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from incoming European Commission Ambassador Roland Cobia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181462.html>).

Hidayat Orujov, chairman of the State Committee of Azerbaijan, visits Tbilisi where he meets with Iliya II, the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181410.html>).

Zahid Oruj and Gudrat Gasanguliyev, two Milli Majlis deputies, tell a session of the Defense and Security Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO that the Western alliance should promote the implementation of the UN resolutions on Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181356.html>).

Jamil Hasanli, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Azerbaijan must set a time limit on the resolution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181010.html>).

Ross Wilson, former US ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that the US "would like to see Azerbaijan and Armenia as peaceful neighbors" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181358.html>).

Note to Readers

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