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CHANGES IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS SINCE AUGUST 2008: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES FOR THE WORLD'S SUPERPOWER

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Introduction

The three countries of the South Caucasus (sometimes referred to as the Transcaucasus)—Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia—form the most complex, combustible and unstable region in the former Soviet Union. Lying at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and the Middle East, they share deeply ingrained historical trauma, Soviet-era bad practice, economic mismanagement, corruption, social problems, weak institutions, conflicting tendencies towards authoritarianism and reform, inter-ethnic disharmony, border disputes and several low-intensity (or 'frozen') conflicts. Georgia, often the most visible of the three countries to the West, has undergone a

brief but dirty 'hot' war with the major regional power, Russia, after years of Russian threats and pressure. This was a pivotal event, which carried consequences for the capacity, scope, emphasis and effectiveness of engagement by the United States across the region.

With natural borders, large neighbours and considerable cultural homogeneity at various points in its history, the South Caucasus is a distinct and interconnected region with a total population of around 16 million. However, the three countries differ considerably, both internally and in their geopolitical orientations. Ancient as nations, but new as self-governing states, they have each taken separate routes since the break-up of the Soviet Union and independence in 1991.

Georgia is located strategically on the coast of the Black Sea; it was a 'failed state' for at least the first half of the 1990s and then underwent a peaceful and democratic 'Rose' Revolution in 2003. It has a staunchly pro-Western foreign policy orientation. It is predominantly Orthodox Christian and desires NATO and EU membership. There is no significant Georgian diaspora community. It suffers from unpredictable foreign policy decision-making and was defeated (and, for some, discredited) in the war with Russia.

Azerbaijan is located strategically on the coast of the Caspian Sea; Baku was the world's first oil capital in the 1890s (and the world's first oil pipeline was built there in 1906). It is overwhelmingly Muslim, though nominally secular, and currently performs a delicate balancing act between Russia and the West.

Landlocked Armenia has poor relations with—and is currently blockaded by—its neighbours Turkey and Azerbaijan due to its continued occupation of part of the latter's territory. Its national assets are increasingly being bought up by Russia but it shares no border with that country. It has a large diaspora (more Armenians live outside Armenia than in it) and an influential (if diminishing) lobby in the United States. It is considered the world's first country to officially adopt Christianity as a state religion in 301 AD and it is developing an increasingly close relationship with Iran.

Of the six countries that lie within the South Caucasus or that directly border the region—Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iran, Russia and Turkey—only Iran maintains embassies in each of the other five capitals.

Throughout the region, closed borders coexist with a relatively long history of federalism, while the interplay of geopolitical pressures and local politics at times creates a combustible mix. Although these are small countries, they can create big problems for great powers and, in consequence, could yet hinder the Obama administration in the conduct of its wider foreign policy.

Georgia

The war with Russia, the subsequent discrediting of the Saakashvili regime and the election of President Barack Obama have led to a cooling in US–Georgia relations. Even though President Obama singled out Georgia as a major point of difference between Russia and the United States, the "tough love" delivered by Vice President Joe Biden in his speech to the Georgian parliament in July 2009 (including criticism of Georgia's democratic deficiencies and warnings against further military engagement in South Ossetia and Abkhazia to reclaim these territories) has

somewhat estranged the two countries. There is a notable concern in Tbilisi that, despite the continuing statements of support, Georgia has been downgraded in the list of US priorities and the Georgian leadership is struggling to discern where it fits in American policy in the light of the “reset” of US relations with Russia.

Yet there have been elements of continuity with the George W. Bush era as well. The US–Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership, which was signed by the Bush administration, has been taken up by the Obama administration. This allows for further US military training of the Georgian army and improvement of interoperability with NATO, as well as greater trade and economic assistance. An Enhanced Bilateral Investment Treaty, a Free Trade Agreement and access for Georgia to the General System of Preferences have also been pursued. The United States is also training Georgian police officers, judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers. These bilateral agreements sit alongside multilateral groupings such as the NATO–Georgia Council and the Annual National Plan in which the United States takes the lead roles. Although the US administration has been clear that the Charter does not provide security guarantees, its provisions have angered Russia as it sees them as directly infringing upon its sphere of influence. In the face of strong Russian opposition, Georgia also hosted two NATO PfP exercises in May 2009. But Georgia has had to face up to the reality that there are limits to US support. Although there have been negotiations for a new US base on Georgian soil, these have not yet produced any tangible results, and direct military assistance in the form of US troops on the ground will not happen under any circumstances.

Since August 2008, the United States has committed USD 30 million in humanitarian aid in its annual assistance programmes to Georgia, as well as a USD 1 billion multi-year package of economic aid for stabilizing the economy, helping refugees and democratic development. In addition, US-funded Radio Liberty began broadcasting news to South Ossetia and Abkhazia in November 2009 with the explicit aim of decreasing anti-Georgian sentiment and countering Russian propaganda. But the Abkhazian government’s view is that this is “Georgian propaganda” designed to promote Georgia as an attractive country for Abkhazia and South Ossetia; the breakaway republics have threatened to jam radio signals. However, international aid is masking the serious effects of the economic crisis on Georgia. Foreign investment has fallen by just under 75 per cent since the beginning of 2008. More helpfully for the long term, Georgia’s income from trade with the United States is currently USD 360 million a year. In a sense, Georgia was lucky. The August war and subsequent aid promises came just before the global financial crisis. A few months later and the international community might not have felt so generous.

Azerbaijan

America’s strategic commitment to Azerbaijan has diminished its ability to place the issue of human rights onto the bilateral agenda. Nonetheless, American policy-makers have stated that Azerbaijan will need to take democratic standards more seriously if it is to get what it wants from the partnership. Azerbaijani officials are frustrated that there is little US recognition of the country’s economic achievements (the increase in energy prices has made it the world’s fastest-growing economy for the last three years) and political stability. Like Russia, Azerbaijan is referring to historical precedent to accuse America of double standards. Slavery, gender barriers, racial discrimination and corruption in the United States have all been pointed to by Azerbaijan to rebut criticism and soothe domestic irritation at the United States’ “interference in internal affairs.” President Aliyev decided at the last

moment not to join an energy summit in Batumi, Georgia in January 2010, partly in protest at the decision of the US Congress to provide USD 8 million in humanitarian aid to Nagorno-Karabakh.

In spite of this current downturn, the US–Azerbaijan relationship is unlikely to be significantly harmed in the long term. For Azerbaijan, a good rapport with the United States is useful to exert leverage in dialogues with other powerful nations—principally Russia, as Gazprom attempts to maintain its near-monopoly on gas exports from the region and ensure that gas from Azerbaijan, or delivered from other Caspian producers to international markets via Azerbaijan, does not become a serious alternative gas supply for Europe. To keep the Americans happy, Azerbaijan maintains a contingent in Iraq, and doubled its troop numbers in Afghanistan in 2009 to 95.

Armenia

Armenia remains one of the highest per capita recipients of American economic aid under the Obama administration. In 2009, Armenia received USD 48 million in assistance to Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia (AEECA) funds. The USAID–Armenia managed share was USD 31.85 million. However, US investment in Armenia (USD 21 million in 2007) is not as large as Armenian investment in the United States (USD 31 million in 2007), despite the close cultural and business links described above. What little US investment exists is mainly in the hotel and IT industries. The United States has also signed an agreement with Armenia to build a nuclear power plant in the country.

The Obama administration has expressed concern over Armenia's increased economic links with Iran—not least in the form of a Russian-backed pipeline sending Iranian natural gas to Armenia. Armenia's response is that increased ties with Iran will reduce its energy dependence on Russia. Ninety per cent of Armenia's energy currently comes from Russia and its USD 160 million of debt to Russia was cancelled in exchange for state assets. Much of the Armenian transport, energy and telecommunications industries are now controlled by Russia. Simply put, it is harder for the United States to play a role in Armenia because of the depth of Russian involvement there. Moreover, given the Turkish and Azerbaijani blockades, Armenia has little choice. The United States would still like the Armenian leadership to be a more active participant in dissuading Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons technology. Armenia's influence over Iran, like Russia's, is questionable, but Iran does enjoy closer relations with Armenia than with any of its other neighbours.

Finally, Armenia's relations with Turkey constitute the most positive progress that has been achieved in the region in 2009. The 2008 war in Georgia created the environment for the signing of protocols in October 2009 to establish diplomatic relations and open shared borders between Armenia and Turkey. There was a major push on the US side to get the Turkish–Armenian protocols signed in April 2009 in time for President Obama's visit to Turkey later that month for the Alliance of Civilizations forum. This made Azerbaijani leaders angry with Istanbul and Washington, and the process was delayed until October. However, if all goes well with the necessary parliamentary ratifications—a big “if”—Turkey will become an even more active player in the Caucasus region. The Obama administration has welcomed this rapprochement, but has also learnt its lesson of the spring and kept its distance, preferring to let the bilateral dynamics take their own course. It should be noted also that, for fear of endangering any future agreement, President Obama

did not use the word “genocide” when referring to the events of 1915 in his address to the Turkish parliament in April 2009, as he had during his election campaign. Instead, he used the other term Armenians use, “Mets Yeghern”—literally, the Great Calamity. As shown during Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s visit to the United States in December 2009, Washington is now less able to influence Turkish foreign policy as Turkey has, at the time of writing, refused to de-link its own rapprochement with Armenia from the issue of a settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Conclusion

While not as important as Iraq, Afghanistan, non-proliferation or fighting international terrorism, the South Caucasus has become a vital concern for US foreign policy as a result of the Georgia war. August 2008 was the first time since the fall of communism that Russia sent its forces across an international frontier in anger. This in itself has massive implications not only for the South Caucasus countries but also for other major American partners in the former USSR, such as Ukraine, as well as for NATO members themselves. The South Caucasus matters in itself but also in relation to other policy areas for the United States such as energy and the war on terror. The balance between them must be constantly reworked for the United States to avoid being caught up too closely with the region.

As many have now observed, August 2008 was a proxy war for Russia, not against Georgia, but against the West and particularly the United States. To counter this dynamic, the Obama administration may have to rethink its military capabilities to cope with a third simultaneous crisis or conflict situation in addition to Iraq and Afghanistan. However, regaining its influence in the region will give the United States the best chance of achieving durable solutions and ensuring that the South Caucasus countries are less vulnerable to internal and external forces of instability.

In contrast, retreat from this region by the Obama administration would have far-reaching, short- and long-term negative consequences for American interests, including an inevitable further rise in Russian (and Iranian) influence. The Caucasus lies on the fault line in Western attitudes on how to deal with Russia. But Russia will react, whatever the United States does in the South Caucasus. And the United States will not be able to constrain it any more than it was able to in August 2008. At the same time, Russia will be similarly incapable of blocking all US policy actions. The South Caucasus states have all banked their autonomy, their legitimacy and their increasingly pro-Western orientation on a continuing American presence in the region. For some in South Caucasus, the United States has been just as unreliable in its principles as Russia and has lost some of its credibility. And today, even though the United States is the indispensable country for the independence of the South Caucasus states, we are entering a period of less American engagement there, not more. This has been made clear by the Obama administration. In itself, that may not be a wholly bad thing for a sensitive region riven by ethnic and civil conflicts. Nonetheless, to the extent that the United States will remain involved in the affairs of the three countries of the South Caucasus, future American engagement and leadership must be thoughtful and not fail them—or itself—a second time.

** This article is comprised of extracts from the chapter “The South Caucasus: Drama on Three Stages” in America and a Changed World: A Question of Leadership, edited by Robin Niblett, April 2010, Chatham House/Wiley Blackwell, London.*

**'AZERBAIJANI BY NATIONALITY BUT PATRIOTS OF ESTONIA'
THE AZERBAIJANI COMMUNITY OF ESTONIA**

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When President Ilham Aliyev visited Estonia earlier this month, he was in a country with not one Azerbaijani ambassador but rather as many as 6,000. While Baku does not yet have an embassy in Tallinn, although one is scheduled to open later this year, the number is a reflection of the activity of the Azerbaijani community in that Baltic capital, a community whose members proudly say that they are "Azerbaijani by nationality, but patriots of Estonia."

Although Estonians have been in Azerbaijan longer than Azerbaijanis have been in Estonia—some Estonians worked for the Nobel family firm in the 19th century and a few owned their own oil wells—the two countries and their peoples have a long history of contacts. In the 19th century, some students from Azerbaijan attended the University of Tartu, and in 1919-1920, Tallinn and Baku explored establishing diplomatic relations, but before they could do so, Soviet forces occupied Azerbaijan and suppressed that country's independence.

By the end of the Soviet period, there were numerous Azerbaijanis in Estonia, and in 1988, they created the *Odzhag* Cultural Society, a group which was founded to support the continued existence of the Azerbaijani community in Estonia and to promote cultural ties between the two countries. It was renamed in 1996 as the Azerbaijani Community of Estonia and continues to be active.

In advance of President Aliyev's visit, *Vestnik Kavkaza* ran a three-part article about the Azerbaijani community of Estonia which among other things featured an extensive interview with Niyaz Gadzhiyev, who had been part of the *Odzhag* Society and now heads the Azerbaijani Cultural Center in Tallinn. [1]

In 1988, Gadzhiyev pointed out, there were "no more than 2,000" Azerbaijanis in Estonia, but they were "very active "and became the first who supported the independence of the Estonian Republic." In the course of doing that, he said, the society raised the flag of the Republic of Azerbaijan there, even though "before this many did not know that Azerbaijan had its own flag."

During the drive toward the recovery of Estonian independence, Azerbaijanis there "participated in the forum of national minorities where, Gadzhiyev said, the people from the Caucasus served as "a connecting thread" that helped maintain relations between Estonians and Russians. "We never wanted that Estonians would think that all Russians are occupiers and that Russians in turn would say that all Estonians are fascists."

Gadzhiyev said he is "proud" that the Azerbaijanis in Estonia have succeeded in overcoming some of the stereotypes that people had in Soviet times and have

become full-fledged members of Estonian society even while maintaining their national culture and links to their homeland. One Azerbaijani, for example, Eldar Efendiyev served as mayor of Narva and population affairs minister and now is a member of parliament. Moreover, there are now several Azerbaijani restaurants in the Estonian capital, and the very first Azerbaijani wine shop anywhere outside of Azerbaijan opened in Tallinn a few years ago. In addition, Azerbaijanis have organized their own puppet theater and kindergarten there.

"At the present time," Gadzhiyev told *Vestnik Kavkaza*, "there is no Azerbaijani embassy in Estonia." As a result, the Azerbaijani community in Estonia "plays the role of a bridge between our two countries." It has organized visits, including one by Diaspora Minister Nazim Ibrahimov, staged national day celebrations, and promoted translations of Azerbaijani literature, including *Kitabi Dede Gorgud*, and even a book entitled *Estonians in Azerbaijan in the 19th and 20th Century* by Jafar Mammadov.

And while there have been occasional problems in the relationship—earlier this year, a group of Sumgayit residents staged a protest demanding the release from Estonian jail of two Azerbaijani businessmen convicted of drug smuggling—the Azerbaijani community of Estonia has played a key role in promoting ties between these two nations on the shores respectively of the Baltic and the Caspian seas.

* *This article is the first in an occasional series on Azerbaijani communities in countries around the world.*

Note

[1] <http://www.vestikavkaza.ru/articles/kultura/history/17336.html>, <http://www.vestikavkaza.ru/articles/kultura/history/17748.html>, and <http://www.vestikavkaza.ru/articles/kultura/history/17336.html> (accessed 2 April 2010).

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A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says that "we have entered into the decisive phase of the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204184.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev says that "the unconstructive position of Armenia and its policy of dragging out the peace process are creating major obstacles for the resolution of the conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202841.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that "between Azerbaijan and Russia there is developing a strategic partnership" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204256.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Azerbaijan “welcomes those efforts of Iran which have been directed to the achievement of peace and stability in [the] region” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203364.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that “the resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict can become the basis for the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204100.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan’s Foreign Policy

15 April

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov takes part in negotiations with Russian officials concerning the delimitation and demarcation of the Azerbaijani-Russian border (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204341.html>).

Mikhail Savin, deputy industry minister of the Moscow *oblast*, says that a program for economic, scientific-technical and cultural cooperation for 2010 to 2012 between Moscow and Azerbaijan is ready for signing (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/204300.html>).

Haluk Ipek, a member of Turkey’s Grand National Assembly from the ruling Party of Justice and Development, says that “the just resolution of the Karabakh conflict is a national question of the Turkish government” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204209.html>).

Azay Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that “Washington will continue to put pressure on Turkey” regarding its protocols with Armenia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204019.html>).

14 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives Movlud Chavusoglu, the president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204210.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov reiterates that “the Karabakh conflict can be resolved only in the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204215.html>).

Movlud Chavusoglu, president of PACE, says that Azerbaijan has fulfilled the majority of the obligations it has taken with the Council of Europe. In other remarks, he says that he is working to prevent any effort to apply “double standards” to the South Caucasus (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204086.html>).

Samad Seyidov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that “the election of Movlud Chavushoglu as president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

is the beginning of a new stage in relations between Azerbaijan and the Council of Europe" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204098.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the Council of Europe must express its position relative to the problems of Azerbaijani forced resettlers" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204128.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Armenia missed a historic chance" by not acting in ways that would have allowed for the ratification of the Ankara-Yerevan protocols (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204089.html>).

Asim Mollazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the Armenian government has sabotaged chances for progress on resolving the Karabakh question by its unwillingness to accept the renewed Madrid Principles" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204026.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that "the resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict can create the foundation for the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204100.html>).

13 April

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov tells Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, deputy head of the Bundestag German-Azerbaijan Friendship Group, that "the occupation forces of Armenia must leave the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204027.html>).

Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Safar Abiyev attends the CIS Council of Defense Ministers in Moscow (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203859.html>).

Azerbaijan, Georgia and Romania sign a memorandum of cooperation on gas supplies (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/203885.html>). Romanian economics, commerce, and business minister Adriean Videanu says that the accord will "play a large role in the energy security of Europe" (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/204023.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Azerbaijan is satisfied with the position of Turkey regarding the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204016.html>).

Ilgar Mukhtarov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Mexico, says that parliamentaries in the country to which he is accredited have established a group to promote friendship between Mexico and Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203940.html>).

Aynur Jamalgyzy, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Baku "will not allow the establishment of a second Armenian state on [Azerbaijani] lands" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203889.html>).

Movlud Chavusoglu, president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that "PACE supports the work of the OSCE Minsk Group on the resolution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/204021.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that "the occupation by Armenia of Azerbaijani lands creates obstacles to cooperation in the Caucasus" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203914.html>).

Sergey Kuznetsov, head of the elections and referenda section of the Venetian Commission, visits Baku for consultations (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203920.html>).

12 April

President Ilham Aliyev visits the Polish embassy in Baku to express his condolences on the deaths of Polish President Lech Kaczynski and other Polish officials in the plane crash near Smolensk (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203784.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Gambian Foreign Minister Ousman Jammeh (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203768.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and his Gambian counterpart Ousman Jammeh sign a protocol on cooperation between their two countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203780.html>).

Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Safar Abiyev says that "Azerbaijan does not intend to agree with the occupation of its own lands" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203816.html>).

Ganira Pashayeva, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Baku "must present materials which unmask the inventive accusations of Armenians to the research centers of the world" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203772.html>).

Asef Hajiyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Yerevan should not draw out talks on Karabakh because that is "playing with fire" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203641.html>).

Musa Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "if the negotiations with Armenia reach a dead end, then we will make use of our army" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203640.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy and member of the political council of the Yeni Azerbaijan Party, says that "the result of the Obama-Erdogan meeting will influence the future activity of the OSCE Minsk Group" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203801.html>).

Rainer Stinner, the chairman of the partnership sub-committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO, says in Baku that "Azerbaijan has been transformed into a strong partner of NATO." In other comments, he says that the western alliance hopes for a rapid resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203804.html>).

Hulusi Kılıç, Turkey's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that the meeting in Washington among the presidents of the US, Turkey, and Armenia was "profitable" for Azerbaijan as well (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203710.html>).

Taliyat Aliyev, the deputy chairman of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, says that the US has put "serious pressure" on Armenia regarding the settlement of the Karabakh conflict and the opening of relations with Turkey (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203381.html>).

Bayram Safarov, the head of the Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh, says that "ordinary Armenians prefer to live within Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203699.html>).

11 April

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that Turkey wants to see "greater activity" on the part of the OSCE Minsk Group (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203632.html>).

9 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives Firuddin Siniroglu, the special representative of the Turkish prime minister (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203527.html>). In a separate meeting with Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov, Siniroglu confirms that "Turkey has not changed its position" on Karabakh (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203461.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Ștefan Füle, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203425.html>). The European official says that "relations between Azerbaijan and the European Union must not be limited to the energy sphere alone" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203463.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov signs a cooperation agreement with his Mauritanian counterpart Naha Mint Hamdi Ould Mouknass (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203392.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Azerbaijan "welcomes those efforts of Iran which have been directed to the achievement of peace and stability in [the] region" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203364.html>).

The Foreign Ministry expresses "regret" on the human losses in Kyrgyzstan's political unrest (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203369.html>).

Fuad Alaskarov, the head of the law enforcement department of the Presidential Administration says that "Azerbaijani law is being brought into correspondence with the European Convention" (<http://www.day.az/news/society/203410.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the Azerbaijan State Committee on Struggle with Narcotics, says that Baku is "seeking to include a discussion on the transit route of drugs from Afghanistan through Iran to Nagorno-Karabakh on the agenda of the United Nations" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203391.html>).

Nikolae Ureche, Romanian ambassador to Azerbaijan and NATO's representative to Baku, says that "Romania is providing support and assistance to Azerbaijan in the process of integration into the European Union." He adds that "NATO supports the

peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict”
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203331.html>).

Radek Matula, the ambassador of the Czech Republic to Azerbaijan, says that Prague considers Baku “its strategic partner”
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203288.html>).

8 April

President Ilham Aliyev says during a visit to Estonia where he meets with Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves that “the unconstructive position of Armenia and its policy of dragging out the peace process are creating major obstacles for the resolution of the conflict” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202841.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Vietnamese Vice Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203263.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Mauritanian foreign minister Naha Mint Hamdi Ould Mouknass (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203261.html>).

Rafael Huseynov, a member of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that a committee of that body has discussed the question of the destruction of forests in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203228.html>).

Gultakin Hajibayli, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that “the idea of a West Azerbaijan émigré government is very serious” and that she is “a supporter of the realization of this initiative” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203210.html>).

Azay Guliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that he “does not think that Iran is a country which will exert pressure on Yerevan with the goal of ending the occupation of Azerbaijani lands” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203052.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, the executive secretary of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, says that the events in Kyrgyzstan show that a government which “does not operate on the will of the people” will not long survive
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203130.html>).

A delegation of Milli Majlis deputies takes part in the Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203084.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that the upcoming visit of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s special representative is intended to promote progress toward the resolution of the Karabakh conflict
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203166.html>).

Štefan Füle, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, says that the EU “will consider the possibility of direct participation in Nagorno-Karabakh resolution” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203141.html>).

The European Parliament says that the European Union must concentrate on promoting stability, flourishing and regulation of conflicts in the South Caucasus region (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203335.html>).

Representatives of the OSCE offer recommendations on the upcoming parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan to members of 16 political parties (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203135.html>).

7 April

The Foreign Ministry says that "we can resolve the Karabakh conflict in a very short time" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202572.html>).

The Azerbaijan embassy in Moscow hosts a reception for Oleg Tsyganov, who has published a book in English and Russian on Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev (<http://www.day.az/news/society/203008.html>).

The Azerbaijan embassy in Moscow sends a letter to the Crimean Azerbaijan Community thanking it for opposing the adoption by a city council there of a resolution on the so-called "Armenian genocide" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/203017.html>).

Nuraddin Ismayil, the deputy head of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, says that it is "in the interests of the United States to put pressure on Armenia" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202856.html>).

Zahid Oruj, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "if Azerbaijan is able to deprive Armenia of its protectors, then we will immediately begin a war" to recover the occupied territories (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202802.html>).

Dunyamin Khalilov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the world powers will force Armenia to accept these principles," a reference to the renewed Madrid Principles (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202680.html>).

Roland Kobia, the ambassador of the European Union to Azerbaijan, says that "Nabucco is a mutually profitable project" and that "the absence of agreement between Azerbaijan and Turkey on the price for gas is not a serious problem" in that project's realization (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/202824.html>).

Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki says that "Iran has offered proposals for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202958.html>).

Anne-Marie Lizin, the former speaker of the Belgian senate, says that "regarding the peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict, the European Union must play a role" (<http://www.day.az/news/society/202933.html>).

6 April

President Ilham Aliyev receives Herman Scheer, a member of the German Bundestag and co-chair of the World Council on Renewable Energy, who is in Baku to take part in a meeting on that subject (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202813.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that "Armenia does not want a peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202577.html>).

The Foreign Ministry reminds all international organizations and firms operating on the occupied territories of Azerbaijan without the advance explicit approval of Baku are violating national and international law (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202575.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that Azerbaijan believes that the resolution of the Karabakh conflict will be "a priority theme" for Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan during his visit to Washington (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202746.html>).

Ziyafat Askarov, vice speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that "Azerbaijan fulfills all the measures planned with NATO in a cooperative way" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202844.html>).

Arzukhan Alizade, a member of the political council of the National Independence Party of Azerbaijan, says that "the actions of the Armenian diaspora and Yerevan are a game clearly planned out by them" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202642.html>).

Roland Kobia, the European Union's ambassador in Baku, says that the upcoming visit of the EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy is "an important signal" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202810.html>).

5 April

The Foreign Ministry says that Baku is waiting for Armenia's response to the renewed Madrid Principles of the OSCE (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202486.html>).

Ali Aliyev, the director of the center for geo-ecological monitoring of the Ecology and Natural Resources Ministry, says that "the construction of a second atomic energy station in Armenia will increase dangers for the region" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202625.html>).

A symposium at the Turkish parliament discusses the ways in which Ankara can advance the provisions of the Nakhchivan Accord on the establishment of a Council of Cooperation of Turkic Language States (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202649.html>).

Riad al-Malki, the Palestinian foreign minister, says that the Palestinian embassy in Azerbaijan will have a regional mandate (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202618.html>).

3 April

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that "official Baku supports the position of Turkey on the Karabakh conflict and the Ankara-Yerevan protocols" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202363.html>).

Gudrat Hasanguliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, criticizes the OSCE Minsk Group for not working harder to reach an agreement on Karabakh (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201988.html>).

The US Department of State issues a correction to its annual report on narcotics concerning Azerbaijan after Baku officials point out that the notion that 100,000 of the 140,000 Azerbaijani university students are users is "simply absurd" (<http://www.day.az/news/society/202344.html>).

Baku's International Diaspora Center declares April a month for boycotting the idea of the so-called "Armenian genocide" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202392.html>).

The coordinating center of Azerbaijanis in Germany discusses the future of cooperation among diaspora societies (<http://www.day.az/news/society/202277.html>).

2 April

President Ilham Aliyev says that "today, Azerbaijan using its own internal opportunities has built a strong state" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201968.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to discuss the resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202086.html>).

Oktay Asadov, speaker of the Milli Majlis, says that he is "certain that in this year [Azerbaijanis] will mark for the last time the anniversary of the occupation of Kalbajar" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202159.html>).

Ramiz Mehtiyev, the head of the Presidential Administration, says that Azerbaijan "has the right by any means to liberate [its] lands from occupation" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202256.html>).

Ramiz Mehtiyev, the head of the Presidential Administration, says that "Azerbaijan always will be alongside fraternal Turkey in the struggle against double standards" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202081.html>).

Arif Mammadov, the permanent representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe, says that "those who politicize historical questions show their insincerity" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202232.html>).

Avez Temirkhan, head of the Liberal Party of Azerbaijan, says that under existing conditions, "the Turkish parliament will never ratify the Ankara-Yerevan protocols" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202073.html>).

Gudrat Hasanguliyev, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that if Armenia refuses to negotiate in good faith, then military actions between Azerbaijan and Armenia might resume (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201989.html>).

1 April

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov calls for a step-by-step resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/202066.html>).

Industry and Energy Minister Natik Aliyev receives French National Assembly deputies Roland Blum and Christian Bataille (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/202057.html>).

A delegation of members of the Presidential Administration of Azerbaijan visits Turkey (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201875.html>).

Fazil Mustafa, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "if the game about the so-called 'genocide of the Armenians' continues, Turkey will react very harshly" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201858.html>).

Nikolae Ureche, Romanian ambassador to Azerbaijan and NATO's representative to Baku, says that attracting the support of the civil society of Azerbaijan to NATO initiatives is "a priority of this year" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/201942.html>).

Gabriel Keller, French ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that approximately 75,000 Azerbaijanis are studying French at the present time (<http://www.day.az/news/society/202072.html>).

Note to Readers

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