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NATION-BUILDING AND LANGUAGE POLICY **IN POST-SOVIET AZERBAIJAN**

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Note: A more detailed article on this topic will be published in a forthcoming issue of Central Asian Survey

Social-scientific literature has long accepted the fact that a national language can play an essential role in nation-building . This role can be positive in terms of state-building: revitalizing a formerly oppressed national language can help a state find a new, independent identity. However, the role can also be divisive: a state can come into conflict with local minorities by attempting linguistic rationalization—that is, unifying the state under one language .

In Azerbaijan, language could have potentially played either role. On one hand, Azerbaijan was—and remains—largely ethnically Azerbaijani and its titular population evinced a relatively high degree of Azerbaijani linguistic knowledge. [1] Such a situation would appear ideal for linguistic revitalization and unification of the state under Azerbaijani. On the other hand, Azerbaijan's urban centers had significant Russophone populations and moreover its post-Soviet history was marred by ethnic conflict: aside from the Karabakh conflict, members of both the Lazgi and Talysh populations of Azerbaijan had engaged in secessionist activities. [2] As a result, attempts to use ethnic Azerbaijanis' demographic dominance to force the Azerbaijani language on the entire population could have led to greater unrest.

On the whole, the policy adopted by Azerbaijan's government mainly has avoided potential problems by emphasizing the symbolic aspects of language, not mandating changes in linguistic behavior: while the government framed the Azerbaijani language as a symbol of the independent Azerbaijani state and nation, it also made significant allowances to speakers of other languages. In practice, such a policy has meant that while usage of the Azerbaijani language was certainly encouraged, this encouragement has not been overtly coercive. Indeed, the government has taken great pains to portray itself as a supporter of Azerbaijan's ethnic communities. At the same time, the demographic dominance of Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijan has meant that more extreme language policies were unnecessary: even without greater pressure from the government, Azerbaijani has gradually become essential for most citizens of Azerbaijan *de facto* if not *de jure*.

To understand how this situation developed, it is necessary to describe the years immediately following Azerbaijan's independence, all of which occurred in the context of the chaos surrounding the Karabakh war. In 1992, Abulfaz Elchibay, the leader of the Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF), became president of Azerbaijan. In terms of language policy, the tone of the Elchibay government was both nationalistic and pan-Turkic. [3] Most controversially, the government officially designated the Azerbaijani language as simply being "Turkish." [4] Many Azerbaijani citizens perceived such a pro-Turkish stance as impinging on Azerbaijan's national uniqueness, and the resulting widespread disapproval resulted in the government backing down from its initial stance, renaming Azerbaijani "Azerbaijani Turkish."

In addition to unease surrounding the APF government's policy toward Azerbaijani, the APF's nationalist tone may have influenced the development of minority separatist movements in both northern and southern Azerbaijan. In southern Azerbaijan, Talysh military officers attempted to create an independent Talysh state; though this act garnered little popular support, concerns about Talysh separatism remained. Meanwhile, members of the Lazgi minority formed the organization "Sadval," which was committed to the unification of predominantly Lazgi territories in Azerbaijan and Russia. All the while, the emigration of ethnic Russians and other minorities continued.

Whether or not these difficulties were actually a result of the APF government's nationalist and pan-Turkic policies or merely a function of the chaos produced by the Karabakh war is difficult to determine. Former members of the APF steadfastly claim that their policies were intended to promote the revitalization of all local cultures in Azerbaijan. In contrast, the government of Heydar Aliyev (1993-2003), which succeeded that of the APF, portrayed the APF's political positions as having exacerbated ethnic instability in the country.

In any event, it is clear that Aliyev's government reached out to Russophones a great deal more than the APF, with Aliyev himself commenting often on the importance of the Russian language to the Azerbaijani people . Aliyev's government also made overtures to speakers of other language in Azerbaijan, instituting provisions for the protection of minority languages in Azerbaijan. For example, Article 21.2 of the 1995 Azerbaijani Constitution states that the state "ensures the free use and development of other languages spoken by the people" of Azerbaijan. Though such measures were mainly symbolic, they signified a tonal shift from that of the APF.

Aliyev was able to avoid accusations that such policies were overly pro-Russian and/or insufficiently nationalist because he also worked to outflank the APF on the nationalist front: Aliyev framed his policies as a remedy not just for the ethnic divisiveness of the APF's time in power, but also its pan-Turkic leanings. For example, under Aliyev, "Azerbaijani Turkish" became "Azerbaijani" , signaling an emphasis on the language's distance from Turkish. [5] Additionally, Aliyev took the step of enshrining Azerbaijani as Azerbaijan's state language in the country's 1995 constitution. This maneuver was especially politically beneficial in that it allowed him to highlight his Soviet-era support of the Azerbaijani language: the 1978 Constitution of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, written while Aliyev was First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, also had enshrined the Azerbaijani language as an official language of the republic.

Finally, Aliyev was even able to co-opt a long-planned script change from Cyrillic to Latin by having his government actually mandate the change in 2001. [6] Consistent with the government's overall policies, propaganda accompanying the script change emphasized Azerbaijan's uniqueness: instead of emphasizing the language's common letters with Turkish, unique letters such as the schwa ("Ə") are the focus.

All of these acts of symbolic nationalism served to insulate Aliyev from criticism as he pursued a less superficially nationalist course than his predecessors (and that which was desired by his opponents). Aliyev's successor as president of Azerbaijan, his son Ilham Aliyev (2003-present) has largely continued such policies. Insofar as the Russian language is concerned, with the exception of recent restrictions on foreign Russian-language broadcasting in Azerbaijan, Russian-language media has encountered little government interference, and government officials often boast that they have not closed down a single Russian-language school. However, the importance of Russian in Azerbaijan has unquestionably diminished. Almost all domestic government affairs are conducted in Azerbaijani, and demand for Russian-language education has decreased (while interest in other foreign languages, especially English, has increased) .

Consequently, it is unsurprising that no government official whom I interviewed during field research in 2005-2006 considered Russian to be a threat to the development and spread of the Azerbaijani language. Instead, they emphasized the positive aspects of the Russian language's continued role in Azerbaijani society, arguing that the Russian language will have continued value given the Russian Federation's proximity and its long-standing economic and political ties to Azerbaijan. Even opposition leaders with whom I spoke believed that the government should not drastically change its position toward Russian; their main criticism was that the government's ties to Russia were slowing the transition to English.

In terms of the other languages spoken in Azerbaijan, the government's position was

best stated in an essay by the former State Counsellor of the National Politics of the Azerbaijan Republic, Hidayat Orudzhev, wherein he comments that “the preservation of its unique historical wealth [is] a top priority of the life of the Azerbaijani multinational society, which constitutes the diverse and rich tapestry of the country’s centuries-long heritage.” Azerbaijan is thus able to show “the whole world its attitude toward its national minorities, and they [the minorities] in turn can demonstrate to the world community their true status in a democratic state, which keeps a constant and careful watch on them” . Protection of national minorities is thus portrayed as a means by which Azerbaijan proves its burgeoning democracy to the world, as well as a moral necessity.

Furthermore, Orudzhev confronts past minority-related problems in Azerbaijan, arguing that national minorities pose little threat to Azerbaijan’s security: after acknowledging that there have been “attempts” to instigate separatist movements within Azerbaijan by unspecified outside actors, “to the credit of national minorities in our republic they understood on time the threat they were creating primarily to themselves by such behaviour” . Separatism thus is framed as an issue that lies in Azerbaijan’s past; minorities are therefore deserving of the state’s protection. In fact, the Azerbaijani government does provide funding for the development of minority-language textbooks and media, as well as rent-free usage of government facilities for cultural activities; it also allows for education in various local languages.

At the same time, Azerbaijani politicians whom I interviewed also largely consider it self-evident that success in Azerbaijan requires proficiency in the Azerbaijani language; learning Azerbaijani must therefore be a top priority for minorities. The resulting tension has meant that the continued existence of many minority languages in Azerbaijan remains an open question: while some minorities appear to be maintaining their level of linguistic knowledge (such as the Udi, the Mountain Jews and the Avars), other ethnic groups appear to be losing ground to linguistic assimilation . Azerbaijani officials with whom I spoke were aware of these concerns, but noted that although they could encourage individuals to speak “their” language, the final choice to actually do so remains up to the individual.

In any event, the end results appear to be largely positive, at least in terms of unifying the state peacefully. After the Nagorno-Karabakh war there has been minimal ethnic conflict in Azerbaijan, and minorities are perceived to be learning the state language.

The final aspect of Azerbaijan’s language policy *vis-a-vis* language policy that remains for discussion is the government’s policy toward the Azerbaijani language itself. In this regard, the government’s approach has been largely hands-off: it has shown little inclination for removing Russian words from the language or mandating corpus reform in general, arguing instead that necessary changes will occur naturally. Indeed, New Azerbaijan Party Deputy Executive Chairman Mubariz Gurbanly told me explicitly that any program regarding language development should not be performed in a “primitive” manner (e.g. purification). [7]

Such an approach is consistent with the rest of Azerbaijan’s language policy: the government has largely avoided inserting itself into matters of everyday language use. The glaring exception to this rule—adoption of the Latin script—was itself almost entirely superficial and symbolic, designed to show a clear break with the Soviet past. Such a symbolic policy has allowed the Azerbaijani government to portray itself as being a supporter of both Azerbaijani nationalism and the minority

languages of Azerbaijan, while ethnic Azerbaijani's demographic dominance has ensured a gradual shift toward the national language. As a result, Azerbaijan has avoided conflicts while beginning the process of unifying the state under the Azerbaijani language.

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Notes

[1] For a detailed account of the relative status of the Azerbaijani language in the years preceding the disintegration of the Soviet Union, as well as the importance of demographics in determining sociolinguistic outcomes, see Fierman (2009).

[2] Neither the Talysh nor the Lazgi language is related to Azerbaijani. The Lazgi population of Azerbaijan is predominantly located along the Russian border, whereas the Talysh population is mainly located along the Azerbaijan-Iran border.

[3] My account of the APF's language policy and the popular reaction is largely based on those contained in Hunter (1994), Altstadt (1997) and Landau and Kellner-Heinkele (2001, p. 69).

[4] For a description of the controversy regarding the correct name for the Azerbaijani language, see Hunter (1994), Garibova (2009, p. 16) and Garibova and Asgarova (2009, p. 194).

[5] It should be noted that the Aliyev government did not deny the language's close relation to Turkish, and has in fact shown willingness to strategically deploy pan-Turkic rhetoric in support of some policy objectives.

[6] For a more detailed analysis of the script change, see Hatcher (2008).

[7] Interview with the author, Baku, Azerbaijan, February 2006.

ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE SCHOOLS OF AZERBAIJAN DURING THE CRISES OF 1905 AND 1918

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The political crises of 1905 and 1918 affected all institutions of Azerbaijani society, none more than the schools, as recently opened materials in the Azerbaijan National Archive show. In both years, students met, organized, staged protests and submitted petitions calling for "freedom of thought" and "freedom of assembly within the walls of the school." And those protests in turn had an impact not only on the quality of education the students at that time were receiving but also on the emergence of a distinctly Azerbaijani elite, one that viewed its own culture and identity as very different from the Russian conquerors who had organized the schools there and from their Armenian fellow students.

In both of these years, conflicts spread to the schools from the oil fields and the fishing fleets and significantly interrupted the educational process. In 1905, many schools were closed because of students' demands for an overhaul of their curricula and because officials could see that social democratic activists were increasingly turning their attention to the students in order to challenge the officials of Imperial Russia.

The director of the Commercial College reported that "due to the bloody clashes between the Armenian and Tatar population which began in Baku on August 20 [1905] and which have paralyzed all public institutions, all educational institutions are closed. [1] And he noted that his predecessor had asked the Russian governor general to send guards to the college because of "rumors that Armenians are planning to burn [the school] which is located in the house of a Tatar." [2] Nine days later, the archives show, the college director made a personal appeal to the Governor General for guards, but that official first sent only five soldiers to patrol the schools and then suggested postponing the opening of the school year and allowing teachers and their families to remain outside Baku until September 15. But by early September, it had become clear that the situation would not be calmed by those steps alone.

Other sources in the archives show that some of the forces of order, including the Cossacks, were taking sides in the ethnic disputes rather than simply enforcing order, a shift that exacerbated the ethnic feelings and activism of the various groups. And that was true even though in most protests, the students acted together rather than along ethnic lines, just as workers were doing. As the tsarist government required, the teachers were monitoring the students to detect and block any revolutionary activity. But by mid-September, ethnic tensions were increasing, even as the students' multi-national board at the Commercial College collectively rejected the director's call for them to begin the school year. Denouncing the leadership's call as the work of a "colonial" government, the activism of the students led to the closure of the college for another six months. During that time, Muslim students

demanded the introduction of Turkish language courses alongside the program mandated by the tsarist authorities.

By mid-November, the students were advancing even more political demands, noting that "the abnormal situation in Baku is not the result of local conditions but rather of the political regime in Russia. The bureaucracy is not doing anything to calm the situation but rather, by its repressive acts, is dissolving the ties among the various strata of the society...". [3]

A similar pattern, in which forces outside the school invaded its precincts, could be seen in 1918. Educators in Baku initially tried to calm tensions between the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians, but the steps they took in the name of "saving the students, the best part of society," were insufficient by that time. And the police structures were increasingly unable to control even the teaching staff. [4] And the new Azerbaijani authorities replaced many of them, naming Ali Iskandar-Zade a teacher of the Turkic language on September 11, 1919. [5] (Subsequently, Soviet investigations found that many of these new teachers never in fact appeared at the schools). [6]

Sometimes parents were behind the school closings because they feared that their children would not be safe, but the students came increasingly under the influence of the workers. Indeed, they often referred to workers as "role models" and accepted many of their ideas, although the workers in their demands typically remained more internationalist than the students were becoming. In any case, student radicalism and demands for a more national school system with courses in the language of the students kept the schools closed longer than might otherwise have been the case and even with courses in Islam rather than Russian Orthodox Christianity.

In this way, as the archives make clear, the schools and especially their students played a far more significant role in the conflicts of these two revolutionary years and in the formation of an Azerbaijani national consciousness than is generally recognized in the literature.

Notes

[1] ARHA, f. 316, list 1, rec. 21, commerce school, on school break in 1905/06, p. 7.

[2] Ibid, p. 3.

[3] ARHA, f. 316, list 1, rec. 21, commerce school, on school break in 1905/06, p. 7.

[4] ARHA, f. 396, list 1, rec. 1, p. 3.

[5] ARHA, f. 396, list 1, rec. 1, pp. 1-2.

[6] ARHA, f. 396, list 1, rec. 1, p. 3.

IRAN BECOMING A MAJOR PLAYER IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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For most of the post-Soviet period until recently, Iran played a relatively restricted role in the South Caucasus either because Tehran was focused on other regions and issues or, more often than not, because both the major powers and the countries of that region had their own reasons for excluding Iran or keeping their distance from it. But now, in the wake of the Russian-Georgian war which reflected the growth of Russian influence at the expense of American and led Turkey to seek to play a larger geopolitical role, and has led ever more people to ask questions about the effectiveness of the OSCE Minsk Group in which Tehran is not represented, Iran faces fewer limits on its activities or far more opportunities for involvement. As a result, Iran is rapidly expanding its activities both bilaterally with each of the countries in the South Caucasus and multi-laterally as a new center of geopolitical power in its own right and a counterweight to other outside powers.

To appreciate just how significant this shift is or even more may become, it is worth recalling that throughout most of the last two decades, most leaders in the region and beyond assumed that the major geopolitical competition in the South Caucasus was between a receding Russia and an expanding American role. And such people could point to the reality that the United States insisted on using the OSCE as the source for mediation of the Karabakh conflict because it was and remains the only international body of which all the countries of the region are members except Iran. Moreover, while the United States was pushing forward Turkey as a counterweight to Iran, Ankara was not able to deal at all with one country in the region—Armenia—and did not have a significant role in a second—Georgia—even as it did develop ever closer ties with the third—Azerbaijan.

Moreover, during that period and even afterwards, Iran was focusing its attentions elsewhere, toward the Shia populations in the Arab world and in support of radical Islamists in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and terrorist groups elsewhere. And because these steps and Tehran's pursuit of nuclear power left it internationally isolated at least diplomatically, Iran was not able or willing to deploy the diplomatic muscle needed to overcome both the resistance of each of the three countries in the region and of the larger outside powers to an expansion of its influence there.

These obstacles were and, to a certain extent, remain serious. Azerbaijan, despite its borders with Iran and the fact that two-thirds of its population are Shia, traditionally has had a troubled relationship with Tehran because more than a third of the population of Iran is Azerbaijani Turkish, a group the central authorities of Iran have often treated harshly. Armenia was more interested in developing ties with Iran even then, seeing the land bridge of Zangazur as its way out of Turkic encirclement, but the sometimes difficult status of Armenians in Iran and its own status as an ancient Christian nation restrained Yerevan from forming close political as opposed to economic links with Iran. And Georgia, which lacks a common border with Iran and which has positioned itself as an outpost of Europe, was even more constrained by that than either of the other two.

Moreover, in the 1990s, three major outside powers were also opposed to an expansion of Iranian influence in the region. Although its power in the region was receding in the 1990s, Russia was reluctant to see Iran expand influence at Moscow's

expense. The United States, since the Iranian revolution in 1979, has sought to contain Iran and particularly to prevent Tehran from expanding its influence in the historically Muslim regions of the former Soviet space. In the 1990s, those calculations defined Washington's policy both bilaterally and in the case of the Minsk Group multilaterally as well. And Turkey, which the United States hoped would play the role of an alternative—to Iran—source of influence in the post-Soviet south because of its very different religious and cultural history and because of its longstanding hostility to Iran, largely found itself unable to play that role because of Russia's traditional concerns about Turkey, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and Turkey's own domestic focus during that decade

The turning point for the region and for Iran in it was the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008. That conflict underscored the rise of Russian power and influence in the region at the expense of the United States, a rise that led two of the countries—Armenia and Azerbaijan—to be more deferential to Moscow and all three to be interested in developing links with countervailing powers. Turkey sought to play this role with its new proposals on a Caucasus "platform," but so too did Iran, which supported Georgia regarding the breakaway republics and which found more doors open to it in both Baku and Yerevan.

Over the last two years, Iranian officials have visited all three South Caucasus capitals, and more visits are planned including one by the Iranian president to Baku before the end of the year. Armenia and Tehran have signed a broad series of economic cooperation accords, agreements Yerevan sees as a necessary balance to its dependence on Russia and a way to keep the pressure on Turkey to move forward with rapprochement. Georgia increasingly stresses its ties with Iran to underscore its support from a major regional player against Russia and thus gain greater freedom of action.

And as readers of the chronology section in this and other recent issues of *Azerbaijan in the World* know, Iran and Azerbaijan have exchanged more visits and signed more agreements on a broader range of issues over the last three months than in the previous two decades, a development that reflects both Baku's commitment to a balanced foreign policy, in this case between the Russian North and the Iranian South, and Iran's interest in exploiting that to burnish its self-image as a country which can play a positive role internationally—hence its support of the principle of territorial integrity in the Karabakh conflict—and bilaterally with all the countries of the region.

But if it is important to take note of this change, it is equally important to recognize what it means and what it doesn't. Iran is again a player in the South Caucasus as one would expect of a country of its size and power located where it is, but both its actions and the responses of the countries of the region and to a lesser extent of the outside powers to what Tehran does are not driven by a consistent ideology but by pragmatic calculation. And that reality, one that many who grew up with the Cold War's ideological competition find hard to accept, means that most countries, including those in this region, will form multiple and often short-lived ties, changing them in kaleidoscopic fashion as events appear to dictate.

That will not make the analysis of any particular situation any easier, but a failure to recognize this new reality will guarantee that any analysis offered will be defective. And consequently, the return of Iran to the Caucasus may prove instructive even to those who are most opposed to what they are certain to view as an unfortunate

expansion in Tehran's influence there. At the very least, an appreciation of these new realities will prevent the kind of apocalyptic conclusions that some analysts of this region have offered in the past.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev tells the UN General Assembly that "the continuing armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is a major threat to international and regional peace and security" (<http://news.day.az/politics/229973.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov tells the Millennium Development Goals UN Summit in New York that despite the occupation of 20 percent of its territory by Armenia and the presence of approximately a million refugees and internally displaced persons, Baku is fulfilling all the obligations on development that it has undertaken to complete by 2015 (<http://news.day.az/politics/229567.html>).

Ogtay Asadov, the Milli Majlis speaker, tells Ludec Sefzig, chairman of the EU committee of the Senate of the Czech Republic, that the delay in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict is due in large part to the activities of the Armenian lobbies in various countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/231067.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov says that "the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is a holy thing and it must be supported in all variants of the solution of the Karabakh problem" (<http://news.day.az/politics/230961.html>).

Ali Agha Mohammadi, deputy first vice president of Iran, says that "the goal of [his] visit [to Baku] is to raise the level of economic cooperation to the same level as political relations" (<http://news.day.az/politics/230739.html>).

Andrey Kelin, head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's CIS Countries Department, says that "Nagorno-Karabakh cannot participate in negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan as a separate side since Azerbaijan considers [Nagorno-Karabakh] to be its territory" (<http://news.day.az/politics/230227.html>).

Vaira Vike-Freiberga, former president of Latvia, special representative of the UN secretary general and vice president of the Experts Group on the Long-term Development of the EU, says that a new group of negotiators is necessary for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/229116.html>).

Anne-Marie Lisin, honorary chairman of the Belgian Senate, says that the appointment of a special representative of the UN for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict may have a positive impact on the negotiating process (<http://news.day.az/politics/229088.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

30 September

President Ilham Aliyev receives Japanese Ambassador Masamitsu Oki on the completion of his assignment in Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/231222.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Ukrainian Fuel and Energy Minister Yuri Boyko (<http://news.day.az/politics/231220.html>).

Iranian Deputy Vice President Ali Agha Mohammadi says that not a single Iranian company is operating in the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/231161.html>).

The Milli Majlis ratifies the convention on the legal status of labor migrants and members of their families in the CIS countries (<http://news.day.az/society/231252.html>).

Asim Mollazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Armenian Foreign Minister Edvard Nalbandyan has adopted the big lie technique of Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels (<http://news.day.az/politics/231135.html>).

29 September

President Ilham Aliyev receives the letters of credence from incoming Norwegian Ambassador (<http://news.day.az/politics/231111.html>), incoming German Ambassador (<http://news.day.az/politics/231095.html>) and incoming Latvian Ambassador (<http://news.day.az/politics/231089.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Ludec Sefzig, chairman of the EU committee of the Senate of the Czech Republic (<http://news.day.az/politics/231110.html>).

The Foreign Ministry accuses Armenian Foreign Minister Edvard Nalbandyan of making "insinuations" in his comments about Baku's position on the OSCE Minsk Group Madrid Principles (<http://news.day.az/politics/231062.html>).

Novruz Mammadov, the head of the foreign affairs department of the Presidential Administration, calls the declaration of Armenian Foreign Minister Edvard Nalbandyan regarding the negotiations about the Karabakh conflict "absurd" (<http://news.day.az/politics/231042.html>).

Finance Minister Samir Sharifov says that Baku does not exclude providing additional financing for the Georgian section of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway (<http://news.day.az/economy/231094.html>).

Culture and Tourism Minister Abulfaz Garayev receives Alirza Beygi, head of the Iranian province of Eastern Azerbaijan, to discuss the establishment of joint tourist companies (<http://news.day.az/economy/231011.html>).

Elman Rustamov, the head of the administration of the Central Bank, receives Ali Agha Mohammadi, the deputy vice president of Iran, who suggests that the two countries use their national currencies for trade (<http://news.day.az/economy/231128.html>).

Allahshukur Pashazade, the sheikh-ul-Islam, receives Konstantin Romodanovsky, the head of the Federal Migration Service of Russia (<http://news.day.az/politics/231061.html>).

Fazil Mustafa, a Milli Majlis deputy, says the process of normalizing relations between Ankara and Yerevan is "frozen" because of Yerevan's intransigence on the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/230868.html>).

Sabir Rustamkhanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that he has "always considered the OSCE Minsk Group to be a touristic organization" (<http://news.day.az/politics/230806.html>).

Elshad Nasirov, vice president of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan, receives Babak Afghahi, the chairman of the trade development organization of Iran, who says that Tehran is interested in the purchase of oil, gas, oil products and other products from Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/economy/231113.html>).

28 September

President Ilham Aliyev receives Ali Agha Mohammadi, deputy first vice president of Iran (<http://news.day.az/politics/230864.html>). Mohammadi says that "the goal of [his] visit [to Baku] is to raise the level of economic cooperation to the same level as political relations" (<http://news.day.az/politics/230739.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev launches his own Youtube site at <http://www.youtube.com/presidentaz> (<http://news.day.az/politics/230843.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that it is checking reports about the activities of a Russian educational institution in the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/230872.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov receives Abdulwahid Radi, chairman of the house of representatives of the Moroccan parliament (<http://news.day.az/politics/230769.html>).

Farid Shafiyev, Azerbaijani ambassador to Canada, discusses the expansion of ties with the Canadian provinces during a visit to Prince Edward Island (<http://news.day.az/politics/230895.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev receives Pascale Meige Wagner of the International Committee of the Red Cross to discuss the return of the bodies of two soldiers of Azerbaijan killed by Armenians (<http://news.day.az/politics/230835.html>).

Youth and Sports Minister Azad Rahimov meets with Firuza Mukhammadjanova, the head of the Uzbek Kamolot youth movement, to discuss cooperation (<http://news.day.az/society/230822.html>).

Rustam Usubov, the first deputy procurator general, signs a cooperation agreement with Elena Leonenko, the deputy chairman of the Investigation Committee of the Russian Federation (<http://news.day.az/society/230819.html>).

Vice Admiral Shahin Sultanov, commander of the Azerbaijani navy, meets with Tariq Majid, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff of Pakistan to discuss cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/230775.html>).

Deputy Economic Development Minister Niyazi Safarov receives a Cuban delegation and says Azerbaijan wants to expand cooperation in the fields of medicine, agriculture and tourism (<http://news.day.az/politics/230886.html>).

Ombudsman Elmira Suleymanova receives Kyrgyzstan ombudsman Tursumbek Akun (<http://news.day.az/society/230792.html>).

Zahid Oruj, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the recent statements of Armenian Foreign Minister Edvard Nalbandyan reflect a "defeatist" attitude (<http://news.day.az/politics/230446.html>).

Japanese Ambassador to Azerbaijan Masamitsu Oki says that Tokyo intends to support the GUAM countries and their promotion of democracy and market economies (<http://news.day.az/politics/230804.html>).

Audrey Glover, head of the observer mission of the OSCE Bureau for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, says that her organization expects the upcoming parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan to show forward movement on the path toward the development of a democratic society (<http://news.day.az/politics/230832.html>).

27 September

President Ilham Aliyev makes a working visit to Tashkent where Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov tells him that "the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is a holy thing and it must be supported in all variants of the solution of the Karabakh problem" (<http://news.day.az/politics/230961.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that the proposal of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon concerning the withdrawal of snipers from the line of control is an interesting one requiring careful study (<http://news.day.az/politics/230614.html>).

Industry and Energy Minister Natik Aliyev tells visiting Iranian deputy vice president Ali Agha Mohammad that Azerbaijan has the ability to supply gas to the northern provinces of Iran (<http://news.day.az/economy/230706.html>).

Hicran Huseynova, the chairman of the State Committee for Problems of the Family, Women and Children, meets with UNPFA regional director Zahidul Huque to discuss expanding cooperation between their organizations (<http://news.day.az/society/230715.html>).

The foreign ministers of the member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference meet in New York and, in the final communiqué of the meeting, call for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict on the basis of the principles of territorial integrity and the inviolability of the borders of Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/230642.html>).

25 September

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov proposes that the Organization of the Islamic Conference conduct its 2014 summit in Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/230433.html>).

24 September

President Ilham Aliyev meets with US President Barak Obama in New York (<http://news.day.az/politics/230351.html>).

Ecology and Natural Resources Minister Huseyngulu Bagirov tells Zokir Vezirov, Dushanbe's ambassador to Azerbaijan, that Baku is interested in "ever greater cooperation with Tajikistan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/230349.html>).

Milli Majlis Speaker Ogtay Asadov receives Abdelwahid Radi, the chairman of the Moroccan House of Representatives (<http://news.day.az/politics/230325.html>).

Rossana Boldini, a member of the Italian Senate, meets with Milli Majlis deputies in Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/230347.html>). She says that the two countries need to take "definite steps" to expand cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/230182.html>).

Abdelwahid Radi, chairman of the Moroccan House of Representatives, says on his arrival in Baku that "Morocco is interested in the development of relations with Azerbaijan in all spheres" (<http://news.day.az/politics/230201.html>).

23 September

President Ilham Aliyev tells the UN General Assembly that "the continuing armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is a major threat to international and regional peace and security" (<http://news.day.az/politics/229973.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets in New York with his Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki (<http://news.day.az/politics/230000.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets in New York with the three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (<http://news.day.az/politics/230421.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov signs in New York a communiqué with his Grenada counterpart Peter David on the establishment of diplomatic relations between their two countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/230199.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov meets with his Georgian counterpart David Chalagania to discuss the delimitation and demarcation of the Azerbaijani-Georgian border (<http://news.day.az/politics/230025.html>).

Vice Prime Minister Yagub Eyubov signs a protocol in Tashkent with his Uzbek counterpart Batyr Khodzhayev on the completion of the latest session of the Uzbek-Azerbaijan intergovernmental commission (<http://news.day.az/economy/230132.html>).

Turkish President Abdulla Gul says that Ankara devotes "great importance" to the peaceful resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/230137.html>).

Sahad Ali Aldosari, Saudi Arabian ambassador to Baku, says that his country "supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and favors the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem by peaceful means on the basis of the fulfillment of all resolutions of the UN Security Council, the OIC and other international organizations" (<http://news.day.az/politics/230134.html>).

Aleksey Ostrovsky, chairman of the CIS Affairs Committee of the Russian Duma, says that "international public opinion on the issue of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is on the side of Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/230081.html>).

Caroline Brown, British ambassador to Baku, visits Nakhchivan (<http://news.day.az/politics/230005.html>).

US Congressman Michael MacMahon, a member of the Azerbaijan Working Group, calls on the US Senate to confirm Matthew Bryza as US ambassador to Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/230125.html>).

22 September

President Ilham Aliyev meets in New York with Richard Morningstar, the representative of the US secretary of state for Eurasian energy issues (<http://news.day.az/politics/229973.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets in New York with his Greek and Canadian counterparts, Dimitris Droutsas and Lawrence Cannon (<http://news.day.az/politics/229850.html>).

Javanshir Akhundov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Tehran, says that the number of ethnic Armenians in Iran has declined from 200 to 250,000 in the time of the shah to some 65,000 today (<http://news.day.az/politics/229935.html>).

21 September

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets in New York with his Georgian counterpart Grigol Vashadze (<http://news.day.az/politics/229618.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov attends a meeting in New York of his counterparts from the Turkic world hosted by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (<http://news.day.az/politics/229568.html>).

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the President's Office, meets with Sergey Vinokurov, the chief of the Russian Presidential Administration for Inter-regional and Cultural Ties (<http://news.day.az/politics/229709.html>).

A delegation of the youth organization of the ruling *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party takes part in the work of the Fifth Congress of the Union of Youth of the Regions of Ukraine (<http://news.day.az/politics/229736.html>).

Roland Kobia, leader of a European Union delegation, says in Baku that "the Eastern Partnership may serve as a platform for the promoting of mutual understanding between Armenia and Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/229733.html>).

Azerbaijan displays the products of its defense industry at an international exhibition in Cape Town (<http://news.day.az/economy/229688.html>).

20 September

Prime Minister Arthur Rasi-zade receives Xiaoyu Zhao, the vice president of the Asian Bank of Development (<http://news.day.az/economy/229475.html>).

Youth and Sports Minister Azad Rahimov receives his Kyrgyzstan counterpart Aliyasbek Alymkulov to discuss expanding bilateral cooperation (<http://news.day.az/society/229470.html>).

Milli Majlis Speaker Ogtay Asadov meets with Sadettin Kalkan, secretary general of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, and Berik Aryn, deputy head of the apparatus of the Senate of Kazakhstan, to discuss the development of ties within the Turkic Parliamentary Assembly (<http://news.day.az/politics/229542.html>).

Aydyn Hasanov, a member of the Milli Majlis defense and security committee, says that if a war begins over Karabakh, "the [Azerbaijani] army will fulfill the mission laid on it in the shortest possible time" (<http://news.day.az/politics/229095.html>).

Safa Mirzoyev, head of the apparatus of the Milli Majlis, says that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic Language States reflects their solidarity (<http://news.day.az/politics/229436.html>).

Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijani consul general in Los Angeles, speaks to the private American research center Stratfor (<http://news.day.az/politics/229395.html>).

Faig Bagirov, Azerbaijani ambassador to Ankara, meets with Mehmet Ali Shahin, head of the Grand National Assembly (<http://news.day.az/politics/229471.html>).

Fred Tanner, Director of Geneva Center for Security Policy, meets with Elkhan Nuriyev, director of the Baku Center for Strategic Research, to discuss cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/229464.html>).

Azerbaijani, Turkish and Georgian officers take part in a staff exercise in Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/229452.html>).

19 September

Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations, says that a report on "the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" has been included in the calendar of the 65th session of the UN General Assembly (<http://news.day.az/politics/229318.html>).

The Defense Ministry says that Yerevan is completely wrong to claim that Armenia has the strongest and best prepared military force in the South Caucasus (<http://news.day.az/politics/229320.html>).

Javanshir Akhundov, Azerbaijani ambassador to Iran, calls on Tehran to focus its attention on the issue of the destruction of cultural monuments on the territories occupied by Armenia (<http://news.day.az/politics/229330.html>).

Mammadbaqir Bahrami, Iranian ambassador to Baku, says that "the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict directly affects the national policy and interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran" because "Iran is the only one of the countries neighboring the Caucasus which suffers from the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/229339.html>).

18 September

Chingiz Asgarov, Azerbaijan's representative to the European Court for Human Rights, says that if the court holds that Armenia controls the occupied territories, "this will be the first judicial decision concerning the occupation by Armenia of Azerbaijani land" (<http://news.day.az/politics/229280.html>).

Dashgyn Shikarov, charge d'affaires at the Azerbaijani embassy in Pakistan, visits a middle school for girls built there by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation (<http://news.day.az/society/229282.html>).

17 September

Nizami Jafarov, the head of the working group on inter-parliamentary ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey, says that relations between the two "must be strategic in all respects" and that "a special organization" should be created to promote that (<http://news.day.az/politics/228962.html>).

Elchin Guliyev, head of the State Border Service, meets Ahmadi Mogadam, the commander of the Iranian police forces (<http://news.day.az/politics/228994.html>).

Khady Rajabli, the chairman of the Milli Majlis social policy committee, considers measures to improve the lives of Azerbaijanis working in the Russian Federation and other CIS countries (<http://news.day.az/society/229121.html>).

A protest by the Justice Ministry causes the International Prosecutors Association to remove from its agenda the question of admitting the prosecutor general of the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (<http://news.day.az/politics/229123.html>).

Caroline Brown, British ambassador to Azerbaijan, meets with Mazahir Panahov, head of the Azerbaijani Electoral Commission (<http://news.day.az/politics/229189.html>).

Walter Fust, director general of the Kofi Annan Foundation and president of UNESCO's International Program for the Development of Communications, says he supports naming a special UN representative for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/229173.html>).

Mustafa Kabakci, a deputy of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, says that the resolution of the Turkic summit yet again demonstrates the support which Azerbaijan enjoys for the maintenance of its territorial integrity (<http://news.day.az/politics/229125.html>).

Ismatulla Irgashev, Uzbekistan's ambassador to Baku, presents a book by Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov entitled "The Higher Spirituality is an Unbeatable Force," saying that the translation of this work into Azerbaijani will further strengthen relations between the two countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/229067.html>).

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu says that Turkey, as one of the initiators of the Karabakh peace process, seeks to play an active role in advancing that effort (<http://news.day.az/politics/229042.html>).

16 September

President Ilham Aliyev says in Istanbul at the summit of Turkic language countries that "the desire of peoples for self-determination must not destroy the territorial integrity of countries" (<http://news.day.az/politics/228870.html>). In other comments, he reaffirms that "Nagorno-Karabakh is Azerbaijani territory from time immemorial" (<http://news.day.az/politics/228663.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev meets in Istanbul with Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev (<http://news.day.az/politics/228941.html>).

Ambassador Arif Mammadov, permanent representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe, is elected chairman of the group of rapporteurs of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe on education, culture, ecology and youth (<http://news.day.az/politics/228974.html>).

Nazim Ibrahimov, chairman of the State Committee on Work with the Diaspora, discusses the state of the Azerbaijani community in Latvia with former Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga (<http://news.day.az/politics/228968.html>).

Gultakin Hajibayli, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that the AGRI project "raises yet higher the role of Azerbaijan in providing energy security to Europe" (<http://news.day.az/politics/228982.html>).

Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammadov says that Ashgabat has no intentions of hurting the "fraternal relations" it enjoys with Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/228919.html>) and that the East West pipeline in his country is linked to the Nabucco Project (<http://news.day.az/economy/228930.html>).

Robert Gates, US secretary of defense, says that it is necessary to increase efforts to prevent outbreaks of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh (<http://news.day.az/politics/228862.html>).

The European Union transfers to Azerbaijan the first tranche of three million Euros to support the energy sector (<http://news.day.az/economy/228935.html>).

Note to Readers

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